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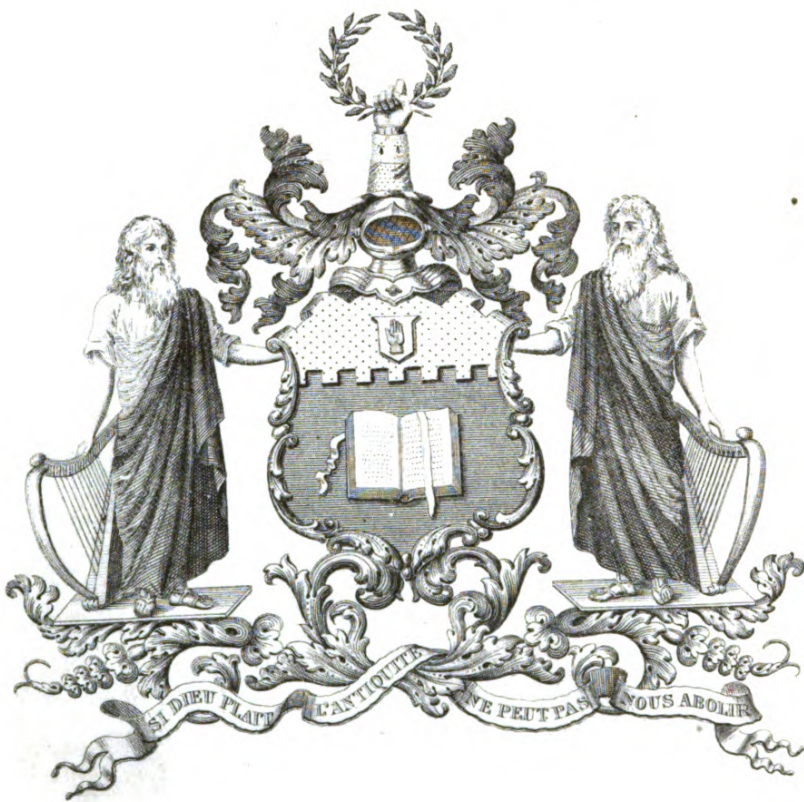


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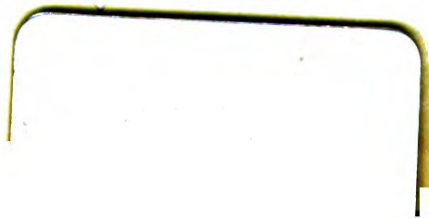
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To Edward Conroy
from his most affectionate
Wife



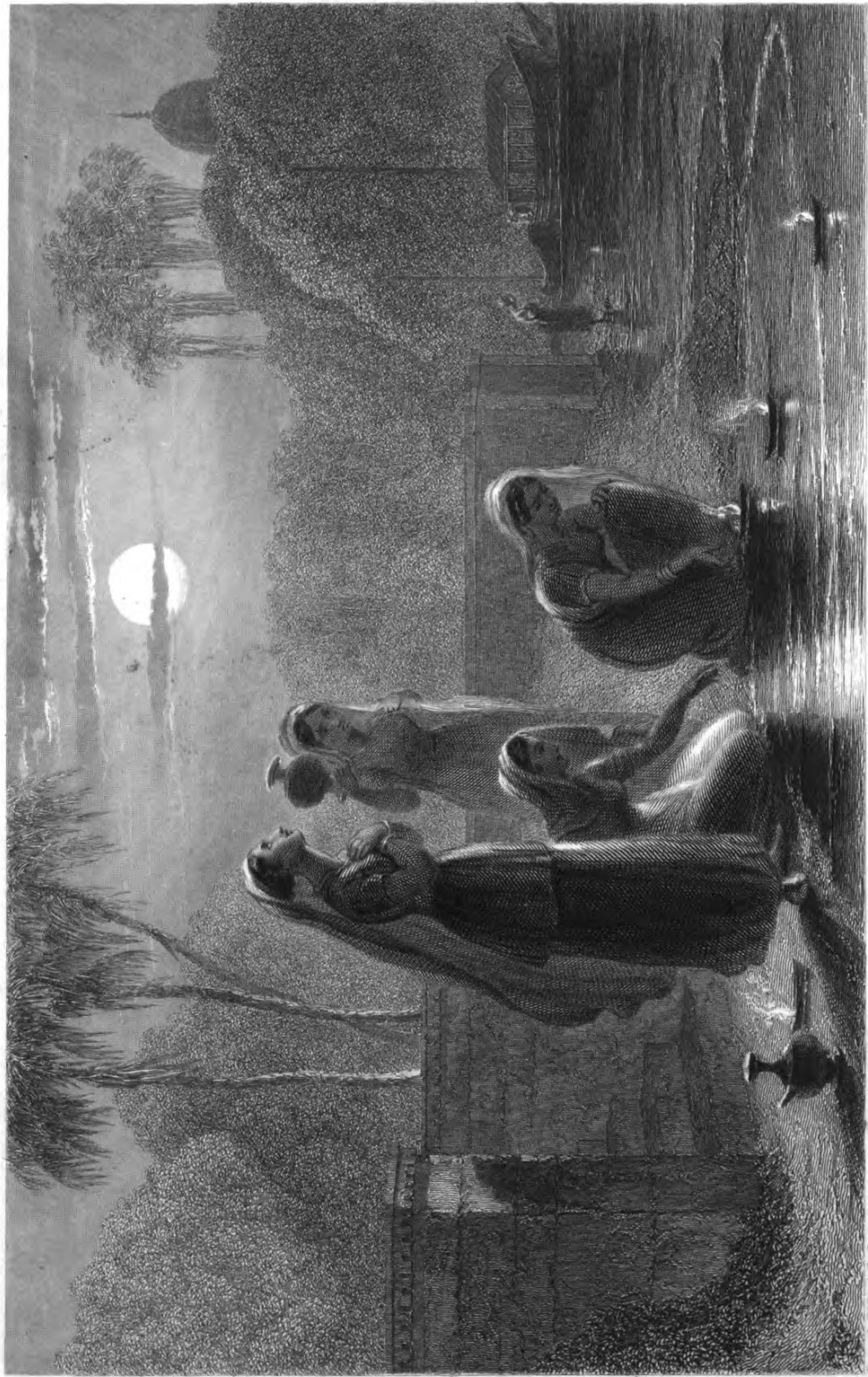
EDVARDVS CONROY
BARONETTVS.



224 A 4

Indian Institute, Oxford.





Engraved by J. Stuppelin, 1841.

Illustration of a scene in India.

Engraved by J. Stuppelin, 1841.

**EASTERN
LEGENDARY TALES**

AND

ORIENTAL ROMANCES ;



BEING

A REPRESENTATION OF ORIENTAL MANNERS, AND HABITS,

EXHIBITING

A TRUE PICTURE OF EASTERN SOCIETY.

EMBELLISHED WITH TWENTY-ONE ENGRAVINGS ON STEEL,

FROM DRAWINGS BY THE LATE

W. DANIEL, R. A.

**LONDON:
WHITTAKER AND CO.,
AVE MARIA LANE.**



PREFACE.

Poor Daniell! my excellent and worthy associate in the Oriental Annual, has passed to his immortality. He lived to see the volume for 1838 completed, and shortly after quitted a life, the close of which was marked by intense suffering, for an eternity of ineffable glory. My acquaintance with him commenced many years ago; and during a long period of frequent intercourse, our friendship grew into a warm and earnest attachment. He was one of the best of men—good in all the relations of life. I have never known a man combining so many moral

excellencies—so tender a husband, so affectionate a father, so kind a friend. To these qualities he united the most extensive liberality, the most earnest benevolence, the most exact integrity. He was not theoretically, but practically a Christian. During our long acquaintance, and especially for the latter five years of his life, we were so frequently together, that I may safely affirm I saw more of him than any even of his oldest and most attached friends; still, upon no single occasion, have I seen him overtaken by anger, or observed the beautiful equanimity of his temperament in the slightest degree disturbed, except during his last illness; and yet I have been with him many times when he was labouring under extreme mental disquietude. Throughout that protracted interval, when the chastening hand of a merciful God was upon him, he bore his infliction with extreme fortitude and resignation, though those high qualities of a true Christian temper were occasionally overborne by the intensity of physical agony. Upon approaching the door of his house, I have frequently heard him in the road shrieking under the excess of his sufferings. Poor fellow! great as those sufferings were, almost too great for endurance, he

never murmured at the visitation which had fallen upon him, and to which I can truly say that, during the whole course of my professional experience, I have never witnessed any thing bearing even a distant comparison for duration and severity.

My lamented friend has left numerous drawings of Oriental scenery behind him : a portion of these will be found in the present work, which will, I trust, be received with the same kind favour as the public have always shown to the productions of Mr. Daniell's pencil ; and it becomes my duty to make it publicly known that this work will be continued until the drawings now in the hands of the late Mr. Daniell's executors shall have been all employed.

With reference to the letter-press, I have a few words to add. The present volume contains two tales,—one a Hindoo legend, based upon a popular but singular superstition : the other, a Mohammedan romance. Both are made vehicles for the representation of Oriental manners, habits, and feelings ; and aim at exhibiting true pictures of Eastern society. I trust the book will be deemed worthy of patronage. It may be as well to mention, that I

have elsewhere published a very slight sketch of the first tale, without my name. I simply state this that I may not be supposed to have appropriated the production of another hand.

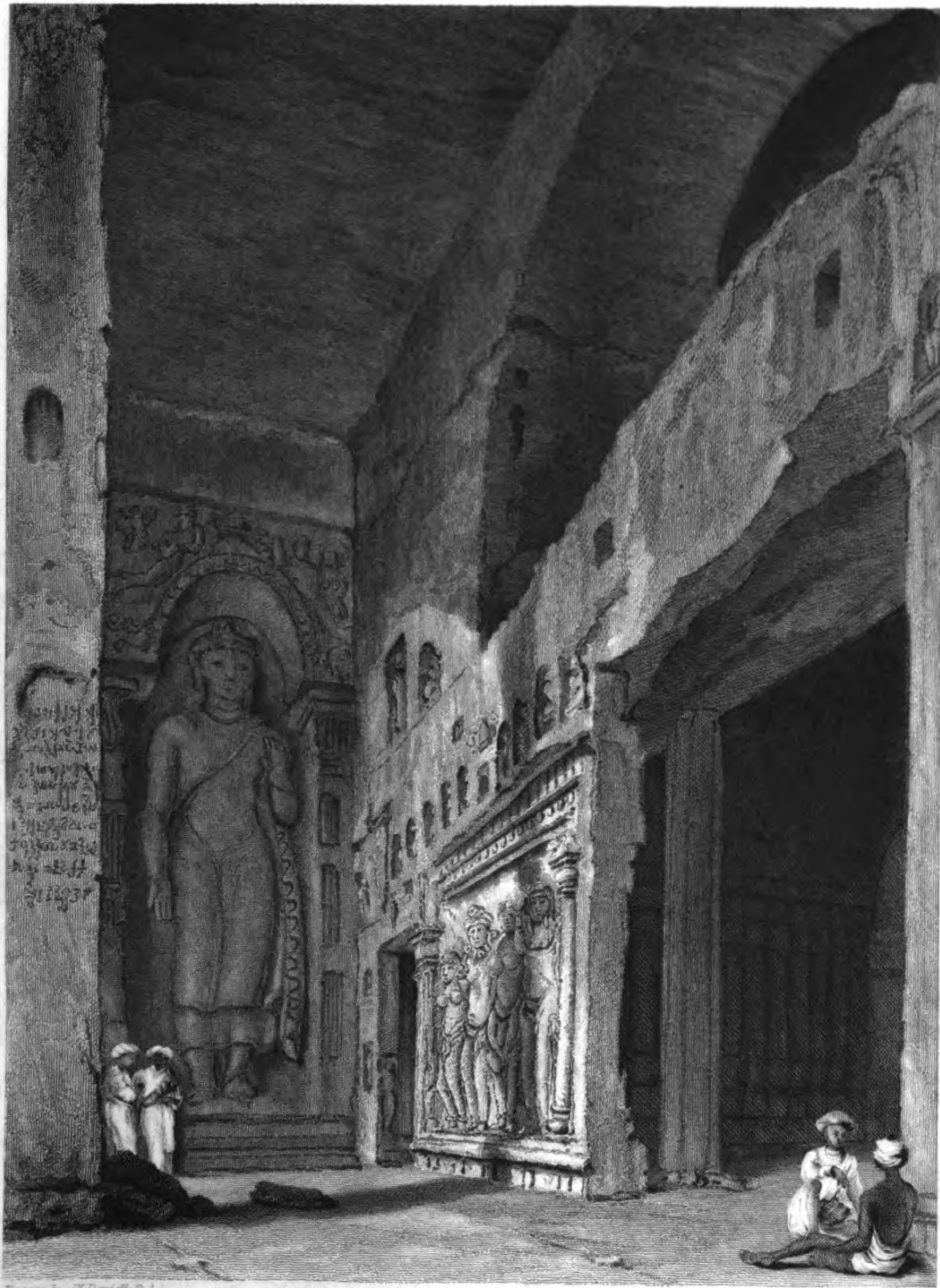
THE
ROYAL DEVOTEE,
A HINDOO LEGEND.

CHAPTER I.

IN Hindostan there are many celebrated temples, caverns, and places similarly venerated, which have been in past ages the resort of pilgrims and devotees. Some of those objects of once universal reverence, though now abandoned by modern saints, are, nevertheless, still the wonder and admiration of travellers who visit them, as exhibiting the marvellous accomplishments of men in ages so far back in the past as to be beyond the date of history. Perhaps there is no work of very remote antiquity, not even excepting the extraordinary excavations of the Thebais in Upper Egypt, more singularly deserving the attention of archaiologists than the caves of Kenaree, on the island of Salsette. Of the principal cave I shall here give a brief description.

This cavern-temple, hollowed by human labour into the very heart of a high rocky hill, is entered through a lofty portico, in which there still remain some favourable specimens of ancient sculpture. Upon the top of a large octagonal pillar are three lions passant, with their heads turned towards the spectator in opposite directions. Their forms are remarkably good; and the minuter details of the sculptor's art are treated with considerable skill. This pillar, with its majestic capital, stands in front of the portico. On entering, in a deep niche on the east side is a gigantic statue, "with his left hand raised in the attitude of benediction; and the screen, which separates the vestibule from the temple, is covered immediately above the door with a row of male and female figures, nearly naked, but not indecent, and carved with considerable spirit, which apparently represent dancers. In the centre is a large door, and above it, three windows contained in a semicircular arch, so like those seen over the entrances of Italian churches, that I fully supposed them to be an addition to the original plan by the Portuguese, who are said, I know not on what ground, to have used this cave as a church, till I found a similar and still more striking window of the same kind in the great cave of Carlee¹. Within, the apartment is, I should conceive, fifty feet long by twenty, an oblong square terminated by a semicircle, and surrounded on every side, but that of the en-

¹ Near a small village so called on the road between Bombay and Poonah. Upon two occasions, on my journey from the latter place to the former, I passed a whole day in this celebrated cavern-temple.

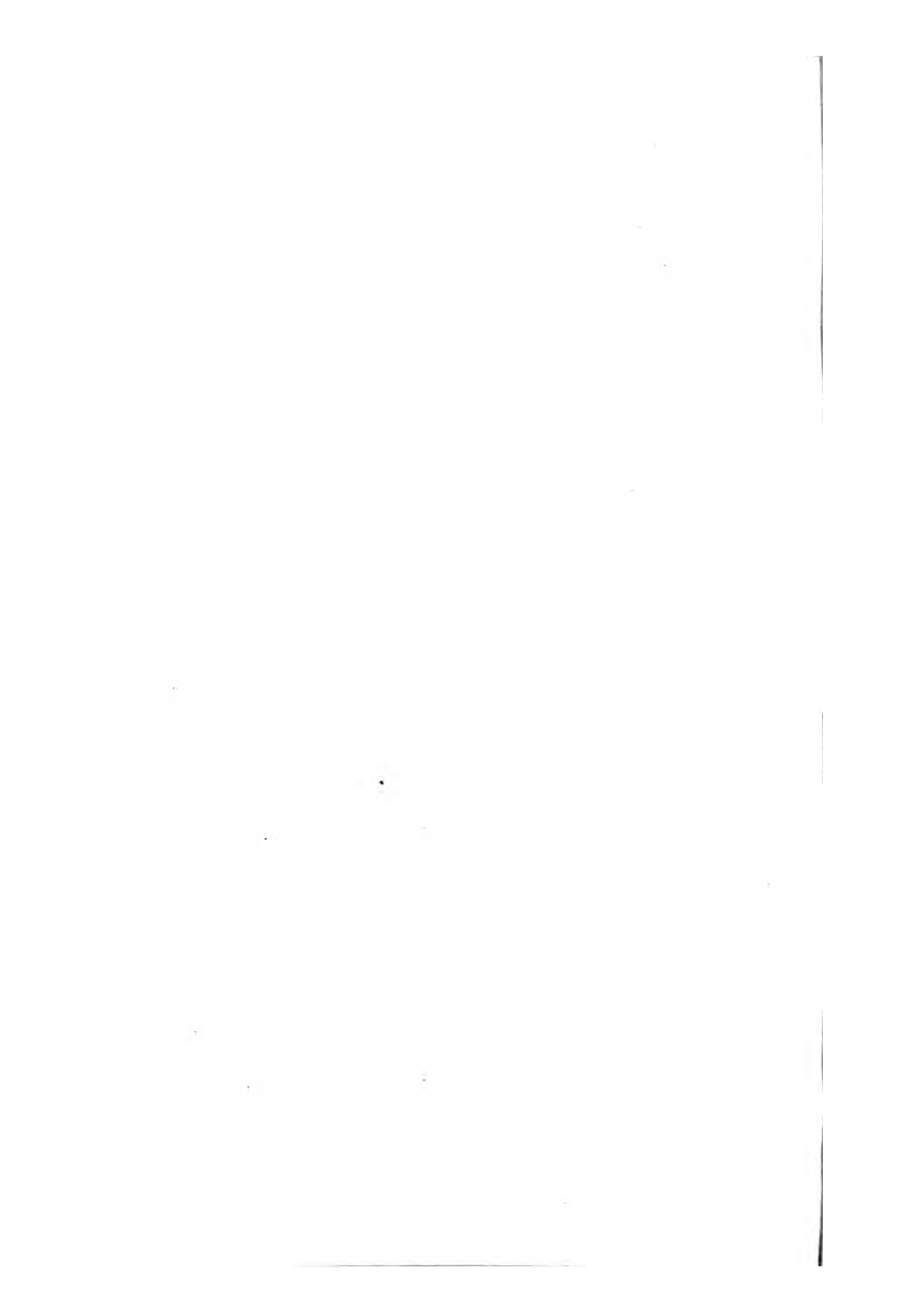


Drawn by W. Daniell R.S.

Engraved by G. R. Green.

Entrance to the largest Cave of the Ajanta Caves.

London: Published by W. Daniell R.S. & Co. 1830.



trance, with a colonnade of octagonal pillars. Of these the twelve on each side nearest the entrance are ornamented with carved bases and capitals, in the style usual in Indian temples. The rest are unfinished.

“ In the centre of the semicircle, and with a free walk all round it, is a mass of rock left solid, but carved externally like a dome, and so as to bear a strong general likeness to our Saviour’s sepulchre, as it is now chiseled away and enclosed in St. Helena’s Church at Jerusalem. On the top of the dome is a sort of spreading ornament, like the capital of a column. It is, apparently, intended to support something; and I was afterwards told at Carlee, where such an ornament, but of greater size, is also found, that a large gilt umbrella used to spring from it. This solid dome appears to be the usual symbol of Bhuddist adoration, and, with its umbrella ornament, may be traced in the Shoo-Madoo of Pegu and other more remote structures of the same faith. Though different in its form and style of ornament from the Lingam, I cannot help thinking that it was originally intended to represent the same popular object of that almost universal idolatry, which Scripture, with good reason, describes as ‘uncleanness and abomination.’

“ The ceiling of this cave is arched semicircularly, and ornamented, in a very singular manner, with slender ribs of teak-wood of the same curve with the roof, and disposed as if they were supporting it, which, however, it does not require, nor are they strong enough for the purpose. Their use may have originally been to hang lamps or flowers from in

solemn rejoicings. My companions in this visit, who showed themselves a little jealous of the antiquity of these remains, and of my inclination to detract from it, would have had me suppose that these too were additions of the Portuguese; but there are similar ribs at Carlee, where the Portuguese never were.

“On one of the pillars of this portico, on the right of the large figure in the niche, is a copious inscription, in a character different both from the Nagree and the popular running hand which, more than the Nagree, prevails with the Mahrattas.

“There are many similar instances in different parts of India, of inscriptions in characters now unintelligible; nor will any one who knows how exceedingly incurious the Brahmins are on all such subjects wonder that they are not able to assist Europeans in decyphering them¹.”

These temples are occasionally visited by devotees, though they have long ceased to be places of regular convocation. Those severe enthusiasts who prefer the bare earth or the hard rock to exhibit their penances on, occasionally resort to these extraordinary excavations for the sake of performing their piacular impositions with the greater strictness. The Suniassi, a description of devotee which the hero of the present legend chanced to be, is sometimes seen upon the rocky floor of some sacred cavern, lacerating himself with the hard flint, and tearing his flesh in

¹ Narrative of a Journey, &c., by the Right Rev. Reginald Heber, D.D. Vol. iii. p. 92—96.

token of his patience under suffering, and of his high elevation in the order of sanctified beings.

Before I enter upon the narrative to which I am about to invite the reader's attention, as an illustration of Hindoo manners and superstition, it may be necessary he should be informed who and what a Suniassi is.

The Suniassi is a Brahmin of the highest spiritual order,—a devotee who imagines that by rigid penance and a life devoted to great privations, and absorbed in the severest mental abstractions, he can so discipline his body as to cleanse it from all carnal defilements, and thus at length elevate it to such a state of sublime purity, as to fit it for Indra's paradise without any vicarious expiation; in which method of remedial intervention on the part of an all-wise and merciful God, he, as a heathen, does not of course believe.

It is supposed by the Hindoos that there are four necessary degrees of probation. The first may be entered by the young Brahmin so early as his eighth year, when the preliminary ceremony of putting on the zenar is performed. This badge is a cord composed of three threads, as a memorial of the Trimourti, or three great deities of the Hindoos,—the creator, the preserver, and destroyer,—under the respective names of Brahma, Vishnoo, and Siva. As soon as this cord is attached to the youthful candidate for spiritual distinction, perpetually directing his thoughts to the Hindoo triad, represented in some of their temples by an idol with three heads attached to one body, his first probation commences. The initiatory discipline,

though sufficiently severe, is light in comparison with what is to follow. Having assumed the zenar, and thus entered upon his noviciate, the incipient saint quits his father's house, and is at once placed under the tuition of a Brahmin, who instructs him in all the cryptic rites of the sacred order. He is enjoined the strictest secrecy; and no doubt it was from this form of initiation into the mysteries of sainthood among the Hindoos, that Pythagoras, who had visited the east and held intercourse with its sages, adopted that mode of discipline, which he imposed upon his disciples before he would acknowledge them members of the sect of Pythagoreans.

When the young candidate for the honour of canonization has been sufficiently long with his tutor to have become cleansed from the grosser feculencies of moral defilement, his head is shaved, except a small portion at the back of the crown; upon this a single lock is permitted to grow, by which, when he shall have attained the highest state of spiritual exaltation, he is to be raised to the supreme heaven by the hand of some Deva or archangelic minister. He is now denied every kind of animal enjoyment: the most perfect purity of conversation and of action is maintained; his youth is passed in the severest mortifications; his days are occupied in prayer, ablutions, and studying the Vedas, or Hindoo scripture; at night he casts himself upon a bed of foul straw, or under the first tree that stands in his path, wrapped in the skin of a tiger or of a stag, the bodies of all other animals being supposed to communicate pollution. This first probationary state continues

generally twelve years ; in some instances, though these are rare, only five.

The second stage of probation, which immediately succeeds the first, is one of still greater self-denial. The stern novice rises at least two hours before day-break, and his whole time is passed in the strictest ceremonial observances ; he supports life by gleaning in the fields, by undergoing the severest mortifications, or by begging a handful of rice from the casual passenger ; and even part of this scanty supply he throws into the fire as an offering to the dead, eating barely sufficient to sustain life, and allowing his body to become painfully emaciated, and often even offensively loathsome. He passes the greater part of the night in observing the course of the moon and planets, and contemplating the spangled skies, which will sufficiently account for the skill in astronomy exhibited by many of the Brahmins, who have left behind them learned treatises upon this sublime science, still existing in the Sanscrit, or classical language of Hindostan.

The third probationary stage is one of still more severe trial than either of the two former. It is hard to conceive how human endurance can support the terrible privations which it exacts, and which must be performed by the candidate for exclusive celestial honours. The devotee retires to the desert, where he passes his days in utter solitude, rendered the more intolerable by the most rigid mortification and the most painful bodily infliction ; thus preparing his soul, by holy contemplations, for that state to which it aspires in the Swerga, or eternal paradise. He

wraps his withered limbs in the scantiest covering, neither cuts his hair nor pares his nails, sleeps upon the bare ground, fasts all day, and, at the approach of night, relieves his long and severe abstinence with a few grains of boiled rice. His whole life is one uniform scene of dreadful torture, and he often expires under the frightful severity of his penances, remote from any human habitation, beyond the reach of human sympathy, without a relative to close his eyes, or a friend to receive his last sigh, which relieves him from an existence of lingering agony.

The fourth stage of probation undergone by the fanatical Brahmin is the state of Suniassi,—if possible the most intolerable of all, and rarely attained in the perfection of expurgatorial consummation. The real Suniassi is seldom met with; few are the favoured mortals who rise to this sublime elevation of spiritual spotlessness. It only differs from the third state, in the horrible tortures endured by the aspirant for the Swerga. The self-inflicted torments by which the Suniassi signalizes his term of successful purification, positively exceeds belief; and yet the facts are established by testimony not to be impeached¹.

When the devotee has advanced himself to the enviable state of Suniassi, he immediately becomes a sort of subordinate divinity in the eyes of his inferiors. They pay him the profoundest homage, frequently seeking the desert in which he passes his days, to attest their veneration for so sanctified a being. By

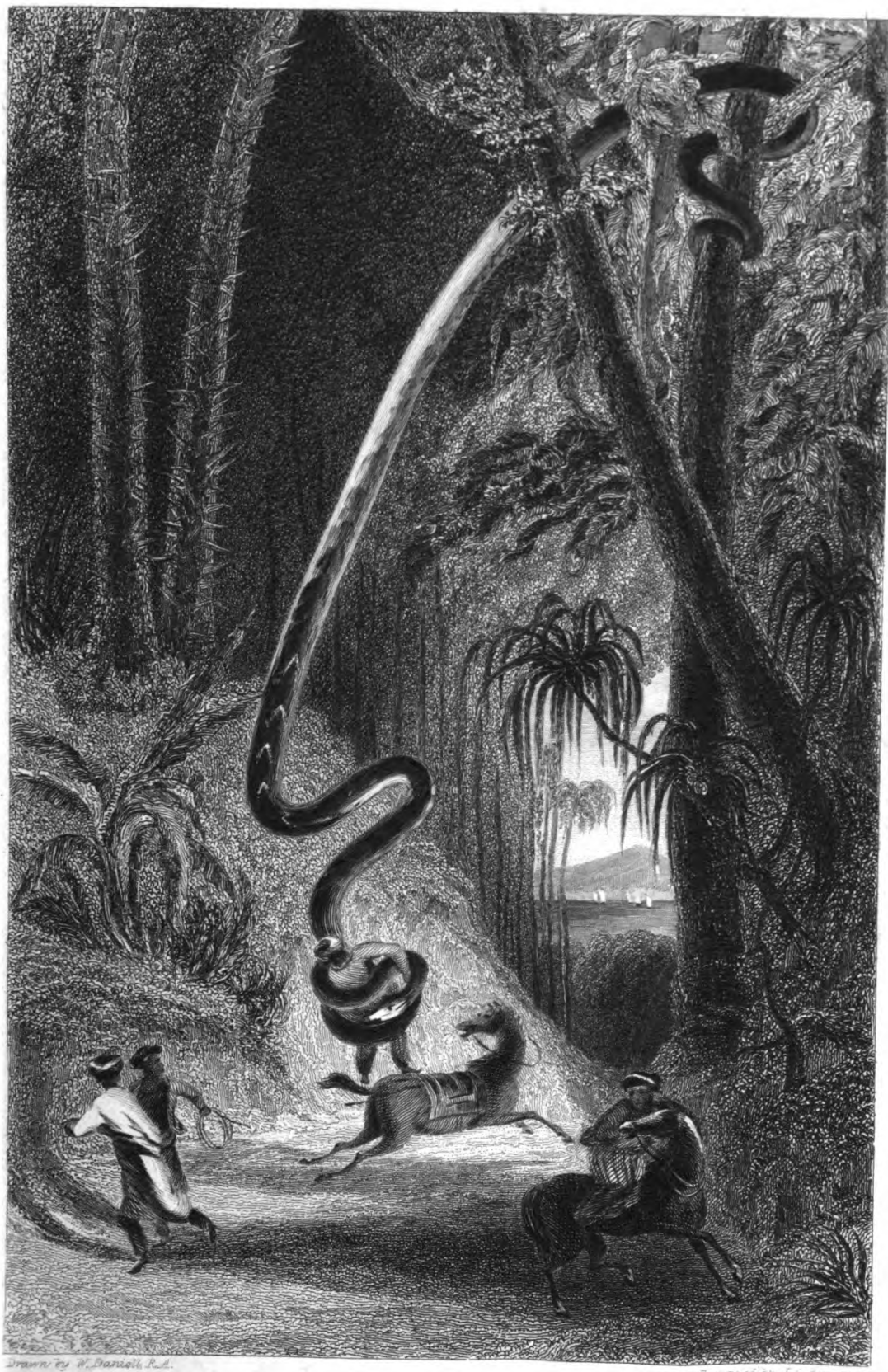
¹ The writer of this narrative has witnessed, in India, acts of self-torture absolutely frightful to behold.

the austerity of his life, and the extreme severity of his torments, the Suniassi imagines that he entitles himself to everlasting reward in the sensual heaven of his idolatry, into which the gods themselves cannot refuse him admission. Having paid the price, he claims the reward as a right, which is at once admitted.

It is maintained by the Brahmins, that a devotee in the fourth stage of probation can, by some mystical act of devotion, dispossess his living body of the spirit, and ascend to the regions of immortal fruition; that he can return at pleasure, and repossess the inanimate but not defunct frame, which acquires additional purity during these intervals of exanimation; the soul, by its intercourse with beatified spirits, becoming the more purified in proportion to the frequency of such heavenly communion.

CHAPTER II.

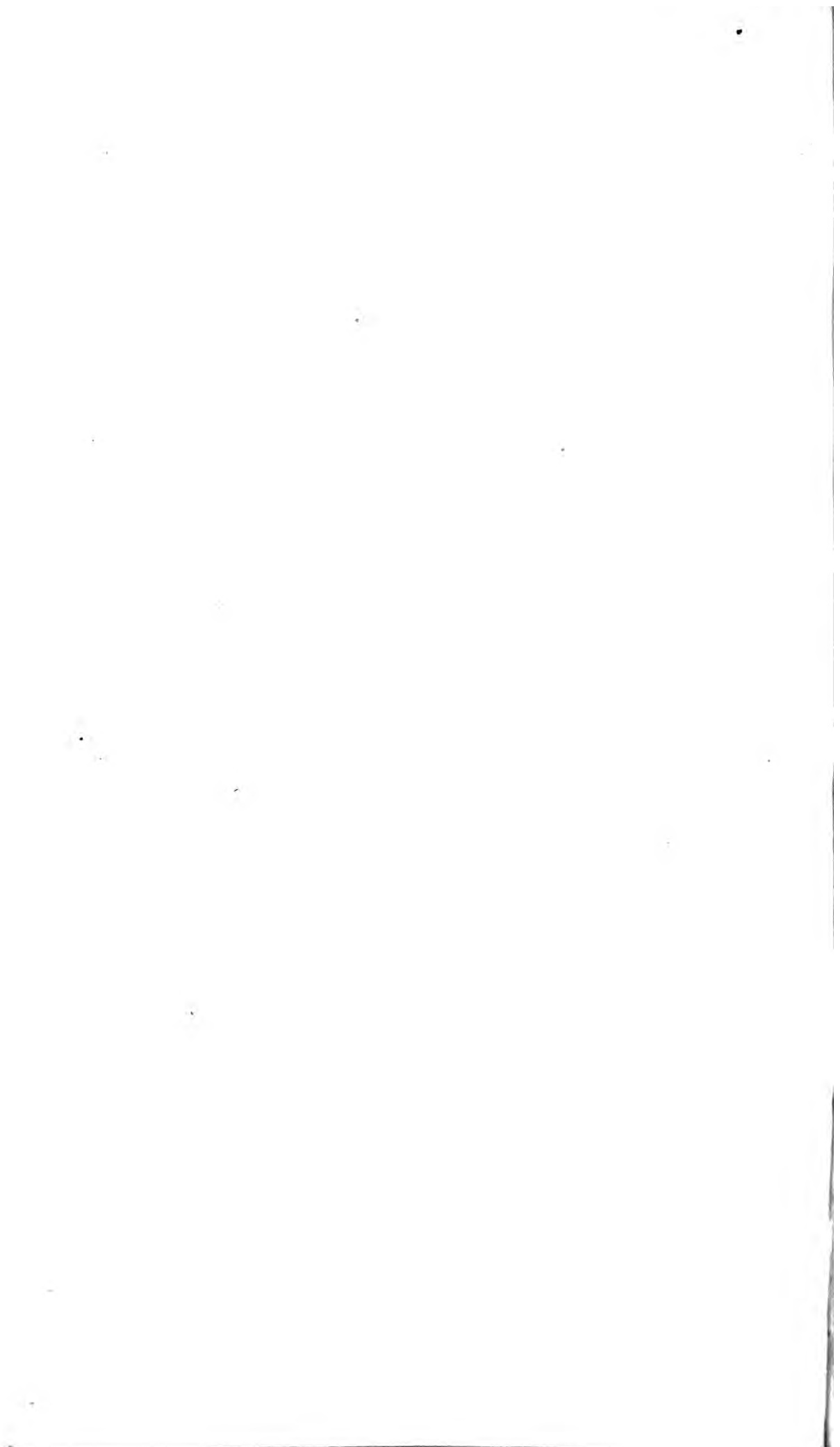
IN a large tract of uncultivated country in the north of India, betwixt the Indus and the Ganges, there was a vast extent of impermeable jungle, where the tiger and hyena prowled undisturbed by the traveller, who seldom ventured into those almost impenetrable recesses. Here the sunbeam never enlivened the murky solitude, and in vain the reptiles crawled from their thick covert, to bask in its refreshing glories. The dews of night drew from the earth a rank but exuberant vegetation, pernicious to human life, yet affording shelter to creatures repugnant to mortal eyes; and in places where the bones of animals lay unburied after the carnival of wild beasts, the forest appeared a gloomy Golgotha. Here the huge constrictor skulked in search of prey, occasionally lifting its prodigious body from the damp earth, where it had deposited its noxious slime, and, rearing its bright but appalling crest amid the branches of the loftiest trees, threatened the casual passenger below with sudden destruction: and instances have been known of persons having thus lost their lives. This fact was awfully verified some years ago in the island of Java, a government messenger being taken from his horse by one of these gigantic snakes.



Drawn by W. Daniell R.S.

Engraved by J. W. Armytage.

Boa Constrictor nigra, a Boconuco, Honduras



Even the tiger and colossal elephant are said occasionally to become the victims of this powerful monster, possessing strength and activity far beyond that of the largest and most ferocious quadrupeds.

Just within the confines of the forest, under the rude canopy of a naked rock, in a natural cavern by the side of a lofty hill, a Suniassi might be seen by such as sought the sacred abode of the devotee, performing his daily discipline of spiritual penance. He was a prince holding supremacy over a territory of considerable extent, and exacting obedience from a numerous population. Since his elevation to the highest spiritual as well as to the most exalted temporal dignities, he had espoused a princess of great beauty, who rather revered him for his eminent sanctity, than loved him for those personal distinctions which, no doubt, generally contribute more to endear the marriage state, than any celebrity arising from a life exclusively passed in austerities almost intolerable, and utterly repugnant to the natural bias and to the more dominant instincts of humanity. She had, however, united herself to the reputed saint in consequence of the extraordinary reputation he had acquired, as a man honoured even by the gods, and revered with the profoundest homage by men of the highest character for devotion and integrity of life. He professed that he had allied himself to so much beauty, merely as a test of self-denial, rigidly abstaining from all the privileges of connubial intercourse, and never indulging in the luxury of profane conversation, but constantly dilating, in the presence of his lovely consort, upon the

perfection of his own spiritual state, and the eternal enjoyments of that heaven to which he had, by his severe penances, purchased the indefeasible right of inheritance. He was, nevertheless, happy in his marriage, as his beautiful partner exhibited towards him extreme respect, not to say submission; and, when not employed in the severities of his probationary discipline, he was said by some, who did not care to wound the fair reputation even of saints, to enjoy her society with a relish proportioned to the privation which his condition of Suniassi, and especially of one who bore the temporal honours of regality, necessarily imposed upon him.

It was whispered by those who considered a gossip upon the frailties of their betters as the most transcendent of delights, that when the royal devotee returned from the jungle to the blessings of his domestic hearth, his visits to the palace were ordered to be kept a profound secret, as any thing like relaxation from the rigid abstinence from all enjoyments, however rational or moderate, imposed by the severe rules of his order, would be deemed incompatible with that celestial spiritualization claimed by the Suniassi over the rest of the Hindoo community. It was generally supposed that he seldom quitted the cavern in the forest, but daily practised there those dreadful austerities, which have consigned thousands to the enviable distinction of martyrdom, but which, by torturing his body, purified his soul for those scenes of immortal fruition where the Suniassi is supposed to reign paramount over every inferior order of spiritualized beings. This supposition, however,

was erroneous ; for the royal saint frequently returned to his capital, from the scene of his inflictions, in order to look after the affairs of his government, which were conducted during his absence by a nephew, to whom, though a very young man, he entrusted their management ; and the trust was worthily bestowed, as the prince was no less honest than wise,—directing with a prudent discretion, aided by the acute sagacity of the queen, the intricate machine of state, and producing general satisfaction. His uncle, having no children, had named him his heir ; and so much power was already consigned to his hands, that he virtually enjoyed all the honours of royalty, though only acting in the capacity of vicegerent. Although scarcely advanced beyond his twentieth birthday, he was considered a miracle of prudence, and was so distinguished for the grace and dignity of his person, that ladies of the first rank in his uncle's dominions sighed to become sharers of his present honours and future prospects. As, however, he had not yet discovered the woman likely to bind his heart with the silken fetters of love, the coldness of the youthful rajah was the frequent theme of conversation among the maidens of high birth who looked upon themselves as fit objects of preference.

Meanwhile the royal devotee pursued his course of sanctification, leaving the almost entire management of his kingdom to the superior wisdom of his nephew and of his queen. The periods of his visits to the jungle, and of his return to the palace, were only known to a single slave, who had for many years

served him with such fidelity as to obtain his esteem, which seemed daily to strengthen. The slave frequently attended him on his journeys; and was an eye-witness to those tortures which the saintly Brahmin inflicted upon himself, by way of realizing the aims of spiritual ambition. By a long course of compliant and obsequious behaviour, the menial had entirely secured the confidence of his master, who at length made him the depository of all his secrets, except those which it would have been a violation of the strict canons of his sect to divulge.

Youghal—for such was this confidant's name—had been originally a Lascar on board one of the vessels which transport merchandise of various kinds from the Arabian and Persian gulfs to the different ports of Bengal, or to certain towns upon the Coromandel and Malabar coasts. He had been left an orphan when only three years old; and as soon as he was big enough to labour for the means of existence, he was put on board one of those traders, where his toil was none of the lightest, and his enjoyment none of the most enviable. These boats are of rather singular construction, having generally a high poop, and being extremely low at the bows, though some of them are flush fore and aft, carrying large lug sails, which expose them to great danger when overtaken by a sudden squall. They are sluggish sailers, and in calm weather are urged forward by the oar, which is a matter of intolerable labour, in a latitude where the thermometer frequently rises, in the shade, to a hundred and fifteen degrees of Fahrenheit. The number of men employed to navigate them is from twelve to



Engraved by T. Agnew & Sons

Drawn by W. Daniell, R.A.

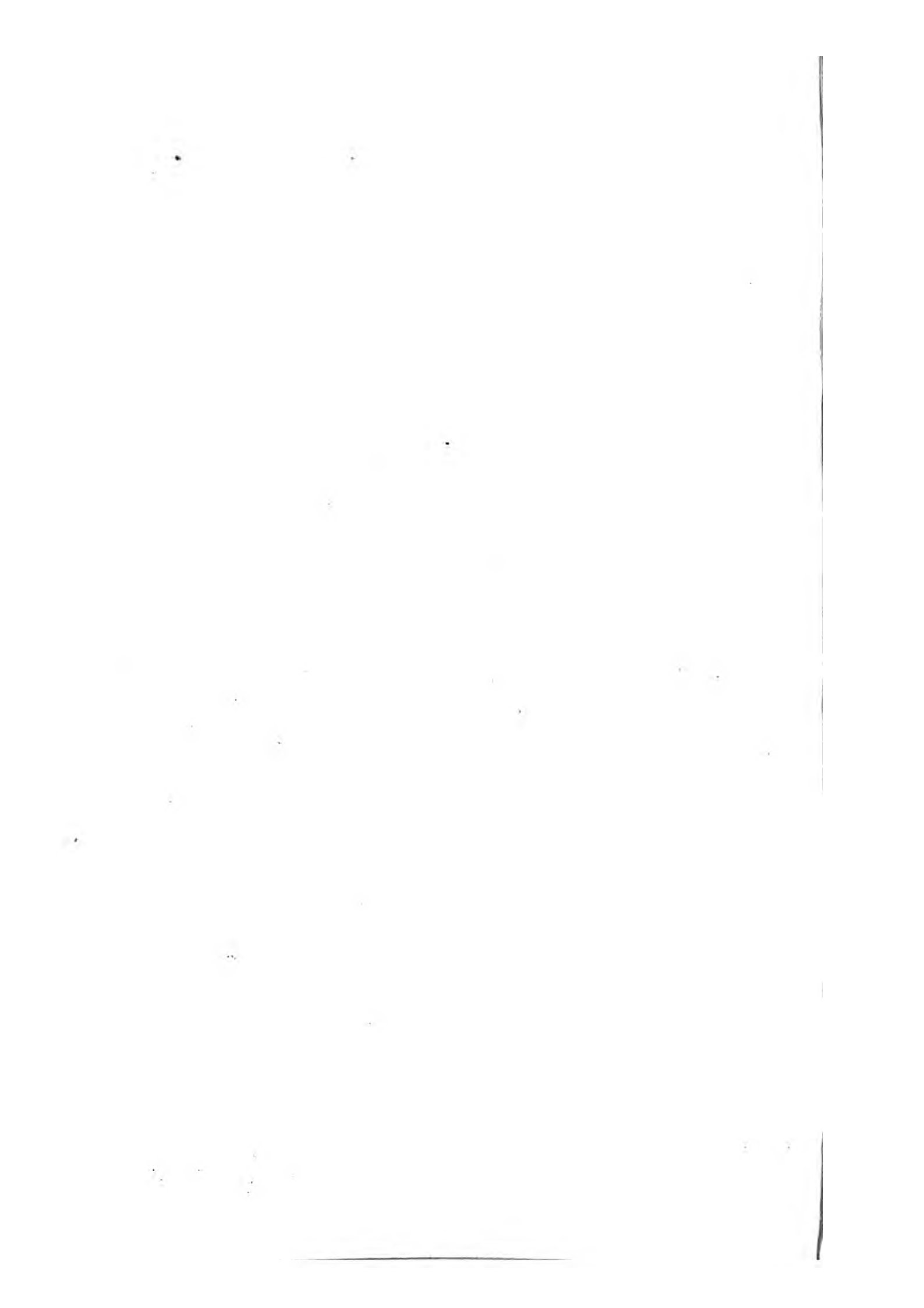
Bank of the Hudson River

Looked at from the Hudson River

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thirty, according to their size. They are so loosely put together, that their seams open, and admit such a quantity of water as often greatly to endanger the safety not only of the cargo but of the crew. In stormy weather their commanders seldom venture out of sight of land, as these vessels are not constructed for weathering severe gales. They have, however, a very picturesque appearance when seen coasting along the shores of Malabar or Coromandel, freighted with cargoes from Arabia the happy or from Persia the magnificent.

Youghal was released from his maritime servitude by an Arab pirate, who took the vessel in which he was employed, and, having disposed of the cargo, sold the crew for slaves. He was transported to the capital of the Suniassi sovereign, and, by one of those chances which rise out of circumstances the least foreseen, became, by right of purchase, the property of that monarch, who, being pleased with his quickness of parts and compliant suavity of temperament, first employed him about his person, and finally took him into his confidence.

The slave occasionally conducted parties to the forest, while the Suniassi was performing his acts of penance, in order that the sanctity of his master and sovereign might be seen by the admiring subjects of the latter, and be thus proclaimed throughout his dominions. The fame of it did in consequence spread rapidly through the neighbouring towns.

This anxious desire to enhance the saint's reputation, on the part of his dependant, so entirely won his reliance, that the holy penitentiary occasionally per-

formed before him those mysterious rites not permitted by the rules of his order to be witnessed by mortal eye. In proportion as the master's assurance of the menial's fidelity strengthened, the latter appeared more anxious to deserve this flattering opinion of the royal fanatic, by unremitting attention to his commands. Perceiving the influence he was rapidly gaining, Youghal took care to increase it by greater obsequiousness of attention to the commands of his sainted master, endeavouring to anticipate his most trifling wishes; and when he was suffering under the positive agonies of corporeal infliction, mitigating the severity of those pains, by extolling the marvellous magnanimity of him who bore them—for your Hindoo saints seek the reward of their fatuitous endurance of bodily torture, no less in the praises of men than in the superior blessings of the Swerga¹. Those exclamations of amazement which burst from the wily attendant were as celestial harmony to the ears of the self-tormented devotee, who was more completely confirmed in the conviction of Youghal's extraordinary reverence and fidelity, in proportion to the frequency of his exclamations, and the apparent fervour of his astonishment.

The result of such severe and continued austerity was, that the Suniassi had secured not only the favour but the admiration of those divinities who preside over the different mansions in the Hindoo paradise, and by frequent penances, so intolerable that few men could undergo them without falling a sacri-

¹ The celestial paradise of the Hindoos.

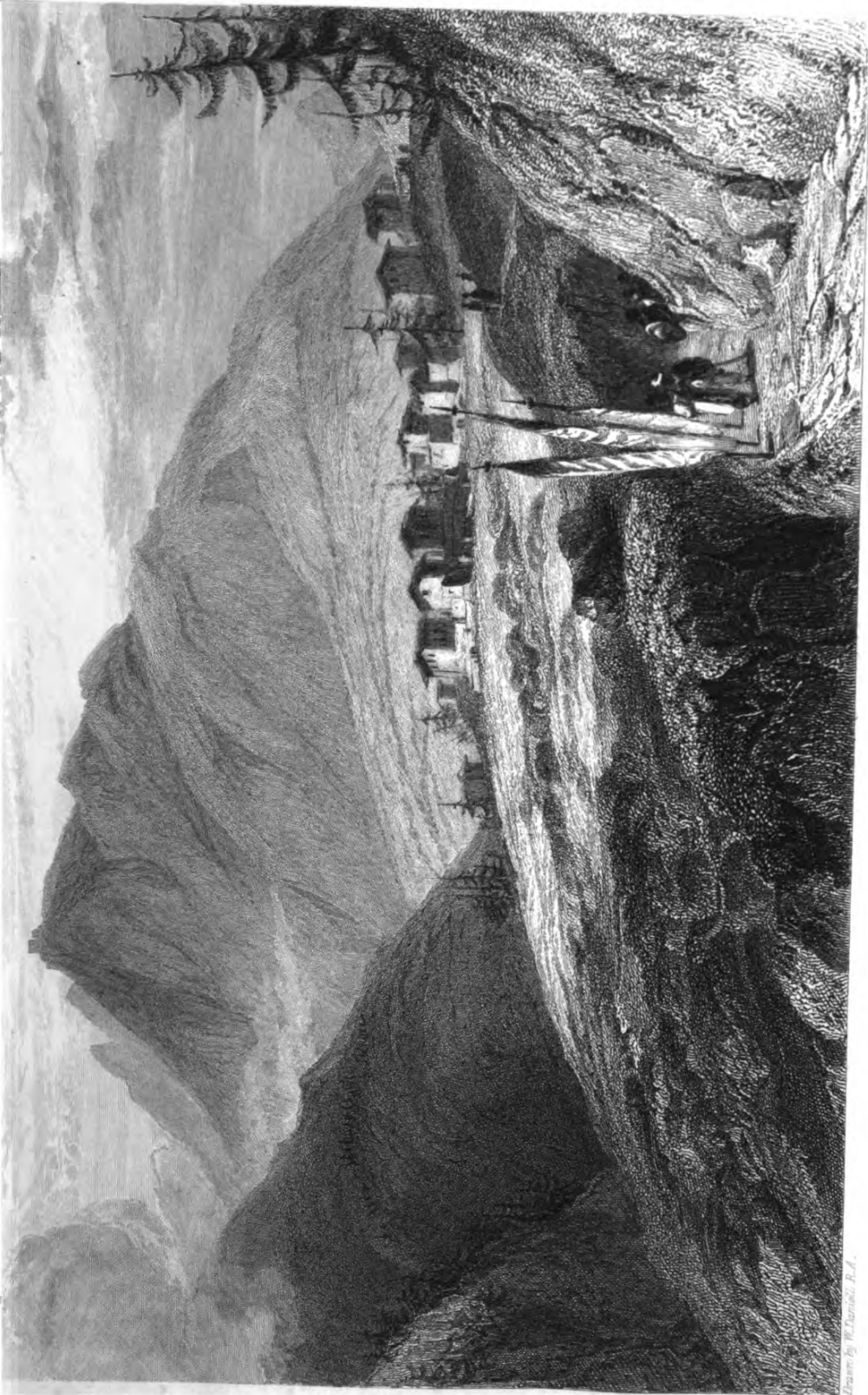
fice to the dreadful torments they endured, he had attained so extraordinary a degree of sanctification, as to be endued with the power of separating his soul from his body. In consequence of this marvellous capability, it was his occasional practice to transport his spirit from the clay in which it was imprisoned, to the regions of everlasting light, where the Suras¹ dwell in undisturbed tranquillity amid gardens of eternal bloom and fragrance, in Indra's heaven. This power is a privilege conferred upon the Suniassi, and upon him alone, by the gods, as the meed of corporeal endurance undertaken upon this condition; and it was exercised by the saintly potentate whenever he felt disposed to give his poor emaciated body a respite from the torments of peculiar infliction.

¹ An order of beneficent spirits.

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT twenty coss, or forty English miles, from the capital of the Suniassi's dominions, in a mountainous part of the country, was a village, which had no other claim to distinction than its locality, being situated amid a cluster of hills, at the base of a peak which towered above it into the clouds. It lay betwixt the capital and the jungle, where the regal penitentiary used to retire to his penances and to his prayers. In many places the ascent of these hills was difficult, and even dangerous, most of the deep gullies being crossed by a single plank, and the road winding occasionally so near the edge of a precipice as to afford scarcely footing to the traveller, and almost impracticable to any animal save those quadrupeds of the mountains, whom habit and natural organization have rendered capable of traversing regions inaccessible by human foot.

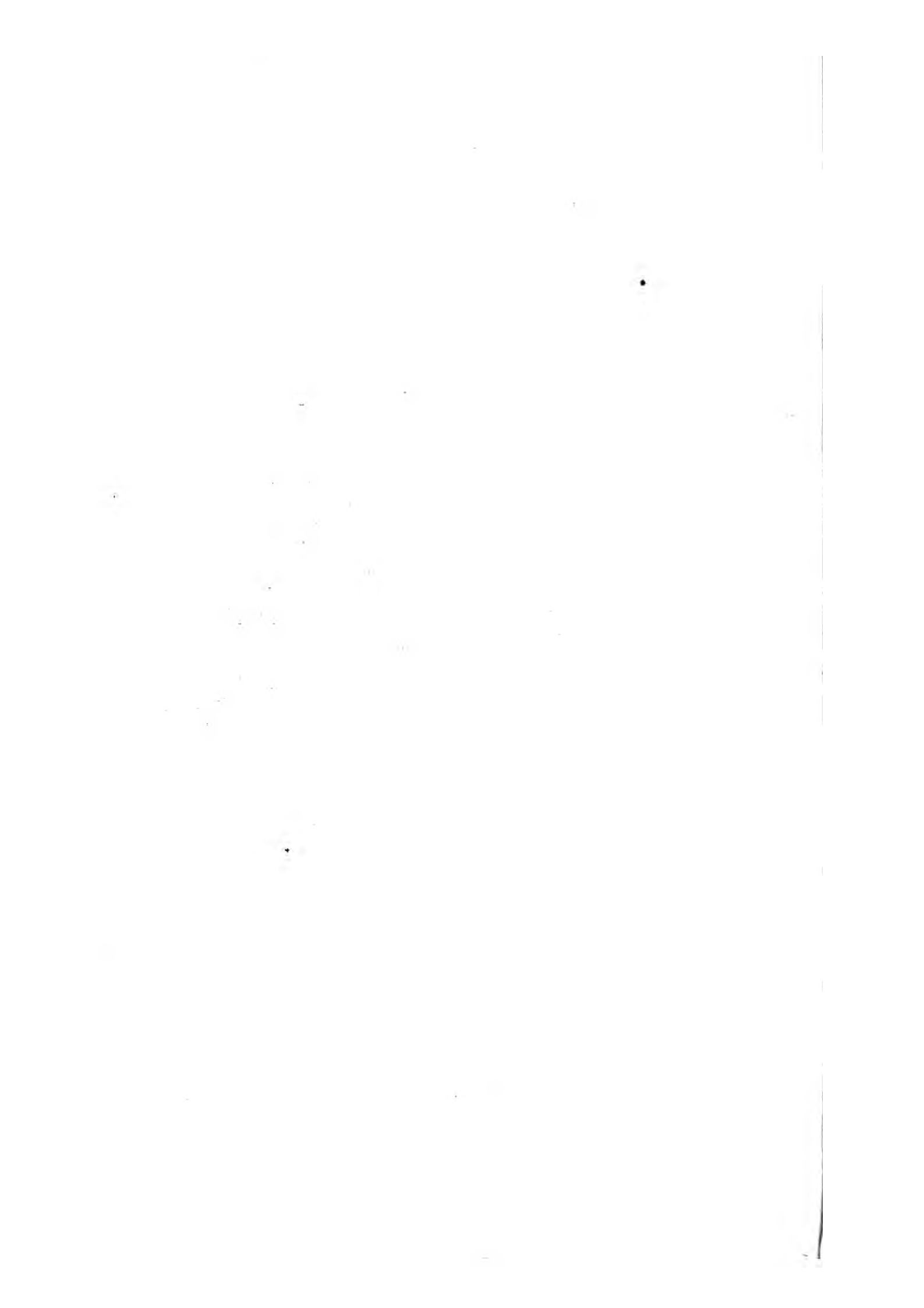
The village was a general scene of misery, being inhabited solely by a tribe of Pariahs, who lived in wretched huts, several families crowding together under one roof, frequently enduring the severest miseries of destitution, aggravated by the deepest abjection. Though some of them enjoyed rather a better condition of temporal ease, yet all were poor,



Engraved by T. Agnew

VIEW OF MOUNTAIN TOWN
FROM THE GREAT CANYON

Drawn by W. H. Johnson, R.A.



and, what was far worse, socially degraded. Their huts were built of wood, having two stories, the lower story being tenanted by whatever animals might be the property of the occupants, and sometimes by those worse-conditioned Pariahs, who had no better prospect of obtaining a meal than the carrion which occasionally lay scattered on the mountain side,—the refuse of the vulture's or of the jackal's banquet.

Among the inhabitants of this mountain hamlet was a man of middle age, who had an only daughter, a beautiful and interesting girl of fifteen¹. Though the sun had darkened her cheek, by nature of a deep yet clear brown, it had imparted brightness to her eye, and, being accustomed to exercise her healthy and elastic limbs upon the hill side, or in the smiling valley in which the mountains terminated below, she had acquired a buoyancy of gait and activity of movement, which, in her, was far more graceful than the studied gesticulations of the light-heeled nautch-girl, whose elegance of motion and grace of attitude, in the luxuriant dance of the East, calls forth alike the admiration of princes and the acclamations of the vulgar.

Mariatally was the pride of the village, but much more so of her only surviving parent, who found in her not merely a beautiful but an obedient daughter. Her affections had been sought by several young Pariahs of her native hamlet : she had hitherto turned a deaf ear to the entreaties of all, determined to remain

¹ It must be borne in mind that a Hindoo girl of fifteen is a perfect woman.

unmarried, and enjoy the blessings of freedom, rather than unite her fortunes with any one who should be excluded from the natural rights of humanity.

It happened that Youghal, during one of his visits to the jungle with his sovereign, whom, as I have said, he usually attended when the latter retired thither to his mortifications, met the Pariah's daughter, and, while his master had retired to a secluded part of the mountain, to perform some secret rite of his religion, he entered into conversation with the lovely maiden, the theme of universal praise among the mountaineers, and an object every way worthy of it. Youghal was a strong, well-made, handsome fellow, smart, merry, and facetious, and, though a slave, the confidential attendant of a man who was at once a prince and a Suniassi,—the highest of all earthly distinctions in the estimation of a Hindoo. He was not only treated with kindness by his pious master, but even his sovereign's queen and nephew acted towards him as one who, having secured the good opinion of so great a saint, deserved attention, and even respect, from all persons in the confidence of that holy being.

Youghal was struck with the sprightly conversation and lively beauty of the young Pariah. He saw in her something very much above the ordinary girls of her class, and was animated with a new feeling of admiration for the sex, unknown to him until now. The girl's father occupied one of the most respectable huts in his native village, carrying on the occupation of a charcoal-burner in the jungle, which extended from the base of the hills over the neigh-

bouring country to a considerable extent. Here the means of existence were supplied to many a laborious parent from the thick growth of the forest, which for ages had not been cleared by the industry of man.

Whenever the devotee visited the jungle, his attendant, who, after his acquaintance with Mariataly, always made some excuse for accompanying him, took the opportunity of renewing his intercourse with the beautiful outcast, when he never failed to pour into her inexperienced but willing ear the grateful accents of attachment which had already warmed his heart towards this interesting highland maiden. Frequent communications naturally begot mutual confidence; and, ere long, Youghal revealed to his lovely favourite what he was in the habit of witnessing in the cavern, to which his master so frequently retired for the purpose of torturing his body for the better purification of his soul.

The saint had not the slightest suspicion that his slave would, under any circumstance, so far forget the respect due to him, as one not only favoured but respected even by the superior divinities, and, at the same time, the certain degradation which such a forfeiture of confidence must of necessity entail upon himself, as to conclude a matrimonial alliance with a Pariah. Indeed, the possibility of such a contingency had never for an instant entered into the abstracted mind of the heaven-doomed monarch. Youghal, however, considering that he was secure from discovery, knowing the over-credulous and unobserving character of his master, did not deny himself the pleasure of meeting Mariataly whenever he accompanied his royal patron to

the forest cavern,—always imparting to her the precise nature of the Suniassi's devotions, so far as he was permitted to witness them.

Occasionally, —but these acts were rare, and performed with the greatest secrecy,—the kingly devotee would avail himself of his peculiar capability of disengaging his soul from his body, and continue for days together in the other world, enjoying all the delights of the celestial paradise, leaving his royal carcase to the care of his faithful slave,—for he imagined him to be so in the highest degree,—who, upon these occasions, used to abandon it to the vermin, which disrespectfully covered it with filth and slime, whilst the unworthy guardian enjoyed, without interruption or suspicion, the society of the earthly object of his idolatry. The soul of his master, when enjoying such temporary release from its earthly prison, became utterly unconscious of what was passing in this gross world. Youghal, therefore, did just as he pleased, with impunity, neglecting his duty, that of guarding the royal body, satisfied that he was perfectly secure from suspicion. His whole time was spent at the hamlet on the hill; and though the accommodation afforded him there was not such as he had been accustomed to in his sovereign's palace, still it was better than he often found when absent from the capital in attendance upon that sovereign, during his seasons of sequestration from the world. The slave's absence was not felt by the queen, because she supposed him engaged with the most sanctified monarch of his time, and whom she had no doubt would be eventually ranked among the seven cele-

brated penitents¹ who have been canonized by Hindoo superstition.

For more than two years these visits to the mountain village were enjoyed by Youghal, whenever the opportunity recurred; and they became at length so essential to his happiness, that he was never easy when absent. Fortunately the saint whom he served was too much abstracted by his rigid devotions to observe any striking change in his domestic, whom he continued to treat with great kindness, and, if possible, with increased confidence; for although it generally happened that, during the intervals of examination, his body became squalid with filth, being covered with the slime of the toad and the cobra di capello, yet as these were both hallowed objects, and much venerated by all pious Hindoos,—the cobra² especially,—he was rather gratified to find that, during the migration of his soul, its fleshly tenement had been preserved from profane contact by the sacred exudations of creatures revered even by gods, and subjects, therefore, of human adoration. Thus the very negligence of the servant procured increased kindness from the master, and this caused the former to encourage those besetting impulses of his nature, which it was much more agreeable in his estimation to indulge than to mortify.

¹ Among the Hindoo saints, who are ranked with their gods, there are seven especially celebrated, whom they call the seven Rishis, or penitents; their names are Casyapa, Atri, Bharadwaja, Gautama, Viswamitra, Jamadagni, and Vasishta.

² The cobra di capello snake is universally venerated by the natives of Hindostan.

Upon one occasion, whilst the spirit of the holy man was among the Suras, Youghal sought the mountain village. Here he was, as usual, when no longer restrained by the presence of the penitentiary whom he served, passing his time with the sprightly Mariataly. To her he expressed the great desire he felt to become acquainted with the words of that mystic prayer, called the mandiram, at the utterance of which the soul of his master quitted the flesh that confined it to this world of trouble and painful vicissitude, and took its flight above the stars.

“ Can't you listen,” inquired the anxious girl, “ and note down his words ?”

“ No. He mutters the potential mantra¹ so inaudibly, that none but disembodied spirits can catch the sound ; I therefore despair of being able to make myself master of his secret.”

“ Never despair while opportunity supplies the chance of success. You may be a good deal nearer Paradise than you imagine.”

“ I have no doubt upon the subject ; for while you are before me, I am not only near but actually in Paradise.”

“ Why, Youghal, one would think that the holy man to whom your life is devoted in service, had taught you to extract honey out of the bitters of his earthly torments.”

¹ A mantra is an imprecatory incantation. It is generally composed of a passage from the Veda (the inspired volume of the Hindoos), in which the names of some tremendous deity occur. The Hindoos, and indeed the Mohammedans likewise, have great faith in the efficacy of propitiatory incantations, and great dread of such as have a tendency to provoke malevolent influences. See *Moor's Hindoo Pantheon*, page 402.

“ No, Mariataly; you have taught me to extract the honey, and I am longing to taste it.”

“ Nay, but you may be cloyed, and then you will prefer the bitter to the sweet.”

“ In that case I must lose all perception of the better, and, like a dull simpleton, cleave to the worse.”

“ Suppose, now,” asked the pretty Pariah, with a sly smile, “ you could get a peep into the Swerga, would you, upon your return, tell me all the delightful things you saw there? No, no; I have scarcely faith enough in you yet to take assurance of your constancy from your professions. You would, it is more than likely, fall in love with one of the Suras in the guise of a celestial maiden, and altogether abandon me.”

“ No, bibi¹; that’s just as likely as that I should prefer mere perfume to a water-melon. My master is a lover of spiritual creations, but they are above my deserving—I don’t covet their society. Don’t be jealous; for even if I should ever manage to get above the skies before death shall appear on his mission to transport me there, I am sure to come down again.”

“ Because, I suppose, you are too wicked to remain in such good company.”

“ Not so, sweetheart; but because there is better attraction below for a poor slave like me, who is desperately in love with the prettiest Pariah maiden within a circle of fifty coss². ”

¹ Bibi is a term equivalent to wench, used as an expression of endearment, or lady.

² The coss is about two miles.

“ It would be good-bye to the pretty Pariah, I fear, should you ever chance to find yourself among the divinities. You know there are no delectable bowers in the Swerga reserved for the outcast. Pariahs are not admitted to the possession of those joys reserved for the privileged castes, and denied to the degraded. Naraka¹ must be their doom when the spirit abandons their bodies to the vultures. Ours is a dull prospect in that far land of dim futurity, of which death holds the seal of admission.”

“ Nay, don't despair, bibi ; your presence will convert the lowest abyss of Naraka into a Swerga bower, and thus achieve a triumph of which Indra himself might be proud.”

“ Is this jesting a fair sample of your truth ? If your love is of a piece with it, I have very little security for its outlasting the season.”

“ Nay, I am satisfied you have no more doubt of my love than of my making one of the best husbands on this side of the mighty Ganges.”

“ If you don't make a better husband than the generality of our tribe, I had better remain under my own protection for the rest of my days. You have seen sufficient of our domestic condition to be convinced that Pariah wives are the most miserable of women.”

“ I swear to thee, Mariataly, not upon the oath of a slave, but upon the credit of the confidential domestic both of a king and saint, that I love thee better than the paradise whither I confess I am rather

¹ The fifth of the Hindoo hells. Naraka signifies the region of serpents.

anxious to accompany my most holy master on one of his spiritual journeys to the world above."

" Well, then, if you are really so anxious to take your leave of this world for a season, you have only to get at the secret of quitting it without calling upon death to lend you his assistance, and the matter is settled at once."

" Ay, but there's the difficulty ; the Suniassi is too cunning to part with his mystery : how to obtain it by stealth requires both thought and management. I must watch him closely, or I shall never go on a journey to the stars in this life."

" Will you promise me, and the promise must be ratified by a solemn vow, that, should you take a journey to the upper world, you will communicate to me all you see there upon your return ?"

" Depend upon me. Adieu for the present. One kiss ;—we meet again to-morrow, when I may have better news for one who loves a bit of gossip as dearly as a kid loves the mother's milk."

Youghal was transported with the playful good humour and ready intelligence of the fascinating Pariah. He really loved her fondly, as he had fully persuaded himself she entertained towards him a simple but earnest affection. His visits were daily repeated until the period of his master's penances had expired, when he returned with him to the capital. Nevertheless, amid the splendours of the palace, and surrounded as he was by every thing calculated to captivate his senses, the enamoured slave thought of nothing but the beauty of the mountain villager, whom he determined to marry at the first convenient

opportunity, though, as he knew such a marriage would excite the severe indignation of his sovereign, it was a matter of extreme uncertainty when the desired opportunity might occur.

Mariataly was no less anxious that the time should arrive when she might claim the protection of the man she loved; for she not only desired to be removed from the society of an outcast and degraded tribe, but encouraged a faint hope of seeing herself recognized as a being fitted to hold communion with the best among her fellow-creatures.

CHAPTER IV.

Not long after the return of Veramarcken, for this was the name of the regal fanatic, it became evident to his obsequious slave that he meditated one of his aerial journeys out of the body, as his penances had of late been extremely rigid, it being his invariable practice to torture himself with more than usual severity whenever he determined to pay a visit to the gods of his idolatry in their own celestial habitations.

Veramarcken at length commanded his obedient menial to prepare for a journey to the cavern, and to provide a horse, in order that the fatigue of travelling might not impair his strength, and thus render him less fit to endure the additional penance which, upon this occasion, he was resolved to undergo. On the day named by the saint he set forward with his confidential slave, who rode behind his master upon the crupper of a small tattoo¹, until they reached the hills amid which the Pariah village was situated, when they were obliged to dismount and lead the pony, in consequence of the difficulty and frequent peril of the route. The passes were occasionally so narrow

¹ A native pony.

that it required the greatest caution to maintain a footing.

When the travellers had reached a certain elevation, they had to descend an abrupt declivity, at all times held to be dangerous, even by the practised mountaineer. After turning a projecting angle of the hill, the sheer side of the precipice presented itself, in which was a dark cleft, as if the entire body of the mountain had been split by some mighty convulsion of nature. Across this chasm a rude bridge had been thrown, consisting of three planks fastened to piles driven horizontally into the sides of the hill. This bridge sloped considerably, which rendered it a matter of much difficulty to get the horse across; but on reaching the end of the platform, or scaffolding, for this it much more resembled than a bridge, the difficulty was greatly increased. Here the descent became perilous in the extreme, being almost perpendicular to a depth of twenty feet. In order to render the descent practicable, a number of steps had been cut out of the solid rock; but they slanted so little out of the perpendicular, that it was not without much cautious management that the tattoo was prevented, and this entirely by the superior strength and dexterity of Youghal, from falling headlong over the precipice. This impediment being at length overcome, the remainder of the journey became comparatively easy; and the travellers reached the cavern without any further obstacle, to the great but suppressed joy of Veramarken, and to the equal satisfaction of his slave.

Whilst the Suniassi was engaged at his penance, Youghal took care to enjoy himself as well as his

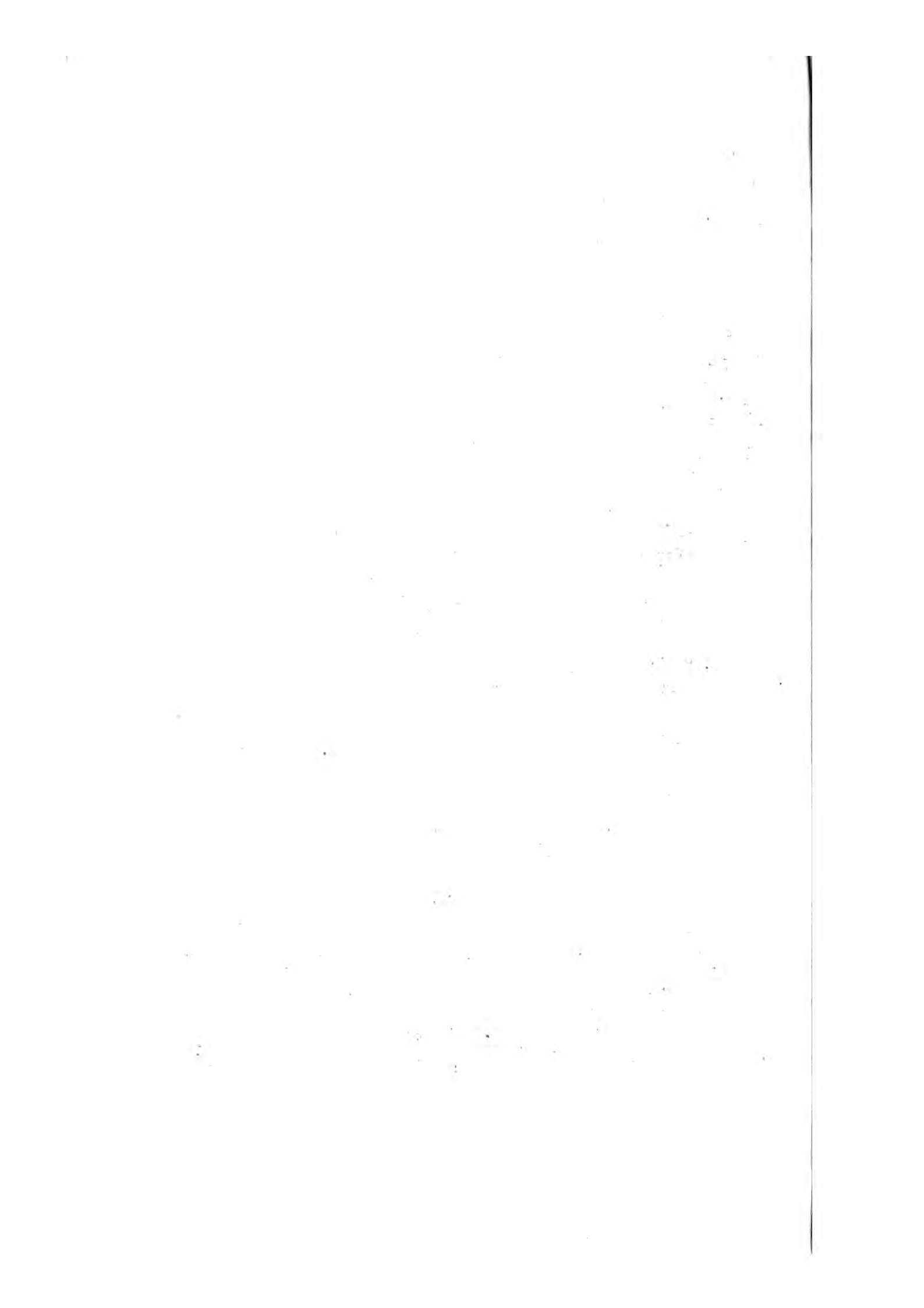


Drawn by W. Daniell, R.A.

Engraved by W. Hill.

The Staircase

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solitude would permit, being supplied with as much as he could conveniently eat and drink at the cost of his master, who never stinted his dependants, though he mortified his own body to the last degree. For several days he continued in the cavern, and only allowed himself a few grains of rice at sunset, washing them down with a single mouthful of fetid water, which had been conveyed from the Ganges at least two months previously, and which was considered spiritually efficacious in proportion to its foulness. He sat hour after hour absorbed in holy meditation, having given orders to his attendant not to appear within the cavern, the hallowed scene of his stern devotion, for at least seven days.

This order at once confirmed Youghal in the supposition that his master meditated a flight to the upper world, which determined him to discover, if possible, the secret of Veramarken's spiritual manumission ; but if he should fail in making this discovery, to leave the exanimated body to the reptiles, and pass the time of its mysterious disunion at the mountain village with the object of his best affections.

Imagining the day preceding that to which Veramarken had limited his attendant's entrance into the consecrated cave would probably be the one on which he would disunite body and soul, for the purpose of allowing the latter a flight to the Swerga, Youghal, on the sixth morn, stole stealthily into the sacred retreat of his sovereign, unobserved by the holy penitent, who was at that moment subjecting himself to one of those so-called religious inflictions almost too dreadful for physical endurance. The place was

wrapped in solemn gloom, except one corner of the cavern, where a sickly taper, formed of a reed enveloped in flax and dipped in cocoa-nut oil, diffused a faint glimmer that extended not many feet beyond the spot in which it was fixed. The place was only fit to form the lair of the hyena, or to be a sanctuary for the fox-bat. It was so low, as scarcely to afford room for a man of ordinary stature to stand upright. From the roof and sides of the cave sharp masses of rock projected, covered with a green coat of slimy matter, clammy and cold to the touch, and offensive to the smell. The floor was strewn with the accumulated incrustations of years, which rolled under the naked feet, and rendered the slightest movement insecure. Every part of the vault was blackened to the very darkest hue by the smoke of the solitary taper which now faintly illumined its gloomy recesses; and the whole aspect of the place was such as to inhibit the visitation of any thing under the form of humanity.

The royal penitent was too much absorbed in his devotions to observe the entrance of Youghal, who advanced softly into the dungeon, where he could witness, unperceived, what was going on. Having seated himself upon the damp and slippery earth, he awaited the issue of a scene which he expected would terminate in his master's temporary ascent to Indra's paradise.

The Suniassi was lying on his back; underneath his spare emaciated form was an iron frame, covered with spikes about an inch long, sufficiently sharp to irritate severely without puncturing the skin. Upon

these he lay, muttering certain mantras of mystical import, whilst his body was racked by inexpressible pangs; still he disdained to utter a cry. On the contrary, he expressed his grateful satisfaction at the ease with which the gods of his idolatry, whom he served with a proud devotion, had blessed him. His eyes were fixed upon the roof of the cavern with a stare of painful intensity; and his flesh seemed to quiver, as if expressing a kind of mute horror at the severity of the torture to which it was subjected: his fingers were pressed firmly against the palms of each hand; and his neck, stretched to its utmost elongation, exhibited every fibre of the anatomical structure with so revolting a distinctness, that the only human witness of this degrading fatuity of superstition felt a thrill of painful disgust creep through his frame, as he cast his eyes upon the haggard and deluded object before him.

Youghal listened with anxious impatience to catch the words of the mysterious mandiram, which he knew the royal fakeer must utter before his spirit could be released from the encumbrance of emaciated flesh to which it was doomed to be imprisoned in this state of bitter probation, for an everlasting destiny of fruition among beatified spirits in the bowers of Indra's heaven. No intelligible sound, however, met the slave's ear. He was mortified at his repeated disappointments; nevertheless, he had learned sufficient philosophy to feel satisfied that the exercise of patience is the best, and indeed the surest mode of triumphing over the greatest difficulties which may oppose the immediate consummation of our hopes.

The Suniassi did not cease to invoke his idols in a tone so utterly unintelligible, that the disappointed but still anxious listener began, at length, to despair of catching a word. Nothing but a confused murmur reached his ear; and his vexation was becoming extremely painful to repress.

Veramarken continued to mutter his devout aspirations, and the balked intruder had, by this time, abandoned the thought of realizing his expectation, so long and ardently encouraged. Hour after hour passed on; still the saint did not raise himself from his bed of torture. He seemed to cling to the iron frame upon which his enfeebled body was writhing in suppressed, indeed, but actual agony, as if it were at once the cause and instrument of superlative, nay, of ecstatic enjoyment. Sometimes, by his deep and hollow breathing, he appeared to have sunk into an unquiet slumber in the midst of his torments; but the mutterings were so soon resumed, that the interval of repose, if obtained, could have been only of the shortest possible duration. Youghal had never before, during the whole period of his servitude, endured so severe a trial of his patience.

CHAPTER V.

THE slave having long and patiently waited in hopes of becoming master of the secret that would enable him to take an aerial flight above the sun, but not receiving the desired communication, resolved at length to quit the cavern, and leave his master to his painful reveries. On putting his head beyond the entrance, however, he found that the rain was falling copiously; he therefore determined to remain until the shower should abate, preferring the gloom of a dry shelter, though a very disagreeable one, to a certain drenching, although with a prospect of meeting the sprightly Mariataly. He began to while away the time, that lagged heavily, by giving all the encouragement in his power to the suggestions of hope, now crowding upon his mind like motes in the sunbeam, which the mountain mist has embraced with its prismatic wings; but he soon grew tired of these visionary imaginings, and longed for the company of his beloved, to dissipate the melancholy already oppressing his spirits as with the influence of a malignant exhalation. There did not, however, appear any immediate probability of release from a situation with which, though he had been

long familiar, was on the present occasion more than usually painful.

The winds were already beginning to lift their voices, and a darker gloom was rapidly mantling the heavens. The sun had withdrawn his shining; the air felt loaded with vapour—it was thick and murky. Every moment the obscurity increased, until the dismal glimmering of the solitary taper within the cave was a relief from the external dreariness with which the whole face of nature appeared to be invested.

The lightning now flickered lightly, at intervals, from the heavy purple clouds in which it had been long pent, and the thunder growled audibly in the distance. This was altogether a grievous disappointment to the anxious attendant, who was becoming every instant more dissatisfied with his vigil. There was, however, no opposing the fiat of Omnipotence, which had evidently gone forth, and he had, therefore, no alternative but to wait patiently until the tempest should subside. Retiring with much reluctance into the innermost recesses of the cave, in the obscurity of which he knew himself to be perfectly concealed from the penitent's observation, he determined there to await the issue of the threatening storm, which soon assumed a more fearful aspect, and rendered a visit to the Pariah that evening an enjoyment no longer to be hoped for.

The rain now fell in streams, hissing through the air and ploughing up the parched earth with the violence and force of a cataract. The lightning blazed round the whole vault of heaven, hanging upon the skirts of the clouds, which were charged with ele-

mental ammunition, and appeared every moment to be rent asunder by some invisible concussion, and to pour forth their central fires, which expanded with inconceivable velocity as they quitted their aerial prison, wrapping the whole firmament in one vast sheet of living flame. The thunder rolled and burst in a rapid succession of explosions, so loud and deafening that it seemed to the appalled slave as if the artillery of the skies were opened against this lower world by the incensed deities, whom the wickedness of mankind had roused to sudden retribution. Youghal's terrors were so great that he began to cast his thoughts back upon the past, and trace the lapses of his past life. The gloom and solemnity of the objects before him tended to quicken this mental survey. His conscience quickly showed him that he was not yet by any means a fit subject for the other world, and he quite made up his mind to think no more of possessing the secret of temporary exanimation, fearing that if his spirit once quitted its prison-house of healthy and luxurious flesh, it would be seized by the Asuras¹, and kept in bonds that would gall everlastingly, and detain him through eternity within the molten atmosphere of Lohangaraka².

The din of elemental conflict had by this time become so great as entirely to drown the ejaculations of the holy man, whose voice increased with the tempest, and whose prayers rose in power and vehe-

¹ An order of malignant spirits.

² Lohangaraka signifies hot burning souls, and is the lowest of the twenty-one hells of the Hindoos.

mence in proportion to the tumult without; nevertheless, he did not move from his position of prostrate humiliation, but crossed his arms over his breast, occasionally placing his fingers upon his forehead, in token of profound devotion. The perspiration rolled from his temples in torrents, yet not a single expression of agony escaped his lips.

Youghal felt not the slightest pity for the sufferer, whom he now pretended to look upon as a mere pious madman, though he knew that this sanctified enthusiast occasionally went upon a visit to heaven; and did not hesitate to wish him fifty times in the cow's mouth¹, through which the Ganges pours its fertilizing stream over the hills of Himalaya, and thence through the Gangetic plain into the sea. He dared not stir, lest the sovereign fakeer should be made conscious of his propinquity,—a discovery which might expose him to something worse than either stripes or imprisonment; for although his master was a very indulgent one, under the impression that he was rewarding the fidelity of a worthy dependant, yet, had his suspicions been once roused, he would have had no more mercy upon the body of his menial than he had upon his own. Fortunately for the slave, though the lightning was so vivid, that when it flashed into the cavern it rendered every object for the moment distinctly visible, the position of his master, who lay flat upon his

¹ A rock in the Himalaya mountains, in which is an opening, something like the mouth of a cow, and long supposed to be the source of the Ganges.

back, prevented him from seeing any thing but the roof immediately above him, upon which he fixed his glassy eyes with devout intensity, as if gazing upon the sanctuary about to be entered by his soul as a temporary visiter. Youghal consequently escaped that notice dreaded by him far more than thunder and lightning,—though he dreaded both sufficiently,—and which would certainly have been attended with such severe castigation as might have scored his shoulders for the rest of his days ;—for although the Suniassi permitted his confidential servant to attend him to the cavern upon ordinary occasions, he nevertheless always forbade his immediate presence whenever he was about to perform those mysterious rites and piaculary inflictions that invariably preceded his separation of body and spirit for one of those visits to the other world, which he was exceedingly fond of taking, both by way of relaxation from the rigid discipline of his ascetic life, and in order to form an acquaintance with Indra and his blessed community, before he should finally be exalted, and for ever, to the highest condition among them.

After some hours, the tempest having subsided, the cavern was left to its original gloom and silence, only interrupted by the mantras of the holy man, now heard with fearful and appalling distinctness. His lips quivered, and his teeth clenched, with the spiritual agony of the afflatus under which he was labouring. He rolled himself upon the iron bed, as if to ascertain whether the spikes were still in contact with his body—for this seemed to be utterly insensible of pain. On a sudden the fanatic

raised his meagre frame from its recumbent position, and, throwing himself prostrate upon the bare earth, repeated deliberately, and with an audible utterance, the mystical and potential mandiram. The menial's ear drank in every word as it fell from his master's lips. He thus became possessed of the secret of dispossessing his body of its spiritual occupant, and of taking a journey to the regions of everlasting glory—a privilege which had accrued to his master and sovereign after nearly a life spent in exercising the severest discipline of self-denial and bodily infliction.

No sooner had the Suniassi uttered the potent incantation, than his soul was on its way to the Swerga. His body remained upon the natural floor of the cavern, without either motion or consciousness. Youghal turned it over and over, to make himself sure that it was without a soul, and soon satisfied his anxious mind that it was nothing more than a lump of senseless flesh. The principle of life, however, remained, for the pulse sensibly throbbed, and the breath came feebly, though there was no other sign of animation. Here was, at length, presented the opportunity so long sought by the slave. He had the power of emancipating himself from the trammels of humanity, and of paying a visit to the divinities whom he professed to worship. He felt by no means easy. Quitting this world was to him altogether such a novelty, that he could not immediately reconcile himself to the thought of undertaking a journey out of the body, for the sake of satisfying a mere idle curiosity. This curiosity was like a giant within him: he could not control it. His

bosom expanded under its influence, and his heart throbbed with painful acceleration. He was, nevertheless, repelled by his fears from uttering the awful words which had rendered his master a visiter of the omnipotent Indra. Should he likewise avail himself of his newly-acquired power, and travel in the spirit to the unknown world? This was an extremely serious question. He did not know precisely how to answer it, as he had many and strong misgivings. How should he face the inhabitants of the celestial paradise, if he appeared in their presence without having undergone the necessary penances of propitiation? They might expel him from those abodes which had never yet been profaned by the presence of an unclean spirit, and cast him down to the obscurity and torments of the dreadful Maha-raurauva¹. How should he meet his master in such company as he must be enjoying in Indra's heaven, sanctified by the austere devotions of a whole and sufficiently long life, and thus rendered fit, even before death, for intercourse with celestial society! He had too much reason to fear that a menial who had spent all his days in merriment and good living, would be looked upon as an intruder into the heavenly presences, among whom there was nothing but innocent pleasure, except upon certain occasions where the immunities procured by terrestrial penances allowed of particular indulgences, which would be looked upon

¹ Maha-raurauva is the third of the twenty-one Hindoo hells, and signifies most dreadful.

as heinous offences, if practised by any but those thus specially privileged; for in the profane heaven of Hindoo superstition, the frailties of humanity are sometimes mixed up with the enjoyments peculiar to spiritual intelligences.

Having balanced all these and sundry other particulars carefully in his mind, Youghal, in spite of the yearnings of curiosity, came finally to the conclusion, that he had better for the present keep the secret of which he had become so fortunately possessed to himself, and use it hereafter as occasion might warrant. Upon casting his eyes, however, on the attenuated frame of his master, it suddenly occurred to him, that if he were to utter the mysterious words which would instantly disengage his essence from the dross of clay by which it was encumbered, he might, in place of aspiring to explore the regions above the firmament, and these he did not feel much ambition at present to survey, cause it to enter the unconscious trunk of the regal Suniassi, and thus advance himself to the dignity of immediate sovereignty, instead of continuing in the humiliating capacity of a bondman. He was transported at the idea, his brain grew dizzy with rapture, and, under the excitement of ambitious anticipations, he pronounced the awful mandiram. He had no sooner ended the form of incantation than a sickness overcame him, a palsy seized his limbs, they gradually became powerless, his head drooped, his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, his eyes closed, and his spirit, after a severe but brief paroxysm, was disengaged, and transfused

into the inanimate form of his master. The latter being now endued with consciousness, its physical powers were restored, and, rising from the earth, the soul of a menial gave animation to the body of a king.

CHAPTER VI.

YOUGHAL was for a moment astonished at his sudden transformation ; but quickly recovering himself, he looked upon his own vile carcass, and spurned it with contempt.

“ Well,” said he aloud, knowing there was no one present to overhear him, “ I venture to say this is the last time the body which now incarcerates my soul shall lie upon spikes. No more starvings, mortifications, and agonies in a jungle cavern ! What a change shall be wrought in the dominions of Veramar-ken the saint ! He will wear a jewel in his turban, instead of encasing his sapient head in a greasy skull-cap, unctuous with the sacred exudations of years of pious self-abasement and righteous penance. The Suniassi will henceforward grow fat, or Youghal’s love of good feeding must greatly abate with his exaltation—of which, however, the present sharpness of his appetite does not warrant the expectation. All penance shall be foreclosed for the time to come, and I warrant me the dignities of a prince will be much better enjoyment than the devout discipline of starvation and cold iron. What will the subjects of the sovereign saint think when they see their monarch get rid of his leanness, cast off his slough like the

lithe snake, and grow at once into comeliness and rotundity? It is of no use for them to expect that I shall be continually with my bare forehead upon the earth, and with a few grains of parched rice in my belly, as though I were anxious to become so transparent that the sunlight should make its way through my frame, as if it were a mere lump of flattened crystal. I would have it as opaque as the trunk of a teak tree, and as sound into the bargain. Now for royalty and the society of a beautiful queen for the rest of my days! May my master long continue to enjoy a paradise above the clouds, while I content myself with enjoying his paradise below them."

The counterfeit monarch almost lost his wits when he found himself so suddenly transmuted from a slave to a sovereign. He could scarcely trust his senses. He reeled under the weight of rapturous anticipations. Had the fumes of a pint of arrack been at that moment in his brain, he could not have appeared more unlike what he had been just two minutes before. He danced round the cavern with such mad delight, that the scared bats fell about his ears, and obliged him to quit the place of his concealment, covered with foam produced by the extraordinary violence of his exertions. By way of precaution, however,—for he did not an instant lose sight of his interests, under the influence of joyous intoxication,—before quitting the place of his auspicious transformation, he took a knife from a pocket of the tunic that covered the body which his spirit had so lately quitted, and, having severed the head from the trunk, in order effectually to prevent his soul from taking up

its future abode in the corporeal tenement of a slave, he passed the night in sleepless ecstasy at the thought of his happy change, under the broad canopy of the star-studded skies.

No sooner did the grey tints of dawn tinge the lofty trees that skirted the jungle to the east, than he rose from the reeking earth, and, in defiance of rheumatism or catarrh, mounted the tattoo, and proceeded on his journey towards the palace. Before he had advanced two coss, the sun was flooding the plain through which his road lay with its early glories. As he jogged onward, a most agreeable reverie overcame him. Visions of bright things flitted before his excited imagination, and, under the transport of some happy thought, he unluckily impelled his heels so lustily into the galled flanks of the pony, that the smart caused it suddenly to raise its hind legs to a level with its ears, and cast its royal burden over them into a dry nullah¹, without doing him any other injury than slightly grazing his ribs, and depriving his nose of a minute portion of its cuticle.

Upon reaching the neighbourhood of Mariataly's abode, Youghal perceived her on the borders of a tank, accompanied by three female companions. They had evidently been performing their matutinal ablutions—a practice strictly attended to by all Hindoo women, though this did not obviate the odium of pollution which every where in India attaches to the outcast. At the sight of a stranger, and that stranger a Suniassi, the four women rushed from

¹ A watercourse.

the edge of the tank, and immediately disappeared in a neighbouring thicket.

At the base of the hill on which the highland village stood, ran a broad placid stream. Here the female population bathed themselves upon certain days, and performed other ceremonies peculiar to their creed, which indeed promised them little in this world, and less in the next—for the bliss of immortality is denied to the unhappy Pariah. Youghal knew that if he presented himself at the hamlet under his present transformation, he must at once resign all chance of meeting his beloved, as she would immediately flee at the sight of so sacred an object. He therefore determined to pass the day in the forest, and watch towards evening for the approach of Mariataly, as he felt certain she would visit the banks of the river, it being one of those days on which it became imperative on the younger women to perform certain ceremonial observances sanctioned by the custom of ages, in a running stream.

About half an hour after sunset, the fictitious Veramarken concealed himself behind a tree, a little way out of the path by which he knew the object of his love would return to her humble habitation in the mountain village. The moon rose majestically and bright above the darkening waters, over which there spread a thin mist, investing every object with a shadowy covering that imparted to it a hue of subdued beauty, relieving the intensity of the shadows flung upon the placid surface of the stream by the various projections of the landscape. The broad bright orb, which marched up to the zenith in the glory of its heavenly

radiance, was occasionally overshadowed by a passing cloud, so transparent that, like a thin veil over features of Grecian symmetry, it heightened rather than concealed the loveliness beneath, by lending an impulse to imagination, which often so pleasingly enhances the reality.

The slave-king had not been long in his place of ambush, before he observed Mariataly and her three companions approach the river side. After they had gone through those ceremonies of time and place, peculiar to the day, each took a lamp from beneath her tunic. Placing them on the bank, they filled them with oil, and, having trimmed and lighted them, launched them upon the unruffled stream. The frames of the lamps were composed of a light wicker-work, in the shape of a boat, being flat at the bottom, and containing a small earthen receptacle for the oil, out of which a wick of twisted cotton projected through a small tube.

Youghal was delighted at observing the trembling anxiety with which his beloved launched her lamp on the gentle waters, upon which there was not a ripple to disturb the perfect placidity of its repose. He knew that at this moment he was the object of her thoughts, and his heart bounded as he gazed at the interesting maiden. The lamps glided quietly down the stream, anxiously watched by those who had committed them to the uncertain and often treacherous element, until they disappeared as the current bore them beyond the reach of vision, still casting their pale light over the bright speculum on which they so quietly floated.

To the cause of this interesting ceremony, very common in Hindostan, Youghal was no stranger. He knew that the lamps were intended to represent the lovers of those superstitious yet innocent girls, who had committed them thus confidently to the stream, and who were fully impressed with the conviction, that if they gradually disappeared without becoming extinguished, their sweethearts were not only safe, but thinking tenderly of them ;—on the other hand, that if a sudden ripple of the water should overturn and quench the bright symbol of absent love, those to whom they had been betrothed were either in jeopardy, or had banished them from their faithless hearts.

On the present occasion the ceremony was perfectly propitious, and Youghal trembled with unusual delight, as he marked the intense anxiety with which the lovely Mariataly gazed at the receding emblem of her lover's constancy. He observed her occasionally turn her eyes to the broad heavens, studded with radiant stars, which seemed to twinkle in mute but expressive admiration of her beauty, while, with her hands crossed upon her bosom, she was evidently breathing a fervent prayer for his safety, who was about to belie the favourable omen which had elated her spirits and given a new impulse to her affections. She was the last to return from the scene of such affecting interest. Her companions having ascended the gaut¹, she followed them at a

¹ Gau are flights of steps on the banks of rivers in India, made the convenience of bathers.

distance, absorbed in grave but tender reflections. Youghal at length heard from his retreat the tripping step of his beloved, as she pattered with her naked feet the beaten pathway. On her nearer approach he sprang forward to meet her, but she started back as if a huge scorpion had risen before her feet. For a moment the slave had forgotten his transformation, and, actuated by an impulse of indignant surprise, he exclaimed—

“ How now, girl! why, you start from me as if I were a white man who had his unholy stomach filled with sacred beef, and made no distinction between a cow and a guana¹. Why do you shun me thus eagerly?”

“ Because you need not be told that a Pariah maiden may not come within reach of a Brahmin’s breath, and that Brahmin a Suniassi, without hazarding her own life.”

“ Ha! ha! ha!” cried the transformed menial; “ by the chuckra² of Vishnoo, that cannot be denied; but I am no Brahmin, bibi: I am Youghal your slave, though no longer a bondman. Why do you stare? Do I look like a Brahmin? If so, all the better. I am a rare counterfeit, but no true saint, as you will find when we come to be man and wife.”

Mariataly was incredulous. She imagined that the Suniassi, who, among the few unhappy outcasts residing in the immediate neighbourhood of his sacred

¹ A large lizard so called. It is, at its full size, from three to four feet long.

² The chuckra is a sort of missile discus, with which the god Vishnoo is always represented armed.

retreat,—so at least it was reported after his last ascent to the Swerga (for the greatest saints are not secure from scandal),—had become as notorious for his gallantries as for the severities of his penances, was endeavouring to tamper with her credulity, for the most undevout of purposes. Certain it is, that however undeserving Veramarken might have been of such an imputation on the purity of his sainthood, it was no uncommon thing to find members of his sacred order who, though they pretended to mortify the rebellious appetites, administered to them without stint, wearing the garland of licentiousness, while they affected to be distinguished with the crown of immortality. Mariataly, therefore, after a short pause, replied with some asperity, retreating gradually as she spoke.

“ My eyes are not yet dim, most holy Suniassi ; and I cannot mistake the spare, withered, but sacred form of the venerable Veramarken, for the round, elastic, yet gross material frame of the comely Youghal. Would you persuade me that I am unable to distinguish between the saint and the slave, when both my eyes and heart are engaged in the scrutiny ?”

“ Pah, pah, bibi, this is well enough when others are by, but we are alone, and there is no need of such reverence. I don't want your respect, but your love, Mariataly. I'm no more Veramarken than thou art Lakshmi¹, except in seeming : I'm no more nor less than thy adorer Youghal.”

“ This jesting, most reverend man of many pen-

¹ The consort of Vishnoo.

ances, is rather unbecoming thy holy functions : it certainly suits better with the light-heartedness of the slave than with the sacred gravity of the master."

" Don't take me for a saint, girl, but come to the arms of thy tenderest of adorers."

He hurried towards her ; she retreated with such activity that he could not overtake her. The severity of those tortures to which the ascetic's body had been so lately exposed, rendered it incapable of much exertion ; and its new tenant was extremely mortified to find that he could neither manifest the warmth nor energy which his feelings really prompted. The limbs were almost fleshless, the joints had become inflexible, and the muscles rigid : in short, the whole frame was out of harmony. The body of Veramar-ken was too feeble to give full expression to the youthful and buoyant passion of Youghal.

" Come, sweetheart," cried the impetuous lover, impetuous in spirit, but weak and altogether wanting in physical energy, " none of this pretended modesty ; you were not wont to be so coy, when we talked together in the grove on yonder hill."

" I never talked with you in the grove on yonder hill, nor any where else, in all my life. This jesting would be thought unbecoming even in a pariah. I wonder, then, that a devout Suniassi can practise it."

" Devout nonsense. I tell thee I'm no more a Suniassi than thou art a brahminee ; though I may venture to say, without any flattery, that I richly deserve all the privileges of the one, and thou all the devotion of the other."

" But as I do not happen to be a brahminee, and

you do happen to be a brahmin of the most sacred order, you know that the slightest personal contact with me would destroy all the effect of your long penances ; prithee, therefore, take thyself off, and leave me to my pollution."

" Don't talk so, bibi. Indra would be proud to make thee his queen." Saying this, he hobbled after her, as she retreated beyond the reach of his extended arm.

" Why am I thus persecuted ?" exclaimed the indignant girl, perceiving that the brahmin, as she imagined her withered interlocutor to be, was determined to pursue her with his disgusting love—" I feel it no honour to be distinguished by the unhalloved preference of a devotee, who values me only for my person, and looks upon my soul as abandoned to the demons of Loha-Sanku¹. You pursue me in vain, for I am determined never to listen to the love of one who, while he asserts the highest spiritual purity, indulges in the grossest and most revolting sensuality. Look elsewhere for a victim, for you will not find one in me."

Saying this she bounded forward, and was in a few moments lost amid the mazes of the forest, which her more inexperienced lover was unable to penetrate. He gazed after her with an expression of mortified surprise, but was at once made conscious, when he raised his right leg for the purpose of pursuing her,

¹ The sixteenth of the twenty-one Hindoo hells. Loha-Sanku signifies iron-pointed.

of the utter impracticability of overtaking one so nimble of foot, and so earnest of will. He fixed his eyes for a short interval on the moon, which seemed to smile in mockery at his vexation, and then threw himself under a tree, where he slept until dawn.

CHAPTER VII.

YOUGHAL was greatly mortified at the first issue of his transmutation. He became of a sudden rather disheartened, fearing that so inauspicious a commencement augured very unfavourably of the ultimate success of his elevation to kingly honours. He resolved, however, to be revenged upon the Pariah girl for having slighted his love, and, with this determination, mounting his tattoo he resumed his journey towards the capital of Veramarken. His thoughts were none of the most consoling, as he jogged pensively onward. If the rest of his career of royalty should turn out of a piece with the commencement, he would not have much reason to congratulate himself upon the acquisition of such a questionable distinction.

When the fictitious Veramarken reached his master's palace, the queen treated him with cold respect; but he, dazzled by her beauty, sprang eagerly forward to embrace her, when the stiffness of his limbs, from long and rigorous penance, caused him to stumble, and the lady's hookha happening unfortunately to be in the way, he fell over it, and measured his lean length upon the Persian rug which had been spread under it. The beautiful Maldavee, with a

grave composure of countenance which at once showed how far her veneration for the saint outstripped her love for the man, approached the Suniassi, who lay rolling on the floor, and, bending upon her knee beside him, just touching the carpet with her small delicate palms, then applying them to her forehead, in token of the profoundest reverence, she raised the counterfeit of her devout lord from his unsanctified prostration, and, having placed him upon his legs, making a second salaam, as graceful as it was profound, expressed a hope that he had sustained no mischief. The soul of Youghal was sensible of pain through the bodily organs of Veramarken; but although he felt himself very unpleasantly shaken by his fall, he nevertheless pursed up his grim features into a smile, and, throwing his arms round the queen's neck, much to her astonishment, and still more to her confusion, he kissed her with an energy which she had never before experienced from his lips. She did not receive the greeting as he expected, but reminded him that such warm demonstrations of affection were not quite consistent with the mortified life of a Suniassi.

Youghal found, to his unexpected mortification, that Veramarken and his queen had, ever since their marriage, lived more as brother and sister than as man and wife, the saint not choosing to sully the spotless purity to which he had attained,—as he pretended, at least,—by any other intercourse with his royal consort than that which every subject of his realm might enjoy, without being guilty of a crime, or incurring a reproach; and Maldavee soon made known to the

fictitious monarch, that she did not intend to alter her life of connubial self-denial, however the disposition of her august partner might have changed, since she was as proud, though married, of being still a maiden queen, as he was of being specially distinguished by intelligences dwelling above the planets. The supposed saint could not persuade her to change this determination, though he kissed her a thousand times, and pleaded with all the earnest eloquence of a man whose fervid feelings gave to his thoughts the brightest colouring of words, against a resolution which deprived his subjects of all hopes of an heir, and thus did them injustice, by subjecting them to an unlawful and impolitic privation. She was, nevertheless, deaf to persuasion, declaring that so pure and devout a man should never taint the sublime spirituality of his nature, and thus degrade the name of Suniassi, either on her account or through her means.

“ We must continue to live apart,” she said, “ as we have hitherto lived—you as a spotless devotee, I as a virgin queen. I am unfit to pair with one by whose presence the deities themselves hold that they are honoured. Leave me to my sins and defilements, and do you return to your sublime mortifications.”

“ Tut,” cried Youghal, with a squeaking levity of tone, “ I have done with mortification now ; no more tearing of my own flesh, and defrauding the natural appetite ;—no more sleeping upon a metal bed covered with flesh-hooks, in a dark cavern, with the bats for lookers on, and snakes to hiss their applause. No,

my sita¹, I am now at the very zenith of spiritual perfection—the cardinal point of bliss is reached; I therefore intend henceforward to devote my days to those innocent gratifications which I have hitherto denied myself. I shall eat and drink to the utmost amount of my heart's longing. I will spend money like a prodigal, and make gold as vulgar as copper. You shall soon see my hand at the bottom of the state coffers. Instead of this lean, withered, hungry frame, you will shortly behold a set of comely limbs encased in the fat of health, and cheeks as round and broad as the lotus-leaf, pampered into vigorous rotundity by means of an unfailing appetite and a most accommodating digestion. Come, consort, though you don't love the natural man, but only venerate the spiritual, you can nevertheless comfort me, I suppose, with a decent refection. Chuck, order me a curry of prawns, and a pilau by way of garnish, for I feel a grievous craving after so long a fast. Don't stint the measure of this first meal, for I am as empty as a toad in an old wall, the reptile having been built in with the foundation, and so doomed to a perpetual fast. I should like to fortify my stomach at the same time, for it sadly wants distending, with a draught of fine arrack distilled from the rice of Serindib²."

This was uttered with a volubility which fully confirmed the avidity of his longing after the enjoyment of a speedy meal.

The queen's amazement increased every moment at these extravagant demands of her late sanctified

¹ Sita signifies bride.

² The island of Ceylon.

husband, as she supposed the miserable object before her to be. She could not account for the change. He seemed to her possessed ; but she knew his power, and therefore feared to contradict him. The curry of prawns, the pilau, and the arrack, were accordingly laid before him, the whole of which he dispatched within the space of three minutes, devouring it with ravenous impetuosity. Her astonishment now rose to a climax. The hungry saint, observing the unusual expression of her countenance, cried with an exulting tone—

“ Is not this the way to make a lean body fat ? ”

The queen was silent, not yet daring to enter upon too close a familiarity with a man whom the gods delighted to honour.

“ Well, Maldavee,” continued the slave-king, “ don’t you think it wiser to eat, drink, and adore one’s wife, like a faithful husband, than to fast, groan, and love nothing in this world but air, penances, and the society of reptiles, in order to be allowed a visit now and then among the divinities ? ”

Maldavee hesitated to reply. She imagined that this might be nothing more than an artifice of the holy man, to try how far she was impressed with sacred awe for those austere obligations by which the Suniassi was bound. Youghal, perceiving her hesitation, said gaily—

“ Nay, don’t be under any apprehension at communicating your thoughts : I am no longer a devotee, except it be at the shrine of thy beauty.”

The queen stared. This was the first time she had ever known her husband guilty of an act of gallantry,

either in word or deed, and she began to fancy that his head had been turned by the extreme austerity of religious mortification. It would not, however, do to betray her suspicions to the holy man; therefore, instead of leading him to suppose that she considered him already more than half mad, she exclaimed, in a grave but solemn tone, and with a low salaam—

“Pride of Suniassis! Siva forbid you should so indulge the demands of a carnal appetite, after such a long course of exemplary penance, as to confound the sacred outline of that venerable figure, by puffing it out with those interdicted luxuries which destroy the spiritual angularity so becoming to the frame of a godly ascetic, and swelling it into that pursy, round, unholy shape, only befitting men of mere gross animal senses, in whom the divinities take no pleasure. What a privilege to be honoured by three hundred and thirty millions¹ of celestial intelligences!”

“Fah, fah, my sita, I have been meagre long enough to justify my infringing now those stern canons of devotion which direct the life of the Suniassi. In my last visit to the Swerga, the Suras taunted me with my leanness; and Indra has granted me a special permission to grow portly. I am determined, therefore, to stuff to my heart's content, for thy sake, bibi, as well as my own; for I am sure you must prefer a plump, healthy partner, to one whose bones constitute almost the entire unseemly aggregate of his external man.”

¹ The number of gods in the Hindoo Pantheon.

“I can have no preference, most holy Vera-
marken;—whether fat or lean, it is my duty to be
alike obedient and respectful.”

“Nay, I don't seek respect now, all that is gone
by; I want you to adore me like a little dove. I
shall never leave you any more for caverns and holy
places, for, to tell you the truth, I prefer your society
to that of the glendoveers ¹.”

“This is really very kind of you, but I am sure
you cannot have forgotten that love, except the love
of penances and self-abasement, is forbidden to the
Suniassi, and you are too holy a saint to divert to
the gross things of this world those thoughts which
have been so long employed in contemplating the
blessed delights of the world above.”

“It's all very well, queen Maldavee, to be saintly
for the sake of a reputation, but who, in the name
of the great Siva, can live upon iron spikes and
unsoddened rice, without recruiting the craving ani-
mal with a little refreshment?”

“I never heard you before talk thus profanely.
Do you forget that you are heard by all the three
hundred and thirty millions of our divinities?”

“I don't value them a kabob, sita; I have won
my prize in the next world, and am now, therefore,
determined to enjoy my pleasure in this. Why
should I cut myself off from the privileges claimed
by the meanest of my subjects? There is not even
a Chandallah in my dominions who does not eat
and drink when it pleases him, if he can get it,
and—”

¹ An order of good spirits.

“But a Chandallah and a Suniassi, you will admit, are two very different beings.”

“Yes I do admit it without the slightest demur of conscience—the one is a fool and the other a knave. But thou, fair queen, besides being the privileged consort of a man who has been honoured by the notice of omnipotent beings, art more beautiful than an elephant, more elegant than a dromedary, and sweeter than toddy¹; and I again declare to thee, that I would rather dwell in thy presence for a single day than in the Swerga for a whole month. I am more at home with thee than with those impassible dignitaries who neither know the blessings of wedded life nor the luxuries of good eating and drinking.”

The queen smiled. Although she could not account for such a signal change in the sentiments of so holy a man, and the somewhat gross tendency of his conversation, her vanity was nevertheless qualified by the extravagant compliments so unexpectedly paid to her. She held down her head, and the animated Suniassi once more embraced her with a fervour which fully satisfied her that a change had come over his spirit, as he had never before evinced such fondness. It was altogether a marvel: but though her royal consort seemed inclined to merge the sanctified husband in the privileged lover, she was determined not to alter in the slightest degree the terms of connubial intercourse upon which they had hitherto lived, however

¹ Toddy is an exudation from the palm which is drunk with great relish by the Orientals.

much the sovereign might desire it, as his reputation for immaculate abnegation and renunciation of every solicitation of sense was as dear to her as to him, and she was proud of her alliance with so spotless a being.

After this interview with Veramarken, Maldavee retired to her apartment, told her favourite maidens the strange occurrence of the morning, and having discussed the matter for some hours with an acuteness and copiousness of elocution peculiar to Hindoo matrons, came at length to the conclusion that her sainted husband was about to complete his probation—that he would shortly enter upon his metempsychosis, appear with the spiritualised body of a Sura, and in that celestial form dwell with her for the rest of her days. This was an agreeable anticipation enough, for she could not help thinking that it would be a change for the better.

CHAPTER VIII.

ALTHOUGH Youghal had for the first few hours after his return to the palace been occupied chiefly with the pleasures of feasting, and in calculating the various enjoyments in store for him, he still had not forgotten his determination to revenge himself upon the Pariah for her defection, as he was pleased to term it, forgetting that she could no longer recognize the slave Youghal under the form and lineaments of the saint Veramarken. He resolved, nevertheless, to visit her with a signal chastisement, especially as the superior charms of Maldavee had entirely effaced those impressions once excited by the less dazzling indeed, but not therefore the less attractive, beauties of Mariataly. In consequence of this determination, he ordered a dromedary to be dispatched to the mountain hamlet, and the innocent maiden to be brought before him. By the following morning her arrival was announced, and her former lover heard with delight tidings which foretold the accomplishment of his unnatural revenge.

About an hour after dawn, the unhappy girl was placed under a balcony, from which she could be

conveniently seen by Veramarken and his court, in order that her polluted frame might not taint the atmosphere breathed by the royal fakeer. As she stood trembling before the imagined potentate, in whom she recognised the man who had so lately assailed her with his vows of love, he asked her with a stern voice—"Where is Youghal?"

The trembling girl, astonished at this question, not supposing that her intimacy with the Suniassi's slave was known beyond the precincts of her native village, for she had never communicated it to a creature save her father, protested with solemn earnestness that she knew not.

"He was seen in thy company only a few days since. What has become of him?"

Again the affrighted maiden declared that she was entirely ignorant of his movements, as he had quitted her in good health after their last meeting, and she imagined he had returned to the palace of his sovereign.

"Thou wilt not confess then?" said the enraged Youghal, elevating his voice to a pitch of dissonant vehemence.

"I have nothing to confess," meekly replied the wronged Mariataly.

"Hast not thou, or have not some of thy detested tribe, murdered my slave—the most worthy and confidential of menials?"

"I am incapable of taking the life even of the meanest insect, much more incapable than am I of shedding human blood. But I trust Youghal is not dead, for I love him too well not to feel deeply at

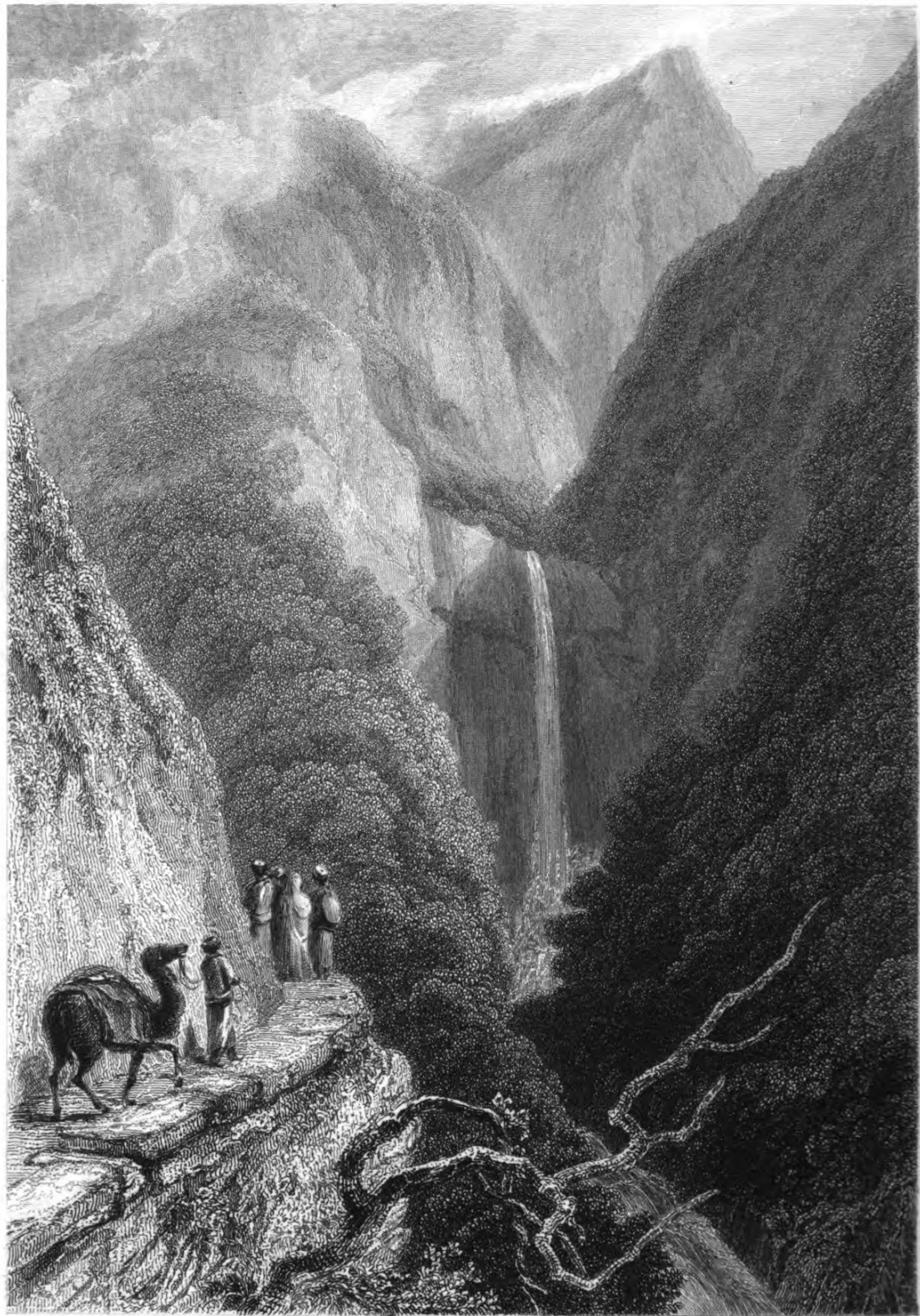
the bare possibility of such a mischance. If you only suspect him to have been murdered, I am still disposed to hope that your suspicions may prove unfounded."

The features of the mock-sovereign seemed to relax; the corners of his mouth assumed, for a moment, a less decided curve downwards, and his eyes began to twinkle; but, looking on the nobles who stood around him, his countenance resumed its sternness; his brow lowered; the point of his nose became gradually elongated; his teeth gnashed, and he cried vehemently—

"There stands the murderess of my faithful slave Youghal." Then turning to those persons who had brought her from the hamlet, he exclaimed with truculent ferocity of aspect—"Take her to the cavern in the jungle, and let her behold the mangled remains of that worthy man."

Mariataly was confounded at hearing such a direct confirmation of Youghal's death from the lips of his master, and the more so at an imputation so unequivocal of her having murdered him. She was borne rudely from the presence of her royal judge, placed again upon the back of a dromedary, and hurried to the late scene of pious penance and mysterious evocation, with the same painful dispatch with which she had been forced from her home on the preceding day.

Her journey from and to her home was one of no little peril. Some of the passes of her native hills were of the most fearful description. She was often obliged to descend from her dromedary, where the



Drawn by W. Daniell, R.A.

Engraved by J. Garmynges

Mountain Scene in the North of India.

path wound round an abrupt projection of the mountain, a horrible chasm yawning beneath, so deep that the eye could scarcely penetrate to the bottom. Peaks capped with clouds rose to a dazzling height, pouring from their naked sides cataracts which fell with a frightful rush and roar into the valleys below. Mariataly, however, was now too much occupied by her own misery to be alive to the sublimities of nature: she had no sight for external objects—her sad condition absorbed every sense.

On reaching the cavern a sight presented itself that paralyzed her with horror. There lay the headless trunk of Youghal in a state of rapid decomposition. She gazed upon it with terrified astonishment. Tears of anguish streamed down her quivering cheeks as her eye fell upon the mutilated corpse of one whom she had really loved with a fondness not at all common among Hindoo women. The cavern was filled with suffocating exhalations from the disfigured object before her, and the sickening fumes only added to the horror which swept like an inundation upon her heart. When asked if she had not murdered her lover, she again declared her innocence with that artless eloquence of truth which carries conviction to every mind unclouded by prejudice or passion; and enquired how it was possible that a feeble girl should have been able to overpower a young, strong, healthy man like him, whose livid corpse was at that moment lying at her feet under the most unsightly aspect of death.

Her appeals to those instruments of inflexible justice, by whom she was surrounded, moved not

their stony hearts: she was again placed upon the dromedary, and the putrid body of her late lover fastened to the back of the animal beside her. She sat in the abstraction of speechless grief, and was so absorbed by the agony of her sorrows as to be insensible to what was passing around her. On reaching the capital she was thrown into a dungeon, and the next morning placed again under the balcony before the inflexible spirit of her once fond Youghal: who now asked her, with savage severity of tone and manner, how she had contrived to put her victim to death.

“I am innocent,” she cried, “of a crime so revolting to humanity! I am incapable of violating, by so detestable an act, at once the dignity and natural tenderness of woman, in whose bosom the seeds of the highest virtues are lodged, where they are frequently brought to quick and affluent maturity. Besides, how should the weak overpower the strong? Some enemy has done me this wrong, for the despised Pariah has no friends.”

“Take her home,” exclaimed the still unrelenting Youghal, “and let the sepulchre be prepared for her and the body of my unhappy slave, who has become the victim of a woman’s treachery.”

Mariatally, by the royal command, was immediately removed to a remote apartment in the palace, where she was left to the solitary silence of her own unhappy thoughts. In the course of that evening, the door of her dismal chamber was unexpectedly opened, and, to her united astonishment and indignation, the venerable Suniassi stood before her.

“ I am come, Mariataly,” said he, “ to convince thee that the love which thou hast so lately slighted deserved a more grateful requital.”

The devotee paused; but the unhappy maiden making no reply, he continued, affecting a tone of extreme tenderness, “ Why was I repelled by her who had received my vows, and from whom I had heard a declaration of the fondest attachment? Your coldness, bibi, was heart-breaking.”

“ Why thus basely sue to one whom your tyranny has doomed to an unjust and cruel death? Does it become the sanctity of your order to steal into the miserable prison, where I am to await the doom which base injustice has pronounced upon me, and insult me with this mockery of love? Though degraded in the eyes of all save those of my own unhappy tribe, I am not, still, so lost to the decencies of my sex, as to listen to the unhallowed vows of a saint by profession and avowed practice, whose profanation of his sacred calling shows him to be a scorner of the divinities whom he pretends to serve.”

“ Ha! ha!” burst forth the intemperate ascetic in seeming, with an ill-timed merriment, “ is it possible, bibi, you cannot see my soul through my skin? Why, it is more transparent than a dried palmyra leaf, and you can distinguish moonshine through that any day of the month when Chandra’s¹ fair lamp is hung in the broad heavens. I am not Veramarken, as I seem to be, but Youghal, whom I seem not to be, and whom you used to own you loved better than

¹ Chandra is the Hindoo Diana, or the moon.

a banana with the fresh morning dew upon its stem. The genuine Suniassi is on a journey to the stars, and, having left his trunk behind him, with all its appurtenances, I, his counterfeit, by means of the mysterious mandiram, have crept into it, and now stand before you, Veramarken in body, but Youghal in spirit."

"Nay, that is impossible; Youghal would not have abandoned his own body and cut off his own head, of which he was too vain to think so lightly, when, if what you say be true, his soul must so shortly be called upon to relinquish its present usurped tenement, and take to its own shell. Where will he find that, when its ashes shall have been wafted upon the wings of the wind over the far country?"

"Don't fear, sweetheart,—my holy master cannot resume his own flesh, until it shall please me to quit it; and this, you may rely upon, I shall never do, while I can enjoy a crown, be received as the husband of a beautiful queen,—who, by the bye, has a very singular notion of connubial felicity,—and, as I hope, the lover of a still more beautiful Pariah. Will you accept my love, Mariataly, as before I became a sovereign?"

"Never. You may be Youghal, but I only see before me the unsightly form of Veramarken. I cannot imagine deformity to be beauty, and therefore will not yield my love to what my heart recoils from with a feeling little short of abhorrence. Besides, how am I to know that what you tell me is true?"

“ How dare you disbelieve the declaration of a prince ?”

“ If a prince, you are no longer the slave Youghal—you cannot be both.”

“ Thou art growing metaphysical, bibi ; thou wilt prove by and by, that an elephant cannot be an oyster, because he does not suck salt water through a shell. Take my word for it, I am not what I seem.”

“ In truth you are not : never was sinner more belied than Veramarken, who is the wickedest saint that ever performed penance, or drank bottled water from the Ganges.”

“ Well, well—never mind my failings, girl ; you always knew that Youghal, who now stands before you, was a sad fellow when the wicked fit was on him.”

“ Aye, the Youghal whom I now see before me is no doubt a sad fellow ; and that is why he so sadly resembles the hypocritical Veramarken.”

“ Don't I tell thee, that the slave's soul has become an inhabitant of his master's body, and that thy adorer is now ready to raise thee to distinction, being determined no longer to submit to the hungry penances of a saint, but devote his future life in this world to those enjoyments for which princes were made, and which are only denied to the vulgar.”

“ Do as you please ; but I don't fear to tell you that I will never consent to participate with you in those honours of which you now boast the possession. Youghal I tenderly loved, but cordially detest Veramarken. In you I see only the latter. Listen to my suspicions : I believe you are endeavouring to

delude me into a false belief, for the basest of purposes. You are no more Youghal than I am the queen. If you really are the man I love, why assume so disgusting a disguise?"

"You reject me, then?"

"I do."

"Are you prepared to die?"

"I am; rather than become the concubine of Vemarken, were he purer than the purest of the seven Rishis."

"Your wish shall not be delayed: to-morrow you shall lie in the cold earth with Youghal's body."

Thus saying, he quitted the unhappy Mariataly with a frown of fiery indignation, which the more strongly confirmed her suspicions that her former lover had not been addressing his beloved highland maiden, as he had ever been tender, and was utterly unused to manifest the least excitement, even under disappointment or provocation. She was, consequently, now fully persuaded that he was dead,—for at first she had some doubts, even though she had been so many hours in the presence of his corpse,—and the idea of being buried in the same grave with him was to her a matter of rejoicing rather than of grief. For her, death had no terrors, since the object of her dearest attachment was no more; and she therefore cheerfully resigned herself to the fate which awaited her.

That very afternoon the beautiful Pariah was placed in a hackery with the corpse of the once sprightly Youghal, wrapped in a cerement. The doom pronounced against her was, that she should be buried

in the same grave with the body of her deceased lover, in the neighbourhood of the mountain village where her father dwelt, and in which she was born. The persons who accompanied her had sufficient compassion to allow her to pass a few hours with her disconsolate parent, previously to her being consigned to that tomb prepared for the reception of one for whom she had entertained an earnest attachment. She passed the night under her paternal roof, and in the morning early, accompanied by those who had been appointed to conduct the interment of the living with the dead, proceeded towards the place of sepulture. It was at the foot of a lofty cone, which, rising among a cluster of small hills, lifted its proud crest to the clouds, and seemed to stand there a monument of the stupendous exercise of omnipotent power.

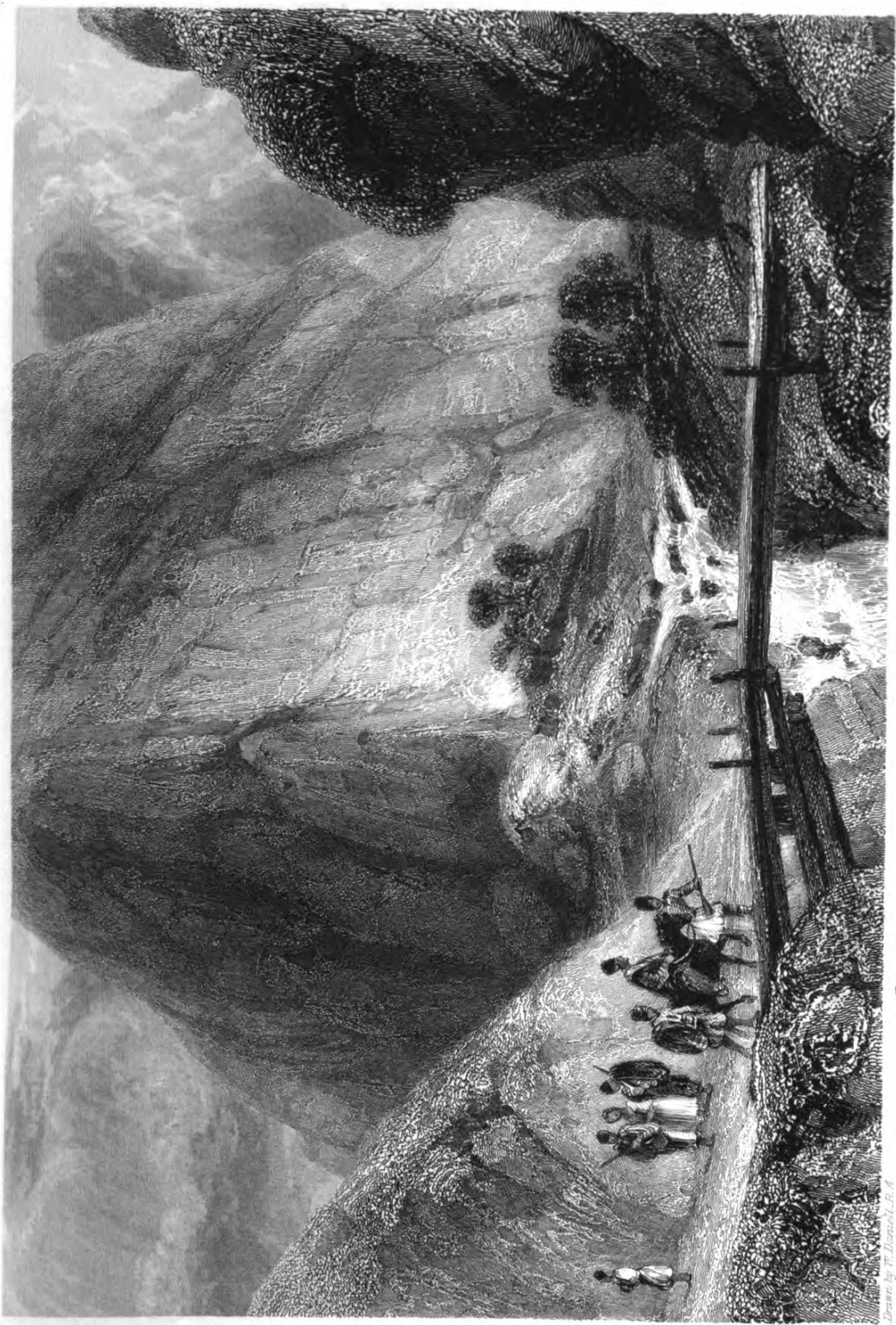
The body of Youghal had been sent forward to this solitary place of burial, and the unhappy victim of usurped and pampered tyranny was allowed to follow rather than accompany an object which, though concealed from sight, was still loathsome to a more delicate sense, in spite of the cerement by which it was enveloped. The party slowly ascended the hill. In front was an official on horseback, who had the charge of conducting this melancholy business, attended on either side by a man armed. The innocent maiden followed between two persons, likewise armed, who had neither respect for her sorrows nor compassion for her condition.

Having arrived in sight of the hill's base, which had been fixed upon as the scene of cruel punishment, the party reached a rude wooden bridge

thrown over a gully, presenting a frightful aspect of turbulence and of danger. It had a steep irregular channel, through which the mountain torrent poured with frightful impetuosity, occasionally impeded in its precipitous descent by projecting masses of rock and other impediments collected there in the more temperate seasons of the year, when, during the prevalence of temporary storms, portions of the hills are loosened from their parent masses, and thrown into the watercourses, then nearly dry, or only charged with shallow and more gentle streams.

The bridge consisted of a single wide plank of teak, about half a foot in thickness and nearly two feet wide, sustained under one end by beams inserted among the inequalities of the bank, and affording effectual support to the rude fabric, secured on the other side by two thin but strong upright poles, that kept it sufficiently steady to afford a safe yet fearful footing. The torrent roared ominously as the procession passed over the bridge, which vibrated at every step. Mariataly's father accompanied her to the gully, and then turned homeward from a scene of distress which he had not the fortitude to encounter.

After a silent march of about two hours, the victim and her guards reached the place of interment. In a small hollow between two rocks, a large deep hole had been dug, about three feet square. Upon the brink was placed the corpse of Youghal, in a state of sickening decomposition, covered with a ragged palampore. The wretched girl advanced to the side of the pit without shedding a tear, and, strewing some flowers over the corpse, expressed her satisfaction at the

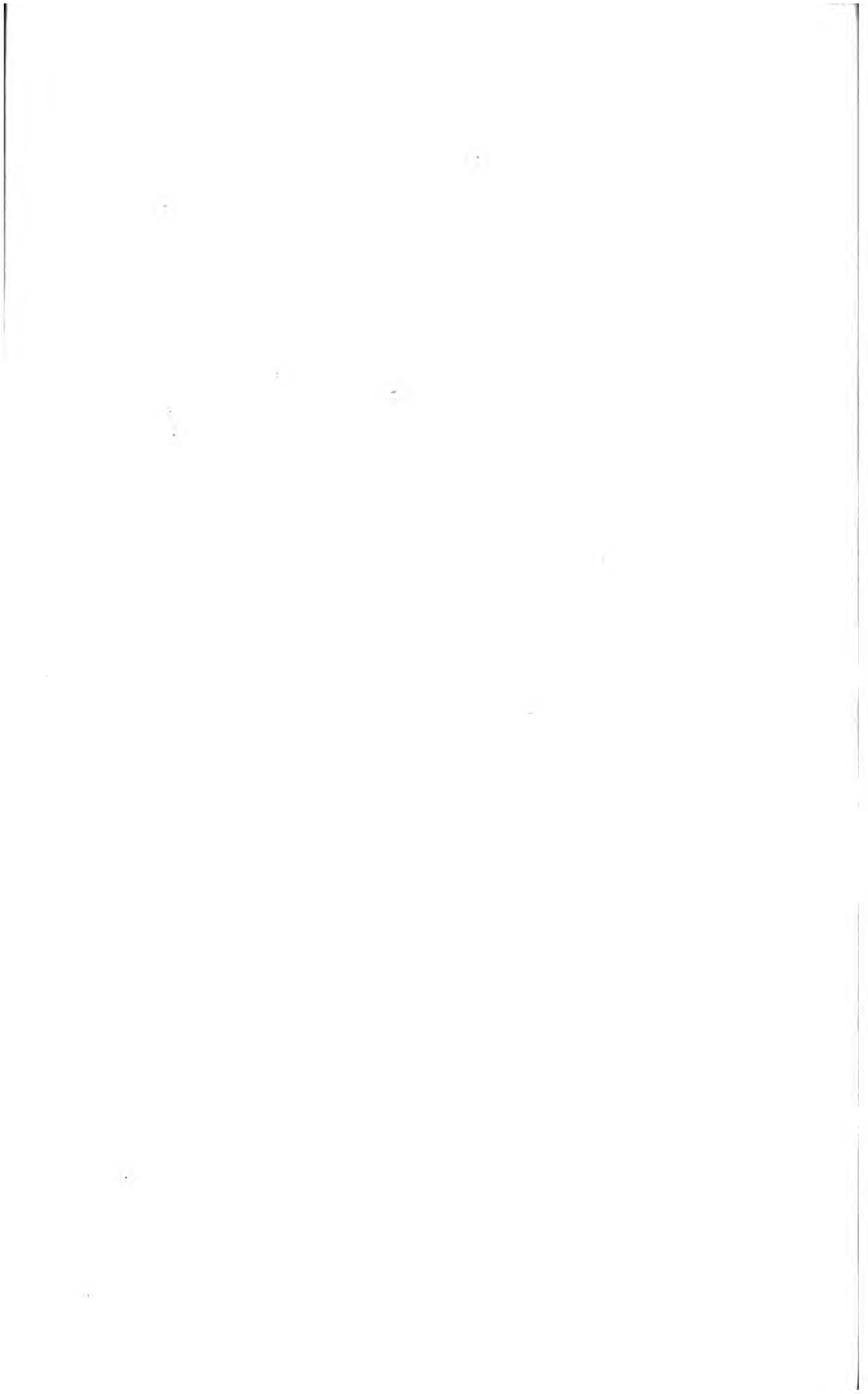


By Thomas G. Lillman

Perth on a way

J. Murray, and publ. 1857, in vol. 37, p. 10, n. 5

Engraved by W. Harrison, del.



privilege of being laid beside him in death, whom she had so fondly loved in life. Having completed the preliminary ceremonies, she desired that the solemnity might proceed. Her manner was solemn, though gentle, exhibiting a calm yet lofty determination to meet death with that spirit of resigned endurance which best becomes beings who are born to die. At length, declaring she was ready to suffer the dreadful penalty to which she had been doomed by an unjust and selfish tyrant, the body of her late lover was lowered into the sepulchre, and Mariataly having again scattered some flowers over it, descended into the dreary chamber of death. Her dress consisted of a tight vest of pale red silk, under a loose flowing drapery of thin white calico; her black hair was rolled up into a large knot upon the top of her head, secured by a long brass pin, tapered and polished like gold. Upon her wrists she wore several thin bangles and armlets of buffalo's horn. The tips of her nails were slightly tintured with henna.

Having been lowered into the vault, the beautiful Pariah seated herself upon a projecting ledge, purposely left in the head wall of the grave, and placed the corpse upon her knees. At the bottom of the pit a horizontal opening had been dug, to admit the dead body, so that its legs were forced into this hole, and its head allowed to rest upon the lap of its living companion. A few bamboos were now crossed above the latter's head, and fixed firmly into the sides of the pit; upon these slender beams branches were thrown, and a canopy being thus formed, which

prevented the earth from falling in, the innocent girl was thus consigned to a living sepulchre, without one ejaculation of sympathy being expressed at her horrible doom.

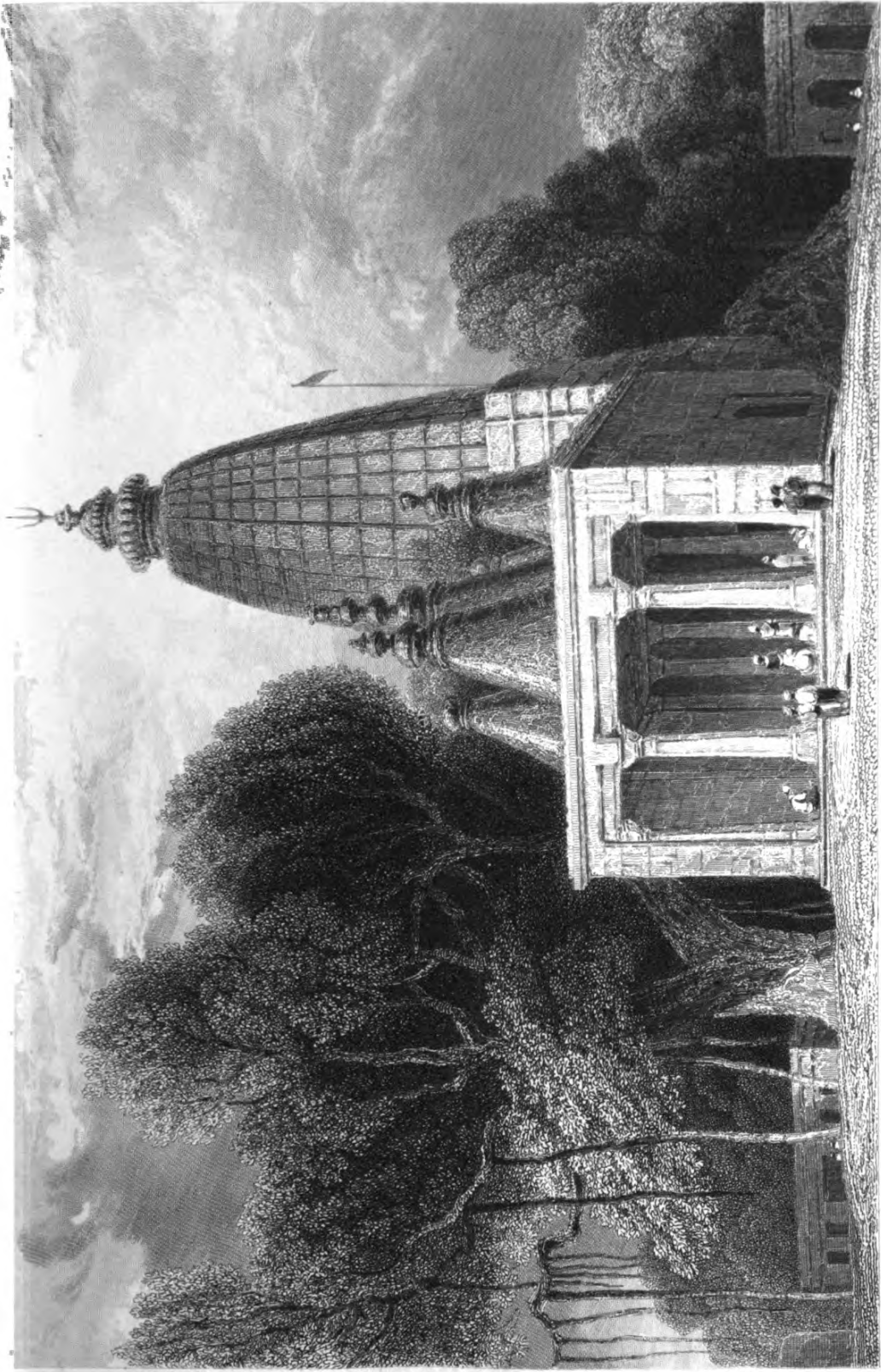
The dry soil, from which the sun had caused to exhale every particle of moisture, was lightly strewed upon the bamboos, at once covering the living and the dead. After the task of inhumation had been performed, the delegates of Veramarken left his victim to her fate, and returned to the capital, where they announced the completion of their mission. Upon hearing it, the counterfeit sovereign expressed his satisfaction with an oath little becoming the lips of a saint; but a timely bribe rendered his hearers deaf to so unjustifiable a profanation.

CHAPTER IX.

YOUGHAL soon perceived that it would not do entirely to discard the severity of the devotee into whose body his soul had been transfused ; for vulgar eyes already began to perceive the strange change which had come over the spirit of their master, and vulgar tongues to make free comments upon that change. Finding there was no stopping the voice of censure, which, in spite of interdiction, was heard in frequent murmurs, he determined to announce a pilgrimage to a celebrated pagoda in the province of Bahar, near the banks of the Ganges, and to undertake the journey thither on foot, in order to prove to such as doubted his sanctity, that he had not really thrown off all respect for those bodily mortifications which had gained him so extended a reputation for piety, and rendered him the pride of four millions of adoring subjects.

The pagoda which the Suniassi had announced his intention of visiting, was the constant resort of pilgrims and fanatics of every description, from all parts of Bengal and the bordering districts : indeed, some of the most celebrated devotees of Hindostan have prostrated themselves before its venerated shrines. It is situated on the brow of a small hill covered with

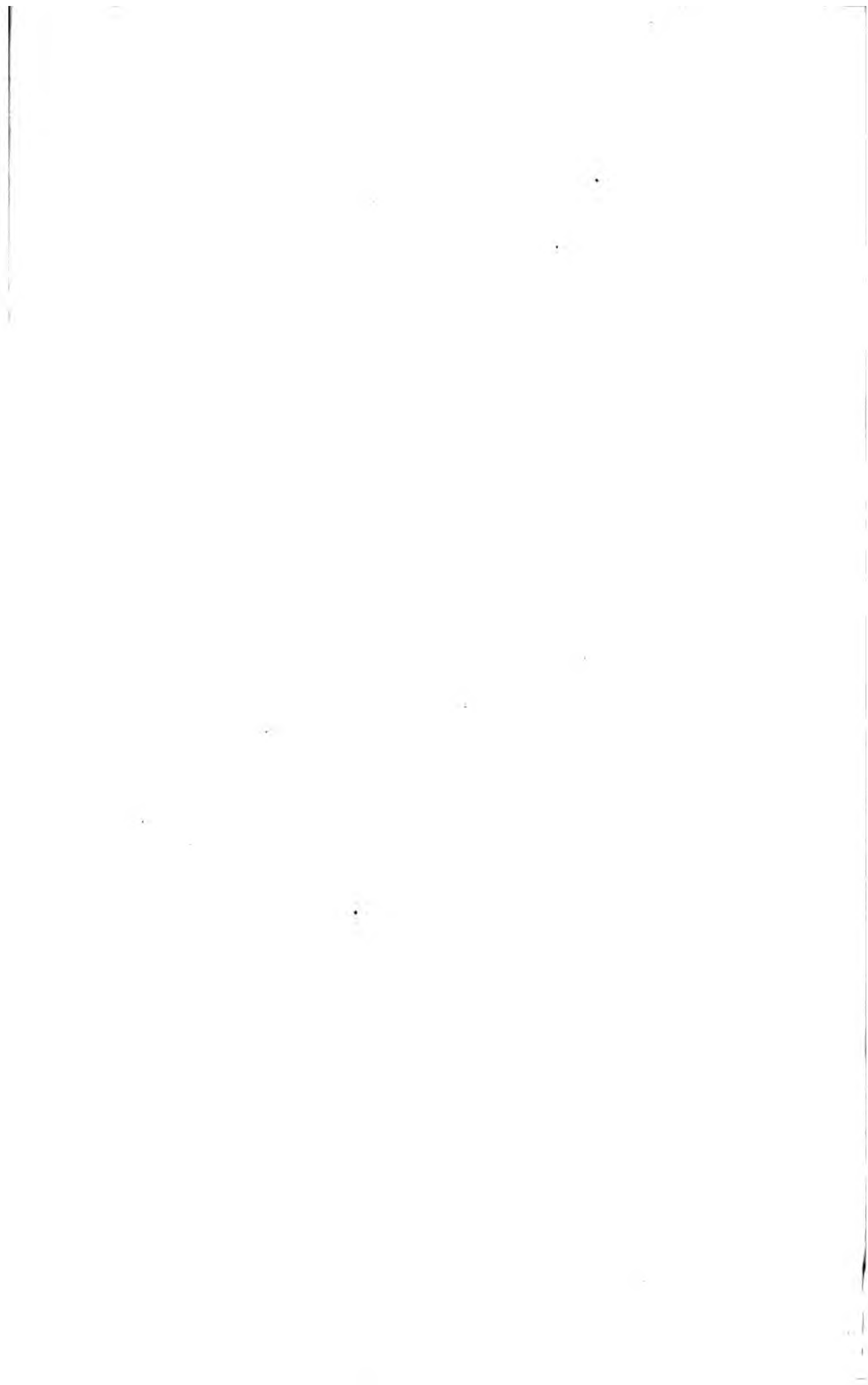
jungle, and, though exposed to the brunt of tropical storms from every quarter of the compass, it has, nevertheless, stood for ages without suffering any perceptible diminution of its architectural beauty. The masonry is extremely massy, being composed of large blocks of granite, squared and fitted with so great a nicety that the divisions are scarcely perceptible, and cemented with a bituminous mastic, so adhesive and indestructible as to bind the walls into one solid compact mass, inseparable either by the hammer or the wedge. Before the main building is a large and lofty portico, supported in front by two plain square columns, and by six within, of corresponding shape and character. Upon the roof of the vestibule are four bell-shaped turrets, or rather cupolas, employed more for ornament than for use. The entrance into the body of the building is through a small low portal in the left-hand corner, under the portico. Within this sanctuary all is drear and murky. The air is close, fetid, and suffocating. Here, round a huge shapeless stone, daubed with red ochre, and converted by the prolific fancy of Hindoo superstition into a divinity, may be daily seen the wretched victims of priestly delusion, prostrating themselves and presenting their offerings to an insensible idol, which offerings become the perquisites of the hierophants of the temple, who plunder the besotted worshippers, and grow rich upon the follies of those whom they thus basely mislead. Without, the pagoda is surmounted by a high pyramidal tower, the whole surface of which is squared into chequers, diminishing in size towards the top of the building, the divisions



Hindu Temple at Benares, India.

Engraved by J. G. Thompson del.

Drawn by W. L. Marshall. R.A.



between the squares being apparently deeply indented in the stone. The tower terminates in two richly ornamented domes, from the smaller of which rises a gilt style or cullice.

Here Youghal arrived after an easy journey, which he had forgotten to undertake on foot, but more wisely performed in a palanquin. Having made his offering at the shrine of this eminent sanctuary, he passed a week or two in the neighbourhood, without subjecting himself to a single mortification, and at length returned to his own capital, so much fatter and improved in personal attractions, that he could scarcely be recognised as the late meagre but holy Veramarken.

After the ill-requited Mariataly had been committed alive to the earth, she began to think that the sooner she should be released from the still lingering principle of life, the better; to her surprise, however, she found that she could breathe without great difficulty, though placed under ground with the dead. A considerable space was left betwixt her head and the bamboo canopy, which latter prevented the earth from falling in upon and suffocating her. A small jar of water and a rice cake had been laid in the grave beside her, previously to the interment. Perceiving that her lungs were not at all painfully oppressed by her unnatural confinement, her thoughts immediately reverted to the objects of this world, and it soon became manifest that, though she did not fear to die, the natural love of life prevailed over the unnatural desire of death. But how was it possible she should escape from her present imprison-

ment? Her cell was so straitened that there was not room for more than two persons to stand conveniently upright, and she had nothing but her hands to remove the impediment above which interposed betwixt her and liberty; besides this, she was greatly incommoded by the body of her unhappy lover. Amid her reveries at this melancholy moment, she could not help reflecting upon Youghal's murder. The mystery which hung over this dreadful event perplexed her exceedingly. Having turned the matter every way in her mind, she came at length to the conclusion that he must have been put to death by his master. She accounted for it by supposing that Youghal had possessed himself of the secret so jealously withheld by Veramarken, who, on discovering this, had killed him with his own hand, in order that he should not have any communication with the possessors of the Swerga—a privilege only granted to pious Suniassis. This was a conclusion so satisfactory to the mind of the Pariah maiden, that she set it down at once as a solution of the mystery, and longed to charge her sovereign with the crime.

Mariataly's singular captivity was now becoming every moment more painful. The stench from the body, which she continued to support upon her lap, was intolerable. A sickness overcame her, followed by a dizziness, which rendered her all but insensible. She gave herself up as about to be released from a miserable life and misfortune together, when her ear caught a strange noise. The sudden shock of surprise roused her from the stupefaction which was fast creeping upon her, and she plainly distinguished

the sound as of something scraping above her head: It continued without pause until the bamboos which supported the earth that covered the grave of a living victim began to crack. Turning her face upwards, some particles of dust fell upon it betwixt the interstices of the bamboo canopy. This, after the expiration of a few seconds, was followed by a gush of air almost instantly filling the vault, and relieving her from that state of distressing unconsciousness into which she was rapidly sinking. A short interval of painful suspense succeeded, when light suddenly streamed into the gloomy receptacle of death. Gazing in joyful surprise, she saw the slender bamboo rafters bending beneath some superincumbent pressure; they gradually yielded, and several of them being forced from the sides of the pit, into which they had been fixed, gave way with a loud crash, when a huge jackal fell at the feet of the anxious maiden.

The mystery was now explained. It was evident that some jackals, attracted by the scent of Youghal's corpse, had collected round his grave to disinter the dead. This they commonly do in hot countries, where they abound, by scraping the fresh earth beneath which the body has been deposited, and, having removed so easy an impediment to their banquet, they immediately despoil the sepulchre, dragging the corpse from its unconsecrated tenement, then leaving the bones to parch beneath a tropical sun, and crumble into dust under the natural process of decay.

Mariatally was somewhat disconcerted at the intrusion of the jackal, which did not appear in the

slightest degree scared by the proximity of a living occupant in a place only fit to be the habitation of the dead, but began to tear the cerement which enveloped the corpse of Youghal, and to devour the latter with savage greediness. The terror of the overjoyed girl was overborne by the transport which expanded her bosom, and roused the failing pulses of her heart, as the hopes of a restoration to freedom from the cold and withering embrace of death were thus suddenly quickened within her. But how to liberate herself from the gulf which had swallowed her up alive, was a question by no means easy to be solved, at the bottom of a hole three feet square and upwards of nine feet deep. She was a good deal alarmed at the prodigious voracity of her uninvited companion, who, however, was too much occupied with her late lover to offer her the slightest molestation.

It fortunately happened that several of the bamboos forming the canopy constructed for the purpose of protecting Mariataly from the pressure of the earth above, had fallen to the bottom of the grave. A thought happily struck her that she might convert these into instruments of deliverance. Having refreshed herself with a draught of water with which she had been supplied by the considerate humanity of those who had inhumed her, she broke the canes into short lengths, and, by digging holes with them into the soft walls of the pit, into which she thrust her feet, she gradually, and after considerable labour, reached the top, whence she emerged to liberty, leaving the jackal to conclude his disgusting meal.

Making the best of her way towards a small pagoda at the top of a hill near her native village, having first prostrated herself before the idol, she offered up a fervent thanksgiving for her unexpected deliverance, and invoked a blessing upon her future life. The officiating brahmin, who had beheld her on her way to the place where she had been so lately interred, perceiving a person enter the sanctuary, whom he supposed to be in the bowels of the earth, concluded, as a matter of course, that she had completed her metempsychosis, and had been advanced from the condition of a Pariah, the lowest among the social orders of mankind, to that of a brahminee, the highest. The superstitious mind of this heathen minister could lead him to no other conclusion. Advancing solemnly towards the prostrate maiden, he addressed her as one who had been chastened by death from the stains of mortality acquired in the polluted form of an outcast, and elevated to the enviable condition of a brahminee, through the purifying medium of transmigration.

The quick and intuitive sagacity of Mariataly instantly suggested to her the personal benefits which might be made to arise from this timely delusion; and she determined to convert the hallucination of the brahmin to her own advantage. Under the impression that she was one whom the gods had distinguished and raised to the highest caste among mortals, the deluded priest did not hesitate to impress the well-known marks of that caste upon her forehead.

“ Daughter,” he said, with a grave deliberation of

tone, " thou hast gone through thy probation, and art exalted to the first distinction upon earth. Thou hast passed through the grave to the purification of the brahminee."

Mariatally nodded her head, and, having quitted the pagoda with the brahminical mark, took care to show herself to such persons as she expected would proclaim her resurrection from the grave, and her exaltation, through the metempsychosis, to the highest condition both of civil and social existence. The report of her miraculous deliverance spreading rapidly abroad, soon reached the ears of Youghal, who became seriously alarmed lest some horrible punishment should overtake him for having so cruelly consigned an innocent victim to a doom which he knew to be unjust. Mariatally, however, for the present carefully avoided general publicity; nevertheless, every one who had known her previously to her inhumation, and who was aware likewise of the sentence visited upon her by the royal Suniassi, implicitly believed the story propagated by the brahmin of the pagoda upon the hill, of her having accomplished her term of probation; and persons of the highest caste no longer hesitated to hold communion with her. It singularly happened, as if the fates were resolved to remove every impediment to her future exaltation, that her father, on the very day after her extraordinary deliverance, while pursuing his occupation of charcoal-burner in the jungle, was bitten by a snake, and almost instantly died. The affectionate daughter mourned her parent's decease with a deep and abiding sorrow; but finding now

no further obstruction to her taking that station in society which chance had pointed out to her, she resolved to repair without further delay to the capital of Veramarken.

CHAPTER X.

MEANWHILE the disembodied spirit of the Suniassi which had been taking its pleasure among the beatified in Indra's paradise, satisfied at length that he had been sufficiently long in such good company for all spiritual purposes, and being anxious to see his queen, whom he had now, as he imagined, grievously pained by too protracted an absence, determined to return to this nether world, resume his body, and, putting off the penitentiary, at least for a season, devote, if not the remainder of his life, at all events a long interval of it, to those enjoyments from which he had hitherto debarred himself with painful but religious perseverance.

With this determination Veramarken sought the imperial God of the elements to take a respectful leave, and to thank him for his divine hospitality. Approaching him just as he had descended from the lofty back of his omnipotent elephant Iravaty, whose trunk is a mighty water-spout, his tail a thunder-cloud, and whose tusks are each the axis upon which a planet revolves, the favoured Suniassi respectfully declared his intention of descending to the terrestrial regions, there to re-assume his grim form of mortality, and in that sainted image of humanity, ex-

purgated from all carnal impurity, do homage to all the divinities worshipped by devout Hindoos.

Indra, having majestically ascended his throne composed of sun and moonbeams beautifully intermixed by the hands of adoring Pitris¹, looked benignly on the spirit of the venerable Veramar-ken. His consort, the ineffable Indrani, blooming with immortal youth, was seated on his right hand, and at his feet lay his chief musician Chitrarat'ha with a vina in his hand ready to commence his celestial minstrelsy: the Iris, Indra's bow, hung from the luminous shoulders of the divinity, whilst his arrows, barbed with thunder-bolts and feathered with lightnings, lay on one side of the throne innocuous, but showing, by those vivid coruscations they momentarily emitted, the deadly powers of mischief with which they were charged. Near the throne grew the celestial tree Paryataka, that arose from the sea when it was churned with the mountain Mandara². Upon each side of the trunk stood the sacred and all-prolific cow Kamdenu and the eight-headed horse Oochisrava, which both arose with the tree from the churned ocean, and were the faithful guards of Indra's throne.

The venerable dispenser of the elements nodded graciously when Veramar-ken declared his intention

¹ An order of good spirits.

² Vishnoo is fabled to have become incarnate in the form of a tortoise, in which shape he sustained the mountain Mandara, placed on his back, to serve as an axis whereon the gods and demons, the vast serpent Vasoky serving as a rope, churned the ocean for the recovery of the Amrita, or beverage of immortality.

of resuming his mortality, and the lovely Indrani bowed her head with a dignified motion of approval, which caused every spark in the celestial throne to gleam with a lustre so dazzling, that the spirit even of a Suniassi could scarcely endure the intensity of their united effulgence.

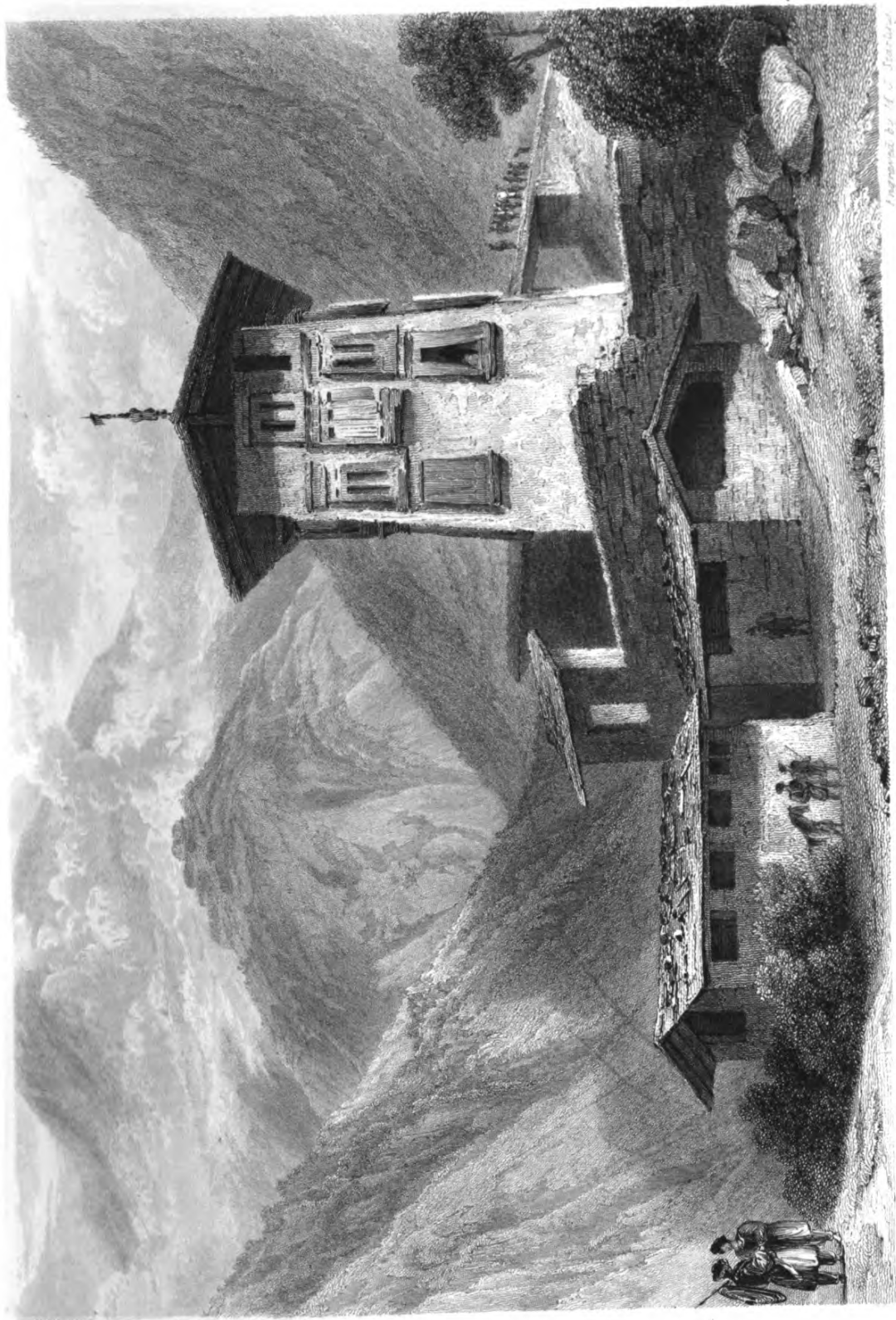
Having thus taken a respectful leave of Indra and his celestial consort, the soul of Veramarken quitted the Swerga, shot with the velocity of a sunbeam from a height immeasurably above that of the most distant star visible through the largest telescope, and dropped like a ray of light into the cavern where it had so lately quitted its carnal prison. The spiritual Veramarken looked anxiously round for his body;—alas, it was not to be found! The radiance which his soul had imbibed in, and bore with it from, the celestial mansions, filled the entire space with a lambent glow that showed distinctly every object, but the fleshly form of the Suniassi was no where visible. What could have become of it? No beast of prey had devoured it, because it was charmed against the power of wild beasts by the potency of the Mandiram. Not being able to discover it, he proceeded into the darkness, for it was now night, and spread like a mist over the neighbouring jungle, hiding the stars and affrighting the superstitious inhabitants scattered here and there through that desert tract with the apprehensions of evil omens or of coming mischief.

With the dawn, Veramarken renewed his search; but being unable to discover the tenement of flesh which his spirit had so lately quitted, he rose into

the air, and, wafted by the gentle breeze, hovered over his capital, uttering no perceptible cry of lamentation, but enduring, nevertheless, all the agony so keenly felt by incorporeal beings when doomed to suffer. He knew not whither to direct his flight in order to be relieved from the torments by which he was overborne. He could not return to the Swerga, having once quitted it, without being again dismissed from his mortal remains by uttering the Mandiram, and this could not be done without bodily organs; so that he was now for ever excluded either from living upon earth as a human creature, or dwelling with Indra as a beatified spirit. This was a dreadful predicament to fall into, after having just been honoured with a nod from that omnipotent Deity, and with a smile from his all-beautiful consort.

In despair, the immortal part of Veramarken rose above the clouds, which, for a while, hid this dull earth from its view, (for, though without eyes, it had the power of perception imparted by its own inherent light,) and directing its flight to mount Meru, upon the top of which it rested, invested the peak in the form of a light silvery cloud. Restless, however, and disconsolate, it sailed from hill to hill, and at length settled upon the highest point of the Himalaya range. Here it became so chilled with the excessive cold, that it was finally obliged to take shelter in one of the valleys at the bases of those sublime mountains: these valleys are clothed with the freshest verdure, while the gigantic hills beneath whose projecting shadows they are sheltered remain covered with perpetual snows.

Here was a romantic scene, the contemplation of which relieved for a while the intensity of his grief. On every side were hills rising one above the other, and hiding in the clouds their snow-clad summits, which glistened with eternal sunshine. In this valley was a cluster of rude buildings roofed with wood, one of which was employed as a military guard-house; the upper part of the pass being protected by a thick stone wall forming the buttresses of a rude bridge, and passing in front of a lofty tower evidently built to defend the pass against an invading force. The tower had three distinct stories above the ground floor, and was strongly built of stone. The windows projected from the wall, forming a sort of recess within, whence archers could discharge their arrows from loopholes cut in the casements. The disembodied spirit, almost condensed to a palpable substance by the extreme cold of the mountain whither it had at first rested after its disturbed flight from that capital, in which a sensual slave was revelling in all the luxuries of royalty, sought shelter in the upper story of this highland tower, where, shut out from this world of probation, it could hold communion with itself undisturbed by external objects, and seek at least a temporary relief from the vexations to which it was at that moment a prey. The tower was inhabited by soldiers, who gaily discoursed upon the dangers of their profession with light hearts and smiling faces; and the miserable Veramarken, as he listened to their noisy conversation, could not help contrasting the buoyant cheerfulness of the mountain soldier with the deep-rooted



Engraved by H. C. Sturtevant

Drawn by W. Daniell, R.A.

Two men looking towards a distance.

1833. The artist's name is not given.



melancholy of the Suniassi sovereign. The former appeared to have no cares amid the severe toils of a military life, but evidently possessed a keen relish for those temporary relaxations which were to him a recreation and a bliss. Some among these hardy highlanders spoke of their wives in a tone of rough affection, which showed that they had not only a sensible, but even a refined perception of the fruition of wedded life. Others talked of their children with a rude eloquence, that sufficiently attested how deeply they felt the influence of parental affection, while the forlorn Veramarken was overwhelmed by the sad reflection that his home was not only barren of connubial bliss, but that the reciprocations of filial and paternal love could never be known by him, doomed as he now was to be a wanderer, out of the body, over the face of a world which could furnish no enjoyment to him. He could by no means account for such a doom, as his life of severe penance and mortification had entitled him to look for a very different issue. Had he not received the approbation of that mighty divinity who governs the elements, and to whom all terrestrial things are obedient? Had he not been honoured by the most distinguished of mortals? Had he not obtained the right of entering the Swerga by the purchase of a mortified body and constantly abstracted mind? Why then was he punished with a severity which could only be merited by the mass of sinners?—He set it down as a matter too manifest to need any proof, that he was the most ill-used spirit that had ever inhabited a human frame.

When day dawned, the soul of Veramarken, dissatisfied with its present retreat, rose like an essence into the air, and, quick as the sudden transition of thought, was hovering over the palace in which Maldavee was enjoying the sweetest repose, and Youghal reaping the dangerous fruits of his villany. When the sun had accomplished full a two hours' journey above the horizon, he had the mortifying opportunity of witnessing his own lost body possessed by the soul of his menial, and for the first time made the vexatious discovery that Youghal was a treacherous knave. Of the latter being found in the cavern a headless corpse, together with the narrative of his burial and that of the lovely Pariah, he soon heard from the usual gossip of his domestics. It was the theme of constant conversation, as Youghal had been of so merry a temperament that his loss was seriously felt by every member of the kitchen and domestic offices. The bodiless Suniassi felt exasperated beyond description, though unable to express the vehemence of his emotions, at the treachery of his slave, who he now perceived must have overheard him utter that solemn form of incantation which produced immediate exanimation. His soul flitted about from place to place like a noxious exhalation, one while nestling within the petal of a flower, at another dilating its ethereal substance, and spreading over a surface that enabled it to catch at the same moment the conversation of all the palace inmates, from the chamber of state down to the scullery of the royal establishment.

Nothing, however, reached Veramarken's ear that

tended to appease his restless impatience once again to assume his natural form, and enjoy the conversation of his queen. His nephew, since the appearance of the counterfeit sovereign, had retired from the capital to a country seat, where he enjoyed the pleasures of the chase, expecting that he would be recalled to the chair of state when his uncle should be fatigued with the toils and perplexities of legislation, and retire to his usual devotions in the jungle. He was rather surprised that the summons was so long delayed, as the intervals hitherto between the royal Suniassi's assumption of regality and his devotion to the severe requisitions of his sacred profession, had never before been so protracted.

On the day after his return from the mountains, to the extreme mortification of the incorporeal devotee, he saw the counterfeit of himself enjoying the society of his queen, whom it almost maddened him to perceive listening apparently with more pleasure than she had been wont when he was with her, to the unrefined discourse of his slave. What was to be done? Was there no remedy? The miserable spirit, though almost rendered palpable with indignation, had no power of expressing it, because, to his bitter annoyance, he was dispossessed of every physical qualification.

CHAPTER XI.

RAJA VITRAVINGA, the Suniassi's nephew, still remained at his mansion, situated not far from the capital, on the borders of a beautiful river that laved the walls of a magnificent garden, in which it stood amid the most luxuriant growth of the East. He was surrounded by every luxury which could contribute to his enjoyment, and was so beloved by all his domestics and retainers, that they took the greatest pleasure in doing his bidding, instead of considering the execution of his orders a toil. He richly deserved their fervent affiance, because he took as earnest an interest in their happiness as in his own, and promoted it to the best of his power ; so that, whether at the head of the government, directing the intricate machinery of state, or exercising the more confined superintendence of his own domestic establishment, he was equally an object of expressed regard. Walking one morning by the river side, as he passed a gaut he perceived several women who had just completed the morning bath, and were about to return to their homes : the beauty of one among them particularly arrested his attention, and he instantly felt a desire to know something more respecting her than belongs to ordinary curiosity. All, however, he could ascer-

tain was, that she was a brahminee who had come from a distant part of the country, and taken up her abode in that neighbourhood. She was very well thought of by her neighbours, who were charmed with the simplicity of her manners and the amiable tone of her general behaviour. The strangest thing connected with her seemed to be, that she was still a maiden, it being a rare event in India to find a high caste girl unmarried after the age of six years ; but in her case it was accounted for by her having been in an extremely ill state of health for the first eight or ten years of her life, and moreover, that her father, lately dead, anxious not to be separated from his child, who had lost her mother in infancy, kept her at home as a companion whom he did not choose to spare.

Vitravinga was more than ever anxious to meet this beautiful Hindoo, but did not choose to intrude upon her privacy without her consent, as he respected too much that strict separation from the male sex to which all girls of the superior castes rigidly adhere in their maidenhood, to offer violence to the delicacy of one evidently, from her extreme beauty, of wondrous sensibility and meekness. How frequently is beauty the symbol of all virtues in the estimation of many warm-hearted young men, who show no lack of penetration in the ordinary, or even in the extraordinary, matters of life ! For several mornings he walked on the margin of the river about the time that the brahminee came for her daily supply of water. At his approach she invariably drew over her head the long veil which co-

vered her shoulders, and shrouded that beauty which she could not altogether conceal.

The young Rajah's curiosity continued daily to increase, and something more than curiosity was already working within his bosom. Unable longer to refrain, he determined to take the first fit opportunity that might present itself of speaking to the lovely stranger.

Mariatally, on quitting her native village after her singular release from a living burial, bent her steps towards Veramarken's capital. When examining her father's effects, she unexpectedly discovered that he had amassed a small sum of money, laid by from the earnings of his severe and ill-requited toil. This money, with a frugal economy, she knew would afford her the positive necessaries of life for some time to come, and before her funds should be exhausted she hoped to be in a condition to secure her own maintenance. Her prospects, indeed, were none of the brightest, still she did not despond. Her late release from jeopardy so immediate, and from which there appeared no escape, strengthened her faith in the favourable aspect of her present position; and she could not help indulging the flattering hope, in opposition to the more chilling suggestions of reason, which brought to her mind a host of opponent probabilities, that she was not born to die the death of an outcast, or to continue her life in the world, as that portion of it up to the present time had been passed.

On reaching the capital, she took up her abode with an aged brahmin and his wife, the former of

whom officiated in a small but eminent pagoda in the suburbs of the city. Coming with a direct recommendation from the ministering priest of the temple on the hill near her native village, she had no difficulty in obtaining a ready welcome from his brother priest in the capital of the royal Suniassi.

The evening of her arrival at her new home she repaired to the sanctuary, in order to offer up her devotions to the presiding deity, through whose benign dispensation she had been released from death and advanced unexpectedly to the dignity of a Brahminee. She cast herself before the idol, and almost immediately sank into a kind of trance. The whole building appeared to her illuminated by a mysterious light, the source of which was not visible. A fragrant incense rose from the floor, and, first gradually enclosing the idol with a subtile mist, shortly extended itself throughout the entire area of the building. Mariataly was awe-struck. The chords of a vina were touched by some unseen hand, and the most exquisite music filled the enraptured ear. The maiden at length raised her eyes in solemn devotion towards the idol to which she was about to offer the grateful thanksgivings of an overcharged but guileless heart. As she gazed upon it intently through the mist, a majestic shape arose from the sacred stone and descended to the floor of the pagoda. It was mounted on a colossal eagle, which it slowly quitted, and advancing to the spot where the awe-struck girl had prostrated herself, stood before her, august and motionless. Its form was of a dark azure, and the intense brightness of its eye com-

pletely illuminated the whole space around her, thus explaining the mystery of the light which appeared to proceed from some invisible agency, as already stated.

Whilst Mariataly remained stupified with amazement and awe, the mysterious being uttered in a deliberate tone, heightened by the sweetest melody, the following words,—

“Maiden, attend to the voice of the Almighty One:—‘I was even at first, not any other thing—that which exists unperceived—supreme! Afterwards I am that which is! and he who must remain am I!

“Except the First Cause, whatever may appear and may not appear in the mind, know that to be the mind’s Maya or delusion, as light, as darkness.

“As the great elements are in various beings, yet not entering, that is, pervading, not destroying, thus am I in them, yet not in them.

“Even thus far may inquiry be made by him who seeks to know the principle of mind in union and separation, which must be everywhere always¹. Bear in mind these sacred communications. I am Vishnoo, the omnipotent! whose arrows, when he launches them, pass through infinite space, and are for ever upon the wing.

“Thou hast been an inhabitant of the abode of death—thou hast risen from the grave purified from the first stains of thy generation. Thou art, therefore, no more a Pariah, but a Brahminee. Vishnoo

¹ This is an extract from the “Sri Bhagavata,” a work considered divinely inspired by the Hindoos.

pronounces thy freedom from carnal defilement, and classes thee with the chief among his adorers."

In an instant, the place was enveloped in profound darkness—the form of the Divinity had disappeared; and Mariataly, recovering from her trance, found herself upon the temple floor, the Brahmin standing beside her. She immediately related to him every particular of the vision, except what referred to her having been a Pariah. The sacred functionary, struck by so extraordinary a visitation of the God of his idolatry, looked upon the agitated girl as a person eminently favoured of heaven, and endeavoured to persuade her to devote herself to the temple in honour of the Deity who had so mercifully revealed himself to her. Mariataly, knowing the abandoned course of life pursued by women so devoted, determined not to adopt the Brahmin's suggestion, and at once declared her resolution. He was angry that a woman, however pure, and however distinguished by his Gods, should slight the counsels of a priest of Vishnoo, especially too of one who had acquired such long experience in religious matters; he, therefore, told her, that she had no alternative but to become a minister of the sanctuary, or incur the everlasting indignation of that august Being who had just appeared to her under an aspect of the most benign mercy.

Mariataly, little moved by the subtle, but impure, logic of the Brahmin, who did not hesitate to disgust her with proposals of his odious love¹, determined

¹ Nothing ever exceeded the licentious practices of the priests and other functionaries in some of the Hindoo temples.

to trust to her own virtue as her best security for the realization of those hopes inspired by the appearance of the great dispenser of human benefit; perceiving, however, that to remain under the Brahmin's roof would be attended, not only with annoyance, but with probable danger, she quitted it on the following morning, and soon found an asylum, a few miles out of the capital, where for the present she took up her temporary abode.

It was this beautiful girl, for she was still beautiful and young, having not yet felt upon her clear brown cheek the warmth of eighteen summers, whom Vitravinga had beheld on the banks of the river, as already related. She had observed him, but was not aware that he looked upon her with the slightest interest. Her utter unconsciousness of personal superiority over the generality of Hindoo maidens, was only exceeded by the chaste simplicity of her beauty, and her gentleness was the theme of admiration among the community with whom she associated.

One morning, as she was returning from the river with a bright copper vessel of water upon her head¹, she was met by the nephew and heir of Veramarken, who, accosting her with great delicacy and respect, told her at once who he was. She felt somewhat abashed at finding herself in the presence of one so distinguished by birth and alliance, but more especially by those moral qualities which best adorn humanity, whether of the throne or of the hovel. Quickly overcoming her embarrassment, she acknow-

¹ This is a common practice in India, even among girls of the highest caste.

ledged, with bewitching modesty, the distinction of being honoured by the notice of a prince, no less eminent for his wisdom and justice, than for his benevolence and love of virtue.

“Beautiful Brahminee,” said the young Rajah, approaching the object of his admiration, “believe me, I am not impelled by idle curiosity in thus seeking to ascertain if you are betrothed, for I have been informed that you have yet no husband; though it is surprising that such loveliness should have remained so long unsought, or at least unwon.”

“I am not betrothed, nor do I seek to part with the liberty I now enjoy, for perhaps a bondage which, during the remainder of my life, I might bitterly deplore.”

“Are you determined never to change your condition of domestic sequestration?”

Mariataly hesitated. The address of the prince had been so direct, and his question so specific, that she could not suppose he had no motive in putting it. Being therefore unwilling to declare any thing that might hereafter cause her regret, she said blushing:—

“Indeed, Rajah, I have never yet put the question decidedly to my own heart. I am quite contented with my present lot, and know not that I have any desire to change. Why should I seek to accumulate new cares upon me?”

Vitravinga was not so poor a judge of human nature as not to see, by the maiden’s hesitation, that she had by no means made up her mind to die unwedded; he consequently at once made a decla-

ration of his special predilection, telling her with all that warm eloquence inspired by deep emotion, the impression she had made upon his heart, and offering to unite his destiny with hers. Mariataly, though overtaken by surprise, did not so far lose her presence of mind as to place a bar betwixt herself and the chance which fortune had cast at her feet.

CHAPTER XII.

MEANWHILE Veramarcken was doomed to the intolérable torment of witnessing what he could neither prevent nor interrupt, and, in a paroxysm of spiritual agony, he wished that he had never become a Suniassi, thinking,—though he could not give utterance to his thoughts,—that his holy penances had heaped misery upon his soul, instead of rendering it everlastingly happy. He was shocked at the impiety of his own reflections, but his misery was too much for mortal endurance,—for he was still mortal, and would continue so, until his body, now possessed by another soul, should resign its mortality into the hands of death. What was to be done in the sad state of bereavement to which he was reduced? Reason suggested resignation, but that was entirely out of the question; he was altogether too miserable to be resigned. In a state utterly disconsolate and despairing, he continued to hover over the palace which contained the earthly idol of his adoration, now rendered a thousand-fold more dear to him, under present and irremediable privation. Though unseen by mortal eye, he was nevertheless observed by the benignant Bhavani¹, who quitted her mansion

¹ The Venus of the Hindoo Pantheon.

of bliss, and, meeting the unhappy spirit of her favourite worshipper,—for the saint had been occasionally in the habit of bowing before more than one idol,—consoled it with divine compassion upon its bereavement.

The goddess descended from her bright abode above the firmament, riding on a sacred bull, the hide of which was whiter than milk and smoother than polished marble, and its breath more fragrant than perfumes from the groves of Merut. The glance of its eye was as the flash that heralds the thunderbolt, and its tail swept like a luminous cloud behind its celestial burthen. Bhavani, radiant with unearthly beauty, alighted on a pinnacle of the palace, discharged her faithful bull, which rose upon the wings of the blast, and shot upwards like a rocket to the seat of its immortal mistress, who, invisible to human eyes, rested on the parapet, and commanded the soul of the miserable Veramarken to place itself beside her.

“ Unhappy essence of a most devout Suniassi!” said the divine mother of immortals, not in articulate words, but by spiritual communication, “ thou shalt not wander about this world in a state of restless disquietude, without some shape of mortality to embody thee. I know thou longest to be an inhabitant of this earth, which thou didst quit for an interval, to hold communion with the gods, and return hither only to encounter bereavement of the sorest kind. I will therefore prepare thee a body, in which thy restless soul will find sanctuary until the opportunity shall present itself of regaining thy own. To supply

thee with a human form is beyond my power, but such as I can give thee thou shalt have without further delay."

She had no sooner made this welcome communication than the form of a beautiful lory was wafted towards her on the soft breath of the morning breeze. The bird fell at her feet, where it seemed to flutter in an ecstasy of delight, and was immediately possessed by the disconsolate spirit of Veramarken. For some minutes the lory tried its new-fledged pinions, mounting above the clouds, but soon perched upon the summit of the palace roof, where, having made its acknowledgments to Bhavani for her divine compassion, that goddess said, in a tone that seemed to have imbibed the music of those spheres of which harmony was the presiding intelligence—

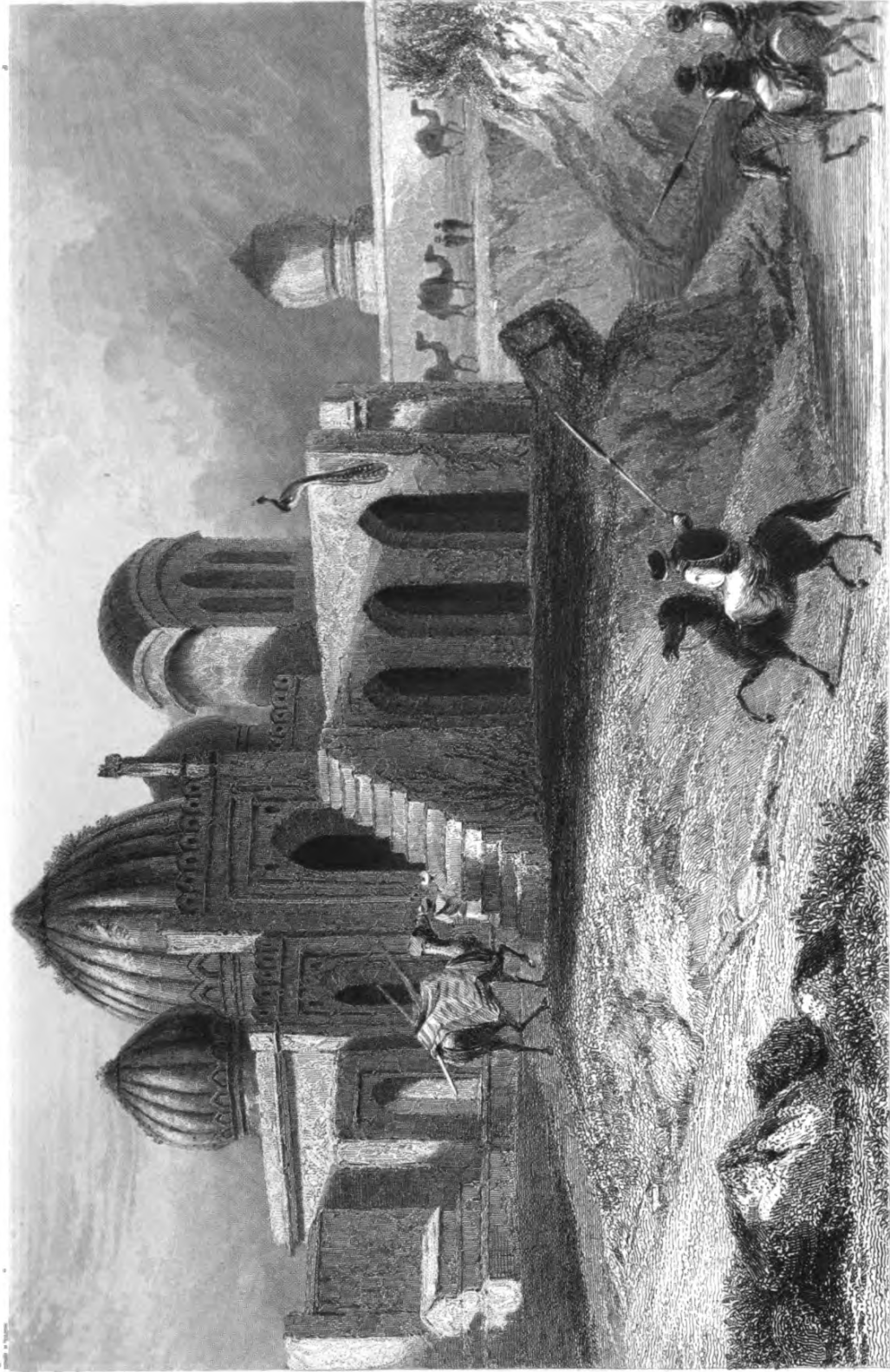
"Sainted Suniassi, despair not, and thy patience shall be rewarded. Fly to Indraprastha¹, once renowned for the learning of its Brahmins, and amidst its venerable ruins offer up thy devotions in an edifice with three domes, converted into a temple by a pious fakeer of thy own character, who has long been among my favourite worshippers, and whom, next to thyself, I distinguish with my especial approbation."

Away flew the lory without a moment's hesitation, and the goddess retired behind the sun, to those celestial regions where she reigned undisputed queen. The feathered Veramarken soon reached the banks of the Jumna, and alighted near the building indicated

¹ The ancient city of Delhi.

by his celestial patron. It was a structure of singular beauty, though part of it had suffered considerably from the gradual but destructive progress of decay. Its most striking feature was three domes, by which the main roof was surmounted, the centre greatly exceeding the two others in size, being in the form of a hive, fluted and covered with fine chunam; the two other domes were similarly shaped, differing only in this particular, that the sides swelled out like the body of a compressed cushion. Parallel with these domes was a square tower with an arched roof, having in front three long narrow windows, and probably originally intended as a place of defence in case of hostile aggression. This building, which had been long abandoned, was now converted into a halting-place for travellers, who commonly stalled their camels, horses, and other cattle within its lofty halls; but a low narrow apartment was taken possession of by a venerable Brahmin, as mentioned by the goddess Bhavani; and hither the lory, into which the spirit of Veramarken had taken refuge, directed its flight. Fluttering through the narrow opening, it perched upon the fragment of a broken pillar that stood almost in the centre of the chamber. The devotee was in a corner of the gloomy apartment, devouring a pilau from the leaf of a banyan tree, to the astonishment of Veramarken, who thought such an indulgence an unwarrantable breach of discipline. After the holy man had devoured his pilau, he swallowed about a pint of ghee¹, pouring it down his

¹ Clarified butter.



Engraved by W. J. Bennett

Drawn by W. Danielli, P.S.A.

Caravan at the Oasis

1851. A. S. W. B. 1851. 1851.



throat as if it had been a draught from the Amrita cup¹.

During the lory's sojourn in this sacred retreat, he witnessed sufficient to satisfy him that its present occupant, the reputed saint, was a great sinner, and would have been stigmatized as such, had the secrets of his dwelling passed beyond the portals of a place too much revered among pious Hindoos to be invaded by profane feet. Here, however, the Vedas lay perpetually open before the holy man, who allowed the worms to deposit their slime upon them, without offering to remove the unhallowed increment. The righteous bird was shocked at such a profanation of these celestial revelations; and, perceiving that the saint had fallen asleep after his refection, he hopped from the broken column upon the sacred volume, and read as follows:—

“ Possessed of innumerable heads, innumerable eyes, innumerable feet, Brahma fills the heavens and the earth. He is whatever was, whatever is, whatever will be. He is separate from all. In this separate state he exists in a threefold form, above the universe: the fourth part is transfused through the world. He is therefore called the Great Being. His command is as the water of life. From him proceeds the Viratoo-poorooshoo². He is the source of universal motion. He is not separate from the universe. He is the light of the moon, of the sun, of the fire, of the lightning, and of all that shines. The Veda is the breath of his nostrils. The primary elements are his sight. The agitation of human

¹ The cup of Immortality.

² The whole universe.

affairs is his laughter. His sleep is the destruction of the universe. In different forms he cherishes his creatures, as in the form of fire he digests their food ; in the form of air he preserves them in existence ; in the form of water he satisfies them ; in the form of the sun he assists them in the affairs of life ; and in the form of the moon he refreshes them with sleep ; the progression of time forms his footsteps ; all the gods are to him as sparks from fire. In the form of fire he cherishes the gods ; therefore I bow to him who is the universe. To the gods who dwell in heaven I bow. To the gods who dwell in space I bow. To the gods on earth I bow. To the regent of waters I bow. To the gods who guard the regions I bow¹.”

Veramarken having perused this holy passage with devout attention, perceived in a moment that it was his duty to bow without reservation to the determinations of the All-seeing, All-pervading, and Almighty one who governed heaven and earth. He learned from the inspired teacher, that patience was a cardinal duty, and therefore resolved henceforth to succumb meekly to the will of him who had smitten him hard in this life, for his better behoof in another. He had received a lesson which he trusted would make him wiser ; and, fluttering past the ear of the snoring devotee, who, awaking in terror, fancied he was within the gripe of the giant Ravana, flew out of the temple, and, rising above the clouds, was soon perched upon the parapet of his own palace.

¹ An extract from the Sama Veda.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOR some days the lory maintained his position on the palace roof, without suffering himself to be disconcerted by what was passing below; but after a while the sacred words of the Veda became fainter and fainter on the worn page of memory, and were at length effaced altogether. He could no longer endure the reflection of Youghal's baseness and the queen's delusion. It was intolerable; and he absolutely moulted with the agony of his thoughts. His eye grew dim, his wings drooped and dragged in the dust, his tail became thin and taper, and entirely lost its bloom. He fluttered from window to window of the palace, anxious to obtain an entrance into those chambers in which the queen and himself, in happier days, were in the habit of enjoying the pleasures of the purest domestic intercourse. The venetians remained still unbarred, as it was early morning, and the sun had not yet flung its beams over the distant hills; there was consequently no opening for the melancholy bird, which bruised its head and wings against the wooden laths that composed the blinds, in its unavailing efforts to enter the palace. It made the attempt at every window in vain. Finding there was no possibility of effecting

an entrance, it returned to the parapet, overcome with disappointment and vexation. Its beautiful throat swelled with impatience, and, with a scream of passion, it again tried the venetians, but without success.

At length, being denied access through the upper stories, the lory descended to the lower, where it was almost immediately caught by one of the menials, who, admiring the splendour of its plumage, was determined to present it to his royal mistress. The extraordinary beauty of the little captive became the talk of the kitchen, and the rumour of its gorgeous array soon reaching the queen's most gracious ears, she desired that it should be instantly brought into her presence. This being done, she placed it upon her finger, put her lips on its beak, and caressed it with unfeigned delight. The enraptured bird fluttered its wings, rubbed its head against her cheek, nibbled her smooth delicate hand, and exhibited a thousand expressive indications of ecstasy.

Maldavee was in a transport, so was the lory, who received the queen's caresses with a joy so excessive that the royal lady was half-persuaded the bird must be bewitched, as she had never before seen a dumb creature manifest such singular symptoms of gratification. She was, however, so captivated with its appearance, that she ordered it to be hung up in a gilded cage within her own private apartment, where the lory remained thenceforward a very unwilling prisoner. Its reflections were hourly embittered by the presence of the detestable Youghal. The queen was delighted with her beautiful captive, and the more so when she found it could speak her native lan-

guage with a fluency truly surprising, being apparently endowed not only with the faculty of speech, but of reason,—for it seemed to think as well as to talk. It was exhibited to every body who visited the palace, as a singular curiosity; and so rapidly did its fame travel over the world, that the Emperor of China was said to have offered ten of the chief cities of his empire, excepting only the capital, to be put in possession of so inestimable a treasure. The queen, however, not having much faith in the integrity of the Chinese monarch, chose to keep her bird, and allowed him to retain quiet possession of his ten cities, which she did not care to be at the trouble of governing.

The captive was so placed in the royal apartment, as to see and hear all that passed. Veramarken was therefore continually put into a state of great torment, at witnessing the usurpation of his rights by Youghal; and although Maldavee rigidly maintained her resolution of allowing to the counterfeit sovereign no greater privileges, except now and then a harmless salute, than to the humblest subject of the state, nevertheless, to see a low-born slave daily conversing familiarly with his queen, was a subject of incessant anguish to the caged monarch. Nothing could exceed his transports of indignation at beholding his menial assume the airs of royalty, and receive the cold, indeed, but nevertheless bestowed caresses of his consort; and though he knew them to be given merely to prevent the boisterous Youghal from insisting upon any further exercise of his usurped rights, still the sight was so agonizing, that the excited bird often stunned himself against the bars

of his gilded prison, in a paroxysm of unconquerable exasperation. He was, however, forced to endure these daily provocatives to passion, without an audible reproach, having no means of recovering his body, which he had relinquished in an unfortunate moment, for a mere idle visit to the skies, and which had been occupied by the most ambitious of slaves.

Having one day heard a domestic, who had been abused by his master, call him, in his absence, a mangy Pariah, whenever Youghal entered the apartment in presence of the queen, the lory continued to repeat this odious term of reproach. This so incensed the supposed monarch, that one morning, excited by the perpetual enunciation of such a degrading expression, he flung his slipper at the presumptuous offender, knocked the cage off the peg from which it was suspended, and was very nearly once more forcing the soul of Veramarken to seek another tenement. The captive was so stunned that it did not recover until it had lain upwards of a quarter of an hour in the warm bosom of the sorrowing Maldavee.

Although Youghal was elevated to a distinction beyond what he ever could have contemplated, and was in possession of a lovely bride, he still could not help now and then reflecting upon the interesting Mariatally, whom he had so cruelly consigned to an untimely grave. Neither the queen nor Veramarken's nephew had seen her when she was condemned to a barbarous death, the unrighteous judge being too conscious of the deep act of wrong he was committing, to allow either of them to be privy to it. He

deeply repented that he had so hastily given way to the exacerbations of unmanly fury ; for the lovely Pariah had really produced a strong impression upon his heart, though it had been blurred, not effaced, by ambition ; when, however, she dared to reject him, and treat his offers of love with animated scorn—when he heard from her lips a contemptuous resistance of his unhallowed passion, declared in the character of the royal devotee—his rage knew no bounds, and his affections became immediately swamped by the fierce impulses of vengeance. Gladly now would he have recalled the iniquitous judgment pronounced against that innocent maiden, under the rash suggestions of revenge. His recollection of her simple and unpretending beauty—of her artless and affectionate conversation, when he met her in the mountain village during the intervals of his master's penance—her confiding love,—all rushed to his recollection like a torrent, and bore upon his heart with a pressure which he could with difficulty resist. He perceived that the queen had no affection for him : she merely treated him with cold and formal respect, and he might just as well have had the privilege of calling a smooth but lifeless stone statue by the endearing name of wife, as the beautiful Maldavee. She would but seldom see him alone, and only when the entrance to her apartment was guarded by domestics who were frequently entering, and thus prevented those declarations of affection to which he was so anxious to give utterance.

Though playing the character of a king, Youghal felt that he was in reality a slave ; nevertheless, he was

determined not to relinquish any of the immunities which his basely usurped authority conferred upon him. In spite of the melancholy which frequently oppressed him, he was so elated with his new position, that his subjects began to murmur at his tyranny; even the queen already felt that, little though it was, she still had rather too much of his company, and consequently soon came to the resolution of having less. Her dislike of the counterfeit monarch increased daily, but she was afraid to exhibit the real state of her feelings, as he had already shown when under the excitement of vexation, that he could be more violent than became either a saint or a sovereign. There was a coarseness, too, in the general conduct of her no longer penitential husband, for which she could assign no satisfactory reason, as, with all his former austerity, there had been invariably blended a certain refinement of manner, showing that he was not only of princely lineage, but likewise of a courtly mind; for Veramarken traced his lineal descent direct from Gautama, one of the canonized penitents; and how to account for his sudden change was beyond the subtlest skill of her philosophy.

In proportion as the queen became frigid, the fictitious Veramarken grew irritable; there consequently occurred occasional jars betwixt the royal couple. The lory heard these bickerings, and the beatings of its heart ruffled the very feathers of its breast, as its ear caught the harsh accents with which the presumptuous menial treated his mistress, over whom he already began to exercise the severe dominion of a husband and of a master. This unusual

severity of treatment was so undisguised as to be observed and talked of among the domestics, who were, one and all, astonished at so strange an alteration in the Suniassi's character. Some of them ventured to surmise, that his soul, during one of its late absences from the body, instead of taking its flight to the Swerga, and holding communion with Suras and Devas, must have visited the regions of darkness, and formed an acquaintance with the evilly disposed inhabitants of Naraka.

These surmises of the servants, coming to the ears of Youghal, only rendered him the more tyrannical; and his frequent recollection of Mariataly's tenderness, compared with the repelling apathy of Maldavee, rendered him at once the victim of remorse and of anger. He was constantly abusing the queen. She, however, received the stern rebukes of her tyrant with passive endurance, scarcely condescending to utter a word, and thus aggravating that passion which, though she did not resist, she adopted no means to appease. It was not to be supposed that such conduct on the part of her presumed lord could either win her esteem or conciliate her good-will; on the contrary, her dislike increased with her patience under tyranny, until it grew at length into positive detestation. She could scarcely bear the sight of a man whose reputation for sanctity had spread from the Indus to the Ganges, and had even been heard of so far as the southern extremity of Hindostan. She no longer venerated one whose frame, formerly grim and ghastly with incessant and severe mortifications, had, by a long period of depraving

indulgence, grown to a comely obesity, which nevertheless was to her far more odious than the rigid angularity caused by a series of torturing inflictions.

Vitravinga, having retired from court, and being occupied with the society of the interesting Mariatally, knew little of what was passing at the palace. Rumour now and then conveyed to him the strange vagaries of his supposed uncle, leaving him at a loss to account for the lapse of so holy a being; still he did not suffer it to disturb the present even tenour of his own enjoyment. He was delighted with the prospect of soon becoming a happier man, being resolved to unite himself with the object who had so recently won his affections.

Youghal had now sufficient experience that the dislike of the royal consort was growing daily more confirmed, and this increased his irritability. He grew to the last degree morose, and took such pleasure in playing the despot, that the prisons were crammed with victims, and the arm of the executioner almost daily reeked with blood. His subjects were heard to murmur; smothered threats often broke forth from lips unaccustomed until now to any expressions towards the sovereign but those of veneration and affiance. Severe declarations of dissatisfaction were uttered without reserve, even within the walls of the palace. The domestics observed, with a significant shrug of the shoulder, or a no less intelligent compression of the eyelid, that things went on very differently now, since their master never quitted his capital, but indulged his criminal longings after those gratifications forbidden by the canons of the

sacred community, of which, until lately, he had been so distinguished a member, and for which prohibited indulgences he blushed not publicly to avow that he had a most ravenous appetite. They remembered with a sigh of unaffected despondency, how completely they had been left to their liberty, a privilege especially coveted by every class of domestics, whether confined within the torrid or the frigid zone, when the regal Suniassi was accustomed to retire to the jungle, in order to prepare his soul by devout abstractions for the paradise to which it had there established an admitted claim¹. He never then interfered with the innocent recreations either of his subjects or dependants. He thought of nothing but his devotions; all who preferred pleasure to piety were left to their own choice, without a word either of exhortation or enquiry. Now the tribunals were thronged with criminals; stripes were administered upon the backs of the refractory without stint or measure. The people were as familiar with oppression as with boiled rice; the scales of justice no longer hung upon an equal balance; the greatest abuses every where prevailed, and, consequently, universal discontent. The roads, which had formerly been so secure from the depredations of robbers, that the traveller might journey unmolested from one end to the other of the country, rendered sacred by the name of Veramarken the saint, were now infested by banditti, and murders nightly

¹ The Hindoos imagine, that by certain penances a positive right to enjoy the blessings of Paradise, is obtained by the Brahmins, which even the gods cannot set aside.

committed under the very walls of the capital. Lawyers began to multiply, and the business of the courts increased to an alarming extent. The leaven of dissatisfaction was manifestly heaving the vast mass of popular opinion, and the horrors of civil war were already anticipated by those political physicians, who, from incipient symptoms, boldly pronounce upon future results.

CHAPTER XIV.

To account for the sudden and unexpected change which had come over the spirit of their sovereign, puzzled all the conjurors; not one of them could unravel the mystery. Many ventured to imagine that the venerable Veramarken was under the influence of some of the emissaries of Yama, whose office it is to corrupt the souls of holy men, and seduce them to his infernal abodes. And, yet, how this should possibly happen to a man who had reached the extreme purity of a Suniassi, was too great a marvel to be reduced to so simple an elucidation. Yama could have no power over one who had obtained not only the sanction, but the fellowship of the celestial principalities, and had moreover performed those penances which rendered him impermeable by the assaults of evil. Besides, it was morally impossible that the soul of a pious penitentiary, who had rivalled each of the seven penitents in the severity of his mortifications, should, on a sudden, have abandoned the claims to which those mortifications entitled him, and have submitted to the dominion of that retributory divinity, presiding over the infernal prison of doomed souls, to whom he awards everlasting tortures.

No one could assign the true cause of that remarkable moral transformation, which had lately distinguished the conduct of their royal master, and general gloom prevailed. Commerce became languid; the cultivation of the land was neglected; the rains failed during one entire season, and famine was the consequence. Robberies and highway murders multiplied. The roads were so unsafe, that travellers were obliged to unite, and form caravans for their mutual safety. This state of things was truly deplorable; still the sovereign seemed to feel no sympathy for his unhappy people: he neither abridged his pleasures nor his expenses. His troops were kept in arrears, and his treasury was all but drained: the royal voluptuary, nevertheless, made no abatement in the extravagance of his pursuits.

Being informed of the great luxury in which Vitravinga lived, the fictitious monarch resolved to visit him, and, having privately made him acquainted with his determination, arrived on the following day without attendants at the beautiful mansion of the young Rajah. Though the visit was by no means desired by the latter, he received his imagined uncle with grave respect, but expressed no rapture at the latter's condescension. Youghal could not fail to observe that his presence was a restraint upon the prince; he, therefore, at once made up his mind, that on his return to the capital he would cut him off from the succession to the throne, and nominate some low-born fellow, in whose ignorance his tyranny should be forgotten. He still took care not to betray the feelings under which his bosom

was labouring, but affected the warmest satisfaction at his reception, and praised the excellent taste displayed in the general arrangement of Vitravinga's establishment.

The morning after Youghal had taken up his temporary abode at the residence of Veramarken's nephew, as he was strolling along the banks of the river, occupied in reflecting upon the late singular events of his life, and revolving new modes of enjoyment and of tyranny, a figure emerged from a small plantation of trees which skirted the stream, in whom he immediately recognized the form of one supposed to be either an inhabitant of paradise, or, much more likely, of the Gehenna of the Pariahs. He was astounded at the supposed vision, his tongue clove to his palate, his teeth gnashed against each other, his fingers were pressed convulsively into the palms of his hands. He had started so violently at the sight of such an unexpected apparition, that his turban flew from his brows into the stream, leaving the dark naked scalp exposed to the fierce sunshine, and with a suppressed scream he dropped upon the earth, as if shot with a cannon-ball. Upon raising his head after an interval of several seconds, he found that the object of his terror and surprise had disappeared. This was a relief from the apprehension which fell upon his heart with the weight and pressure of a mountain. He breathed once more freely, still the blood galloped through his veins with painful precipitation. He was satisfied that a disembodied spirit had appeared to him, and, although he had, fortunately as he was wont to think, beheld the Suniassi disengage

his soul from his body, and had himself performed a similar miracle, yet, as he knew that Pariahs were not in the habit of returning to earth after they had been once placed under the vigilant guardianship of death, he apprehended that some fearful calamity must be about to befall him, of which this appearance from the grave was the awful announcement.

He returned to the young Rajah more than usually grave; but though his disquietude was sufficiently indicated in his countenance, Vitavinga took no notice of the circumstance, and Youghal therefore concluded that his distress had escaped observation. It was, however, so obvious, that it could not elude the keen observation of one used to study mankind with too accurate a scrutiny to be easily blinded by an assumption of indifference, when the bosom was labouring under positive oppression. Youghal was wretched the whole day, until a beam of hope that the beautiful Pariah might still live passed into his heart. If so, the person whom he had sent to superintend her funeral must have deceived him, but he knew his fidelity too well to allow him to calculate upon this as very probable; still it might have so happened. Determined to ascertain a fact which now so nearly interested him, he quitted the young Rajah's abode, and repaired without delay to the capital, when, having summoned his confidential agent, this man confirmed, in a most satisfactory manner, the burial of the beloved, but ill-requited Mariataly.

Youghal was superstitious, and therefore readily persuaded to any thing foreboded by his fears. He

was now daily and nightly haunted by the image of his late victim, and this additional accession of unhappiness only rendered him the more tyrannical at home, and arrogant abroad. The day after his return to the palace, as he was entering by the garden-gate, the same apparition, which had so terrified him on the previous morning, again appeared before him. Rushing into the house, he alarmed the queen with the portentous loudness of his cries. All thought him mad. He foamed at the mouth, struck down an attendant who attempted to hold a bottle of perfume under his nose, and became so violent, that it was thought necessary to strap him down to a bed. He was outrageous at this presumption; and his apparent frenzy was aggravated, when he heard the queen order her domestics, who had thus secured him, to tighten the straps if he showed symptoms of increasing violence. He was thus soon tamed by the severity of the discipline to which his attendants subjected him, and which, after a few hours' endurance, had become so intolerable, that he begged most piteously to be released. For some time no attention was paid to his applications, until the kind-hearted Maldavee, being at length moved at witnessing his sufferings, ordered him to be unstrapped. When the bands were removed from Youghal's limbs, his whole body was so stiff, that he could scarcely stir a muscle; but, after a little exercise, the power of motion returned, though the stiffness continued for several days.

The quondam slave did not regain his mental equanimity with his bodily ease. The indignity to

which he had been so unceremoniously subjected, only rendered him the more petulant and intemperate. He was, however, so much awed by the apparent visitation of Mariataly from the dead, that it tended somewhat to subdue his asperity, which was now often overborne by his terrors. He had made the minutest inquiries concerning that maiden's burial, and received such circumstantial details of the whole process, separately examining all who were present, that he could no longer entertain any doubt of the fact of her having been committed to the earth with the corpse of her lover. He was from this time a prey to the most tormenting superstition, which aggravated the infirmities of his temperament, and rendered him positively odious. The queen shunned his presence, except upon those occasions when she was obliged to endure it for the sake of keeping up the forms of state ceremony. Being haunted by the perpetual presence of her whom he had doomed to such an unjust and cruel death, the life of Youghal was becoming one protracted interval of torture, which he knew not how to support. He more than once thought of hanging himself with a golden cord, but had not resolution to die; he feared to meet the spirits of the wronged Veramarken and still more injured Mariataly. Although perceiving himself to be universally hated, he was so constantly a prey to irritation, that he could not now bend his fierce temper to conciliate the good opinion of any one. Passing one day into his garden, attended by a couple of guards, his turban was struck from his head by an arrow, the barb of which was found lodged in

the folds. The garden was searched, and a man dragged from beneath a ruined bath, who confessed that he had aimed at the life of his sovereign, as he considered such a tyrant unfit to live. He declined making any further disclosure, and was immediately strangled.

This little incident awakened the terrified slaveking to a sense of his danger, and he determined for the future to confine himself within the palace walls. The constant fear of assassination divided his thoughts with the apparition of the murdered Pariah, so that he enjoyed not a moment's peace. He felt he had gone too far to retreat, for, under existing circumstances, kindness towards the subjects of Veramarken would only beget suspicion of some sinister intention, and thus he would be the less respected in proportion as he became less severe. He had, therefore, no just motive for changing the tactics of his government, his tyrannies were consequently continued without abatement. But retribution had already overtaken him. How did he deplore the act which had endowed him with the power of sovereignty! Gladly would he at this moment return to his former condition of humble innocence, blessed with the love of one, who was as good as she was beautiful, and without a care to disturb the equable current of his existence. This was impossible, as with his own hand he had deprived his body of life, so that his soul could not now return to it. There remained no alternative but death as a release from the miseries which he had accumulated upon himself. His life was every hour becoming less

and less endurable. In every shadow he saw an assassin. No one dared to smile in his presence, but he suspected it to be the silent triumph of anticipation—a proof of desire for his destruction. Gravity of demeanor was no less painful to him, as it suggested the suspicion of sinister forethought. He lost both his appetite and his flesh. The body of Vermarken soon returned to the same angular, attenuated outline which it exhibited ere possessed by the spirit of Youghal. Ulcers broke out in his glands, draining him of his strength, and nothing seemed to nourish him. His shadow, as he paced in the sunlight the verandah of his master's palace, showed him that he exhibited the gaunt anatomy so approved by sainted Suniassis, and was no longer of a form to captivate women, or elicit the admiration of men.

Mariatally's appearance near the garden gate, which had so disturbed the conscience of Youghal, may here be accounted for. Observing that he had been so overcome with terror at seeing her on the bank of the river, under the conviction that she was dead, and knowing that in almost every instance those men, whose lives have been devoted to penance, are the slaves of superstition, she determined to strengthen the impression which the unexpected sight of her had already produced upon her late inexorable judge. Putting on, therefore, the clothes she wore when he condemned her to be buried alive, and having rubbed her face with a white powder, she placed herself near the entrance of the garden about the time he was expected to return from a public audience of the court functionaries ; and

perceiving that his terror was again excited by the unexpected presence of a form which he had once professed to adore, while his attendants were engaged about their terrified master, she passed suddenly round a small building that stood near, and darting down a long, narrow street, secured her retreat without any suspicion being raised in the mind of Youghal of her actual proximity. Having ascertained, by the gossips of the royal household, that the counterfeit monarch was fully convinced he had seen her apparition, she retired to her humble retreat near the river.

CHAPTER XV.

MEANWHILE things did not improve at the palace. In proportion as Youghal grew imperious, Maldavee became cold. This so irritated the impatient tyrant, that one day, in the vehemence of his anger, he struck her rudely on the cheek. She reddened with indignation, but said calmly,

“If this is the issue of such long periods as you have professedly passed in sacred penance, I tell you freely, that I believe you have imposed upon me, and upon your subjects; for no one who had once really received the approbation of celestial Powers could be guilty of an act, not only so unbecoming a saint, but which would degrade the lowest ruffian in your wicked majesty’s dominions.”

This reproof only the more incensed the fictitious potentate, and he repeated his violence with increased severity. The lory, which happened to be at that moment perched upon the top of its cage, for it was frequently released from confinement during the day, seeing the assault, could no longer restrain itself, but flying from its perch, seized the nose of the uncourtly ruffian in its beak, and tore off the whole cartilage; then, fluttering for an instant, darted, with a scream of triumph, through a window that happened

to be open, and alighted on the top of a tall cedar-tree in the garden, where it was beyond the immediate reach of Youghal's wrath. The latter, smarting under the laceration, seized a matchlock, inlaid with gold, which hung loaded in an ante-room, and discharged it at the offender, but the ball was turned aside by the benignant Bhavani. The beautiful bird quitting its place of retreat, flew to the palace roof, and perched upon the cupola, where it was further removed from danger. It was some consolation to the unquiet soul of Veramarken, to think that a signal mark of his vengeance had been inflicted upon the cowardly tyrant, which he would carry with him to his grave.

"Suppose," thought the feathered penitent, "I should be restored to that sainted body which my spirit so unfortunately quitted, shall I not deplore the loss of my nose? The queen would surely never tolerate a husband without a nose: thus, in punishing the brutality of my slave, I have been imposing a grievous penalty upon myself. What will my subjects say to a sovereign without a nose? What will my domestics say to a master without a nose? But I am not a mere animal, of comely parts, designed for men and maidens to gaze at; mine is an existence devoted to bodily privation, and, therefore, what is the use of so insignificant a member? Away, then, with such vain regrets. But how am I ever to regain possession of my earthly tenement? There is not the slightest chance of this, for the wretch who has taken up his spiritual habitation in the once uncontaminated frame of the devoutest of Suniassis, knows

too well the advantages of his transmutation, to relinquish them."

The miserable lory ruffled its plumes, drooped its head upon its bright crimson breast, closed its eyes, and raised one leg preparatory to taking a short repose, in order to forget its misfortunes. All would not do; sleep that comes to all, hung not upon its weary eyelids, and the unhappy sufferer was forced to think upon what it had lost by neglecting a young and lovely consort for the society of celestial associates, in regions beyond the firmament. Whilst occupied by these melancholy reflections, a noise caught its ear, which sounded like vehement expressions of anger. Hopping from the apex of the cupola to the coping of the parapet, upon which it perched, and looking down into the spacious court below, it perceived the incensed Youghal issue from the palace with a large yellow plaster of turmeric upon the spot where the nasal organ lately projected, giving his orders in a tone of frantic excitement, that his tormentor should be instantly pursued and its neck wrung.

The lory, in the midst of its distress, was rejoiced to hear that its treacherous enemy was suffering a retribution, however inadequate to his deserts; but not content with having disfigured the angry traitor, it seized a loose piece of stone from the parapet wall, hovered over Youghal's head, and, as the smarting tyrant raised his eyes, dropped the hard fragment with so true an aim, that it fell directly upon the turmeric plaster, which had been spread upon the chasm lately covered by a tolerably well

shaped feature. The shock was so great, that the counterfeit monarch fell writhing with agony, but, quickly recovering, he rose in a paroxysm of fury, and cried with a voice that terrified the trembling domestics,—

“If I have not the head of that treacherous bird ere the sun rises from behind yonder forest, every face that has a living tongue in it within these walls, shall grin upon spikes for the benefit of the vultures before the next dawn.”

“Cree, cree, cree!” screamed the lory.

“Thou black agent of Yama,” exclaimed Youghal, fiercely, placing his finger upon the turmeric plaster, which covered a large portion of his face, at the same time reminding him of his loss, “if I had thy neck betwixt my fingers, I would squeeze the life through thy nostrils, and still thy music for ever. Dogs,” he roared, elevating his voice to its extremest extension, “bring me yonder demon under a bird’s feathers,” pointing at his tormentor, “before sunrise, or you may look for your next night’s lodging on the dunghill; and you ought to know by this time that I don’t often forget to keep my word.”

“Cree, cree, cree!” shrieked the lory, and, darting upwards, was in a few moments above the clouds. The king grew more frantic than ever; a sudden pang painfully calling his attention to the absence of his nose, rendered him almost beside himself, for he was sadly mortified at appearing so mutilated before the fastidious Maldavee, who evidently would not think him improved, by having a hideous gap in his coun-

tenance, instead of the protuberance which nature had placed there, both as an ornament and as a vehicle of sense. He roared and skipped about as if he had been bitten by a tarantula, swore and thumped his attendants with his embroidered slippers, because nothing better happened to be at hand; but this producing no sensible impression, he seized between his teeth the right ear of one of his confidential domestics, and bit it with such hearty goodwill, that the poor fellow dropped upon his knees in an agony of reverential alarm, imploring hastily for a remission of the penalty to which his exasperated master was subjecting him.

There was evidently no catching the winged fugitive, which had effectually made its escape. This obvious fact did not abate the determination of the counterfeit Veramarken to have the author of his disfigurement captured before the ensuing dawn; he consequently repeated his threats of execution, should his commands not be performed by the time specified.

When Youghal re-entered the palace, the domestics looked at each other with dismay, knowing the utter impossibility of performing his bidding; and having death before their eyes, not one of them was able to eat his dinner, a meal in which all generally used to show such an aptitude of manducation as would have astonished a German dragoon, or a French homme de cuisine. They knew not how to proceed, and after much reasoning, one and all determined to quit the palace before sunrise, should

their master continue in the same mind. Having come to this prudent resolution, by supper-time every one had recovered his appetite.

The spoiling of his countenance, instead of awakening the regal tyrant to a proper sense of duty, only rendered him the more violent and headstrong. He treated the unhappy Maldavee, at length, with such ruffian severity, because she adhered firmly to her resolution of remaining, as she had continued from the first, a virgin queen, that she avoided his presence altogether. This so incensed him beyond all bounds, that he ordered her to be confined to her chamber, and treated like a criminal. Here, though refused the consolation of intercourse with her confidential attendants, she was nevertheless free from the intrusion of an unholy and licentious man, who, by his recent profligacy, had altogether belied his title to the claims of sanctification. She had leisure to think more upon the vanity of all earthly pleasures than the pomps of royalty had hitherto permitted; and her pure mind, naturally inclined to love virtue for its own sake, and really free from the grosser elements of vice, soon subsided into that calm of religious resignation, which is the characteristic only of amiable and uncontaminated hearts. Whatever might be the issue of her determination, with reference to the supposed Veramarken, she resolved to adhere to it, even should he condemn her to death; for not only had he now become so odious to her as to be personally offensive, but when she entered into marriage bonds, it was only as an exercise of his forbearance, and a protection to her chastity, until death should

waft him to the world of immortals, and leave her to a new choice,—an issue which would bring the most powerful princes at her feet, as the greatest of monarchs would glory in the pre-eminent privilege of bestowing his name and fortune upon the beautiful widow of a royal Suniassi.

To this anticipated futurity, the captive Maldavee now looked forward with more eager longing than ever, and her expectations had some ground for encouragement, from the dissipation in which the presumed monarch indulged, and more especially since his wound, the lacerated parts having inflamed to such a degree, that the royal surgeon entertained serious apprehensions of a mortification.

When this was announced to the imprisoned queen she did not utter a word, but thought, notwithstanding, that it would be a serious mortification to her, should the fears of the medical attendant not prove prophetic. The hoped-for issue, to her extreme disappointment, did not come to pass. The skill of the renowned Jemadivishtha, aided by the infallible cataplasm of turmeric, kept off the dreaded enemy, and a few strong doses of abstergent compound proved in the end so perfect a therapeutic that the noseless sovereign was once more enabled to swallow raw arrack without the apprehension of immediate dissolution. Still the stump of his nose afforded no indication of ever again projecting into a comely feature. Youghal gave a general entertainment to the court to signalise his cure, at which, having rewarded the surgeon with an opium-case of gold inlaid with pearls, he drank himself stone-blind, and

was carried to bed by four sturdy hamauls¹, who would fain have dropped their burden over the stairs, and thus have ridded the state of a royal nuisance.

¹ Palankeen-bearers.

CHAPTER XVI.

MEANWHILE the lory, having flown above the planets, uttered the Mandiram. The soul of Veramarken instantly quitted it, and ascended to the celestial Bhavani, who received her favoured votary with that divine courtesy for which she has ever been remarkable among the three millions and thirty divinities worshipped by all pious Hindoos. No sooner had Veramarken's spirit abandoned the lory's feathers, than the lifeless bird dropped into the court of the palace, where it was picked up by that unfortunate domestic whose ear had been bitten by his master. The overjoyed menial took the bird to the royal sufferer, who seized it with a grin of savage triumph, and ordering it to be stuffed with pepper, had it hung up in the chamber where Maldavee was now a prisoner, as a memorial of accomplished revenge; but how inadequate did he feel such a completion of vengeance to be to the offence which had so marred the harmony of his countenance. Though the wound eventually healed favourably, as we have already shown, still the cicatrice, which remained in spite of the greatest chirurgical skill, presented a frightful chasm betwixt the eyes and upper lip, where the olfactory member formerly rested, and

which he could not persuade to grow again. So great was his disfigurement, that women generally ran from him as they would from a wild beast; this so outraged his vanity that he ordered his face to be scarified, and poultices of emollient herbs applied, in order to induce the lost ornament to extend itself as formerly. Nothing would do: the rent nostrils gaped horribly, and the mortified tyrant shrank from the reflection of his own face whenever he stood before a mirror, or took his bath in the marble sarcophagus within the palace-garden.

Although Veramarken's spirit was at this moment in the paradise of the incomparable Bhavani—incomparable even among divinities—in community with the loveliest of her celestial ministrants, it was still more miserable than if it had been undergoing the most dreadful inflictions in that abode of Yama, where sinful souls are tortured so variously as to do infinite credit to the ingenuity of that deity's ministers, who have the supervision of twenty-one separate hells, in which they exercise their everlasting and omnipotent vengeance. He wandered about the celestial groves as moodily as if he were in a wilderness upon earth, instead of being in a mansion of bliss above the skies, and took no more notice of the exquisite forms of beatified women, by which he was surrounded, than if they had been so many painted butterflies or floating lotuses¹. Bhavani, having summoned him to her presence, thus addressed the ejected soul of her pious adorer.

¹ The lotus is held sacred among the Hindoos.

“ Spirit of Veramarken, the holiest Suniassi that ever paid homage at my shrine upon earth, or obtained admission to my presence in the skies ;—who, when in the body, thy absence from which thou now so grievously mournest, hast lain six hours upon a bed of iron spikes without wincing, and drunk more putrid water from the sacred Ganges than any penitentiary since the first coming of Menu ¹,—do not let me see thee thus despond. Thou mayest still regain thy former position upon earth, if thou art not too impatient under thy present bereavement, which is nothing more than a further trial of thy perfect consummation of Suniassiism. Listen to what I counsel thee, and remember that the infallible wisdom of divinities renders their counsel worth attending to ; remember likewise that to despise it is to provoke certain and irremediable calamity. He who was once thy slave is already a miserable man. The trappings of royalty hang upon him with the weight of an elephant’s hide, and he is nearly crushed beneath the burden. In spite of all his struggles he cannot release himself from the fatal incumbrance which he has cast upon his own shoulders. He has not only rendered himself odious to his subjects, but despised by thy nephew and detested by thy queen. Descend then upon earth, and hover near him in thy invisibility, for it is not unlikely that he, disgusted with his present condition, and maddened by the intolerable torment to which thou hast it in thy power to subject him, may eject his own spirit, in order to visit the Swerga,

¹ The Noah of the Hindoos, and their great lawgiver.

when thou mayest immediately take possession of thy untenanted body, and be as happy as the state of a Suniassi can render thee."

Veramarken took this advice of the goddess, and immediately quitted her immortal abode. When he came in sight of earth, he perceived an assemblage of persons approaching the banks of the river which flowed in the neighbourhood of his capital. His curiosity being attracted by so unusual a sight, he rested upon a small hill, near the spot, in the form of a silvery mist. From so near a vicinity he could readily distinguish all that passed, and soon discovered that his nephew Vitravinga had just completed his marriage. He shortly ascertained the name of the bride to be Rheti, (for Mariataly had assumed this name since her unexpected release from the grave,) and that she was a Brahminee of great beauty and wisdom. It was some consolation to the uncle's disconsolate soul to know that his relative, whom he sincerely loved for his numerous good qualities, was likely to increase his stock of happiness. Rising from the hill, and being reduced again to an invisible essence, the disembodied spirit floated over the capital, and entering the palace, hovered round the head of Youghal, who felt in consequence such a perpetual whizzing in his ears that he was in a state of unceasing torment. First the doctors, then the conjurors were consulted, but neither could afford him relief. He drank arrack, and swore like a Poliar¹, but neither was of any avail. Day after day

¹ The Poliaris are a most brutalised tribe of Pariahs.

he was tormented with this new visitation, until his life was a positive burden. From constant vexation he grew rickety, as if second childhood had suddenly come upon him. His body became flaccid, his limbs stiff, his appetite capricious, and his voice hollow. His nights were sleepless, and his days without a beam of joy to gladden them. His withered cheeks were stained with the tears of unuttered grief, and his breast laboured with perpetual sighs. His legs tottered under him, so that they would scarcely bear his shrunken and enfeebled frame. A terrible retribution had fallen upon him. He was forced to take a review of the past, in spite of his desire to expel its recurrence from his thoughts. There was no evading the retrospect. Crimes committed, and never to be revoked, started up like so many hideous spectres before his imagination, and tortured him with perpetual visions of terror. He saw every thing as if through an unilluminated atmosphere, in which no objects were distinguishable save those that especially referred to him, in some shape or other, presenting an appalling phantasmagoria. His melancholy was morbid and soul-subduing. He bowed in craven fear before the gods of his idolatry, but they heard not his invocations, and the true God allowed not such prayers as his to rise to the throne of mercy as a propitiation for sins repented of only under the awful visitation of terror, but from no principle of piety or of devout affiance. He felt that his supplications were disregarded, and, therefore, resorted to the delusions of superstition to heal those sores of a festered conscience not to be medicated by

the breath of hypocrisy, nor closed by the amulets or charms of sycophantic priests, who offered their implorations for his recovery, not only to an unknown, but to an untrue God.

The miserable man was indeed an object of compassion. His life was so insupportable that he at length came to the resolution to avail himself of the power he possessed of disembodying his harassed spirit, now associated with so much misery, and seek, for a while, the heaven of Indra, supposing that by this time Veramarken had ceased to entertain any further thoughts of returning to earth. As his thoughts were uttered aloud, the Suniassi's spirit buzzed with more than usual energy about the ears of his irritated slave, in order that the latter might not relinquish a resolution, the accomplishment of which was exceedingly desirable to the injured monarch, whose form and lineaments his confidant had so treacherously assumed. The thought of being denied admission into the Swerga alone caused Youghal to hesitate. His numerous malversations crowded painfully upon his memory. Fear fell on his heart, and chilled it as he reflected upon his probable chance of a happy immortality; but while he was thus anxiously deliberating, the buzzing increased to such an insupportable degree, that in a moment of agonizing excitement he uttered the potent Mandiram. Instantly his soul was disengaged from the frame of the Suniassi, which that of Veramarken immediately entered. The latter's disappointment, however, was extreme on finding that he continued an object of revolting deformity. He had ventured to hope

that upon regaining possession of his fleshly tenement, it would be restored precisely to what it had been ere he quitted it; but this expectation was grievously defeated. The noblest feature of his countenance had disappeared, and nothing but a miracle could restore it. His sighings did not cause the unsightly scar to disappear, nor the vehicle of a most agreeable sense to elongate into exact proportion and beauty. His tears did not remove decrepitude from his limbs, impart firmness to his disorganised muscles, nor texture to his relaxed fibres. Without a nose, covered with disease from head to foot, palsied and enfeebled to the last degree, detested by his queen, and despised by his subjects, how small was his prospect of happiness! He repaired to the apartment of Maldavee, who had lately been released from confinement by order of the penitential Youghal, but she shrank from the true saint with the same undisguised disgust as she had exhibited towards the counterfeit; and when he attempted to explain that his soul had been separated from her for a long interval, and his body possessed by that of his slave, she turned from him with a look of scornful incredulity, which at once convinced him she was not to be persuaded to receive, as truth, a fact so entirely out of the ordinary course of nature.

The spirit of Youghal, being released from that wretched incumbrance of flesh which had lately imprisoned it, ascended above the earth towards Indra's paradise, but during its flight thither was considerably embarrassed by apprehensions of its re-

ception by the presiding deity of that celestial abode. It felt by no means certain of admission, charged as it was with the contamination of numberless crimes which had never been even repented of, and being, therefore, utterly unfit to associate with beings spiritualised to the highest degree of purity. In proportion as it neared the goal, alike of its fears and of its hopes, its flight became more tardy and hesitating. It at length reached the entrance of the Swerga, guarded by the eight-headed horse and the mighty Vajrapani, armed with a thunderbolt which he was ready to launch against profane intruders. The moment the soul of Youghal presented itself at the heavenly portal, the thunderbolt was hurled. This, being tempered by divine hands above the material elements, was of such subtly permeating power that it was capable of "perforating a sound¹," and of dividing every several vibration. The soul of the unrighteous slave fell before the shock of that celestial missile, and shot like a falling star to the earth, being sensible of the keenest spiritual torment. Its worst fears were realised. It was a doomed thing, from which hope was withdrawn for ever, abandoned to a fearful, but merited, retribution.

¹ The Hindoo poets assert that the arrows of their canonised hero, Rama, are capable of "perforating a sound."

CHAPTER XVII.

ALTHOUGH Veramarken had regained possession of his empire, and of his queen, he was nevertheless more miserable than during the term of his exanimation, when doomed, in the form of a lory, to witness the daily abominations of his slave. Sick at heart under the combined sufferings of mental and bodily infirmity, he summoned all the celebrated physicians in his dominions to restore him to health and to his nose, or rather his nose to him; but they could neither give him back that which had been so wantonly dissipated, nor furnish him with a new feature. The sagest of the Hindoo faculty admitted with one accord that his loss was utterly irreparable. The wretched Suniassi now found, that, by resuming his original form, instead of regaining his former happiness he had only secured additional misery; and the melancholy which constantly preyed upon his mind aggravated the infirmity of his frame. He grew hourly worse, and at length began to apprehend that he had resumed his body only to yield it up a prey to the great conqueror death. This was a grievous affliction, for he had a young wife on whom he doated; and having not yet numbered more than five-and-forty years, his

meridian of existence being consequently but just past, he had promised himself a still long interval of enjoyment, having, immediately before his last separation of soul and body, determined to relinquish the severe life of a devotee for the more befitting dignities of a sovereign.

The merciful Bhavani, compassionating his sufferings, condescended to visit him in his palace, invisible to all eyes but his own.

“Veramarken,” she cried, with a bland smile, “thou hast sufficiently suffered, and wilt shortly obtain the reward of thy commendable resignation. Obey my injunctions, and thou shalt yet be happy ere thou takest possession of that everlasting inheritance allotted to so worthy a Suniassi in the abode of the beatified. So soon as the sun peeps from yonder plain, flooding it with its golden rays, repair to the chamber of thy queen, and stand boldly before her in all thy present bodily deformity. She will taunt thee with thy infirmities. Remembering the tyranny exercised by thy late slave under thy semblance, she will perhaps defy thee with lofty contempt and virulent bitterness of reproach; but whilst thy ears receive the taunts of her insulting scorn, should she assail thee with them, invoke my name, and instantly the glow of youth shall suffuse thy cheeks, which shall swell to the nicest undulations of beauty. Thy nose shall be restored to such perfection of shape and expression as to baffle the limner’s art. Thy limbs shall assume the roundness and proportions of the most admirable symmetry; thy breath shall exhale the perfume wafted from the spicy

groves of Arabia the happy :—in sum, thou shalt be the envy of man, the admiration of woman, and the idol of thy now detesting queen.”

The delighted monarch was revived by these assurances, and as the benign divinity vanished from his sight, he offered up a thanksgiving accompanied by a mantra, to which none but a Suniassi could give utterance. The thought of appearing before the lovely Maldavee under such a favourable aspect of renovated youth as should retrieve her affections, so animated his frame, that he moved with more energy than he had exhibited since his restoration to mortality; and from so auspicious a prelude to the issue promised by the immortal Bhavani, he did not entertain the slightest doubt of becoming a much better looking prince than he had been even in the hey-day of life, when his mortifications had only just been sufficiently severe to keep his body in a state of pure health and thus of juvenile comeliness. The confidence of an immediate completion of the divine prophecy imparted such lustre to his eyes, that they looked as if they had been appropriating a ray from the bright sunbeams which danced like a host of immortal intelligences on the clear stream that watered the palace garden.

According to the injunction of his celestial mistress, Veramarken appeared at the time specified before his royal consort, and besought her to look upon him with an eye of pity at least, if not with affection.

“I am, indeed,” he exclaimed, tenderly, “a pitiable object. I know myself to be unworthy of thy

love, as I have lately appeared to thy deluded sight ; but deign to confide in my professions, and you shall soon receive proof that I am not undeserving of that confidence which I value far more than existence.”

Maldavee listened to his eager importunity ; she was moved by the earnest humility of his appeal, and, bending her beautiful eyes upon him, said, in a tone of unwonted gentleness,—

“ If I have lately looked upon you with unusual coldness, you must admit your harshness has provoked it, for it is not in my nature to be cruel to those who have never been unkind. Had you not played the tyrant, I never should have played the scorner. As, however, you appear sensible that your conduct has been unjustifiable, assure yourself of my unqualified forgiveness, though the deformity, both moral and physical, which your unhallowed indulgences have brought upon you, positively repel my love.”

“ Nay, Maldavee, you are still under a delusion ; I have allowed myself no unhallowed indulgences. A menial’s soul has been in possession of my body, and degraded it by the most abominable pollutions.”

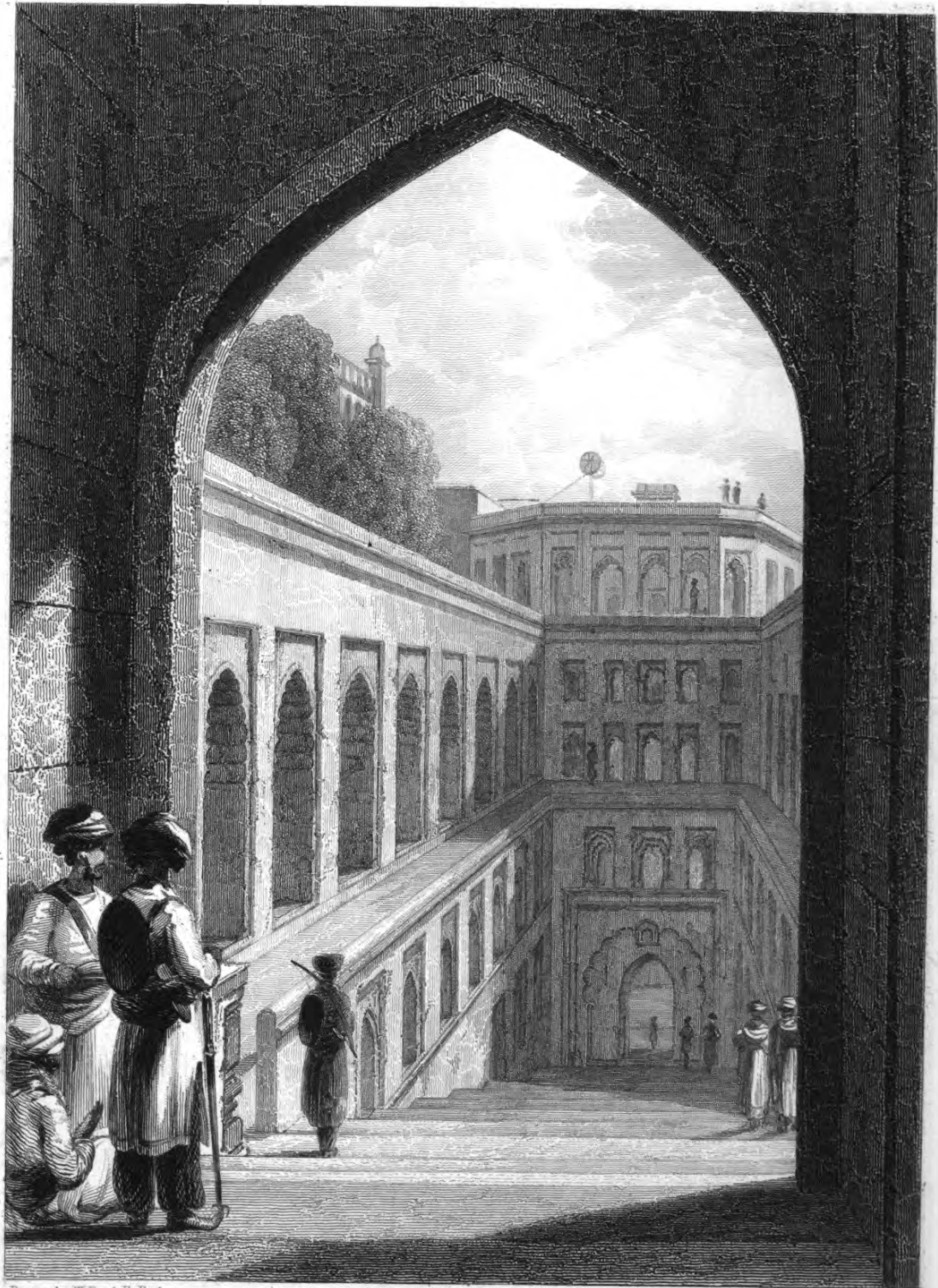
“ This attempt at deception,” replied the gentle queen, her indignation gradually rising to a climax, “ will only whet my hatred to a keener edge ; you had better, therefore, not attempt to confirm the unfavourable opinion which I have been but too well justified in forming.”

Whilst she was yet speaking, Veramarken loudly invoked the goddess who had so eminently befriended him. As he enunciated her potential name

the apartment was irradiated with unearthly light. Maldavee, attracted by the muttering of her degraded lord, turned, and, looking earnestly upon him, to her astonishment beheld a miracle which no less amazed than delighted her. The shrunken and diseased form of Veramarken suddenly rounded; his flesh assumed the tension of vigorous health; the skin tightened, the muscles protruded, the eyes grew bright, the nose was gradually developed; the whole body quickly exhibited the exactest symmetry, and the Suniassi stood before her in the perfection of youthful beauty. Notwithstanding the change, his identity was not to be mistaken. The marks of his long and holy penances were still upon his back and limbs. The queen was amazed, but delight soon overmastering her astonishment, she sprang towards her royal consort, and threw herself passionately into his arms. Their happiness was now complete, and the piety of the regal ascetic rewarded.

It has been already said that the spirit of Youghal was expelled from the Swerga, as unfit for its purity, by the thunderbolt of Vajrapani. The doomed soul, after its rapid descent to earth, upon entering the palace, was overwhelmed with consternation at finding the Suniassi had once more occupied his own body, in which he was restored to the confidence both of his queen and of his subjects. The spirit of the menial, after floating about the capital of Veramarken like pestilential miasma, was compelled to enter the trunk of a lean ox, which was daily driven to a well in the suburbs





Drawn by W. Daniell, R.A.

Engraved by J. C. Armytage

A celebrated Well at Mecca

of the city, where it was attached to a rope and obliged to draw water from morning till night, being sparingly fed and unsparingly belaboured.

This well, of which there is now one exactly similar at Lucknow, was covered by a lofty tower, four stories high, composed of beautiful and compact stonework. From the second and third stories branched, on either side, two broad conduits, which conveyed water through the most populous districts of the city; from these the less populous quarters were supplied. Those conduits were raised on arches, forming a narrow area of great length, at the end of which there was a descent by steps to the mouth of the well, where hundreds of women filled their water-vessels morning and evening, the water supplying the conduits being raised by bullock labour. Here Youghal daily toiled; the groans of his incarcerated soul were neither pitied nor heeded, and when death released it from one body, it occupied another still lower in the scale of animal existence, and will thus continue until it shall have completed its cycle of transmigration, when it will take its everlasting abode in the infernal Lohangaraka, over which the implacable Yama presides.

Vitravinga was perfectly happy with his beautiful Rheti, whom he loved no less for her virtues than for her beauty. She communicated to him the events of her past life with ingenuousness and without disguise. The idea of her having been a Pariah was at first a little oppugnant to the high brahminical prejudices of the young Rajah; but when he considered that she had been visited by the omnipotent

Vishnoo, who pronounced her to have obtained the state of Brahmachari, or, in other words, to have become a member of the sacred caste of Brahmins, those prejudices at once subsided, never again to be revived. He had no reason to regret his alliance with this interesting and lovely girl. Their mutual affection strengthened daily. There existed the most perfect confidence between them, and not a month passed over his head in which Vitravinga did not feel what good reason he had for blessing the dispensations of the merciful Vishnoo, who had linked his destiny with one so lovely and virtuous as the once degraded Mariataly. A year after their marriage, she blessed him with a son. Veramarken associated his nephew in the government, invested him with kingly honours, and declared him his successor in case Maldavee should fail of issue. Nothing could exceed the harmony in which the two families dwelt together. The fame of Veramarken's and Vitravinga's government spread throughout Hindostan. The state soon recovered from the confusion into which it had fallen during the tyrannical administration of Youghal. The laws were administered, justice was dispensed, crime was punished, prosperity once more smiled in the cities, and prolific harvests waved in the fields. The traveller might now pass from one end of the Suniassi's dominions to the other without molestation. Universal satisfaction again prevailed. The wife of Vitravinga bore him many children; the queen of his uncle continued unfruitful, nevertheless nothing could exceed their mutual affection.

The devotee had, from the moment of his restoration to comeliness and health, relinquished his penances, so that he enjoyed for years, with scarcely any perceptible diminution, the boon which had been so unexpectedly bestowed upon him. Maldavee retained her beauty until the meridian of life had been long passed. The love of Vitravinga and Rheti did not abate with the advance of time; they were proud of each other, and their beautiful family was as much the pride of the uncle and aunt, as of the father and mother. The nation looked forward in them to a long and prosperous succession. The virtues of this happy family, contrasted with the late vices of Youghal, afforded occasion for a pertinent Hindoo proverb:—"The lustre of a virtuous character cannot be defaced, nor the vices of the vicious ever become lucid. A jewel preserves its lustre though trodden in the dirt, but a brass pot, though placed on the head, remains brass still."

From this time forward, until they were visited by the angel of death, the lives of Veramarken and Maldavee, Vitravinga and Rheti, were uniformly happy.

THE
OMRAH OF CHANDAHAR,
A MOHAMMEDAN ROMANCE.

CHAPTER I.

THE wind howled fiercely through the forests of Chandahar. The trees bowed their lofty heads to the earth, and many were upheaved by the terrible assaults of the blast, casting their huge bodies upon the drenched earth, and crushing the tenderer growth of the forest under the pressure of their proud and ponderous crests, beneath which the wild elephant and scarcely less gigantic rhinoceros had for ages found shelter from the terrors of the eastern hurricane. The lightning "ran along the ground," as it has been so emphatically expressed by the Hebrew historian, and the awful crashings of the thunder, which succeeded this manifestation of fierce elemental conflict, broke upon the ear like sounds proceeding from the dislocation and abruption of a dissolving

universe. It is impossible to convey more than a faint impression of those appalling convulsions of nature so frequently witnessed in the eastern world. Nothing of a similar kind, that may fairly challenge comparison, is seen in the more temperate climes of the west. There, indeed, the variations of temperature are infinitely greater, but those affrighting concussions which seem to shake the earth to its centre are never witnessed, except in a few localities of great elevation, as the Alps and Apennines, where the giant of the hurricane is occasionally seen to put forth his most terrific strength.

Upon the present occasion the tempest raged with a violence unusual even in these regions, where the frightful effects of the tornado present an almost familiar scene of devastation. The rain fell in confluent streams, hissing through the unresisting air with an impetuosity that seemed to threaten a universal inundation. Every animal crept into the thickest covert, while the most noxious reptiles crawled from their subterranean abodes, and exposed themselves to the pelting fury of the rain, as if they felt an instinctive enjoyment in the destruction threatened by the clash and distracting dissonance of the agitated elements. Many of the more ferocious beasts of prey, scared by the falling of trees, beneath which they had sought a temporary shelter, raised their heads to the blackened heavens, and howled their terrors with the tone of dumb nature's deep but unutterable agony. They were cowed by the exhibition of a power to which their own, great and mighty

as it often is in its manifestation of individual prowess, was but as that of a pigmy compared with the might of omnipotence. They fell prostrate and helpless before the terrors of that arm which puts into activity the prodigious resources of nature, and awes the whole living world by the mere transient ebullition of those mysterious combinations of matter which, in their occasional appulse, carry fear to the hearts and destruction to the hearths of thousands.

There were occasional pauses in the paroxysms of the tempest, when the very silence that succeeded was only the more terrifying from its immediate and complete contrast with the uproar which had just preceded it, and during which the heavens continued to open their fiery magazines, whence the lightning poured in streams of pale and portentous light, now flickering in mazy lines round the darkened horizon, and now gushing with the velocity of a whirlwind from the womb in which it had been matured, to perform its mission of destruction, and flooding the deluged earth with a trail of intensely vivid but momentary flame. The intervals between these outpourings from the vast storehouse of this fearful agent of devastation, were only just sufficiently brief to render the silence that intervened painful, and even appalling, by the suddenness of transition from astounding uproar to almost perfect obmutescence. In many places trees were shivered to the roots, the charred limbs being torn from their trunks as if struck down with the force and precision of machinery; while the huge and blackened bodies of elephants and

other beasts of prey lay upon the ground, exhibiting, with terrifying reality, the direful effects of the storm.

In the very heart of the forest, whither the traveller, and even the adventurous hunter, seldom penetrated, a lofty teak-tree reared its gigantic bulk above a huge rock, at the base of which a small recess had been hollowed by the patient industry of an aged female, just of a size to enable her to sit upright, and of depth sufficient, when her legs were crossed under her, (the mode of sitting common among the natives of India,) to shelter her from the severity of those tropic storms which, especially at certain seasons of the year, prevail to a dreadful extent nearly throughout the whole continent of Asia. She was

—————“ A wither'd hag, with age grown double.
Her eyes with scalding rheum were gall'd and red ;
Cold palsy shook her head ; her hands seem'd wither'd ;
And on her crooked shoulders had she wrapp'd
The tatter'd remnants of an old striped hanging,
Which served to keep her carcass from the cold ;
So there was nothing of a piece about her.
Her lower weeds were all o'er coarsely patch'd
With different-colour'd rags—black, red, white, yellow,
And seem'd to speak variety of wretchedness.”

The tree grew just beyond the rock, which it canopied with its mighty arms, casting a constant shadow over it, and sheltering it at the same time from the ardent rays of the sun and from the impetuosity of those tropical rains which fall in such abundance and with such extreme violence while the monsoons prevail. During the tempest just described, the aged

inhabitant of the cavern had crawled into her narrow tenement, in order to escape the fury of the hurricane. Here she remained a sullen spectator of the sublime scene, mumbling her prayers to Indra, god of the elements, according to the code of Hindoo superstition, and crossing her arms in an attitude of holy aspiration. Whilst she was thus absorbed, a flash of lightning struck the teak-tree, in a moment shivering it from the summit to the root, and scattering its gigantic fragments on every side.

The hag was roused from her stupor by the unexpected shock, and, throwing herself from the recess, gazed around her with an expression of terrified surprise. At the moment of her sudden ejection from her gloomy habitation, the stream of fire which had shivered the tree split the rock to its foundation, opening a wide and gaping fissure into the dark retreat of the aged stranger. A second flash followed, scattering the stony mass in a thousand fragments, and in a few seconds destroying every trace of the retreat of one who had but too sadly known the extremity of want, and all the bitterest agonies of bereavement. The sibyl was of that class of old women who profess to have communion with evil spirits, and go about the country deluding the superstitious into the belief that they can prevail on the Devatas, or good spirits, to be propitious to them, or call up the Asuras, or evil influences, to harass them with various plagues, according as their dupes happen to be generous or the reverse,—that is, superstitious or incredulous.

The woman, though not so far advanced in years

as would make complete shipwreck of European beauty, being scarcely more than five-and-forty, nevertheless appeared to have entered her grand climacteric. She looked a positive incarnation of old age, and, being squalid to the last degree, from neglect and physical suffering, was an object positively offensive to behold. The filth of years had engrained her skin, and was lodged in the thick grizzled covering which fell in tangled masses from her palsied head, mantling her spare angular shoulders, and hiding the harsh anatomical development of her fleshless form, which exhibited a true but revolting personification of the image of death. Amid the dark and solitary recesses of the jungle she dwelt alone, in the cleft which had just been closed up by the unsparing lightning, this being her nightly tenement, in which she could scarcely find room for her spare and macerated body in a sitting posture. Her chief food were berries and fruits supplied by the jungle, and carrion occasionally left by the tigers, jackals, and more voracious vultures. For days she sometimes scarcely ate sufficient to sustain nature, especially during the monsoons, when the intense violence of the tempests prevented her from quitting her miserable dwelling in search of nourishment. Such was her predicament on the present occasion. For the last twenty-four hours she had been without the means of appeasing the cravings of hunger.

As the storm subsided, which it did shortly after noon, the venerable stranger advanced into the forest in search of food. The sun now flooded the land-

scape, its rays reflected in ten thousand scintillations from the drops that hung upon the broad leaves of the palms, imparting a singular animation to the scene, the striking effect, however, of which produced no emotion in a bosom which the stern trials of poverty had rendered callous to all impressions of enjoyment save those only produced by appeasing the lowest animal wants. She proceeded leisurely onward; but at times the growth was so thick that she was obliged to force her way, with extreme exertion, through the knotted entanglements of briars and other thorny shrubs, which, intermixed with tough creepers, something of the same character as the stem of the honey-suckle, formed an impediment to her progress by no means easy to overcome. Around her were frequently strewn the branches and shivered trunks of trees, the effects of the recent hurricane, presenting a scene of awful devastation. This, nevertheless, did not move the imperturbable gravity of her haggard but harsh features, upon which not even the pangs of appetite, now increasing almost to the intensity of positive torture, produced the slightest variation of expression.

After pursuing her patient journey for some hours, she emerged from the jungle into the open country, in which the deer bounded before her with the velocity of timid apprehension, directing their flight towards a thicket that gradually rose to a considerable elevation above the plain. She followed the herd, in hopes of discovering the remains of a carcass left by the beasts of prey to the ants, who generally follow the vultures in

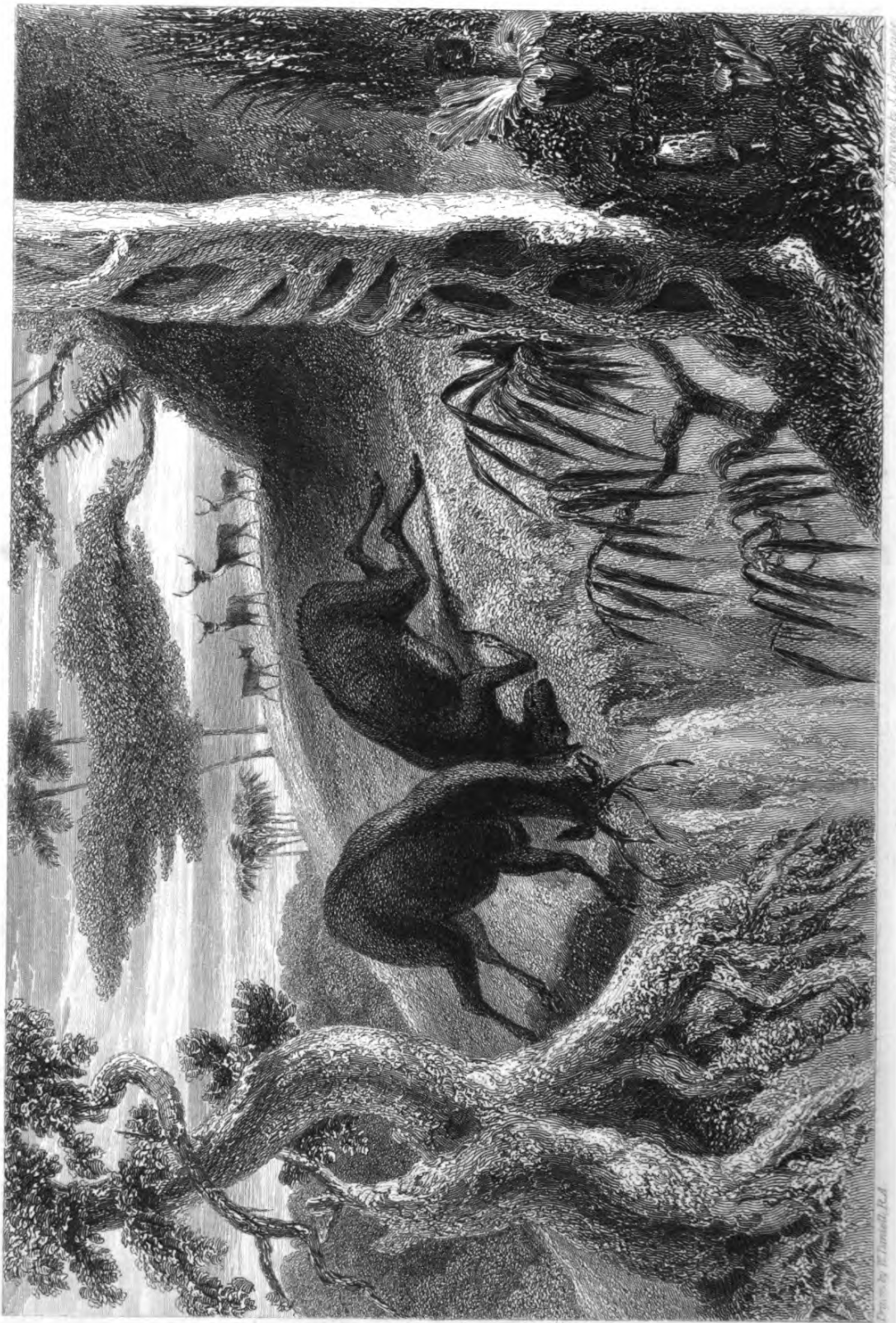


Illustration by J. G. Thompson

Engraved by F. S. Rowland, Phila.

their forest carnival, and blanch the bones of those creatures whom their stronger foes have overcome, for the sake of banqueting upon their flesh.

The hungry crone hobbled after the active and beautiful game, which seemed to mock her in their precipitate flight, and were soon hidden among the scanty growth of the thicket. On reaching the summit of the hill, a vista opened before her, down which she proceeded with deliberate but persevering patience. It terminated in an abrupt hollow; over this hung a precipice of eighty or a hundred feet, presenting so steep a descent, that nothing above the size of a mouse could find a secure footing. Upon the brink of this precipice two stags were struggling in deadly encounter; and so intent was each upon victory, that neither perceived the approach of human foot, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have inspired such terror as to cause a precipitate retreat. The stags fought desperately, goring and butting with a fury that caused every stroke to be heard a considerable way off. Several of the herd stood gazing at a short distance from the spot where this fierce contest was taking place, but fled with tremulous precipitation as the stranger advanced: she had nearly reached the precipice, when both combatants, having unconsciously approached its verge, making simultaneously a furious rush at each other, their heads met in stunning collision, and they were carried, by the force of the shock, into the abyss below.

The woman gazed with a glance of momentary satisfaction, as she saw the mangled bodies of the

two stags lying in the hollow beneath. Her heart panted with that natural triumph which the thought of appeasing long suppressed hunger may be conceived to engender. The ravine was steep and difficult, but the cravings of nature soon suggested a sufficiently secure mode of descent to induce the sufferer, notwithstanding her many physical infirmities, to hazard her neck for the sake of a certain and immediate repast. Advancing to one side of the precipice, where it was less abrupt, by means of some tough-rooted shrubs which grew from the face of the hill, fixing their fibres in the interstices of the stony stratum, and twisting them round the yielding stones, after a good deal of difficulty and much danger, she reached the valley in which the bodies of the two stags lay, still quivering with the last motions of expiring life. She hurried to the spot, and, tearing a long sharp thorn from a prickly shrub which grew near, thrust it into the still warm throats of the dying deer. A copious effusion of blood followed the puncture; applying her mouth to this, she inhaled the elements of life from bodies in which they were gradually subsiding, and thus recruited the fading energies of her own.

Having refreshed herself by this unnatural, but, in her case, necessary draught, applying the nails, which covered her fingers like talons, to the hides of her now dead prey, she denuded the flesh of its skin, and, gathering a few dried leaves and sticks from a hollow under the hill, where they had escaped being wetted by the rain, piled them in a heap at the root of a tree, and began to prepare for the enjoyment of such a

meal as she had not partaken of for many a miserable month previously. Taking a small lens from the folds of her dress, where all her earthly valuables were deposited,—and these consisted almost entirely of a few small copper images and certain mysterious forms in horn, which indicated her profession to be that of a looker into the events of futurity,—she applied the glass to the heap of combustibles, and, condensing the sun's rays into a focal point, upon materials so readily inflammable, they almost instantly kindled into a blaze.

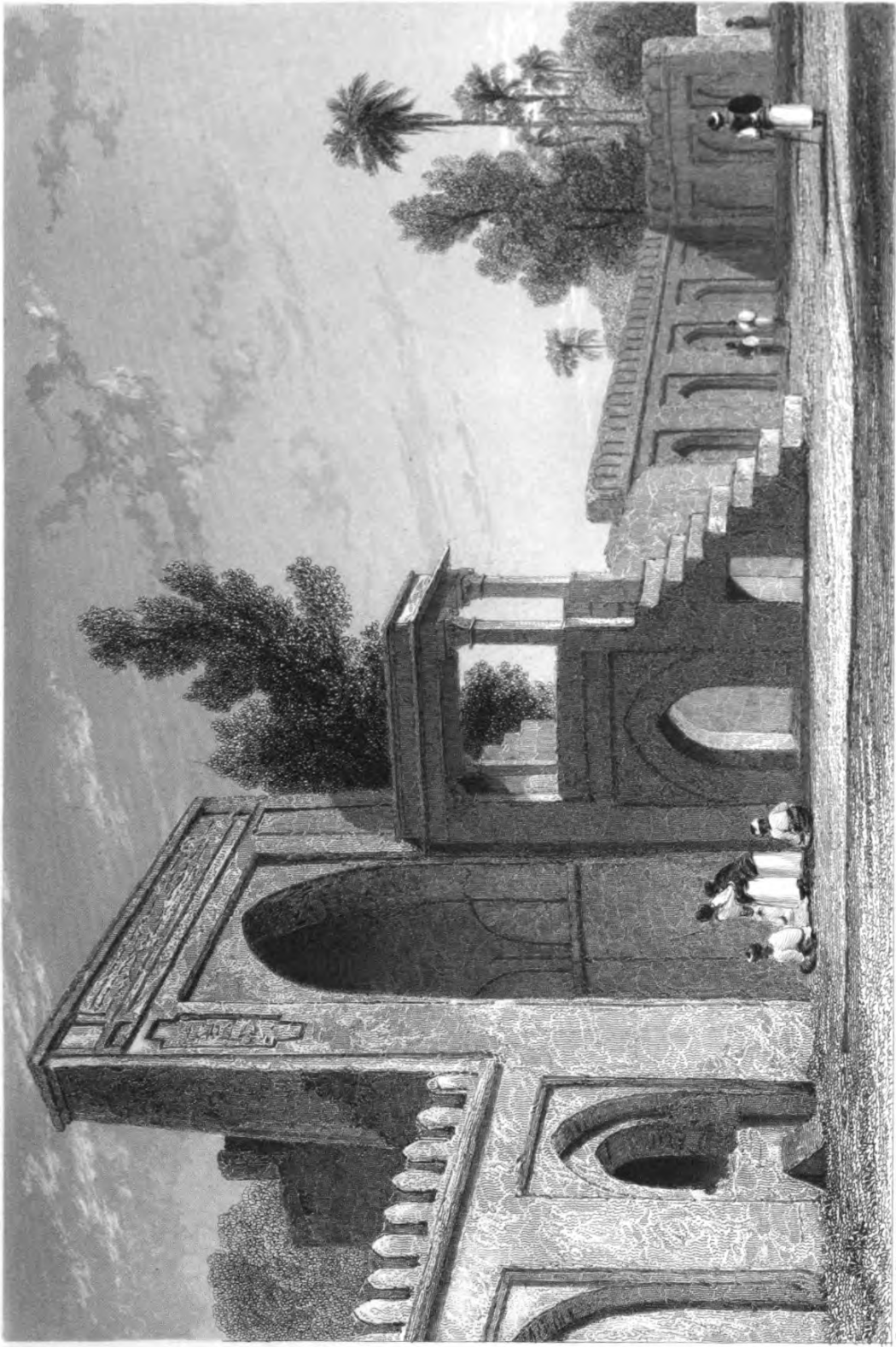
Having roasted a portion of the flesh, which she cut from the haunches of one of the stags, the hungry crone formed it into kabobs¹, and made so hearty a repast that she almost immediately fell asleep, and enjoyed her refreshing repose until the broad sun appeared high above the horizon on the following day. On rising, to her great mortification she found that the jackals had, during the night, entirely consumed the rest of her delicious game, without dressing.

¹ Meat cut up into small pieces, put upon a thin skewer, and then turned over the fire.

CHAPTER II.

NEAR a village on the borders of the jungle, Abdallah Mirza, governor of Chandahar, a young Moghul noble, extremely attached to the sports of the field, had built an elegant mansion, to which he occasionally retired when disposed to enjoy the pleasures of the chace, especially hunting the tiger and the rhinoceros,—both dangerous gratifications, and therefore the more acceptable to the tastes of eastern princes. The building was entered through a lofty portal, which led into a spacious vestibule, where the rites of religion were daily performed by a Mohammeden priest, a regular member of the governor's domestic establishment. This entrance was a fine specimen of the lighter Saracenic architecture of the East, and considered as a proud memorial of the taste of the governor of Chandahar.

Abdallah Mirza was a young man, scarcely more than twenty, with a remarkably fine person, but, as is too frequently the case with men of rank, when their depraved predilections are aided and abetted by the graces of person, grossly addicted to the most debasing pleasures, holding it unworthy the dignity of a Moghul noble to cast a rein upon those appetites, the excessive indulgence of which



Engraved by G. G. & Co. London

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Entrance to the Temple of Isis at Philae, Egypt

Drawn by F. Daniell, R.A.

is no less forbidden in the moral code of Mahomet, than in the divine canons of Christianity. He was extremely unpopular among the Hindoo chieftains who resided in the province under his jurisdiction, not only in consequence of the severe exactions to which he subjected them, but likewise from the tyranny which he exercised over their social enjoyments,—frequently tearing daughters from the arms of their parents, and adding them to the number of his degraded favourites. Still he was beloved by the young nobles who composed his court, from the circumstance of his permitting in them the same license of sensual enjoyment in which he himself so unrestrainedly indulged.

The governor's habitation on the borders of the jungle, when he repaired thither to enjoy his favourite diversion, was usually filled with dissipated young men of his own age, whom he delighted to encourage in those violations of the sanctity of domestic intercourse which it was his own cruel boast to disregard. And yet, though addicted to many of the worst vices that can degrade humanity, Abdallah possessed some popular qualifications, which tended to neutralize them in the estimation of men who placed their own interests in the van of all temporal objects, and who therefore saw in the profuse but selfish generosity of the young governor, a development of what they looked upon to be first among the cardinal virtues,—not considering that profusion is more frequently allied to the grossest vices, than a diagnostic of any high moral qualification.

While Abdallah found, that by lavishly distributing

the public money to unworthy favourites, and by bestowing upon them the confiscated lands of uncompliant Hindoos, who were often robbed of their property under the colour of legal adjudication, or upon the plea of apprehended rebellion, he could secure the approbation of many influential, though unprincipled men, he did not hesitate to sacrifice integrity at the polluted shrine of self-interest, and to secure the support of licentious, rather than the confidence of virtuous adherents.

The Mirza was one morning smoking his hookah in the front verandah of his house, when he was informed by an attendant, that an old woman desired admittance to his presence. Understanding that she had been driven from the door in consequence of her squalid aspect, he ordered that she should be instantly brought before him. Though a man of considerable quickness of parts, and though possessing no very high respect for the obligations of religion, the governor of Chandahar was nevertheless extremely superstitious. Conscious of this infirmity, he was at the same time by no means willing to acknowledge a weakness which reproved his contempt of the Koran, and the severe requisitions of morality.

The woman was ushered into the presence of the princely Moghul, who continued for some moments to discharge the fragrant smoke from a chillam¹, formed of the finest spices from Arabian gardens, and emitting a vapour so subtle that it scarcely tinted the bright atmosphere with which it was mingled,

¹ The chillam is a composition of spices and tobacco, smoked through the hookah.

as it passed with the breath of the luxurious dignitary to the freedom of the buoyant but impregnated air.

“Woman,” said he at length, in a tone betwixt severity and indifference, “what is the occasion of thy importunity?”

“Want.”

“What do you require?”

“Food and raiment.”

“Go to the jungle for the one, and let nature supply the other.”

“Dost thou jeer the heart-stricken and the hungry? Thou mayest tremble yet on thy rug of embroidery; thou mayest one day lie rotting under a palampore¹, though it be woven in the looms of Cashmere.”

Abdallah smiled — “Woman,” said he sternly, though the quivering curl of his lip showed that he was moved rather to diversion than to anger, “dost thou know to whom thou art speaking?”

“Ay; to a thing that the worms shall feed upon though he be governor of Chandahar.”

“How knowest thou that the worms shall feed upon the dead flesh of Abdallah the Moghul?”

“Because, though the bodily eye is dim, I can look, with an unfailing perception, beyond the boundaries of the present, into the dark abyss of the future, and see what is to happen in time though the event is not yet.”

“Well!”

“It may not be well for those who despise the

¹ A counterpane.

poor and aged. I lack food and covering. My appetite is keen, though my body is withered, and both require thy ministrations; wilt thou accord them?"

"Suppose I do not?"

"That is no answer."

"Repair to thy feast in the jungle—gloat on the carrion which the vultures are perched upon—scare them from their banquet, and glut thy unearthly carcass with the food that best beseems the companion of disembodied spirits. I will neither supply thee with food nor clothing."

"Then hear the curse of one who never delivered an oracle that did not find its accomplishment:—Ere the moon shall have performed twelve revolutions, thou shalt be among those who never sleep for the tortures that will cling to them everlastingly. Abide the reckoning, for it will be called for before thy hair shall whiten."

A sardonic smile passed over the Mirza's features, though such an unexpected prediction was by no means agreeable to him. The blood mounted to his cheek, and looking upon the sibyl with evident but suppressed fear, which she at once perceived, he somewhat subdued the levity of his tone, and desired she would instantly quit his presence; still, though too proud to retract his expressed determination not to relieve her, he, nevertheless, ordered that she should be removed with gentle violence from the doors of a Moghul Omrah upon whom she had presumed to pronounce a doom which he considered by no means one befitting the governor of Chandahar.

“I shall not stir,” screamed the decrepit stranger, “until I am fed. Withered be the hand that touches me. I have defied the wind and the tempest; both have passed over me, but I remain unharmed. Time is my only vanquisher; and shall I be scared by the lordly presence of a man who worships only one God, and is debarred from the privileges of absorption into the omnipresent and eternal Bhrim? Remember the curse of the hag of the jungle!”

Saying this, she tottered from the presence of the cowed governor with a shriek of malignant triumph.

“She’s mad,” he said, affecting an unperturbed demeanour, but, at the same time, the strong flush upon his cheek, and the deep contraction of his brow, showed that he had been otherwise moved than he desired should become apparent. The indignant stranger quitted his door amid the laughter and coarse gibes of the servants, muttering curses as she went, unanswered but by the slow pulsations of her own untractable heart.

The fatuitous credulity produced by the prognostics of old women in India is scarcely exceeded by the superstitious infirmities of any country in the world. These terrible prophetesses excite awe even in the breasts of princes; and the terror which they inspire is their security against molestation—nay, even the dispensers of the laws are frequently afraid to summon them before their tribunals. They are considered to possess such influence with the powers of other worlds, as to render it perilous to interfere

with them; though it often happens that persons, whose minds are too strong to be shackled by the slavish suggestions of superstition, not only despise them, but defy the impotence of their machinations.

Abdallah assumed to be one of that class of incredulous heroes, who are inaccessible to the pitiful influence exercised by female pretenders, on whom old age has heaped its worst deformities. Nevertheless, in spite of his pretensions, he was evidently a slave to such terrors as oppress the hearts of persons maintaining implicit belief in the supernatural power of decrepit empirics laying claim to the dangerous gift of prophecy.

After the departure of his unwelcome visiter, the governor of Chandahar was observed for several days to be unusually meditative.

CHAPTER III.

IN order to dissipate the gloom of obtruding thoughts, Abdallah determined to command a general hunt in the neighbouring forest of vast extent, covering, with the exception of here and there a cleared space, which contained a village or a few scattered huts, an area of more than a hundred square miles, and abounding with game of all kinds, from the stately elk to the timid hare. On the morning previously to that fixed upon for the chase the governor strolled out at sunrise in order to enjoy the freshness of the morning air. Nothing could exceed the entrancing beauty of the scene. The dew-drops, as they hung upon the broad leaves of the plaintain and mango-trees, of which there was a large grove just beyond the village, reflected the young sunbeams, and threw ten thousand scintillations in every direction to which the eye turned, seeking its enjoyment in the fresh and radiant glories of an eastern morning. The mists spreading from the distant hills cast a faint bloom upon the landscape, and when they intervened betwixt the eye and the sunlight a thousand prismatic tints were flung over forest and plain, variegating the rich green of the former and enlivening the brown adust

hue of the latter with a colouring that imparted an animated effect to the picture.

The ryot, or peasant, of Hindostan was seen plodding to his morning labour, gazing with an eye of vacant indifference upon the beauties of the scene before him, his whole thoughts absorbed in his own miseries, the days of his dreary pilgrimage being one protracted interval of privation and sorrow. He repaired with the dawn of every morrow to the severe toil of husbandry, with a blighted heart, bowed down by the load of domestic cares, his sombre destiny never relieved by a ray of hope to enliven the dreary prospect that extended betwixt him and the grave. For him the beauties of nature have no charm. He sees in the sunshine but "the smile and mockery of woe." To his bosom the ripening harvest brings no joy, as he gathers it in merely to swell the stores of an opulent zemindar¹, who pays him the scanty pittance apportioned to his labour, leaving him often to pine in the most abject poverty as the guerdon of his unwilling, indeed, but severe industry.

Let the husbandmen of European countries, who complain of the niggard reward of their toils, go to the wretched hovel of the peasant of Hindostan, and then say whose is the better condition. No industry, no talents, no virtues can raise the unhappy ryot from the miserable destitution to which poverty subjects him. He must always live despised and poor, because he is entirely cut off from the means of

¹ A Hindoo squire or land-proprietor.

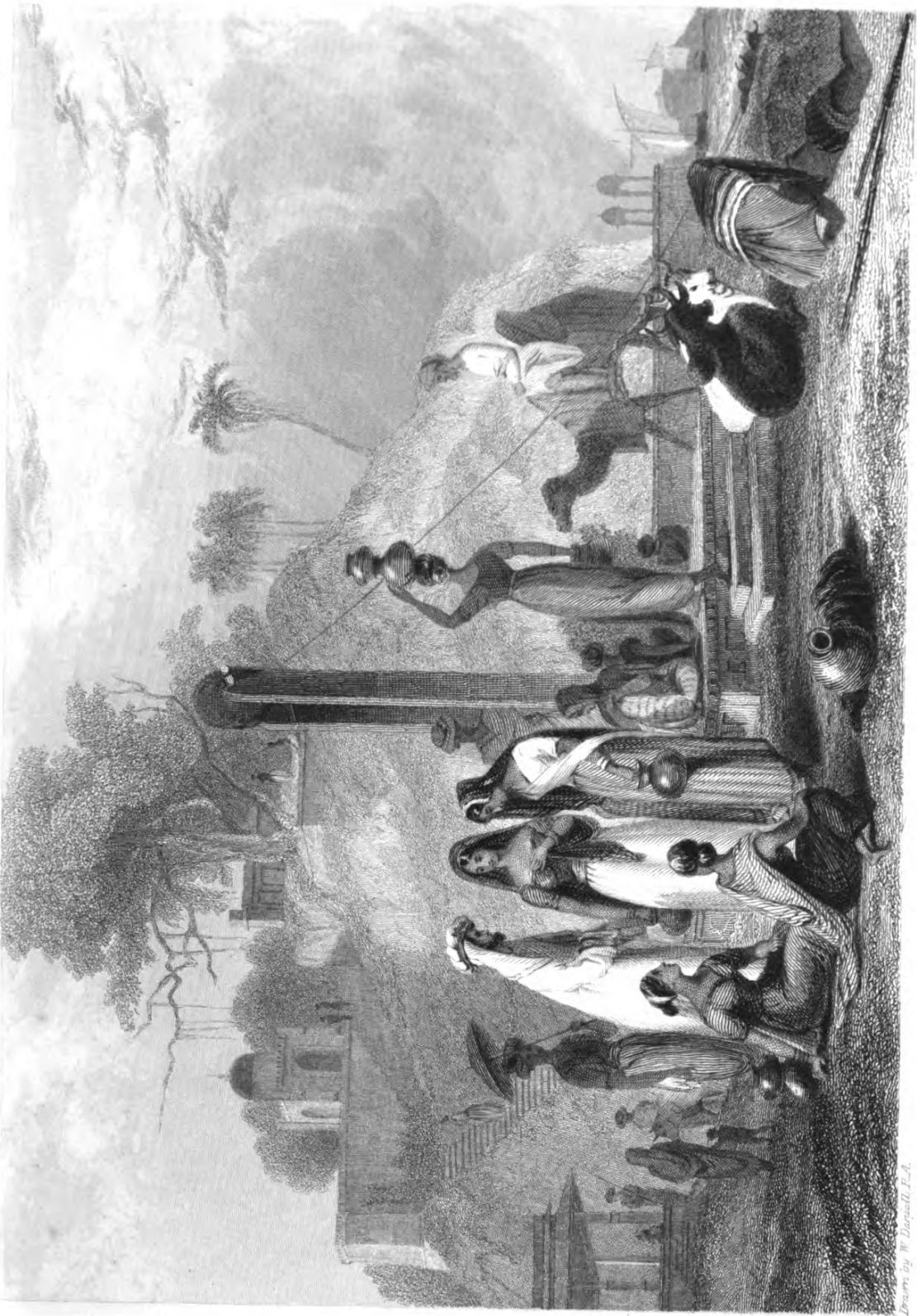
acquiring wealth, but in those lands more favoured of Heaven, where industry may elevate a man almost to the level of kings, the poorest peasant has the power of rising from the trammels of a severe condition to the brightest honours, or, at all events, to the highest privileges which wealth confers upon those who are fortunate enough to render themselves masters of its mighty resources.

The governor of Chandahar pursued his solitary ramble in order to shake off the stupifying effects of the previous night's debauch, as scarcely an evening passed in which he did not render himself insensible, not only to the precepts of the Koran, but to all other laws either human or divine; for the wines of Shiraz, when liberally taken, have a tendency, not merely to rob a man of his discretion, but likewise so to offuscate his intellectual faculties, as to render the luxurious Sybarite, who indulges in such luscious potations, utterly unconscious of what Mahomet has laid down as laws of life, or the wisest philosophers have taught as maxims of wisdom.

As Abdallah approached the village before spoken of, situated on the bank of a deep stream that issued from the distant hills, he saw a group of women repairing to the well for their daily supply of water, which, throughout India, is always procured the first thing in the morning, before the refreshing element is heated by the ardent rays of a tropical sun. The well which he now approached was of great depth, being cased with polished stone, and sunk at least two hundred feet below the surface. After an ascent of two wide steps, there was a low parapet raised round the

opening which was cut in a large slab of granite, united with extreme neatness to masses of the same material, squared with great exactness, and cemented by a strong bituminous matter, over which time appears to possess no influence. The water was obtained by means of a common pulley, the rope, which passed over the grooved wheel, being worked by a pair of native oxen. At the end of the rope was a capacious vessel, holding many gallons, common to the public. From this, those who resorted to the well for water filled their respective jars. This was the place of morning and evening concourse, in which all the gossip of the village was exchanged from mouth to mouth, and a vast deal of scandal thus perpetually disseminated; for in this feminine tendency the women of the east, in all periods of their history, have been no less adepts than their European sisters.

The governor of Chandahar approached the well. This created some confusion among the bright-eyed damsels who had sought this place of matutinal communion, the intruder being a Mohammedan, and they all worshippers of many millions of gods, among whom Brahma, Vishnoo, and Siva were pre-eminent, forming the Trimourty, or Indian Triad. These interesting idolaters quickly dispersed at the sight of one whose contact, although governor of the province whither they had retired to seek an asylum under the protection of those laws which he at once dispensed and supervised, would have been to any one of them a personal contamination. Their retreat, however, was not so precipitate but the



Engraved by W. Daniell, R.A.

Moghul was enabled to take a hasty survey of the numerous young maidens present with their water-vessels. Among the groups assembled, but which the unexpected presence of the governor had so quickly dispersed, were two girls, each with a small cudjree pot, the one carrying it in her right hand, the other in her left. They were sisters in the full bloom of youthful womanhood, and both extremely beautiful. Their soft black eyes were fixed upon two companions seated on the ground, who were retailing with lively gestures the usual village news, to which the sisters listened with anxious attention. The elegant simplicity of the drapery that enveloped their finely-moulded forms, imparted to them a grace greatly enhanced by the animated interest with which they evidently heard the communications of their young companions, who seemed to become more eloquent in proportion as they riveted the attention of their lovely auditors. Apart from this interesting group lay two oxen, beside which was their owner basking under the shade of a temporary tent, composed of an old umbrella and a rug, beneath which the luxurious herdsman shaded his head from the ardent rays of the sun, now advanced sufficiently high above the horizon to render such a covering a luxury, at least, if not a necessity. On the other side a camel approached the well, with its head raised and its nostrils distended, inhaling the delightful freshness of the water, the presence of which, it is said, these animals are conscious of at a considerable distance. When journeying in the desert they are directed towards it by the wonderful

acuteness of their scent, for however inodorous to us, it certainly is not so to them.

The Hindoos having deserted the well, Abdallah mused with a most exciting interest upon the two lovely houris, after whom he earnestly gazed until the walls of the house, into which they hastily retired, excluded them from his view. Although no stranger to the surpassing beauty of Hindoo women, he had never yet beheld two who at first sight produced so strong a sensation in his bosom. She who appeared the elder of the sisters, had especially roused his passions to their topmost bent, and he was determined, by whatever means, to add her to the degraded members of his harem. He had no difficulty in discovering that they were maidens of high caste and blood, being the daughters of an independent Rajpoot, who boasted of his descent from the royal line of his race, and though greatly reduced in circumstances, was far more haughty than poor. Like the high-blooded members of his tribe, he was proud of that distinction which belonged to the name of Rajpoot, and would have considered a matrimonial alliance even with a Moghul sovereign as the deepest degradation. The prejudices of such a man were not easy to be overcome. His personal appearance was no less imposing than his moral organisation. He was tall and muscular, remarkably erect, and so capable of enduring the extremes of fatigue, privation, and physical agony, that his body seemed perfectly fortified against the encroachments of temporal evil. Nothing could bend the inflexible stubbornness of his pride. He considered a murmur at the visita-

tions of humanity, however severe, as inconsistent with the natural dignity of man. He was a noble specimen of the high-minded and independent Rajpoot. For years he had been deprived of sight. An arrow, discharged by him at a deer during the chase, in his youthful manhood, had glanced from a tree and entered his eye. Inflammation supervening, was communicated to the other eye, and total loss of sight was the eventual consequence. Notwithstanding so severe an affliction, and so great an impediment to his practice of archery, in which he had always exhibited prodigious skill, he did not forego the exercise of his favourite recreation, and such was his acquired dexterity, in the course of years, that he could hit a pigeon on the wing at the distance of twenty yards, being directed to the object by the sound of the bird's pinions. Long and persevering practice had given him this extraordinary precision of hand, and it became so great a marvel among his neighbours, that many did not hesitate to believe he had subjected himself to the controul of those supernatural agents whom no good man would desire to avow intercourse with, though it is certain that he was as free from such evil communion as the unborn babe.

The Rajpoot's dexterity in the use of his bow was a matter altogether unknown to the governor of Chandahar at the time of his visit to the well just described, though he was aware of the existence of the person so eminently accomplished in one of the most difficult exercises of arms.

Knowing the acuteness of old women when young

ones are to be seduced, Abdallah determined to send for the crone of the forest, and by a liberal reward induce her to become the instrument by which he might obtain possession of the beautiful Hindoos. He would thus too make his peace with one whose indignation he had provoked, and who evidently had the power of causing him serious disquietude. He returned home, to take his morning's refreshment and enjoy his hookah. Amidst his fragrant expirations he thought only of the lovely objects which had so lately tantalised his very excitable emotions, and filled his heart with violent but delightful agitations. He was desirous of obtaining every possible information respecting the beautiful sisters, with one of whom he felt already so deeply enamoured, that his whole heart was absorbed in her image. A domestic was immediately despatched in pursuit of the old woman so lately dismissed from his door with reproaches; she was easily found, and, before the sun had begun its descent down the far west, was once more in the presence of the governor of Chandahar.

"Well," said the dignitary, taking the gold mouth-piece, studded with costly jewels, from his lips, and, at the same time, lazily emitting a volume of thin perfumed vapour, so ethereal, that it floated off like some spiritual existence, leaving no mark of its materiality upon the clear elastic air—"Well! is there any thing that money would not win thee to do?"

"Aye, son of Mahomet."

"What?"

“Bend the knee to thy prophet.”

“Woman—do not suffer thy tongue to scandalize the object of a pious mussulman’s worship.” A smile passed over his bronzed cheeks, as he uttered this conscious untruth.

“I must speak my will even before kings. Thou hast already refused me that which thou now askest me if I crave with an unholy longing. Shall I forget that thou didst send me forth to starve from thy proud portals, within which the bloated form of luxury riots amidst the grossest profusion?”

“You speak well, woman.”

“I was bred to speak well. I have tasted from the golden cup: these shrivelled fingers have been jewelled with the brightest gems from the treasure caves of Golconda. I have been hurled from the proud height of my prosperity, and am now worse than a beggar—the despised thing you call a hag.”

“What were thy parents?”

“Wealthy—let that suffice thee. Their ashes have long been mingled with the elements; but, before the funereal fire embraced their perishing bodies, the gripe of poverty had clutched them. I have been left alone in the world, the blue heavens my roof, the hard rock my bed, carrion my nourishment, rags my covering.”

“Art thou content to receive money upon conditions?”

“Name them.”

“There are two sisters living in the village.”

“Aye, there are many sisters living there.”

“But two under one roof.”

“Is the kite preparing to swoop upon the unconscious dove? Well, it is not for the deformed fox-bat to cover her with its wings?”

“What dost thou know of those girls?”

“They are the children of one father, who would not spare the hyena that crept into his fold.”

“He is brave then.”

“Though blind, he would grapple with the lion that crossed his path to mar his domestic peace.”

“I would possess those girls.”

“Try thy luck, but blame thy own rashness, if the cold blight of a father’s curse wither thee.”

“Dost thou refuse to aid me?”

“I refuse nothing worth my accepting.”

“Wilt thou bring those maidens before me?”

“Thou hast yet named no condition by which I might be tempted to perform thy bidding.”

“There are a hundred golden dinars¹.”

The old woman eagerly held out her hand.

“Wilt thou do my behest?”

She nodded assent, and having griped the gold with an energy that left the impression of it upon her withered palm, with a sinister grin she hobbled from the presence of her interested benefactor, took up a handful of dust, as she reached the outside of his portal, and scattering it into the tranquil air, mumbled an unintelligible but bitter anathema, and was shortly hidden amid the thickets of the jungle.

¹ The dinar is in value about nine shillings.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the morning after Abdallah Mirza's interview with the old woman of the forest, he assembled his friends and followers for the chace. A number of horsemen, and several inferior Omrahs, who had been invited from their neighbouring estates, to join the cortege, came mounted on their elephants. Abdallah sat in a howdah, gorgeously decorated, and was conspicuous above the rest, no less from the superior size of the animal he rode, than from the magnificence of its caparison. The party quitted the governor's abode shortly after dawn, and pursued their way leisurely, until they reached the borders of the jungle. A great number of poor naked Chandallahs attended, for the purpose of entering the thickets, by their shouts scaring the game, which was the more abundant, because it was not frequently disturbed. Within a few hours, several tigers and leopards were killed. About noon a tent was pitched, on a spot which had been cleared to supply fuel for a small hamlet in the neighbourhood, occupied by a few miserable outcasts, who, surrounded by beasts of prey, had taken up their abode in this dangerous locality, to escape the contempt of their fellow creatures, being, in more

populous districts, denied the common and natural rights of humanity.

After a brief repast, Abdallah strolled into the forest on foot, armed with his matchlock, in order to exercise his dexterity in the use of that engine of destruction, in which he was held to be without a rival. Emerging into a broken part of the jungle, which had likewise been cleared for the purpose of obtaining fuel, and which abutted upon a wide stream that yielded the tribute of its waters to fertilize the neighbouring plains, he saw a leopard and a large black bear engaged in desperate conflict. The former had seized its adversary by the shoulders, which, protected by the coarse shaggy hide, almost defied injury, while the latter held one of the leopard's hind legs betwixt his powerful jaws, lacerating the sinews in such a manner as completely to disable the limb.

Abdallah Mirza concealed from view, silently watched the combat; it soon terminated in the utter defeat of the leopard, which was at length destroyed by its more powerful and better protected antagonist. The bear of India is never very large, but exceedingly strong and fierce, being seldom vanquished even by the tiger, until after a desperate resistance, and sometimes repelling that more powerful foe, though generally falling its prey.

About an hour after noon the governor remounted his elephant, to continue the exciting sport. The thickets were again entered by the Chandallahs, who scared the game into the toils of the hunters, where it became an easy prey. Eager in the pursuit of a pleasure

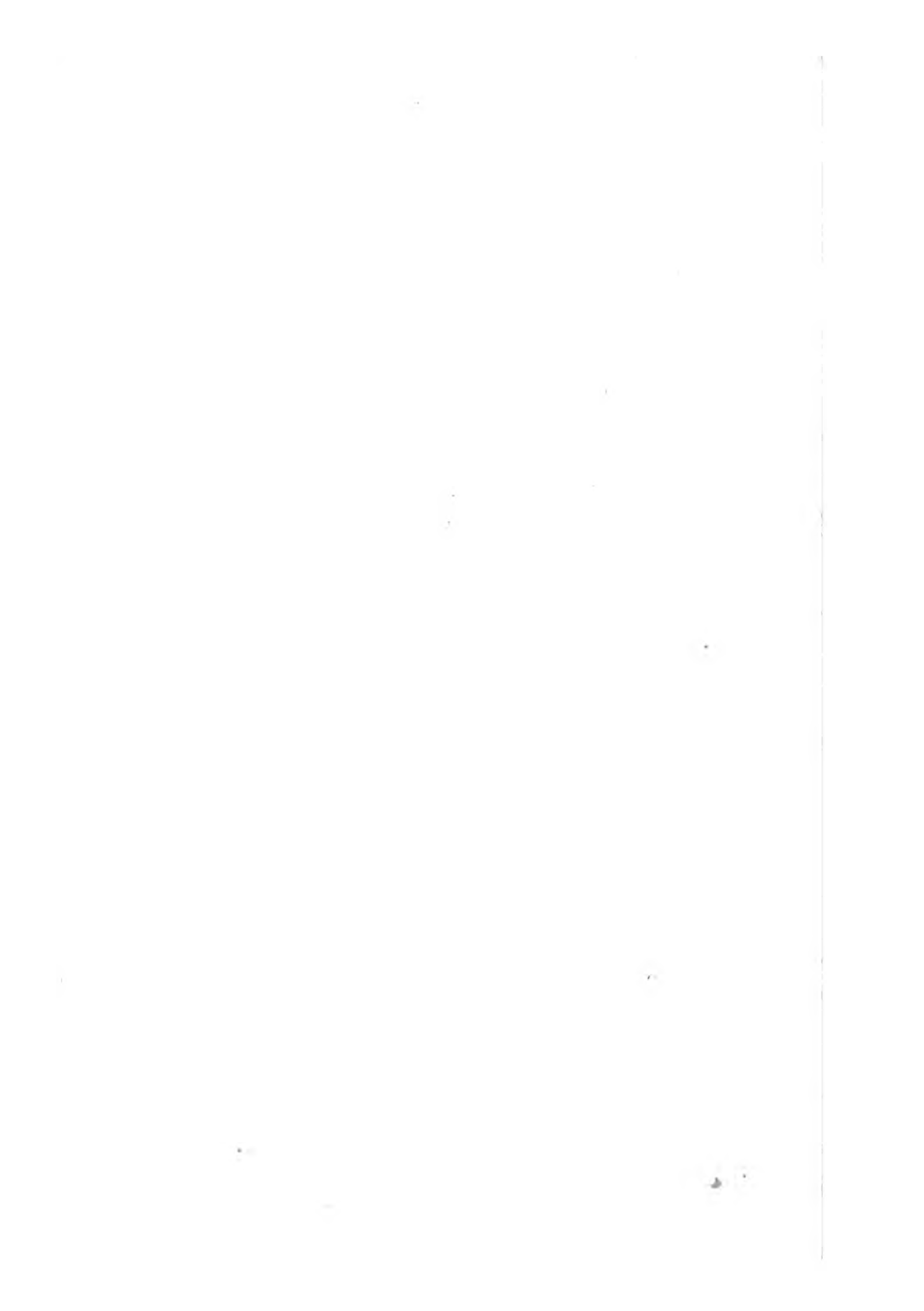


Engraved by W. Daniell

Drawn by W. Daniell

Leopard

Leopardus pardus Linn. *Leopardus pardus* Linn.



to which he was passionately attached, the Mirza headed his guests into a thicket which had not been yet tried by the beaters. The tall jungle-grass reached to the elephants' flanks, and the horses' heads were occasionally only just visible above it. On reaching the centre of the thicket, a cry was heard from one of the horsemen, and immediately afterwards a huge rhinoceros was seen making its way towards a vista in the forest, which formed an avenue of considerable width, and was upwards of half a mile in length. This dangerous animal was followed by at least twenty elephants, and five times as many horsemen, but he dashed fiercely through the tall wiry grass with great speed, until he reached the open space; there, placing his huge body between two trees upon finding himself so rapidly pursued, he prepared to resist aggression, and presenting a formidable front to the advancing hunters, kept his head bent towards the ground, turning his small bright eyes to the right and left, being protected behind by a thick tuft of bamboo, and on either side by the two trees. His horn which, when the creature was not excited, vibrated in the socket with every movement of his body, stood now erect and immovable. He occasionally stamped with one of his fore feet, to evince his determination to repel any attempt to dislodge him by force from his position.

Abdallah being nearest to this formidable opponent, had fixed a large matchlock to the edge of his howdah upon a pivot. This dreadful engine of death carried a

three-ounce iron ball, and was now charged for the purpose of shooting the rhinoceros, should he place any of the party in immediate jeopardy. None of the elephants could be tempted to advance, either by coaxing or goading, but backed from the scene of conflict, and some of them absolutely took flight in the greatest terror, the elephant having universally a great dread of this dangerous enemy. For some time all the sportsmen were kept at bay, neither the elephants nor horsemen daring to approach the ferocious foe, no less determined than powerful. The huge creature seemed aware of the terror he inspired, for he continued at intervals to stamp with his fore feet and champ fiercely, but did not quit the situation which he had so judiciously chosen, and seemed not disposed to abandon.

Tired of thus inactively gazing upon a strong but not invincible foe, Abdallah Mirza ordered the mahout who conducted his elephant, to urge the animal forward, in spite of its manifest reluctance to advance. His command was obeyed, but the refractory beast instead of answering to the goad, as was expected, raised its trunk, uttered a shrill cry, and began to manifest symptoms of anger. Observing the governor's purpose, several of the hunters simultaneously urged their elephants and horses towards the defying enemy, who watched every motion of the hostile array with a keen and wary scrutiny, without stirring an inch from his well fortified position. He was, however, soon neared by an irresistible force. Five or six elephants, and at least twenty horses, ap-

proached within a few feet of him, still he did not move, but continued to eye them with ferocious determination.

At length, a horseman urging his steed forward, struck the mailed brute in the head with a spear. The weapon glanced from the bone, as if turned off by a piece of polished marble, but the enraged creature springing suddenly from his fence, struck the horse in the flank with such force, as instantly to overthrow the rider, then raising the wounded beast upon its armed snout, threw it into the air, as a bull would a small dog. The horse fell in the thicket behind, so dreadfully gored that it almost instantly died. The rider happily escaped with a contused head and a dislocated collar-bone.

No sooner did the rhinoceros quit his position of security, than three of the elephants advanced and attacked him in the rear: he directly turned and overthrew one of them, plunging his horn into the animal's flank, and plowing so deep a trench that the bowels dropped through the hideous opening, and with a terrible roar his vanquished foe fell to the earth, from which it never rose again. Meanwhile, its two companions declining their heads at the same moment, lifted their huge adversary, and bearing him forward several feet, dropped him upon the ground, but, before he had time to recover himself, a ball from the ponderous matchlock of the governor, who had now brought his refractory elephant close to the scene of action, struck the rhinoceros betwixt his shoulders, wounding him in the spine, and thus prevented him from

rising. Being now prostrated and helpless, he was soon despatched, and having been carefully skinned, the hide was borne to the Mirza's home as a signal trophy of the day's sport.

On the party's return, a tiger suddenly bounded from the covert of jungle grass, whence they had unkennelled the rhinoceros, and leaping upon the elephant which Abdallah rode, the affrighted animal immediately plunged into the jungle at the imminent risk of dashing its rider's brains out against the obtruding branches of trees, growing so thickly in every part of the forest as scarcely to leave a practicable path. A small elephant which had been accustomed to occupy the same stable, eagerly followed, and both were soon out of sight. Nothing could stop these terrified creatures. Onward they rushed with the headlong impetuosity of a torrent. The undergrowth of the jungle crashed under them as they urged their precipitate career. After a gallop of several coss, the elephants stopped, and the smaller fell from exhaustion. The Mirza alighting from his howdah, seated himself on the grass under a tree until the alarmed beasts should regain their composure. By dint of coaxing the mahouts at length quieted them, and giving each a few mouthfuls of gram¹, with a small quantity of fresh grass, they soon recovered from their fatigue, and appeared to have forgotten their alarm.

The Omrah with two Hindoo attendants, who occupied the howdah of the elephant which had followed

¹ A kind of small bean.

his from the scene of encounter with the rhinoceros, had now reached the borders of the forest. Immediately before them was a hill of considerable altitude, on which stood, near the summit, a heathen temple. It was a dilapidated structure of great antiquity, now the habitation of an old decrepit brahmin, who occupied a dismal sort of den without the walls, hollowed in the mountain's side. His sanctity was the theme of universal praise, and Hindoo travellers who passed that remote spot, always repaired to him for his benediction, never bestowed without a liberal fee. Abdallah had a curiosity to see this venerable man, and the temple over which he presided, as many stories were circulated far beyond its immediate vicinity, of the miracles occasionally wrought at the shrine of its presiding divinity.

As the elephants were still fatigued, and the ascent was by no means easy, it was necessary to proceed up the mountain with more than ordinary caution. About midway the acclivity became much steeper, and even dangerous for the elephants, which, though extremely sure footed, have a natural antipathy to climbing mountains, and especially where the passes are steep or uncertain. The ground being slippery the larger elephant made indentations across the path with his fore feet, and then stripping small branches from the trees which grew in the path laid them carefully in the hollows, thus forming a kind of rude stair. Having reached the top of the defile, he stood upon a firm ledge, and extending his trunk to his companion, which was a female, assisted her ascent with the greatest gallantry and tenderness.

Wherever the ground was at all suspicious, these sagacious creatures first tried it by pressing it with their fore feet, and bringing the whole weight of their bodies upon it by degrees. The least yielding so alarmed them, that they could not be induced to proceed until a firmer footing was obtained, and by this cunning instinct they at length accomplished a safe ascent to the pagoda.

This sacred edifice was situated in a gloomy hollow, a short distance from the summit of the hill, and was in a state of unsightly dilapidation; near the temple was a spacious cavern, excavated from an extensive stratum of rock on the eastern face of the mountain. The Mirza had scarcely reached the pagoda when one of those sudden storms, so common in mountainous districts, having come on, he, his two attendants, and the mahouts, were obliged to take shelter in the cavern. It continued so long as to preclude all hope of passing elsewhere the night, now rapidly approaching, for the sun had already some time set. The gloomy excavation was consequently cleared, a heap of dried leaves being collected, and a fire kindled near the entrance, through which the smoke escaped without incommoding the hunters. The heat of the fire having disturbed the bats and various reptiles, which for years had here taken up their abode unmolested, the larger number of them were unceremoniously expelled, and the usurpers of their habitation left in undisputed possession.

The idea of passing the night in a damp excavation on the side of a bleak hill, was none of the most agreeable to Abdallah Mirza, a man to whom

luxury was the great object of existence, and whose whole life had been hitherto one rapid interval of unalloyed pleasure. He was, however, a high-mettled Moghul, full of animal spirits, and looking upon the event of his somewhat singular captivity as one of those agreeable accidents which break the tame monotony of a life passed in uninterrupted enjoyment, he determined to think himself the happiest of the faithful, in having obtained the opportunity of relating an adventure that would afford topics for court conversation, for at least the half of a month to come.

The Omrah ordered some refreshment to be laid before him. One of the mahouts rapidly prepared a curry of game which Abdallah had shot during the earlier part of the day, and which, instead of trusting to the sumpter elephant, he had capriciously consigned to the care of the Hindoo, who directed that upon which his master rode. The governor soon finished a hearty meal of the curry and some other viands, of which the Hindoos declined to partake, and washed it down with Shiraz wine, forbidden by the laws of the Koran, but freely swallowed by numerous devout Mohammedans, when they are beyond the prying scrutiny of muftis or their surrogates. His companions contented themselves with a plain meal of boiled rice, but had nevertheless no objection to moisten it with a moderate draught of pure arrack, in order, as they said, with commendable prudence, to prevent the damp of the place in which they were doomed to pass the night, from

inflicting upon them the common penalty of rheumatism. When the meal was concluded, and the remnants thrown to the mahouts, who ate them greedily in a remote corner of the cavern, one of the Hindoos told the following story for the entertainment of the governor of Chandahar.

CHAPTER V.

IN a district in the south of India proclamation was made that the festival of Samaradanam¹ was to be held at a certain time and place. It happened that four Brahmins meeting on their way to this sacred feast, agreed to proceed together. As they were conversing merrily about the Samaradanam they were met by a trooper, who, as he approached, gave them the ordinary salute, by touching hands, and pronouncing the customary dandam'arya, which signifies, health to my lord. The four Brahmins courteously returned the salutation, and continued their journey until they reached a tank, by the side of which, after having quenched their thirst, they threw themselves down under the shade of a tamarind tree. In the course of conversation one of the travellers, alluding to the civil greeting of the trooper who had met them on the road, said, with an air of great self-satisfaction, "I must do that noble soldier the justice to say, that he behaved with most commendable courtesy. Did you not observe with what profound respect he saluted me?"

"Nay," said one of his companions, "you mis-

¹ A festival kept only by Brahmins.

take, he addressed himself particularly to me. When he made his salaam, the border of his turban nearly came in contact with mine. Rely upon it his salutation was not intended for you, but for me."

"You are both in error," exclaimed the third Brahmin with a smile of amusing importance, "for I was the person to whom the man of war intended to show his respect; his eyes were fixed upon me, and me only, during the whole time of his presence."

"Allow me to say," said the fourth Brahmin, "that you all three deceive yourselves. If you had used your senses with common discretion, you must have perceived that he only saluted me; else do you imagine that I should have bestowed upon him the holy asirvadam¹?"

Each, however, maintained his right to the distinction severally claimed by all, and this with such vehemence that they at length tore the turbans from each other's heads, and would have gone to greater extremities had not the first speaker proposed a cessation of hostilities.

"Why should we thus contend, like so many Pariahs over a piece of carrion, about a fact which can be easily settled by an appeal to him who has been the cause of our unbecoming dissension. He cannot be far off; let us quicken our pace, so that we may overtake him, and he will at once terminate the dispute between us."

Panting and perspiring to excess, they overtook

¹ A form of benediction used by the Brahmins.

the soldier after a severe run of more than two coss, and having gravely put to him the question which had caused them to fight, he at once perceiving their stupidity, as gravely replied, that he had saluted the greatest fool among them.

Perplexed at this answer, they knew not how to decide; still neither would relinquish his pretensions to the honour of having been especially distinguished by the soldier. Each continued to maintain that he was the person for whom the salutation, about which they had been disputing, was intended, and to so great a length did they carry their controversy, that each claimed to be greatest fool of the four, the trooper having decided that to him his salutation was given. The contest for supremacy in fatuity soon became as vehement as before, and might have ended seriously had not the Brahmin, who had first spoken, made a second proposal, which was that they should lay their several claims before a conclave of Brahmins, to be held at a neighbouring hamlet, where the dispute would be finally settled by an equitable decision.

This proposal was agreed to, and, on reaching the village, the four disputants repaired to a choultry, in which a number of Brahmins assembled to hear their cause, and pronounce judgment. When the appellants appeared before their jurists, the president, upon hearing the cause of their dispute, declared, that as it was not a matter to be settled upon positive testimony, he and his co-functionaries must judge of it circumstantially, or rather by inference; he, therefore, pronounced that each of the four Brahmins

should relate some event of his life by which his folly might be inferred, and that upon such presumptive testimony judgment should be given. This being agreed to, the first speaker proceeded to offer his proof of stolidity.

“You will observe,” he said, “that my clothing is none of the rarest, and rags have been my portion for many years. Being poor from my earliest days, a wealthy and charitable brother of our caste once presented me with two pieces of cloth, such as had never been before seen in Agragrama, my native town. I was congratulated by all my friends, who declared that I must have done some especial good in a preceding generation to be so distinguished in this. Having carefully washed the cloth, in order to get rid of the impurities which the fuller had left in it, I hung both the pieces up to dry, fastening the ends to branches of trees. A pariah dog passed under them. Fearing the unclean animal might have polluted them, in order to ascertain if it had touched the cloth, I placed myself upon my hands and knees, and being then about the height of the dog, I crawled under the suspended pieces, and rejoiced to find that I did not stir them. It delighted me to think that my present was not polluted; but my joy was soon interrupted by the recollection that the dog had a tail, which curled up over his back like that of a squirrel. In order to ascertain whether the contaminating creature’s natural excrescence had touched my woollen, I fixed a leaf to the end of my own spine. It had been warped by the sun, and, therefore, curled upwards just like the pariah dog’s tail.

Creeping now like a beast, under the pieces of cloth upon my hands and knees the leaf was scraped from my back. This at once proved that the dog's tail had polluted my cloth. I instantly tore it down, and rent both pieces to shreds.

"In consequence of this folly I became the laughing-stock of my neighbours, who wisely observed, that washing would have removed the pollution, after which I might have sold the good Brahmin's gift, and put a handful of pagodas into my pocket. I have remained a beggar ever since, having scarcely a rag to cover me, as my folly was made so notorious that no one would confer another boon upon me; rags, therefore, and too often an empty stomach, have been my bitter portion."

"Well," observed the president, "you seem to have established a fair claim to the distinction of being the greatest fool of the company. One can see that you have been accustomed to go upon all-fours like a cur."

"Precisely so," said the ragged suppliant, smiling, "as you shall see:" saying this, he dropped upon his hands and knees, and trotted off amid the shouts of the spectators.

The second appellant now stepped forward to substantiate his claim, by proving himself a greater fool than he who had just addressed the bench of sacred justiciaries.

"Once," said he, "at the sacred festival of Samaradanam, I got myself shaved, desiring to appear decent upon so solemn an occasion, and commanded

my wife to give the barber a pice¹ for his trouble. She, however, like an indiscreet woman, gave the shaver two pice. I demanded that he should return one; he declined, but offered, as an equivalent for the double fee, to shave my wife also. To this I assented, determined, as I could not get back my money, to have my money's worth. My wife, hearing the bargain thus concluded without her concurrence, rushed from the house; but I pursued, and brought her back. During the operation of shaving she cried bitterly at the thought of losing her hair, which was long and very beautiful, covering her shoulders, when unconfined, like a mantle. So soon as her crown was denuded, with a scalp as bare as the palm of my hand she retired to a place of concealment, uttering the bitterest maledictions against me.

“The barber proclaimed throughout the whole neighbourhood, that he had shaved a Brahmin's wife, colouring the story by the most malicious exaggerations. Supposing that she had been guilty of some heinous sin, and that I was about to visit her with a terrible punishment, all my neighbours assembled before the door of my house. My father-in-law and mother-in-law, who lived at a distance of fifteen coss², hearing the rumour of their daughter's delinquency, mounted a swift bullock of the purest Brahminee breed, and came to inquire into the truth of so grave a charge. Upon hearing the simple story

¹ About the third of an English penny.

² Thirty miles.

from their daughter's lips, they abused me like a couple of Chandallas¹, and, taking their child home with them, kept her from me four years.

“At the next festival of Samaradanam I attended as usual, but was immediately seized, and the conclave of Brahmins insisted that I should give up the accomplice of my wife, who had been accused of having violated the marriage pledge. I vehemently protested that the whole story was a fabrication of the barber's, and related the simple fact of the shaving, when a burst of indignant surprise passed through the whole assembly, which, with one consent, agreed that I had been guilty of an atrocious offence, in having thus degraded an innocent matron. I was, very disagreeably, distinguished with every mark of reprobation. ‘Either this man must be the greatest liar, or the greatest fool upon earth,’ they exclaimed with one voice. And I have no doubt,” concluded the simpleton, addressing the bench of Brahmins, who were seated in adjudication upon this intricate question, “you will concur in the opinion of that venerable body, and surely ‘the greatest fool upon earth’ must be the man whom the trooper saluted.”

The president at once admitted the force of this observation, which was worthy of a wiser man, but declined deciding for the present. The third claimant now presented himself.

“Gentlemen,” said he, looking round the court with an air of conscious simplicity, “to my family name of

¹ A race of outcasts of extremely low and licentious habits.

Amynta has been appended the additional appellation of Betel. I am now universally called Betel Amynta. You shall hear the cause of this strange additament. I was married to a young and beautiful maiden, who, like most of her sex, whether young or old, had so perpetual a tendency to wag her tongue, that, in truth, it was never still. One day, when she had exercised this feminine faculty with more than usual vehemence, I happened to say, under the excitement of vexation, that all women were tattlers. She immediately replied, that men were much greater talkers than women. Perceiving that this insolent assertion was directed against me, who scarcely ever said any thing but my prayers, an altercation ensued between us, when, by way of putting both our assertions to the proof, we agreed to see who would maintain the longest silence. The forfeit of the first speaker was, by mutual covenant, solemnly made, with protestations and oaths, to be a betel-leaf.

“ At night we went to bed without interchanging a benediction. We were as mute as the lizards which crawled above our heads, as if to provoke us to a breach of oath. In the morning we were called by one attendant after another, but, receiving no answer, they imagined that we were dead. The door was forced, and, to their great surprise, they found us wide awake. All then naturally concluded that we had been struck suddenly dumb. My father swore, my mother raved, my brothers stormed, my sisters wept, but to no purpose, we remained as silent as scorpions. It was generally surmised that we were under the influence of an evil spirit; a

magician was, consequently, sent for to release us from so dreadful a thralldom. He came, immediately commenced the exercises of his craft, and finished by declaring that my wife and I were undoubtedly possessed by two demons, but that, if any one interested in our delivery would place four pagodas upon his palm, he would instantly lay the devils, and restore us to the use of our speech.

“To this proposal my father and mother at once agreed, but a Brahmin who happened to be present, and was more than a match for the magician in cunning, declared that our dumbness was the mere effect of some ordinary cause, and agreed to cure us both without incurring the expense of a single cowry¹. He accordingly made a small rod of iron red-hot, and taking it in a pair of pincers applied it to the soles of my feet. Finding I did not speak, he put it upon the crown of my head; but I did not stir my tongue, being determined to die, rather than afford my wife so signal a cause of triumph, as by her sly smiles she evidently expected from this process.

“Seeing that the searing produced not the expected effect upon me, ‘Let us try the wife,’ said the wise Brahmin. The heated iron no sooner touched the skin of her tiny foot, than she screamed out ‘Appa²’, and confessed that I had conquered. This was not all, for she candidly admitted, that, of the two, women were greater talkers than men. Our conversation causing some surprise among the by-

¹ A shell, the lowest current coin of Hindostan, one being about the fiftieth part of a farthing.

² Enough.

standers, I related to them the transaction and wager of the preceding day.

“ ‘What,’ said the good man, who had so humanely blistered the soles of my feet and the crown of my head, ‘have you suffered the excoriation of your nether extremities, and the roasting of your brains, for a betel-leaf? You are the greatest fool that ever trod in a sandal!’ and I am sure, gentlemen,” concluded the claimant for a fool’s honour, turning to his judges, “you will readily concur in that decision. From that time to this I have borne the nickname of Betel Amynta, and not, I think, without richly deserving it.”

The whole bench of jurats admitted the fatuity of this simple husband, when the fourth competitor for the honour of stupidity advanced, and thus addressed the court :

“The maiden to whom I was betrothed remained several years at the house of her parents, on account of her extreme youth. In due time I was apprised that the period for completing our marriage having arrived, I was at liberty to claim my bride. On my departure for this purpose, my mother said to me, ‘See now that thou dost not behave like a fool when thou appearest before the maiden’s parents. I know thee to be a simpleton, but I should not wish them to find it out. Be on thy best behaviour, and cause not thy wife to despise thee.’

“I promised faithfully to do as my good mother desired, and proceeded to the home of my bride. I was well received by her family, and the marriage being regularly concluded according to the formulary,

a feast was prepared to which all the Brahmins of the neighbourhood were invited, and I passed three days in the most joyous festivity. On the fourth day I quitted, with my wife, her paternal abode, amid the blessings of her parents and the benedictions of her friends, who wished us happy days and a numerous issue.

“The day of our departure being excessively hot, and our way lying across a sandy desert, our feet were dreadfully scorched. My young wife, who had been tenderly brought up, suffered so extremely, that she threw herself upon the sand, and, bursting into tears, declared vehemently she could proceed no further.

“I was, as you may suppose, reduced to a painful dilemma, not knowing what to do with my unhappy and suffering companion. At this critical juncture, a merchant happened to reach the spot with fifty bullocks carrying his merchandise. He was travelling in a contrary direction. I advanced to meet him, the tears streaming down my cheeks, told him the deplorable state of my unhappy bride and myself, and besought him to give me his advice under circumstances so pitiable.

“‘Why,’ he replied, ‘yours is truly a distressing case, but you must make the best of it. You know as well as I do, that if your wife remains where she is, she must be devoured by wild beasts, and as to proceeding across the desert exposed to the rays of so scorching a sun, that is altogether out of the question; she must perish under the certain sufferings of such a journey. Now, if she dies, you will be sus-

pected of having murdered her ; therefore, instead of running the risk of incurring so fearful an imputation, as being the perpetrator of one of the five crimes held most heinous by all true Brahmins, I would advise you to consign your wife to my charge, and make the best of your own way home. I will put her upon a quiet bullock, one that has too just a knowledge of good manners to kick under a woman, and take very good care of her. By acting thus, you will obtain the merit of having saved her life instead of having deprived her of it, while I shall encumber myself with a charge which will demand both money and circumspection ; I will, however, undertake it for charity's sake. Her apparel and ornaments may be perhaps worth fifteen pagodas ; here are twenty, and, assure yourself, that you have made a capital bargain.'

" I considered this an extremely equitable proposal, under circumstances, more especially, as if I did not embrace it, my wife must die, and I be nothing the better ; so I took the twenty pagodas, folded them up in my cummerbund, and helped the merchant to lift the lovely Mahabavahdi, to whom I had been so lately united, upon one of his strongest oxen. This being done, he proceeded on his journey, and I pursued mine. I reached my mother's house several hours after sunset, faint with hunger, exhausted with fatigue, and the soles of my feet as raw as if they had just been excoriated with the bastinado.

" Surprised at seeing me alone, my anxious parent having first caressed me in order to give me

confidence, exclaimed with a pallid countenance and quivering lips, 'What is become of your bride?' I immediately gave her a detailed account of every thing that had happened since I quitted home—how kindly I had been received by my father and mother-in-law—the feast made upon the joyful occasion of my arrival—my departure, and their numerous benedictions—the bride's sufferings from the heat of the sun and of the sand—my opportune meeting with the merchant, and the bargain entered into and concluded between us. As a proof of the verity of my narrative, I produced the twenty pagodas, clinking them in my hand with a grin of inexpressible satisfaction. At the sight of this confirmation of my folly, my venerable mother fell into such a rage that I thought she would have annihilated me upon the spot. She screamed with fury, boxed my ears so energetically, that they tingled for a whole week after, and showered curses upon me in such rapid succession, that I could not intrude a single thought between the maledictions. 'Villain,' she cried, 'what hast thou done? given up thy young and beautiful bride—a Brahminee—to the arms of a degraded dog of a merchant. What will her parents say when they find that thou hast cast this dishonour upon their child? Get out of my sight, idiot! thou art the greatest fool ever brought into the world by a miserable mother.'

“When the parents of my wife heard what had befallen their daughter, they became absolutely frantic. They set out together for my mother's house; but I, being warned of their approach, took care to make a

timely escape, or, without doubt, they would have taken my innocent life, and transfused my peaceable spirit into the body of a lizard or some such innocuous quadruped. Finding that I had removed beyond the reach of their vengeance, they laid the whole matter before the president of the Brahminical College. Assembling a council of the caste, the case was formally adjudicated before them, and a fine imposed upon me of two hundred pagodas, to be paid to the parents of my injured wife, as a compensation for the loss and degradation of their daughter. It was further decreed, that I should never again be allowed to enter into the delectable state of matrimony, as I was too great a fool to deserve so rich a boon as a partner of the softer sex. In fact, I should have been visited with that most awful of inflictions, the loss of caste, but for the high respect in which the memory of my late excellent father was held; for he had been esteemed an oracle among the Brahmins when living, and was venerated by them as a saint when dead.

“ Now, worthy sirs, that you have heard my story, I think you can scarcely fail to concur in the declaration of my poor venerated parent, that I am ‘ the greatest fool ever brought into the world by a miserable mother.’ ”

The stories of the four Brahmins had been a source of extreme merriment to their judges, who, after a short consultation, pronounced the following judgment:—“ That the appellants had each established his claim to the title of fool, in its very broadest acceptation; that their folly being so different in

kind, though not in degree, each was the biggest fool in his own peculiar way; that each was therefore at liberty to claim to himself the salutation of the soldier, and to assume the singular but unenviable celebrity for which all so eagerly contended."

The four Brahmins, transported with this equitable decision, rushed out of the choultry, uttering extravagant yells of triumph, every one declaring that he was the greatest fool upon earth.

Thus ended the Hindoo's story, of which Abdallah being heartily tired, he laid himself down upon the housings of his elephant, and in a few minutes was lapped in profound repose.

CHAPTER VI.

ON the following morning the summit of the hill was irradiated with the burning glories of an unclouded sun. Not a speck of vapour floated beneath the broad heavens. The elephants were caparisoned and ready to descend into the plain, when the Mirza declared his intention of visiting the pagoda, though this was a resolution by no means agreeable to his Hindoo attendants, who did not desire that so sacred a place should be profaned by the intrusion of any person professing a different creed, especially by a Mohammedan, whose faith they abhorred above every other. They nevertheless followed their master within the portals of the sacred edifice, in which there was nothing to solicit admiration, but much to excite disgust. The filth and stench were alike intolerable. Scarcely had the Omrah proceeded beyond the vestibule, when his eyes were attracted to a small door in the further end of the building, through which three female figures slowly glided, and laid their offerings before the idol, a huge painted stone, placed in a niche at the extremity of the area, immediately opposite the main entrance through which the Mohammedan and his companions had just passed.

On reaching the centre of the area, Abdallah could

distinctly discern the faces of the three female devotees. To his astonishment he recognised the two sisters, who had lately attracted his attention at the well, and in their companion, to his still greater amazement, the hag of the jungle, whose services he had hired at a liberal recompense. After a few moments' reflection, it struck him that the old woman was probably working out her hire ; he consequently paused, in expectation that he should receive some sign from her, confirming his agreeable anticipations. After a short interval, the sisters, having made their prostrations before the idol, retired. The old woman approached the consecrated stone, rubbed off some of the paint with which it was daubed, and, having smeared her withered fingers, turned round towards the governor of Chandahar, and, directing her sunken and almost rayless eyes upon him, her whole frame hideous with deformity and filth, she broke into a sepulchral laugh, and, retreating to the portal, with her eyes still fixed upon the wondering Mirza, disappeared through the entrance. That hollow laugh was reverberated through the vaulted building in multiplied echoes. Scorpions, centipedes, and snakes, crawled from the fissures of the walls, as if evoked by an unearthly summons, and left their poisonous slime upon the floor of the sanctuary. Abdallah retired with precipitation, glad to escape from so many insidious foes, armed with minute but sure instruments of destruction.

On reaching the outside of the pagoda, he searched every where for the two worshippers who had so deeply interested him, and their mysterious com-

panion, the latter of whom he was eager to question upon her chance of success in an object that concerned him so nearly. His search was fruitless; and, not being able to discover either the young girls or the old woman, he mounted his elephant, and began to descend the hill, more than ever confirmed in his determination to obtain possession of the most beautiful of the Hindoo sisters. The descent was slow and difficult; it was, however, at length accomplished without accident, through the extreme caution and natural sagacity of the elephants, which descended the steepest declivities with a skill that might have shamed the superior faculties of man.

On reaching the plains, as the mahoots were unacquainted with the road, it was some time before the regular path which led towards the village in the vicinity of Abdallah's habitation was gained. In passing through the jungle, the Moghul noble amused himself about noon, while the attendants were preparing him a curry under a teak-tree, with shooting pea-fowl, with which the woods abounded. He had strolled about half a coss from his companions, when, turning into a thickly-wooded dell, he saw the venerable prophetess of the forest seated upon the stump of a tree, attempting to frighten the vultures from the carcass of an elk, which had been destroyed by a tiger during the night. On his approaching her, she rose and said—

“Thou art here, child of an unholy prophet. Dost thou come to claim the prize for which thou didst give me gold?”

“Thou hast made a goodly guess, beldam,” replied

Abdallah; "I have sought thee unavailingly until now. What has been thy success?"

"That thou shalt know hereafter: the time is not yet come."

"What means this trifling? You know my power, you have received your wages, and, if that is not performed which you have stipulated to accomplish, beware the bastinado!"

"I despise it and thee. Take heed how thou provokest the malice of one who can bring upon thee the plagues of the doomed. Think not that a decrepit member of that sex whose weakness man affects to despise, but who is able to scare the vulture from his prey, is impotent to realize the curses which she imprecates. Provoke not my malediction, Omrah."

"Hag!" vociferated the enraged Mirza; "do what thou hast stipulated for, or, by the beard of the most holy prophet, I will send thee to the lowest of thy regions of torment."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried the mysterious stranger, retreating towards the angle of the rock near which she was standing; "a curse on thee, thou circumcised dog!"

Abdallah raised his matchlock; in a moment she darted behind the stony barrier; he fired, and, as the echoes of the explosion subsided, he heard the wild laugh of the hag, as she passed unseen through the thick growth of the jungle. The Moghul feared to follow her, lest he should lose his way, and she was soon lost amidst the deep recesses of the forest,

known only to herself and the various beasts of prey which shared with her its gloomy shelter.

The disappointed governor now rejoined his attendants, who had by this time prepared his curry, which he left untouched, to the surprise of those about him, who knew from experience that his appetite rarely failed him. His late vexation had taken too strong an effect upon his naturally prompt stomach, to allow him to enjoy the luxury of a meal in the forest, composed of a single dish,—one, however, relished above every other by all natives of the East.

About an hour after noon the Omrah again mounted his elephant, and proceeded leisurely towards his home. On his way he passed the spot where the battle betwixt the leopard and the bear had taken place on the preceding day. About a hundred yards onward, at the edge of a thicket, lay the mangled body of the leopard, partly devoured by vultures, and, a few yards beyond, the bear still living, but at the point of death. A ball from the governor's matchlock relieved it from its agony; and one of the mahoots having skinned it, the hide was thrown across the neck of his elephant, to be exhibited among the various trophies of the previous day's sport.

As he neared his home, Abdallah became more abstracted and silent. He could not guess the cause of the old crone's hostility, not conceiving that his uncourtly reception of her, at her first appearance before him, could have roused her rancour to such a

degree, especially as he had so liberally rewarded her on a mere promise of obtaining for him the wish at present nearest his heart. There was, moreover, something about her so mysterious, that although he affected to believe her a mere pretender to supernatural communications, he could not altogether dispossess himself of the idea that she had the power of evoking those evil powers delighting in mischief, which sometimes bring upon unworthy men the severest calamities, and thus a deserved retribution. He now plainly saw that he could no farther calculate upon her assistance in placing the Hindoo sisters into his power; yet such was the fervour of his passion, that he resolved, in defiance of all consequences, to obtain possession of its object before he returned to the capital of his government, which he had arranged to do in the course of a few days. Reaching home about sunset, he retired to his apartment, leaving his attendants to recount the events of the previous evening, in answer to the anxious inquiries of those who had attended him in his excursion of pleasure the preceding day; nor did he appear among his guests until a night's rest had somewhat calmed the perturbed flow of his thoughts.

CHAPTER VII.

BULWUNT SINGH possessed a small patrimony near, and a large comfortable house in the village by the well, where the governor of Chandahar had lately seen the lovely Pelvahi and her scarcely less lovely sister Jemadiva. He was a middle-aged Rajpoot, of princely descent, possessing that lofty pride of birth, that sternness of conscious courage and social superiority over his neighbours, so characteristic of all the Rajpoot races. He was a man of known integrity, of unflinching fortitude, of unreproached honour, and of desperate valour—which latter quality he had exhibited in many a stubborn encounter with the foe. Being alike respected and feared by those among whom he dwelt, he might be said to govern the district in which he resided, not by the law of right or of investiture, but by the inferior influence of moral domination. Though possessing many of the highest qualities which adorn mankind, he had few of what, among Rajpoots, are esteemed the infirmities of human nature. His heart was unassailable by those tender emotions which melt others into sympathy, and mould them for the exercise of the more kindly virtues of benevolence and brotherly love. He loved nothing for its own

sake. Those stern qualities, which emanate rather from the strict decisions of principle than from the blander dictates of the heart, he loved to cultivate and to practise; his integrity was, consequently, trusted, whilst his severity was dreaded even by his children. He was at this time of the age of forty-four years, with a hardy and vigorous constitution, but stone-blind. The arrow that had entered his eye, the iris of which it had completely divided, he kept as a memorial of the infliction which had rendered him incapable of sharing with his countrymen the honours of a well-fought field. During the periods of daily devotion, this arrow was regularly placed by his side as a memorial of lost advantages, and to suggest a lesson of resignation.

Bulwunt Singh's two daughters were the fruit of one birth, which cost their mother her life. At their entrance into the world, their inflexible parent would have practised against them the cruel policy of Rajpoot fathers, who frequently destroy their female children in consequence of the difficulty of connecting them in marriage with men of rank and fortune; for no chief of that race ever permits a daughter to ally herself with an inferior in blood, though no such restriction is imposed upon the male offspring. He was, however, prevented from consigning his two innocent girls to destruction, in consequence of the interference of a prophetess, who foretold that one of them should share the throne of the mightiest potentate of the east; but as the revealer of mysteries did not indicate which, both

were preserved, in order that no impediment might exist to the fulfilment of the prophecy.

Bulwunt Singh, notwithstanding his high mental qualifications, was, like all the eastern races, a slave to superstition. This weakness proved the salvation of his children, who grew up to be as amiable as they were intelligent and beautiful. Pelvahi, the elder, was the admiration of the neighbourhood; the envy of the women, the perpetual theme of praise among the men. She looked full a year older than her sister, though she had only preceded her into the world by about two hours. It happened one day, when she was in her twelfth year¹, while passing through a thicket in the rear of her father's house, that a cheetah sprang upon her, struck her to the earth, and was about to seize her by the head, when a ball from the matchlock of a person unseen laid the ferocious creature dead upon the spot. The affrighted girl rose uninjured, and was accosted with delicate courtesy by the saviour of her life, who offered to conduct her home. The youth was handsome, strongly but finely formed, and the tender moustache upon his upper lip showed that he had yet scarcely entered the stage of perfect manhood. Trembling with agitation, the maiden thanked her preserver, but declined his proffered civility, knowing that her father would deeply resent the presence of a stranger.

“ Beautiful maiden,” said the youth, his cheek flushed with disappointment, and his eyes sparkling

¹ It must be borne in mind, that girls of this age in the East are as advanced as girls of sixteen in Europe.

with that brilliancy arising from the sweet consciousness of having saved a human life, "I am not of contaminated blood: I am of the same race with thyself. My father dwells at a village on the other side of the forest. Accident has brought me hither, or rather the pursuit of game has led me far from my home. My presence, therefore, would not pollute thy father's threshold."

"If," replied the maiden timidly, "you will risk my parent's displeasure, I cannot deny you the right of accompanying me to his dwelling, and of seeking the hospitality of my home, after having so gallantly rescued me from a frightful peril."

With this consent the young man accompanied her to the house, and was introduced by the grateful girl to her father as the saviour of her life. Bulwunt Singh listened attentively, but with an unrelaxed countenance, to her artless narrative, and, when his daughter had concluded, replied:

"The youth has saved thy life—he has only done a man's duty; nay, a dog would have done as much—ay, and have sacrificed its life too, for dogs are the most faithful as well as the bravest of brutes. What obligation then can you owe to him who has achieved for thee less than a dog would have done under similar circumstances? I exercise no hospitality to strangers. He must go his way. He has my thanks; let him better deserve my gratitude."

The youth reddened, but did not utter a word, and, making a respectful salaam to Pelvahi, immediately retired.

“Girl,” said the father, with a deep solemn intonation of utterance, heaved up from the chest as if it came from the profoundest depths of his bosom, “didst thou ever behold that youth until this day?”

“Never.”

“’Tis well; see him not again, or you shall know what it is to slight the behest of a father. Go and remember your duty.”

Both the sisters quitted their parent’s presence abashed, to talk over the events of the morning, and both agreed it was a very sad case that a girl so much inclined to be grateful should be withheld by parental tyranny from telling her deliverer how extremely obliged she felt to him for snatching her from the claws of a leopard.

Though Pelvahi respected the paternal prohibition, the promptings of gratitude in her bosom overbore the colder suggestions of filial duty, and she determined, if ever the opportunity should occur, to tell the young Rajpoot how differently she felt from her father the force of her obligation towards him. She was deeply sensible of the indignity which had been offered to her preserver, and was now more than ever anxious to see him, that she might close up the wound caused by the unwarrantable harshness of her parent. Bulwunt Singh’s blindness favoured the girl’s determination, and knowing the awe in which his children held him, he did not entertain a suspicion that either of them would dare to disobey any injunction of his, especially one so imperatively given.

Pelvahi, emboldened by the confidence of her father, and the remote chance of discovery in consequence of his blindness, determined to consult the old woman of the jungle, famous throughout the neighbourhood for her insight into the events of futurity, and be guided implicitly by her direction. Taking two pieces of gold, she sought her retreat, which, after some little difficulty, she discovered, and laid the whole matter before her.

“Thou shalt see him,” said the prophetess, “but let not thy heart be trapped, girl; for thou art destined for a brighter destiny than to be linked to a poor man, though a good. I have said it—thou shalt be a great one yet!”

The maiden’s heart bounded. The idea of being associated with greatness gave a new impulse to her thoughts; and her desire to see the stranger, when she discovered that he was poor, had already sensibly abated. Still he had saved her life; her parent had treated him harshly; she therefore felt herself bound to express her own gratitude for a benefit conferred, and at the same time to offer some apology for that parent’s rudeness. “Tell me something of the future, venerable Aviarany—thou hast excited my curiosity; thou knowest what will be, and thou canst not communicate it to a more anxious hearer.”

“Truly, maiden, the knowledge of the future is a dangerous possession, save to those who understand how to employ it wisely. If thou wert to attempt to ride the sun, thy flesh would be scorched. Seek not then to hold the reins of foreknowledge, lest thou

drive thyself over the precipice, and fall into an abyss too profound for the arm of Siva to reach thee. Be content to know, that the star of thy destiny is one of the brightest in the horizon, it is likewise of the first magnitude. Go—thou shalt see thy deliverer.”

Pelvahi reluctantly quitting her mysterious adviser, who was not disposed to be more communicative, resolved to wait patiently the opportunity of explaining to him who saved her from becoming a leopard's banquet, that she and her father entertained very different sentiments upon the obligation of requiting good conferred with gratitude.

One morning, as she was returning from the well, the Rajpoot's daughter perceived her deliverer coming towards her. He saluted her frankly, and she returned the salutation with an air of maiden embarrassment, which somewhat disconcerted the youth and arrested his advance.

“Bibi,” he said, as the lovely Rajpootni approached, “I have heard that thou hast a desire to communicate with me. Is it so?”

“It is true; I have felt anxious to assure you that I do not participate in my parent's harshness towards you, and now embrace the opportunity of relieving myself of that anxiety.”

“I am more than repaid for what I have suffered in consequence of the unprovoked indignity offered to me by one from whom I merited a better greeting, in the hope which this meeting gives me, sought by her though unhopd for by me, that the daughter of an

uncourteous father will not hold me presumptuous when I declare to her that I have left my heart entirely in her keeping."

"Indeed, I would fain relinquish the trust; it is too sacred for the custody of one so inexperienced as I am in the guardianship of such treasures."

"Dear girl," cried the enraptured Rajpoot, emboldened by the sweet playfulness of her manner, "I would not desire a more experienced depository. Will you take charge of it?"

"Not yet; I am unprepared for the reception of so sacred a pledge: I did not expect such a proposal—farewell! I must think of this."

"Think kindly, then, and remember that though I have only seen thee once before the present hour, I am no stranger to the fame both of thy beauty and of thy virtues, which latter transcend even thy beauty, though of the rarest order."

Finding the conversation was becoming somewhat more ardent than she had contemplated, for the animated stranger had already seized her hand, Pelvahi hurriedly withdrew it, and retreated with precipitate steps towards her home. She communicated what had happened to her sister, who agreed with her at once that it would not be prudent further to encourage the young stranger, especially as the prophetess had given her a clear intimation that she would live to be far greater than a poor Rajpoot could possibly render her. This advice was no doubt reasonable. Pelvahi fully concurred with her affectionate monitress in thinking she was still young enough to wait for the good fortune hereafter

to befall her, and that it would be unwise to baulk so promising a chance, by an alliance which would not elevate her one jot above her neighbours.

From this time, the young Rajpoot frequently watched his favourite's return from the well, and renewed his vows of eternal attachment; but the maiden, though she received them graciously, and did not positively discourage them, for it is no easy matter to discourage an ardent and confiding lover, by no means confirmed his expectation that he had obtained a triumph over her heart. She had not the courage to reject altogether one to whom she was indebted for so signal a service as the preservation of her life, and therefore permitted him to hope, in tender mercy, lest, as she said, he should give way to the agonies of despair and do himself a mischief.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE events recorded in the last chapter took place just three years before Abdallah Mirza first saw the two Rajpootni sisters at the well. During that period the youthful stranger who had saved the life of the elder, did not cease to pursue her with his urgent addresses. In spite of the flattering prediction of old Aviarani, she could not turn a deaf ear to protestations of attachment which gave her so much pleasure; and finding that there was great worth, as well as great manly beauty, in her admirer, her heart was finally subdued. She at length consented to merge the anticipations of future greatness in the nearer prospect of happiness with a brave and generous youth, who loved her for herself, and, so far as she could see, was the best calculated in the world to make her happy.

The reputed father of Pelvahi's admirer was a Rajpoot warrior, who had distinguished himself in many a well-contested field. His reputation as a soldier was of the highest order. Knowing the severe character of the blind chieftain, to whose daughter he was devotedly attached, the ardent lover contrived that their meetings should be so secret as not to rouse the slightest suspicion of a clandestine

intercourse, as this would have been not only fatal to his hopes, but probably to his life. The betrothed were therefore in the habit of meeting occasionally during the evening return from the well, the younger sister bearing the customary supply of water, and performing those duties which were usually divided between her and the eldest born. As their meetings were seldom, in proportion to their danger, the lovers had, happily for them, contrived to escape suspicion for upwards of three years, when Pelvahi pledged herself to become the wife of him who had not only rescued her from death at the hazard of his own life, but had during a long interval of patient trial exhibited a warm and unabated attachment.

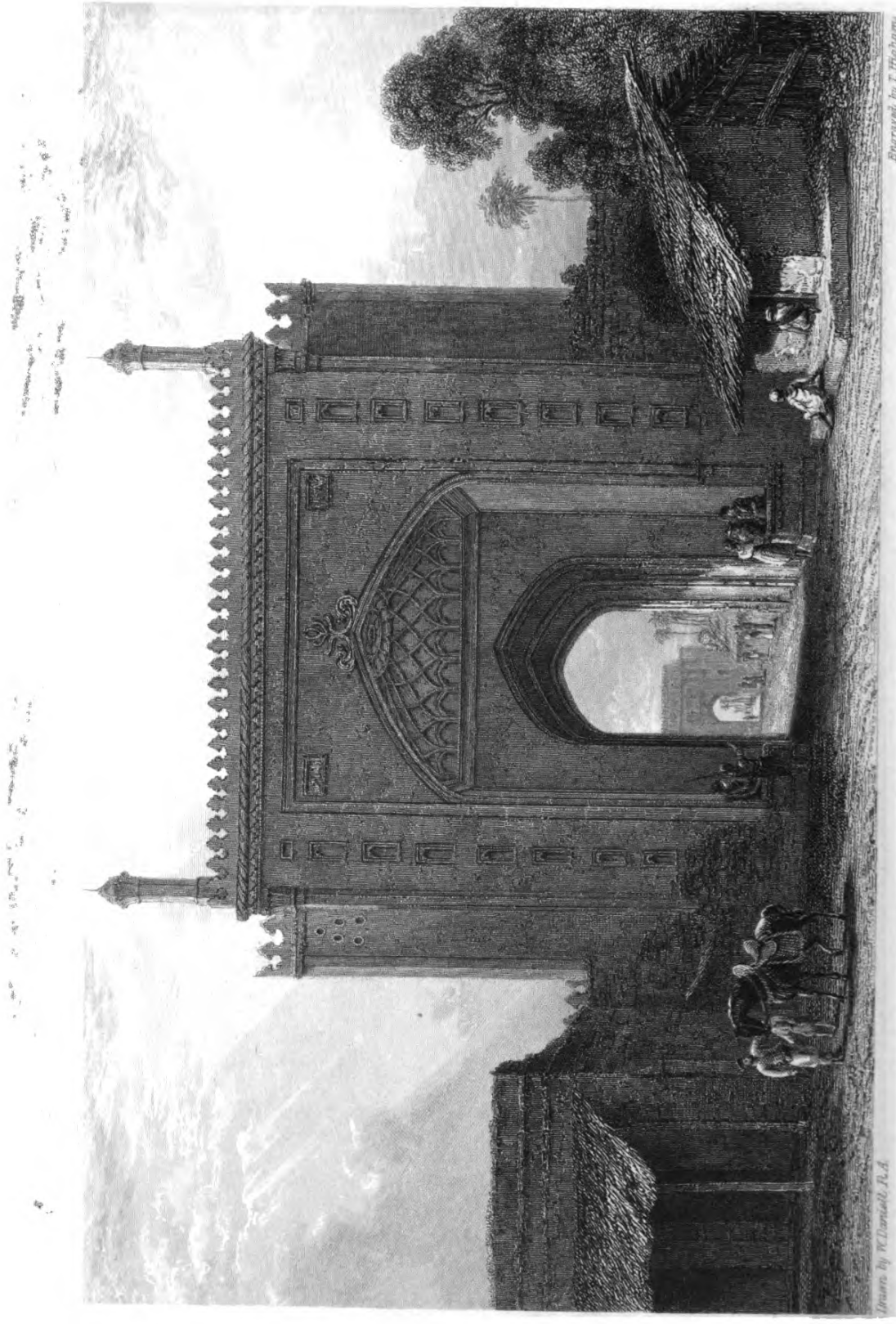
The younger sister did not much relish the idea of her elder abandoning the prospect of greatness intimated by the prophetess, for one who, although of good lineage, was nevertheless not likely to elevate her above her present condition; nevertheless, as she fondly loved her, and perceived that the gentle girl's affections were fixed upon a deserving though not a wealthy man, she not only determined not to traverse, by opposition, the happiness of a being so dear to her heart, but connived at her sister's secret meetings, made her excuses, and in fact became the main instrument of her security from discovery. The lovers had at length come to the resolution of being united, and the period was settled for their final union. It was determined, after many places had been proposed and rejected, that, for the sake of more certain safety, the marriage ceremony should be concluded at a distance, whither Pelvahi was to

repair under pretence of visiting a near relative, with whom the sisters were occasionally in the habit of spending a few days at certain times of the year. So soon as the marriage rites should be solemnized, it was settled that the bride and bridegroom were to quit the neighbourhood, leaving a communication to the father of the former, stating their destination, and soliciting his forgiveness for their disobedience of his tyrannical injunctions. These interesting maidens had visited the pagoda on the hill, where they were seen by Abdallah, in order to present their offerings at the shrine of the presiding divinity, and to invoke him to crown the approaching marriage of Pelvahi with prosperity and joy.

A few days after their return from this pious visit to that venerated sanctuary, as they were bending their steps homeward from the well soon after sunrise, according to their custom, three horsemen suddenly appeared in a narrow curve of the path which led to the village, through a grove of trees in its vicinity. The two Rajpootnis happened to be unaccompanied, though followed at some distance by an attendant, who was at this moment in view. The horsemen advanced at a rapid pace, and, halting as they reached the sisters, one of them sprang from his steed, took the astonished Pelvahi in his arms, placed her before one of his companions, who, immediately galloping off with his lovely burthen, was out of sight in a few seconds. He next seized the affrighted and unresisting Jemadiva, and, placing her before the other horseman, the latter set off at full speed after the first rider. The third then

vaulted into his saddle, and followed on the gallop. The unhappy maidens were so paralysed with terror as to be deprived of all presence of mind. They did not utter a cry, and were beyond the reach of aid ere they had recovered from the severe shock of surprise. Both were amazed at so sudden a capture. Neither could account for it; they knew of no one whom they could really look upon as their enemy, having good reason to suppose that they were objects of universal regard.

The speed with which the terrified girls were carried prevented them from asking any questions, and the fright under which they laboured, from attempting to challenge a rescue. On flew the horses as if they were winged or borne onward by the wind, nor did they stop until their riders considered themselves fairly beyond the reach of pursuit. They at length halted at a small hut a few hundred yards out of the road, where they alighted; the captives were then put each into a palanquin, and carried rapidly forward. They were no longer followed by the horsemen, but a guard of Moghul soldiers marched before and behind the palanquins. They travelled the whole day, only stopping about noon under a tope of tamarind trees, where some refreshment was placed before the unhappy maidens, which both declined. After a halt of little more than a quarter of an hour, they proceeded, with a change of bearers, at the same rapid pace which they had hitherto maintained. Not a creature was permitted to speak to the lovely captives, who heard nothing but the dull tramp of the hamauls, as they laboured under their burthen, and



Grand Entrance to the Temple of Serapeus.

chanted the singularly monotonous chime to which they invariably move when bearing their palanquins.

About half an hour before sunset, the travellers reached the gate of a magnificent serai. It was a structure of great beauty, the architecture of the entrance being one of the finest specimens of Mohammedan taste in the country. Here it had been previously settled that they should rest for the night; accordingly, after having partaken of a slight repast, the palanquins were placed within two deep recesses about nine feet square; into them the sisters crept, and, covering themselves with a mat of smooth rushes, slept until dawn.

On the following day they proceeded early on their journey, and reached the capital of Chandahar before sunset. The sisters were then placed in an apartment together, the door of which was guarded by two soldiers. It was some consolation, under existing circumstances, to find they were not separated. It may readily be supposed that they were neither of them happy. Though their father was stern, he had still ever treated them with paternal consideration; and they were distressed to think how great must have been his rage on hearing of their abduction. They well knew that his violence would know no bounds, and trembled as they reflected what might be the issue of it. Both were fatigued with their rapid journey, and harassed with mental anxiety. Pelvahi was extremely sad. The thought of her lover's disappointment at finding her torn from his arms, just when he was about to unite his destiny

with hers, almost distracted her. There could be no longer any doubt of the author of the violence to which they had been subjected, as they were at that moment in an apartment of the palace of the governor of Chandahar, who was notorious for his disregard of all ties, whether civil, social, or kindred, whenever they offered any impediment to the gratification of his base desires. That Bulwunt Singh, although blind, would attempt their rescue, they knew him too well to doubt; and what the issue of a collision might be betwixt him and Abdallah Mirza, they trembled to imagine, knowing the violence of the one, and the active, reckless courage of the other. The poor girls retired to their repose, fatigued in body and harassed in spirit, dreading the morrow's approach, which would probably reveal some appalling truth.

Next morning, ere they had completed their first meal, Abdallah Mirza appeared before them, and, after courteously inquiring how they had passed the night, and whether the fatigue of their recent journey had left them, declared, without further preface, that he had ordered apartments to be prepared in his harem for their reception; that he should apply to their father for his consent to his daughters becoming members of the female community, who lived but to administer to the pleasures of a Moghul dignitary, and that, if this were denied, he should fulfil his determination without. "For one month," he said in conclusion, "you may remain together in this apartment; after that time you will take pos-

session of a different abode, among a community whose pride is to consult my wishes, and who live but to do my will."

He retired, making them a respectful salaam, and leaving with them a new subject upon which to exercise their reflections. Several days passed, and the Rajpootnis saw no more of their tyrant. They had no communication with a human creature, none but Mohammedan domestics being permitted to wait upon them, and with these they did not interchange a word; they were consequently unacquainted with any thing that took place beyond the walls of their prison. Their suspense increased day by day, until it amounted to positive torture.

Abdallah now triumphed in the success of his bold enterprise; and though he knew that to rouse the anger of Bulwunt Singh was to excite the fury of an unchained madman, he nevertheless resolved to brave the result of a deed which provoked and merited the most signal retribution.

A few days after his return to the capital, he was one evening seated in the vestibule of the palace, sipping his sherbet, when suddenly the old woman of the jungle unceremoniously appeared before him. He was for an instant so staggered at her bold and insolent intrusion, that his tongue refused to perform its wonted office. She fixed her dim dark eyes sternly upon him, and said—

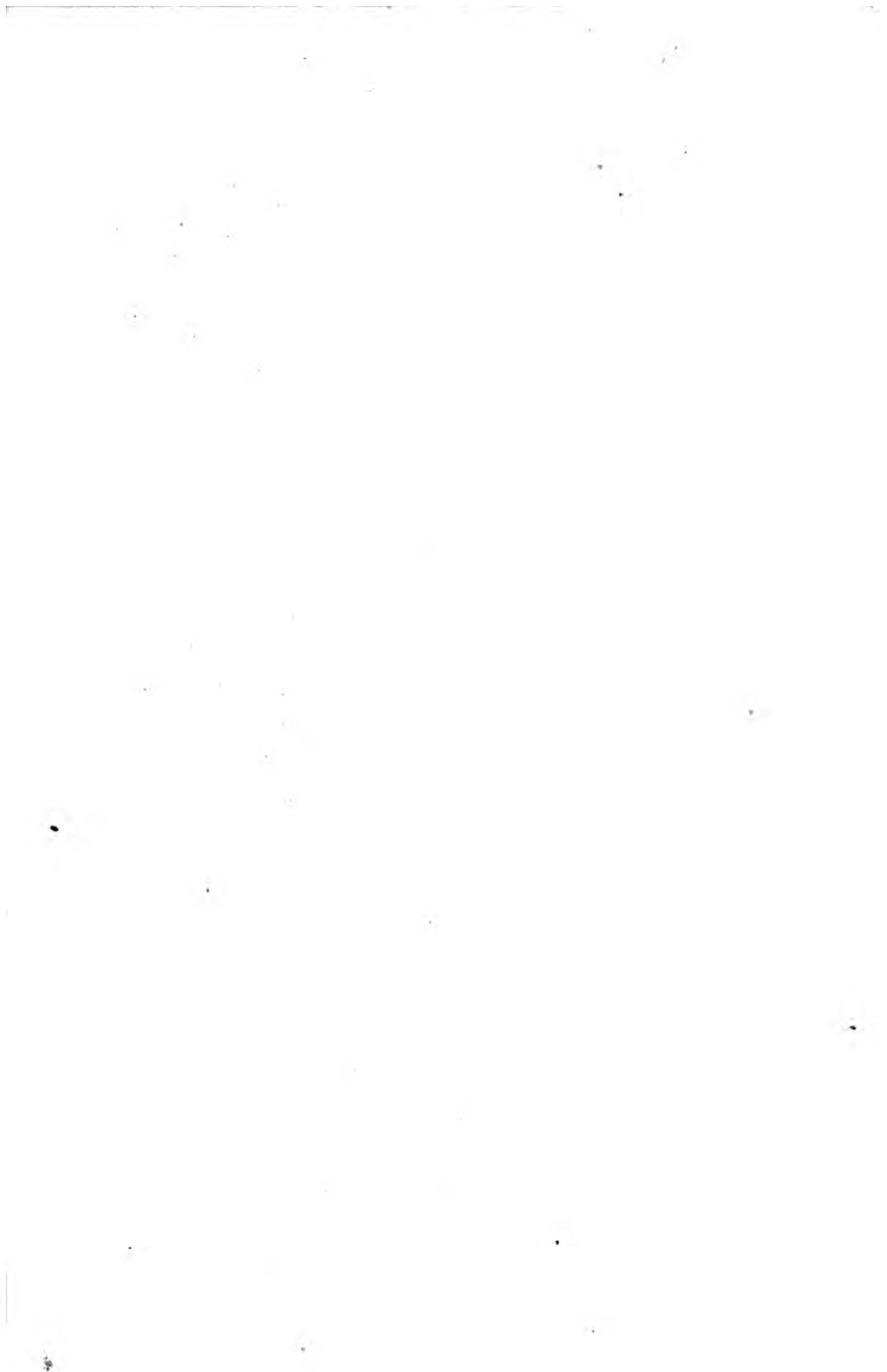
"Robber! thou hast stolen its cubs from the lion: dost thou not fear the fury of that terror of the jungle? Mind me, tyrant, thou shalt rue this outrage—it will entail disaster upon thee."

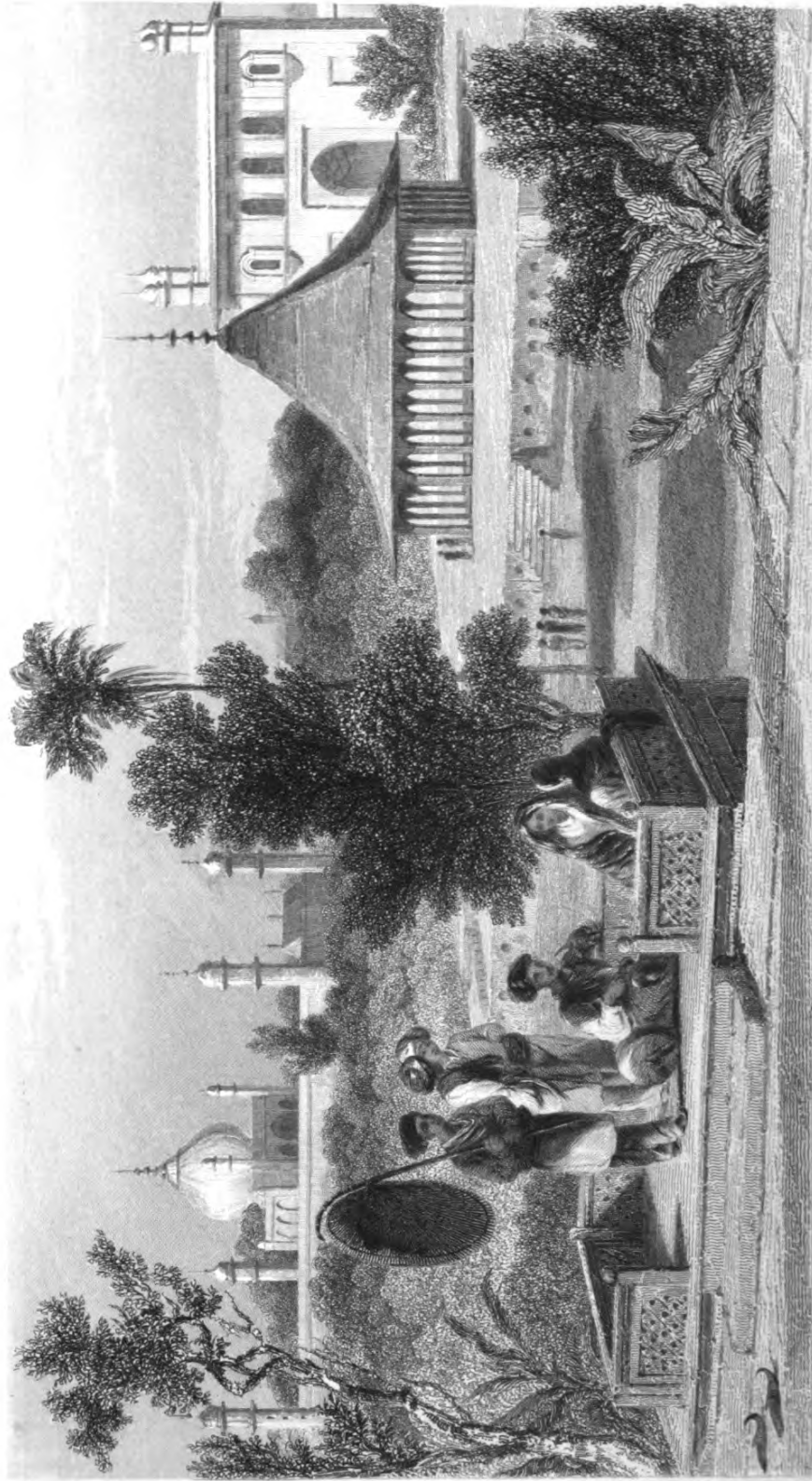
“Hag!” cried the Omrah, recovering from the sudden surprise of her entrance, “quit my sight, or, by the prophet’s beard, the most sacred of adjurations, I will give thee over to the executioners, to be so scourged that the stripes shall never wear out of thy skin. Beware.”

“Son of an outcast mother, do thy worst. I am old, and above the care of this world and its miseries. You may lacerate my flesh—you may torture my body—but you cannot subdue my spirit: that defies thy power—it mocks thy tyranny—it is impassable to thy tortures. I have suffered misery—I have endured agony too long to wince under any thing which can now be inflicted by a mortal hand. Hear me, worshipper of Mohammed—that doomed counterfeit—restore those maidens whom thou hast rudely torn from the home of their parent, or the end of thy crime will be, that thou shalt die the death of a dog.”

Saying this, with fierce gesticulations, she hobbled from Abdallah’s presence. He was so much awed by her manner, that, for the moment, his usual presence of mind deserted him. He permitted her to depart unmolested; and so terrified were the servants by her commanding bearing, and truculent severity of aspect, that they allowed her to pass without molestation from the presence of their master into the street, where she quickly disappeared.

The Mirza was a good deal shaken by this interview: brave though he was, and in no common degree, the fierce denunciations of that mysterious visiter had so disconcerted him, that he almost made





In the Garden of Ahabulla. 1850. S. Alvar

up his mind to release his two Rajpootni captives ; but, recovering from the stupefaction of awakened superstition, his pride came in support of his first resolution, and he determined to retain them in spite either of the machinations of witchcraft or the more potent operations of sorcery. Throughout the day, however, he was absent and thoughtful. He dreaded the fearful Aviarani more than an armed cohort ; and though he tried to rouse his energies, in order to dispel the gloom which she had cast upon his quailing spirit, he nevertheless could not banish from his thoughts the parting words of that inexplicable woman.

In order to divert his mind, Abdallah repaired to the palace garden, accompanied by two of his favourite women, who, while he smoked his chillam, composed of the rarest spices, amused him by telling stories, an accomplishment in which they were both eminently proficient ; nevertheless, the fictions of these amusing story-tellers failed to dissipate those gloomy presentiments by which he was now so painfully harassed.

CHAPTER IX.

WITHIN a few minutes after the two Rajpootnis had been borne off by the horsemen, the circumstance was communicated to their father by the attendant who had been following them. Bulwunt Singh was for the moment stunned at so unexpected an announcement, but quickly recovering himself, with that settled calmness of demeanour which generally precedes some desperate resolution in men who have a ready command of their passions, he desired his informant to quit his presence. His resolution was instantly taken. He dispatched persons in pursuit, resolved to leave nothing untried that might precipitate the accomplishment of an injured parent's revenge. In his mind no act of expiation, however humble, could atone for an outrage so aggravated, and, in the opinion of a Rajpoot, never to be forgiven. At first he suspected the young gallant who had rescued his daughter from the leopard three years before, but it was soon ascertained that he was at his father's house, almost beside himself at what had so unexpectedly befallen.

Though the anxious lover had for so long a period contrived to keep up a secret intercourse with the lovely Pelvahi, this had never roused the slightest

suspicion in the breast of her father, who, being not only blind but stubbornly incredulous, trusting to the terror inspired by his interdiction, did not for an instant imagine, that any one placed immediately under his control would dare to violate a prohibition which he had imposed.

The next day, before the return of his messengers, the bereaved father was unexpectedly favoured with a visit from the venerable Aviarani, who was at once admitted to his presence.

“ Well, good mother ! what hast thou to communicate ? Is it good or ill ? Too much of the latter has lately fallen upon me to bear any further accumulation—relieve my anxiety, then, by proving thyself an auspicious messenger.”

“ I cannot rule the destinies of men, I am only the agent of a mightier one, who has thought fit to visit thee with affliction because thou hast been a domestic tyrant.”

“ Hah !”

“ Nay, thou knowest I am not to be intimidated by words, though from the tongue of a bold warrior. I am invulnerable by such missiles, and the blind require a conductor. Thou hast acted without one long enough, and hast grievously stumbled ; for how should he on whom the light shineth not do otherwise. Let me then be thy guide now, for thou wilt require one in the dark way thou hast to tread.”

“ Art thou come to taunt me with my infirmity ? Need I tell thee, that blind though I am, I could pass a shaft through thy brain, were I thus minded, with as sure an aim as if I had two eyes to direct it to its

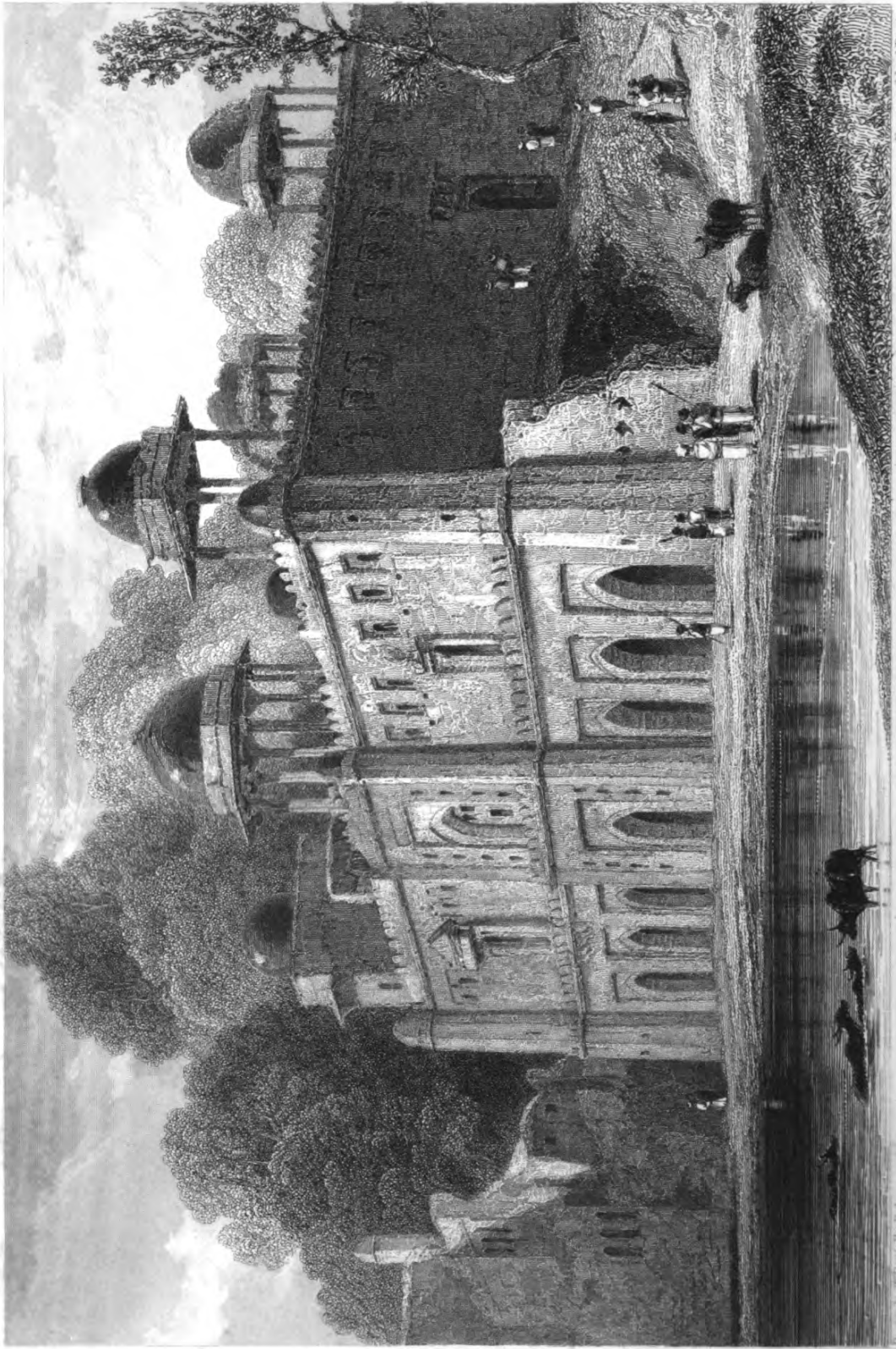
destination? I lack neither the skill nor the will to avenge insult, and thy sex alone protects thee."

"Send thy arrow into the impassive air; it will do as signal execution as when directed against a charmed life. I laugh at the impotency of mortal threatenings. Thus shouldst learn not to confound friends with foes. I am here to announce to thee the name of thy daughters' ravisher. They are now in the power of Abdallah Mirza, who has no doubt borne them to his capital, and will consign them to the pollution of his harem. Think of this, and know that she who has threaded the forest to tell it thee, deserves more courtesy than the threat of being the mark for the exercise of a blind archer's skill."

"Thou hast thy reward, woman, in a good deed," said the Rajpoot, suddenly rising and seizing his bow and quiver, which lay on a table before him. "Thanks are the meed bestowed by beggars who cannot pay in a more substantial mintage. Go to thy thicket, bearing with thee the reflection that thou hast done good, and that to a father."

"I quit thee, man of a rude courtesy, but shall still be by thee in the hour of peril. Speed on thine errand of vengeance, and remember that thou hast two daughters to recover, and an inexpiable insult to avenge."

Casting round her a glance of lofty resolution, she quitted the presence of Bulwunt Singh, who, summoning his attendants, directed them to make immediate preparation for his journey to Chandahar. He was obliged to await the return of those agents whom he had dispatched in quest of the violator of



Palace, Sudding in the Town of Delhi.

his domestic peace. In the course of the next day they came back without having obtained any clue to a discovery of the enemy, who had so wantonly set at defiance the restraints of social order, in bereaving a widowed father of his children.

Three days after the disappearing of Pelvahi and Jemadiva, their undaunted parent quitted his home on a camel, and proceeded with a small train of attendants to the city, under the government of Abdallah Mirza. During the journey he proclaimed in every town and village through which he passed the indignity to which he had been subjected by the Mohammedan tyrant. On passing the Omrah's house, in the vicinity of his own native village, he halted, but found it deserted, except by a few inferior domestics, who were either utterly ignorant, or pretended to be so, of the movements of their master. In order to mark his feeling of the disgrace cast upon him by the follower of a creed which he held in abhorrence, the Rajpoot tore down the hangings that adorned the apartments, defaced the furniture, broke the mirrors, and unceremoniously took possession of all the smaller valuables which were readily portable. The house had been elegantly fitted up according to the Mohammedan taste at a considerable expense. It resembled those buildings of Patan structure seen upon the plains of Delhi, of which the engraving exhibits a beautiful specimen. Having thus signalized the feelings entertained by him towards the man who had so cruelly robbed him of his daughters, Bulwunt Singh proceeded on his journey, his heart fraught with vengeance, and his

mind wound up to the fiercest determination of inflicting it at whatever cost.

On reaching Chandahar, the injured father took up his abode in a remote suburb of the city, and dispatched a message to the governor, demanding his daughters. Abdallah denied having removed them from their home; but, at length, finding that neither subterfuge nor denial availed to disguise the stubborn fact, he boldly confessed they were prisoners in his palace, where he intended they should remain for the present, but solemnly protested that they should suffer no wrong.

The indignant parent was not to be moved by this shallow artifice. He knew too well the character of Abdallah Mirza, to suppose that having been at the pains to steal two handsome Hindoo girls, he would be at the expense and trouble of keeping them merely to exhibit a sublime forbearance. He was too much of a Mussulman not to taste the fruit when he had plucked it. Bulwunt Singh was fully satisfied of this; he therefore resolved to have his daughters returned to their home without further delay, or perish in the attempt to rescue them from the pollution to which, in his eyes, they were now exposed.

The breast of the excited Rajpoot was labouring with purposes too desperate either to suspend or control. His children were in the dwelling of a Mohammedan, and had consequently received such defilement, according to the canons of his religious creed, as no human defecation could remove. It was impossible he could ever again live under the same roof with beings rendered henceforth for ever ob-

noxious to his hatred, having been violently torn from his love, and placed beyond the limits of those cognate obligations which attach man to his kindred, by an act that demanded a signal and immediate exercise of his vengeance.

The death of his children had become the one great intent of his soul, and to snatch them from their ravisher was the first aim of his dark resolve, in order, at the same time, to punish the violator of his domestic peace, and remove the once dear objects of his affection beyond the reach of further contamination.

It is a known trait of the Rajpoot character, that one of this haughty race never relinquishes through life a purpose deliberately formed, but pursues it steadily until the opportunity arrives for its completion. The father of Pelvahi and Jemadiva possessed this quality of unsubduable determination to a degree not surpassed by any of his tribe. Having received several evasive answers from Abdallah Mirza, he dispatched a messenger for the last time, insisting upon the immediate restitution of his children, and, in case of refusal, threatening the implacable hatred of an insulted Rajpoot. Abdallah, thinking it better to feign compliance, sent to Bulwunt Singh, without further delay, his younger daughter, whom he had no great desire to retain, at the same time promising that the elder should shortly be restored.

The hapless Jemadiva entered her father's presence with painful forebodings, which the stern and unrelaxing expression of his features did not tend to

allay. She timidly approached the blind warrior, but when the sound of her footstep caught his ear, he raised his hand as a sign to forbid her advance. She stood trembling before him. Not a muscle of his countenance stirred, but it was easy to perceive that under the marble stillness of his harsh lineaments feelings were working which boded the gloomiest issues. His face had assumed the calm that precedes the hurricane. For a long interval he maintained a portentous silence. Jemadiva watched his features with intense anxiety, but no glow either of sympathy or of pity mantled upon them. At length he said,

“ Girl, I need not tell thee that abiding under the roof of one of another creed has cast a pollution upon thee, which no mortal expiation can expunge. Thou hast forfeited the privileges of thy caste, and nothing but death can release thee from the horrid degradation of becoming an outcast. Thou must die, girl, an abhorred, a degraded thing; and where is the Rajpootni who would endure to live under such a stigma as must attach to thee?”

“ Father, I am as pure as when I was an inmate of thy dwelling, and was blessed with thy love. The Omrah has respected the virtue of thy children.”

“ But his presence within the same walls with a Hindoo maiden has covered thee with a leprous incrustation—the foul spot of infamy is upon thee. If thou preferrest life with shame, to death with honour, thou must make up thy mind to live in utter abandonment. Thou hast no longer a father. The choice is thine betwixt banishment to the ex-

treme south, or death this night from the hands of him to whom thou owest thy being."

"Let it be death then, for I would rather perish in innocency, than abide in this world disgraced and banished from all who are dear to me upon earth. I am content to accept that alternative most agreeable to a father's heart. He will revere the memory of one who yielded up an unblemished life to save the blood of her race from taint, with which the wickedness of a tyrant had prepared to pollute it."

"Well resolved, my child; I will compound this night a potion that shall lull thee to a sleep from which thou wilt never rise again in thy humanity. Thou shalt bear with thee to thy bed a parent's blessing, but receive not his morning benediction."

"Give me thy blessing, father," prostrating herself at his feet. He laid his hand upon her burning forehead, and lifting up those dimmed orbs into which the light had not been received for years, he pronounced a solemn form of obtestation, and dismissed his beautiful child to her last slumber. He listened to her receding footstep, but not a word of soothing reached her anxious ear, and in a few moments she was beyond his hearing:—he never heard her more on this side the grave.

CHAPTER X.

SHORTLY after his return to the capital, Abdallah Mirza gave an entertainment to the Omrahs of his court. As he was a man known not to pay very strict regard to the prohibitions of the Koran, especially with reference either to meats or drinks, most of those who were under him in the government of Chandahar, looking upon him as an eminent example in all civil and social observances, did not hesitate to infringe upon the sumptuary canons of that sacred book. In this they had the less scruple because they found that good living was practically enjoined by the emperor of Delhi, who indulged as much as his vassals; and it was a maxim among all his subjects, tributaries, and stipendiaries, that a Mohammeden emperor can do no wrong.

The banquet provided upon this occasion was of the most sumptuous kind. The finest fruits of Hindostan were obtained, at vast cost, to grace the board. Game from the Himalaya mountains smoked among curries and pilaus prepared by the most distinguished cooks of Lucknow, who had been engaged on this occasion. The wines of Shiraz and of Ispahan glowed in decanters from the shores of the Baltic, and vases of the finest porcelain, fabricated by the best craftsmen of China, sent forth the richest

perfumes of Araby. The tables were overspread with the finest fabrics from the looms of Bagdad, and the floors with the richest carpets from those of Iran. Silken punkas depended from the ceiling, waving over the heads of the luxurious nobles, and cooling the apartment heated by the blended exhalations from dishes and guests.

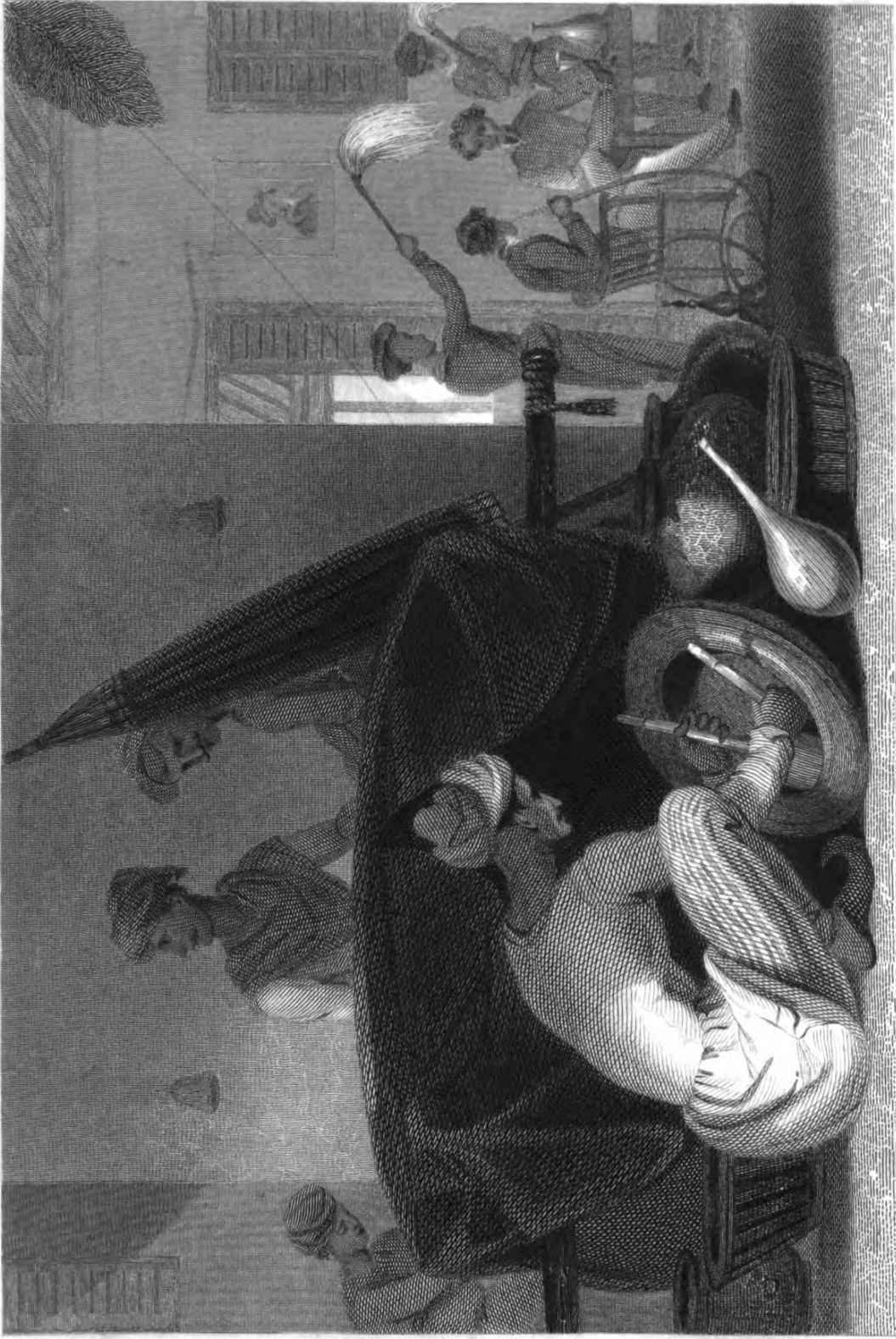
Abdallah was in his glory. He drank till his eyes sparkled with brighter lustre than the wine that had infused it, and his tongue seemed to pour forth the eloquence of inspiration. From him the animating contagion was caught by his lords, and the hum of conversation was like that of a community of bees over their own honey. Nautch girls, exceeded only in beauty by the maidens of the Mohammedan paradise, were introduced, and by the singular grace of their evolutions, with which the small golden bells attached to their ankles chimed in exquisite unison, excited the raptures of the whole assembly, who first murmured their applauses, which the elevated Mirza at length heightened into boisterous acclamation. Nothing could exceed the luxury of this banquet. Amid the natural heat of an atmosphere that would have raised the thermometer of the celebrated Fahrenheit to an elevation of a hundred and twenty degrees, the air was as temperate as upon the surface of a lake in the evening of early summer amid the beautiful scenery of a European landscape. The wine and other liquids were cooled by men so practised in the art, that in a few minutes they could render water almost boiling as cold as if it had just been drawn from a well-spring.

This is a luxury much enjoyed by Europeans in India, who are not backward in availing themselves of all the choicest gratifications of the east. Young Englishmen, to whom change is at once an excitement and a novelty, may often be seen in their bungalows enjoying their claret and Hodgson's pale ale after tiffin, fanned by chowries¹ from the mountains of Thibet², while the busy water-cooler prepares for them the refrigerated element, or that more animating beverage which heats their brains while it cools their throats.

Abdallah Mirza's guests were thus provided with every thing that could tend to exhilarate spirits naturally mercurial, and long before the lamps of night had been hung out in the azure vault above, they were in a state of most delectable elevation. In the midst of their revelry a handsome japan box was brought into the room by an attendant, who signified to the governor that it had been just left by the conductor of a caravan from the south of India. Upon the lid was written, in letters of bright crimson, **MANGOES FROM MAZAGONG FOR THE GOVERNOR OF CHANDAHAR.** The mangoes of Mazagong, a small Portuguese village on the island of Bombay, were at this time famed throughout India, and the Mirza's gratification at the idea of being able to produce some before his guests was unbounded. Every eye was fixed upon the box, which Abdallah had ordered to be opened on the spot, so eager was he to behold this rare

¹ A sort of whisk for keeping off musquitoes.

² The best chowries are made from the tails of the Thibet ox.



Engraved by R. D. White

Drawn by R. D. White

The Suddan or Water Weaver.

Published by J. G. & J. S. in the Strand

fruit of the south. The case was so carefully secured, that it was some time before the lid could be released from the fastenings. It was at length removed, when there appeared a cover of fine white muslin, which concealed the contents from every anxious beholder. The governor rose, in order that he might have the gratification of exposing to view, with his own hand, the coveted luxury. His eyes glistened. His lip curled. With impatient eagerness he raised the muslin, when, to the astonishment and horror of all present, he exposed to view a human head, in the lineaments of which he instantly recognised those of the hapless Jemadiva; amid the hair was rolled a small billet containing the following words:—"A father sends thee this."

The banquet was instantly put an end to, and the guests were dismissed; but there was a general buzz of inquiry as to the meaning of so frightful an occurrence. Abdallah, though considerably elevated by wine, was, for the moment, stupified; but soon recovering, he resolved to visit the parricide with immediate and exemplary punishment. He consequently dispatched a guard to the Rajpoot's dwelling, with orders that he should be committed to safe custody, and then retired for the night, with such reflections for his bed-fellows as completely banished sleep from his pillow. It, however, occurred to him, when daylight dispersed those horrible images with which wine and the sight of the dead head had crowded his brain, that the event of the preceding evening might be rendered the means of bringing the refractory Pelvahi to a more favourable enter-

tainment of his wishes. She had hitherto uniformly repelled his advances with unflinching resolution, treating his menaces with bold defiance and lofty scorn, declaring she never would allow herself to survive the moment that he attempted force for the completion of his will. "No power on earth, as you should know," she said with haughty resolution, "can prevent a Rajpootni from dying when she has ceased to live with honor."

The determination of his lovely captive had hitherto repelled the licentious Omrah, who thought that she might eventually be won by mildness to grant what it would be evidently dangerous to take by violence. He was fully aware of the indomitable resolution of that stock from which she sprang, and therefore calculated, with a shrewd foresight, that she was only to be subdued by addressing himself to her feelings, rather than by opposing her passions.

On the day which succeeded the banquet, Abdallah proceeded to the apartment in which his unhappy prisoner was confined. She was reclining upon a Persian rug, so deeply absorbed in thought that at first she did not observe the Omrah's entrance.

"Lovely Hindoo," he said, approaching her tenderly, "why wilt thou thus give way to unquiet meditations?"

"Can the tyrant ask such a question, after he has torn me, first from the society of a father, then from that of a sister? This trifling is a mockery, beneath thy dignity as a legislator, and thine honesty as a man."

"If I have removed thee from a home where

thou wert under a grievous domestic tyranny, it was to install thee in one where thou wilt reign dominant over the heart of an adoring lover, who can live only in the sunshine of thy smiles."

"Address these gaudy phrases to humbler ears; their honey will not cover the sting which your baseness has planted in a heart where its poison will rankle until the life-blood shall cease to circulate. It is useless to encourage the expectation of my ever acquiescing in your desires, the accomplishment of which would only degrade me, while it conferred no honour upon you. Leave me, at least, to the undisturbed quiet of my captivity, if you have not the generosity to restore me to liberty."

"But were I, this moment, to send you to your father, do you think he would receive you after having been in the custody of a Mohammedan? He has not so much tenderness as to forget that you have suffered pollution, according to the stern dogmas of his creed, by being in the house of a true believer."

"Nevertheless, I would rather brave the utmost severity of that father's wrath than be exposed to the presence of a man whom I utterly loathe. By you have I not only been deprived of liberty, but am reduced to that state of moral desuetude, in the estimation of him to whom I owe my being, which will, more than probably, separate us for ever."

"Ay, it is more than a presumption, it is a palpable certainty, that your father will never again recognise any affinity between you. Your sister having returned to him, he has visited her with that sanguinary

judgment which Rajpoot fathers assume to themselves the right of dispensing. She is no longer one of this earth, but among the beauties of Paradise."

"Do you think I am to be betrayed into confidence by so shallow an artifice? My parent, with all his rigour, could never be the murderer of his offspring. A child's deepest curse shall light on thee for this."

"You shall have ocular proof before noon, and then it will be wise in you to reflect, whether you would prefer returning to the certain vengeance of a ruthless infanticide, or remaining under the protection of a gentle lover."

Saying this, Abdallah quitted his captive, who directed towards him, as he retreated, a look of haughty scorn; but when left to her solitude, she relapsed into that moodiness of thought from which the unsought-for intrusion of the Omrah had diverted her.

Not long after the Moghul's departure, a basket was brought into the apartment by a female attendant, and laid on the rug beside the wretched maiden. Removing the cloth which covered it, her eye fell upon the ghastly head of her beloved sister. This was a cruel stroke. She gazed intently at it for a few moments, and then fell back insensible, without a groan or a murmur. It was long before animation could be restored; but the effect of that dreadful object was far different from what her persecutor had expected. She could not be prevailed upon to believe that her father had descended from

his high exaltation of moral rectitude to the crime of child-murder¹, after his offspring had reached an age when such an act of violence against the dearest claims of nature is no longer recognised by those savage customs familiar to Rajpoots. She felt convinced that Abdallah Mirza was the destroyer of her sister, and this conviction armed her feelings with a thousand-fold more bitterness against a man to whom she owed such daily accessions of misery. In her judgment, the tyrant who could tear a daughter from the home of her parent, could be capable of butchering her; and this impression was so rooted in the unhappy girl's mind, that when her persecutor next presented himself before her, she taxed him with the destruction of Jemadiva. He protested against a suspicion so unprovoked.

"Unprovoked," cried the miserable girl, "who so likely to have been the perpetrator of such an atrocious crime as he who could rob a father of his child?"

"If you are not to be appeased by kindness or conciliation, there remains but one method to bring you to subjection. I have tried persuasion; should you continue refractory, force must follow."

The indignant Rajpootni did not deign to answer this cowardly threat, but, with a look of ineffable detestation, turned her back upon the incensed Moghul. He quitted her, and she relapsed into melancholy thought, now deepened in intensity by the knowledge of her unhappy sister's end. She did not

¹ The Rajpoots sanction infanticide, but it is confined to female offspring, and is not permitted after they have passed the first stage of helpless infancy.

utter a word ; but silently worked up her mind to the desperate resolution of resisting to the death any personal violence that might be offered, to force compliance with the wishes of a man she now absolutely abhorred. Though yet a mere girl in years, her soul was capable of the sublimest energy of action. She scorned to quail under any human visitation.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN the young Rajpoot, to whom Pelvahi was betrothed, heard of her having been forcibly withdrawn from her home by the governor of Chandahar, he was overcome with vexation and rage. His reputed father having considerable influence with those of his caste who dwelt in the neighbourhood, determined to exert it, to assist in recovering the betrothed bride. Within a few days he contrived to assemble a resolute band of three thousand Rajpoots, prepared for any enterprise, however desperate. The son was much esteemed for his high spirit, which, among this warlike race, is considered the first attribute of man; they were, therefore, ready, one and all, to aid in revenging the insult offered to him. His engagement to Pelvahi had been kept, hitherto, inviolably secret; nor was it until the violent abduction of the Rajpootni sisters that the young lover communicated, even to his parent, the pledge which he had made to the elder. The idea of such an indignity being offered to a family of their race, was sufficient to stimulate Rajpoots to any act of daring, and they prepared to execute summary retribution upon the author of their disgrace; for, as they made common cause with every

member of their caste, the degradation of one became the degradation of all.

The three thousand Rajpoots marched towards Chandahar, which they expected to make the field of an exploit that should signalize their courage, and prove to the haughty Mohammedan, that no member of their community was to be wronged with impunity. They had entered into a solemn compact to release Pelvahi, or perish in the attempt, and it was declared that any one who should return to his home and leave her a prisoner, would be accursed in both worlds. As a token of their determination to avenge her wrongs, they assumed the saffron robe, which, among this warlike race, is invariably an intimation to the foe that they have resolved to perish to the last man rather than relinquish the object of their enterprise.

Having reached the capital, the confederates dispersed, some of them retiring to the neighbouring woods, others to villages in the vicinity ; the several parties, nevertheless, keeping so near each other, that they could be readily summoned at the sound of a brazen trumpet used among them, and heard at the distance of half a league. They so completely avoided all appearance of martial array, that no suspicion was excited in the city, which was left almost without troops, so complete was the governor's security in the awe which his name inspired among the Hindoo inhabitants of the province. When the Rajpoot leader discovered that Bulwunt Singh was in confinement, his indignation knew no bounds, and he determined to deliver him at all hazards.

Meanwhile the blind father was thrown into the common prison, and placed in a cell whence the light of heaven was utterly excluded, and the atmosphere, from a want of proper ventilation, loathsome to the last degree. Here he was confined for child-murder, and his execution determined on by his Mohammedan foe. A guard was placed over him, who would not permit him to proceed beyond the boundaries of his dungeon, in which he momentarily inhaled the noxious seeds of contagion. Here he waited, in proud silence, the doom of his inexorable judge. He cared not to die, since he had nothing to render existence an object worth the prizing. Not one pang of remorse pierced his bosom, at a moment when he expected hourly to be led forth to death. To his own conscience he pleaded a satisfactory justification of a deed which the compassionate heart sickens to contemplate. He conceived that his daughter had been steeped in pollution, and that nothing on this side of the grave could cleanse the indelible taint which had depraved her entire physical and spiritual organization. Was it not better, he argued, to release her spirit from its incarceration of polluted flesh, which must have rendered it finally unfit for the communion of those immortal natures which pluck the fruits of bliss above the elements from the everlastingly germinating tree, Pariyataka¹, than allow it to remain

¹ "I have," says Mr. Moor, "a sketch of a tree yielding, if not all sorts, a curious sort of fruit, namely men; with a man of larger mould climbing up its stem: a second with a bow at his back is looking on, encouraging him. The picture is marked merely with

where it must finally have become a prey to the malignant Davanas¹. The contemplation, therefore, of Jemadiva's death was a source of triumph,—not of regret; and it was besides some consolation to know that he had seriously disturbed the tranquillity of Abdallah Mirza.

During his imprisonment Bulwunt Singh refused the food provided according to the prison regulations; for, under existing circumstances, he considered suffering rather a boon than a punishment. His haughty spirit was not to be subdued; and he looked forward to his execution without regret, as it would give him the opportunity of showing the enemy of his faith how unconcernedly a Rajpoot can die.

The governor visited the haughty father the day after he had sent him a present of his daughter's head, in hopes that the love of life might induce him to force his child's consent to enter the harem of her persecutor. By the promise of immediate liberation from an oppressive confinement, Abdallah imagined he could win the inflexible Rajpoot to his wishes; but he knew not the man. The love of life weighed not, in Bulwunt Singh's estimation, a fibre of down in the balance against that honour which he literally prized above the salvation of his soul.

The second morning of his imprisonment he was

the name of Bhima, but I have no knowledge of the legend to which it alludes. Fifteen men are hanging in the boughs like fruit."

¹ Evil spirits.

conducted into the governor's presence, in a private chamber of the prison, set apart for especial purposes. Upon his entrance he stood before his judge erect as a column which has outbraved the storms of centuries; his rayless eyes fixed with an inexpressive stare upon the half-awed Mohammedan. They were left together.

"Prisoner," said the Omrah, at length, "wouldst thou save thy life?" The Rajpoot did not reply; but, twirling the corners of his moustachios on either side of his scornful lip, turned his back upon the speaker. The ire of the Mirza was roused.

"Man," he exclaimed, elevating his voice, "it is insane policy to inflame the anger of one who, with a word, can consign thee to the executioner."

"Do thy worst," cried the Rajpoot, turning suddenly round, "I would not be indebted to thee for even the semblance of a boon. I defy thee, however thou mayest estimate the policy of such defiance."

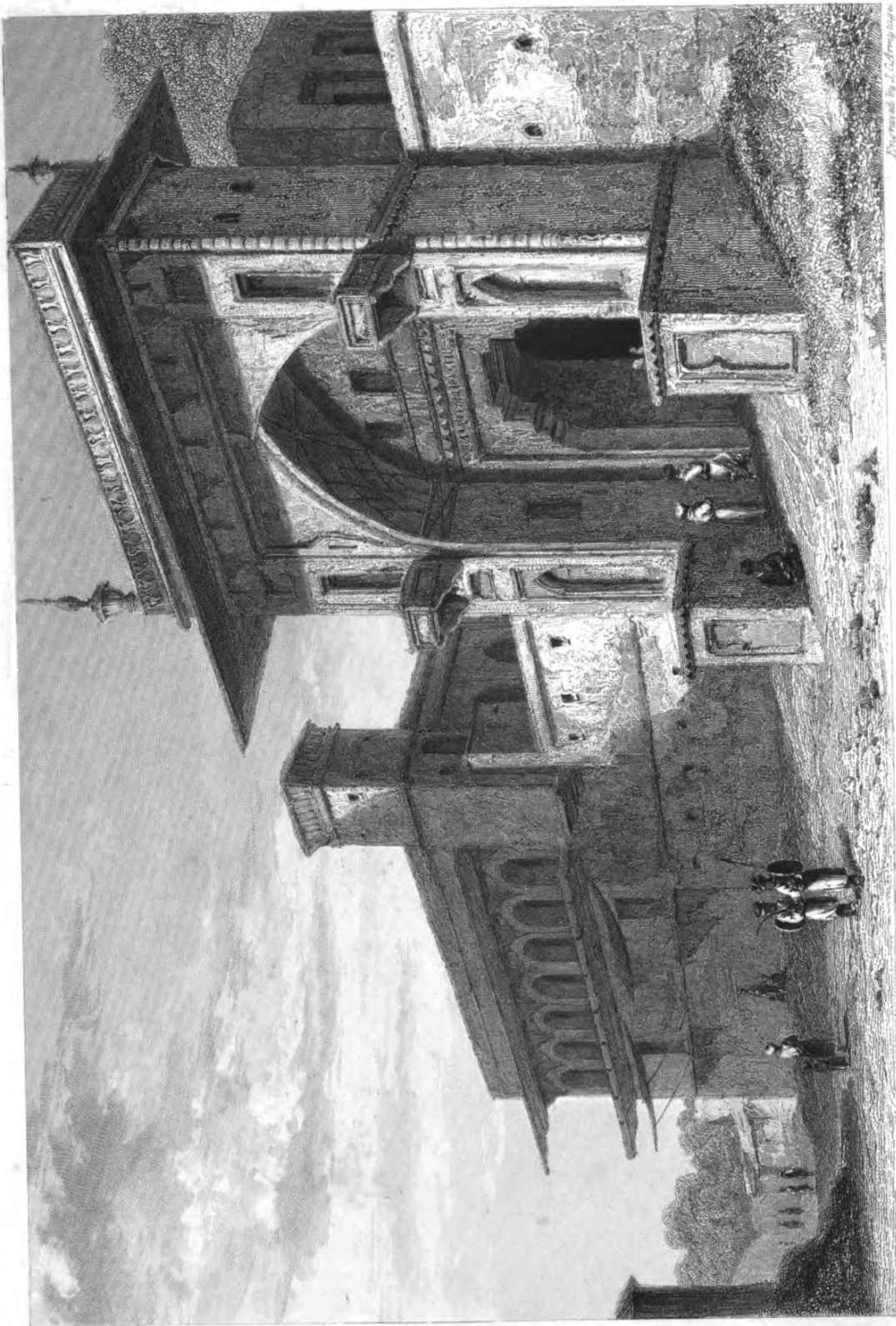
"Nay," continued Abdallah, softening, "this is too extravagant for heroism. Hear what I have to propose, and then consider well before you rashly reject it. You know that your daughter is in my power; she refuses to become the favourite of my harem; I would rather win than force her consent; do you, therefore, compel her compliance, and you shall immediately be restored to liberty."

"Dastard! This to a father!—to a Rajpoot father! who would rather behold his daughter writhing under death's hardest agonies than with the blasting brand of infamy upon her. If thou hast the courage of a man, arm thyself and me, and, though old and blind,

with thy odds of sight and of youth, I will contend with thee to the death. I have yet nerve enough to reach thy coward heart, for my wrongs would guide my impatient weapon home."

"Dost thou think," answered Abdallah coolly, "that I would put the implements of destruction into the hands of a madman?"

"Then I will do the work of vengeance without arms." Saying this the excited Hindoo sprang towards his unsuspecting enemy, and, seizing him by the shoulders, pulled him from his seat. The terrified Mohammedan felt as if he were in the grasp of a giant. In a moment his throat was clutched by the desperate warrior; and he would have shortly paid the dear forfeit of his tyranny, had not some of his attendants, stationed outside the door, rushed in on hearing his suppressed cries, and rescued him from threatened destruction. Having ordered the Rajpoot to be secured and taken back to his cell, Abdallah quitted the apartment. As he was about to enter his palace, still suffering from the gripe of Bulwunt Singh, the old woman, whose prediction had never altogether passed from his mind, appeared unexpectedly before him. He paused on the threshold in mute amazement. The splendour of his palace seemed an object of mockery to the wrinkled prophetess. She pointed towards the magnificent portal, threw up her withered brow to heaven, and muttered an undistinguishable imprecation upon the owner of the gorgeous edifice, then approaching Abdallah, shrieked, "Stop and hear me. Remember what I once foretold. I see thy star now in the broad heavens as

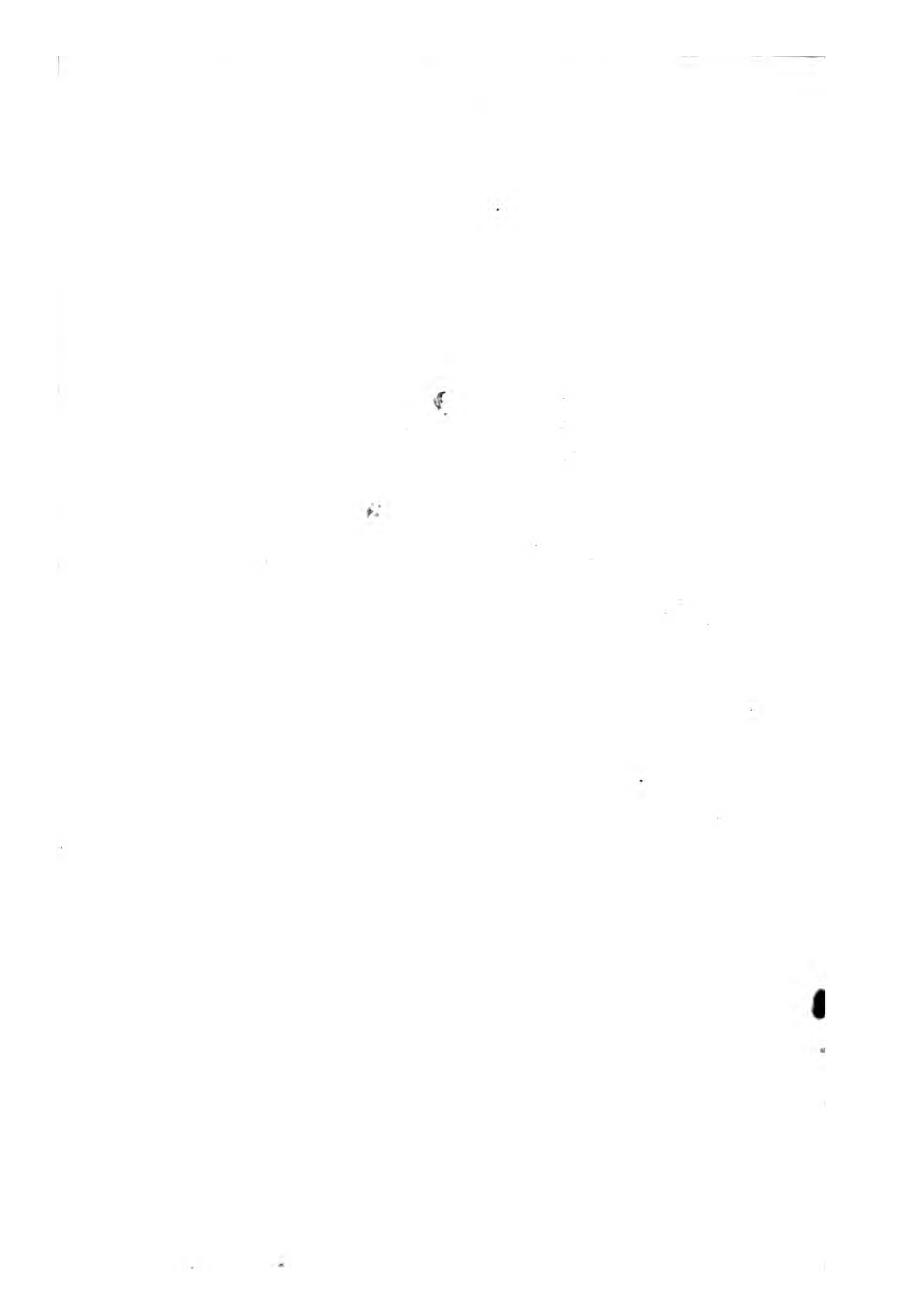


Engraved by J. C. G. P. G. G. G.

Drawn by W. D. G. G. G.

Entrance to Bahadur Sahib's Palace at Chumbahar

1850. Published by G. G. G. G. G.



dim as the border of thy raiment, which bears upon it the dull crimson stain of an innocent maiden's blood. The one grows paler and paler, as the other grows redder and redder; the first shall shortly cease to shine, and the last shall deepen into the black shadow of death."

Abdallah was confused, though he affected to treat the ominous words of the crone with contempt. She perceived her power and continued,—

"Ay, smile at the thunderbolt: but will thy smile divert it from its course of devastation? Will the lightning become harmless because Abdallah shows his white teeth in the sunshine? Take heed to thyself, son of a false prophet, for it shall blast thee before the circle of the moon flattens. Bend thy knee to the saucy Arab who pretended to read at Mecca the sealed volume of the future, and persuaded knaves to bow their heads before him, and call him deity, for thou shalt have need of succour in thy coming visitation. If he can give it thee, thou hadst better use all speed to implore it. Mark me, Abdallah Mirza, the wrath of an unconquerable foe is gone forth against thee. Smile on while thy heart is in tears."

Before the governor could sufficiently recover from the stupefaction of terror, the mysterious Aviarani had passed round an angle of the street and disappeared.

CHAPTER XII.

ABDALLAH was exceedingly depressed by those unfavourable predictions which had been delivered by the old woman of the jungle; and though he affected openly to despise them, he nevertheless could not dismiss them from his thoughts. The recollection, however, of the throttling administered by the blind Rajpoot tended in some degree to withdraw his mind from more painful contemplations, and he resolved that the following day should be the period of his captive's life. Having heard that the old warrior, though blind, still retained his skill in archery, to a degree that had rendered it the theme of continual speculation, he declared his intention to make him exhibit it before the nobles of Chandahar. It was reported that his prisoner could hit with an arrow a small bell something less than a mangoe, placed at a distance of thirty-five paces. The bell being suspended from a beam, a cord was attached to the shank, which being pulled, the clapper was made to strike; directed by the sound, the Rajpoot discharged his arrow, and never failed to hit the destined mark. Such was the report. In order that an exhibition of Bulwunt Singh's skill might be made to the Omrahs of the capital, Abdallah Mirza commanded carpets to

be spread in one of the courts of his palace, and ottomans to be placed for the convenience of his guests, which, to the number of a hundred and thirty, were invited to witness the extraordinary dexterity of a blind archer, renowned as the best marksman in the country. Curiosity was excited to behold so extraordinary a singularity, as it was generally believed that the Rajpoot's reputation had been exaggerated by partial friends or designing knaves. About two hours after sunrise, the state dignitary assembled his nobles under an awning in the court. A messenger was dispatched to summon the prisoner before the governor and his guests. When that noble's pleasure was communicated to the injured father, he peremptorily refused to quit his prison.

"Then," observed the messenger, "you will be strangled on the instant."

"What does it matter whether the homicide's will be done in the morning or at night? If this day is to complete the term of my life, what signifies it whether I die under the brighter beams of the sun, or in the fainter light of the moon? Tell your master, that I will not stir from this den of shame and corruption into which he has cast an innocent and ill-used man, but one, tell him further, who will not perish unrevenged."

"Your compliance may perhaps save your life."

"I don't desire to save it, and as the boon of one so despicable and abhorred as your master, I would rather part with it, than live to acknowledge his assumed clemency. Go, communicate to him my

resolution, and fail not to be the bearer of my scorn, not of my courtesy."

"You had better then at once prepare for death."

"I need no preparation : a Rajpoot is always prepared."

The messenger quitted him.

When the first impulse of passion had subsided, and Bulwunt Singh reflected calmly upon the message of his enemy, a sudden thought flashed across his brain with the painful velocity of a sunbeam. In a moment his resolution changed, and he determined to obey the summons of Abdallah Mirza. The pride of exhibiting his skill kindled within him ; but this was coupled with an ulterior purpose, which impelled the tardy blood upon his heart, and caused his bosom to heave under the sudden excitement of accelerated action. The governor's messenger quickly returned to communicate his master's determination, which was, that the prisoner should be dragged into his presence, and immediately strangled before him and the assembled Omrahs.

"Give me my bow and quiver ; I am prepared to do the bidding of your haughty despot : not that I fear to die, but would show him that neither has blindness paralysed my arm, nor wrong confused my brain. I would convince him that the dread of death will not cause my nerves to tremble, but that I can still direct the arrow to its destined mark. I am prepared to follow thee."

The injured father was led into the presence of Abdallah Mirza and his nobles. He entered with a

firm step and unmoved countenance, without bending, or manifesting the slightest indication of consciousness that he was standing before the chief dignitary of Chandahar. He was a person of most commanding presence, being upwards of six feet high, and exhibiting a symmetry almost peculiar to the distinguished race of which it was his greatest pride to be a member. His limbs were muscular and finely rounded, and the anatomy of his chest, which was completely bare,—for he wore nothing but a short tight trowser, extending half way down the thigh,—was so minutely developed that you could trace the form and determination of every muscle; yet it was sufficiently fleshy to prevent the traces of structure from being too prominent, and thus losing the grace, if not the symmetry, of just proportion. His neck tapered upward from the shoulders in a gradual curve, presenting an image of great strength and firmness of texture. His head was set well back upon the strong column which supported it, so that it was elevated by natural position, and seemed as if it had never deigned to gaze upon the earth. His arms were singularly long, but the hand was so small, and the fingers so taper, that neither much exceeded in dimensions those of a moderately-sized woman. Upon the middle finger he wore a large pearl, secured in a plain hoop ring of virgin gold. Two thin bangles of the same metal encircled his wrists. His turban was saffron-colour, which he had assumed that morning as a token that he was doomed to die. It was carefully folded round his forehead, and beneath it the mark of his caste had been traced with more than usual care.

The nobles, who crowded the area allotted for the exhibition of the Hindoo's skill, looked at him with admiration; an expression of gratified surprise beamed from every eye, which rather disconcerted the Mirza, who had no desire that their sympathies should be enlisted for one whom he had already made up his mind should never feel the warmth of another day's sun. In order, therefore, to divert their attention, he desired that they would all take their seats, as the prisoner was about to commence his essay of dexterity. Having commanded that his bow and quiver should be put into his hands, Abdallah, addressing the blind archer, said—

“ We shall presently see if fame has misrepresented thee; for this is the common business of her and of all her ministers, who love to multiply or diminish according as human passions actuate to the one or to the other. Are you prepared?”

“ Quite.”

The bow and quiver were put into the Rajpoot's hand. He strung the former, which was not easily bent, with a facility and promptitude that showed he was no novice in the use of his favourite weapon. When he had strung the bow, he twanged the string twice, and then slung it on his shoulder. Having selected four arrows, he poised them severally, pressed their points against his finger, and then signified that he was ready, by a motion of his hand. Abdallah ordered the space to be measured; a tall Hindoo immediately stepped thirty-five paces. A pole was then erected, with a transverse beam, in the form of a cross, and at either end was suspended a small bell,

about the size of an ordinary wine-glass. One of the bells being struck with a long brass rod, was almost instantly hit with an arrow, which caused it to vibrate for several seconds. A murmur of applause followed; but the brows of the governor lowered as he heard the unwelcome indication of pleasurable surprise. The bell on the reverse end of the beam was likewise struck with the brass rod, as the other had previously been, and it was immediately put into a state of rapid oscillation by an arrow from the bow of Bulwunt Singh. From every quarter of the court were now heard loud expressions of surprise and admiration, which not even the governor's frown could suppress; he therefore ordered the bells to be removed, and a bird to be put upon a small perch, fixed at the same distance from the archer as the bells. Another bird of the like species being placed near it in a cage, the latter began to chirp, when a shaft from an unerring hand struck it from its perch to the ground. There it lay quivering upon the arrow, and was taken to Abdallah Mirza. Every tongue was now louder than before in eulogizing the amazing dexterity of the archer.

The governor had not spoken since the commencement of the shooting. He sat apart from his guests, on a crimson velvet ottoman, with a short cimeter beside him, the handle of which was studded with gems. In his girdle was stuck a broad-bladed dagger, beautifully inlaid with precious stones of great value. He did not appear at all gratified at the universal manifestations of admiration resulting from the successful trial of Bulwunt Singh's skill;

but as it appeared to be the general wish that the trial should proceed further, he signified his assent by a haughty bend of the head, and looked moodily on at the passing scene. The distance was now extended to forty-five paces, and a musk-rat being tied to a pole in such a way that it could not move above two or three inches either way, a cracker was fastened to its tail, in order that the explosion might indicate the exact locality of the doomed animal. No sooner had the cracker exploded, than the body of the rat was transfixated with an arrow. This exploit elicited still louder applause; but the archer, unmoved by the astonishment which his consummate dexterity had occasioned, exhibited no symptom of gratification. Not a smile passed over his inflexible features. He stood like a lofty rock amid the surge, dark, fixed, and immutable. Not a person present ventured to address him, as it was evident to all that such a proceeding would not have been agreeable to the chief dignitary; his prisoner, therefore, continued mute and scornful, in spite of the applause of every spectator.

When the trial had proceeded thus far, it was observed that a stranger was standing in one corner of the area, enveloped in a long veil. It appeared that she had mixed with the attendants, and consequently was not observed until a sort of master of the ceremonies, or chamberlain, approached her, and inquired by what authority she had dared to intrude among the governor of Chandahar's guests. He received no answer, neither did the stranger attempt to withdraw from the spot where she had stationed herself. Upon

his peremptorily threatening to eject her by force, she threw off the veil, which covered her whole person, and exhibited the tall but withered form of the jungle prophetess.

“ Now, dare to raise a hand against one of whom thy master stands in fear, as the deer stands cowed before the ravenous tigress, and the curse of an insulted woman shall pursue thee to those depths of woe where thou wilt hereafter be doomed to howl in everlasting tortures. I am here by the right of my vocation, which is to see and know all things; and shall I be crossed by a hungry functionary, who eats the salt of a base office, making flattery the means of living in splendour and of feeding to satiety? Thou pamperest thy body at the price of thy soul. Thine is a servitorship that would debase the lean condition of a Pariah dog.”

“ None of this railing, woman, but look at the door, and decamp. Thy foul breath blisters the ear of thy betters: remove it from this presence, or I will expel it hence, and fling thy carcass after it, like a lump of corrupt offal.”

“ Thou shalt swallow thy own tongue for this: it has already pronounced thy doom. The kites are above thee: level thee with the dust, and pray.”

Abdallah Mirza, hearing an unusual noise in the corner of the area, inquired what it was, when the old woman hobbled forward, and, placing herself in front of the governor, uttered, with a quick, shrill tone—

“ I am here again, Omrah, to renew the warnings which I have already given thee. Thou hast slighted

them ; but, despite thy security, the dove shall escape out of the kite's clutch, and the rank bird be brought down from his lofty perch in the clouds. When we first met, my fingers closed upon thy wicked bribe, but I took the money as my fee for an innocent warning—not as the meed of a base betrayal. Look to it : thou shalt groan yet for the crimes of a short but ill-spent life.”

“ Remove that noisy hag,” cried the Moghul, impatiently, “ or the bastinado shall score the back of every menial among you, whose duty it is to prevent intrusions like this.”

The lips of Abdallah trembled as he spoke : in an instant a dozen hands had grasped the bony shoulders of the sibyl.

“ Unhand me, ruffians,” she shrieked. “ Abdallah Mirza, listen to my parting words—they are the last which shall meet thy ears from these lips : the crow shall shortly croak over thy grave, and the fox-bat pillow his head upon thine.”

“ Bear her off and strangle her,” roared the excited governor. The words were scarcely uttered when a shaft passed through his brain from the bow of Bulwunt Singh. The utmost consternation prevailed. Abdallah Mirza had fallen dead upon the ottoman, without uttering a groan. His Omrahs crowded round the corpse. The bold avenger stood mute before them, with an expression of calm scorn upon his rigid features. He was soon confirmed in his confidence that the fatal shaft had passed to its destination, by the exclamations of the astonished guests. He was not, however, permitted

long to triumph. One of the guards, who had been stationed at the door, hearing the confusion within, entered the area, and, upon ascertaining what had happened, thrust his spear through the blind Rajpoot's body. He died with an exclamation of triumph upon his tongue. The corpse was instantly dragged without the palace walls, cast forth to the kites, and frightfully mutilated.

Meanwhile, the venerable Aviarani had been hurried out of the court before the consummation of this dreadful tragedy; and, being thrust from the door, she hastened towards the city gate, invoking the vengeance of Maha Kali¹ upon Abdallah Mirza and his insolent chamberlain. Several persons by whom she was met imagined her to be mad, and set up a loud laugh—our greatest infirmities being but too commonly rather the subjects of mirth than of pity. This only aggravated her passion. She shook her hoary locks, and pursued her way, uttering the bitterest imprecations, which were either derided or unheeded by the passengers generally, though some fiercely retorted upon her. Having gained the city walls, she drew a small horn from underneath the drapery in which she was partially enveloped, and blew a short shrill blast. This she repeated three times, when it was thrice answered.

“Ay, they are ready,” she muttered, “and we shall shortly see the vile Moslems with their faces in the dust. The proud Abdallah shall repent the day he dared to sanction the rudeness of his underling

¹ The consort of Siva, representing the attribute of destruction.

towards one who can look beyond this world, and behold where the eye of flesh cannot penetrate.”

Ten minutes had scarcely elapsed from the time she had sounded her horn, when she saw approaching, at a quick pace, a body of Rajpoots. She made the best of her way to meet them; and, having apprized their leader of the different localities with which he desired to be acquainted, the warlike band, arrayed in their saffron scarfs, passed through the suburb gate into the town, accompanied by the old prophetess, who acted as their conductor. At this time, such was the general security, that there were no troops in the city, except an ordinary guard, amounting to about eight hundred men. The Rajpoots advanced rapidly and without opposition, until they reached the palace, which they entered tumultuously, and put all who opposed them to the sword. The consternation of the surprised Mohammedans is not to be described. They, however, rallied after the first shock of terror had subsided, and offered a resolute resistance. The guards turned out on the first alarm, and flew to the scene of tumult; but were shortly cut to pieces by the desperate valour of their implacable foes. The latter entered every room in the palace, and, where they met the least opposition, death followed without mercy. No quarter was given. A signal revenge was taken for the death of Bulwunt Singh, whose corpse was brought off in triumph by the exasperated assailants.

The young Rajpoot, to whom Pelvahi had plighted her virgin vows, was seen among the foremost of the avengers. His sword was reeking with Mohamme-

dan gore when he broke into the apartment in which was confined the unhappy maiden, who had long won his heart, and continued to maintain an undivided empire over it. She was, as usual, reclining on her rug, absorbed in the profoundest melancholy, utterly unconscious of the signal retribution which had overtaken her licentious persecutor. She gently raised her eyes as her lover entered; in a moment the fire of almost extinguished hope revived in them: her lips parted, she elevated her head, and, ere she could speak, her bosom's idol was at her feet. Her delight was too powerful for utterance: it was evident that he came as her deliverer. The radiant light of gladness which beamed from his countenance spoke with too fervid an expression of truth to lead to a false interpretation. There was no mistaking the mute but eloquent communication. For a short interval neither spoke; the rapture was too intense to be diverted by so impotent a vehicle of profound devotion as words. The silence of the lovers was a trance of the most exquisite gratification—a focal point, as it were, of joy, in which was crowded and concentrated the bliss of years.

After the silent paroxysm had somewhat subsided, Pelvahi said, while her lip slightly quivered, "Where is my father?"

"Dead."

A cloud passed over her deep brown lineaments: nevertheless she did not blench at the unexpected communication. Those of her race look upon death as the common allotment, and seldom show emotion

when it overtakes their dearest relatives. They consider it a proof of weakness to exhibit sorrow for the departed, who are removed to a better condition of things. A sigh, however, gradually swelled her bosom, and soon as gradually expired; but she did not give vent to a complaint. She then asked, with an unmoved countenance, the particulars of her rescue. Upon learning that the author of so much misery to her had paid the penalty of his crimes, and that this penalty had been inflicted by her parent's arm, her features kindled for an instant, then subsided into their former calmness; she uttered not a single expression of triumph, and immediately passed to another theme.

Pelvahi listened with earnest interest to the recital of her companion, who related all that had occurred since the violent removal of herself and sister from the immediate neighbourhood of her home. He dwelt in glowing terms upon her own misery, the calm determination with which her venerable father pursued his deep purpose of revenge, and the signal address with which the old prophetess had contrived to make herself acquainted with all that passed in the governor's palace, which she communicated to those who had assembled to rescue an innocent captive, or perish in the attempt.

“To that resolute woman are we indebted for our present success. She has never ceased to watch over the destinies of your family with a perseverance and vigilance which has rendered you everlastingly her debtor. She has followed you through diffi-

culties and dangers unknown to you or your late parent, and has crowned the obligation by being the main instrument of your rescue."

"Let me at once see the good Aviarany, that I may assure her from my own mouth, that so long as I have a pagoda she shall share it. She has for years sought her abode in the jungle among beasts of prey, rather than among human communities with whom she did not love to mingle. I would see the kind instrument of my deliverance."

Aviarany was sought, and soon found—but, alas, it was among the wounded in the sanguinary fray. She had received a sabre stroke on the head, which had penetrated her brain. When found, though she was rapidly dying, she was still capable of articulating. Being brought into the chamber where Pelvahi had been imprisoned, and where that lovely girl anxiously awaited her presence, the expiring woman feebly extended her hand, and said:—

"Child, I have watched thy infancy and youthful womanhood with an anxiety proportioned to my love for thy mother. She was my sister. An early disappointment in the loss of one upon whom I had bestowed my affections, caused me to renounce the world, and I have passed many bitter years in the woods, often appeasing the craving of a long-stinted appetite upon food which I have shared with jackals and vultures. I have studied the mystical language of the stars for a long term of years, and thus the events of futurity have been often unfolded to me. I go to enter upon a change for the better, and when I shall have finished my transmigrations, I hope to be

absorbed into the essence of the sempiternal Brihm. Child of my long-departed and ever-beloved sister, take my dying benediction. May the glory of the eternal Vishnoo signalise thy days!"

Her breathing now became impeded from want of strength to discharge the phlegm from her throat,—her eyes closed, and, after a few short, hurried gaspings, she expired.

Pelvahi was immediately removed by her lover from a scene of so much sadness. By this time the entire subjugation of the Mohammedans in and about the palace had been completed, and the victorious Rajpoots retired from the city without molestation. They did not think it wise to excite the despair of the inhabitants, and, consequently, relieved them from the terror of slaughter and pillage, by marching in military order through the principal gate of Chandahar. They were not pursued, but suffered to make good their retreat to their native villages. In a few days they were pursuing their several occupations of domestic labour, and the late scene of sanguinary conflict seemed but as an event of the long-forgotten past.

Pelvahi had now no reason for delaying her nuptials with the man who had so fully established his claim to her affections. They were solemnized, according to the minute and elaborate rites of the Hindoo formularies, in presence of the principal Rajpoots, who had lent their services to rescue the lovely Rajpootni, and to avenge the death of her parent. Unlike what is usual on these occasions throughout Hindostan, the feast was scanty, and the

guests few, for neither the bridegroom nor his bride felt any desire to exhaust their little means in providing an entertainment that could really add nothing either to their respect or to their peace¹. A few murmurs were heard, but these being disregarded, immediately after their union the happy couple set out for the Deccan, where the young husband had relatives to whom he wished to introduce his wife. They reached the place of their destination after a difficult and protracted journey of many weeks, their progress being slow as they advanced towards the south, in consequence of the intense heat. They, however, at length arrived at the town of Ahmednaggur:

Here the king of the Deccan at this time resided, and the young Rajpoot told his wife that on the following day at the royal durbar² he should introduce her to the sovereign. A thing so unusual excited Pelvahi's surprise, as she could not conceive what particular interest the monarch of so extensive an empire could take in the wife of a poor Rajpoot. Without demur, however, she accompanied her husband to the hall of audience. The king, a venerable man, of exceedingly benign aspect, was seated upon a large square rug of rich silk damask, under a canopy of similar fabric. The young warrior advanced, leading his beautiful consort by the hand, and threw himself at the monarch's feet. The old

¹ The entertainments at Hindoo marriages are sometimes so costly as to ruin the parents of both bride and bridegroom, and entail poverty on their posterity.

² An eastern levee.

man rose, and embracing him, cried, "Welcome be thy return, my son, to the arms of thy king and father."

In order to account for the heir to the throne of the Deccan being so long in the province of Chandahar, it is only necessary to mention that the sovereign had sent his son thither to be educated under the old Rajpoot, the youth's reputed father, who was renowned throughout the country for his skill in the stern art of war. The son's return had been for some time expected by his royal parent, who welcomed his bride with joy. In a few years the Rajpootni's husband became king of the Deccan on the decease of his father, and he never ceased to remember the happy chance which had rendered him the deliverer of the lovely Pelvahi from the jaws of the leopard.

THE END.

