



Painted by G. S. ...

SCENE NEAR CHILLAN TARAH GHAT, BUNDELKHAND,

On the River Betwa, a Tributary of the Ganges

1879

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THE

INDIAN EMPIRE.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENGRAVINGS.

THE KEEREE PASS.

One of the most agreeable diversities that can occur in the life of a European resident in Hindoostan, is a visit to the Hills—the common term applied in India to the lower ranges of the Himalaya Mountains. Many are driven from the plains to try the effects of a more bracing climate for the recovery of health; but there are some to whom a love of the picturesque, and a restless desire to seek amusement in ever-varying change of scene, prove the chief incentive for a tour into the recesses of the mighty and mysterious range that forms the northern boundary of our Indian empire. The favourite and most exciting route, when undertaking such an expedition, is by Saharunpore, a frontier town of the province of Delhi (sometimes called the threshold of the hill districts), whence it is usual to penetrate through, the valley of the Deyrah Dhoon, to the interior of the Himalayas, and the sources of the Jumna and the Ganges.

On commencing a journey towards the valley, the road of the traveller is through the Keeree Pass; and this lovely portal to a new country gives delightful promise of the scenery beyond. The distant view which may have been already caught of the great Himalaya, from a spot in the neighbourhood of Saharunpore, is of that dreamy, poetical description, which, though full of beauty, presents little that is definite, and only excites curiosity. From this spot two inferior belts, divided from each other by deep intersecting vales, appear to rise tier above tier, the pyramidal snow-capped heights, which seem to lift themselves into another world, crowning the whole with almost awful majesty. From the site mentioned, the mountain-ranges have all the indistinctness that belong to the land of faerie, and which, leaving the imagination to luxuriate in its most fanciful creations, invest the scene with a species of enchantment. The pure, dazzling whiteness of the regions of eternal snow, give occasionally a cloud like appearance to the towering summits, and may almost induce the belief, that they indeed form part of the heaven to which they aspire; while, in other states of the atmosphere, they stand out in bold relief, catching the rays of the sun, and reflecting a golden tint, or rearing their lofty points, white with the unsullied snow of ages, they proclaim, that while all else on earth is liable to change, themselves endure, immutable and for ever.

Upon entering the Keeree Pass, the distant view of the true Himalaya—the birth-place and abode of the gods of Hindoostan—is lost, and the scene becomes one of the softest beauty imaginable; the devious valley winds amongst rocky eminences, richly clothed with stately trees. At every step forward the landscape changes its features; and, though its character still remains the same, presents so great variety of forms—of crag and precipice, wild rock, deep forest, and luxuriant valley—that the traveller is lost in pleasurable amazement;—now exulting with that joy which the exile alone can feel when suddenly encountering some point of resemblance to a well-known object near a far-off home—now struck with wonder by some dazzling specimen of native growth. Here, for the first time, is beheld, in all its native luxuriance, the giant creeper (*Scandent banhinla*), with justice termed the monarch of its tribe. This enormous parasite winds its snake-like stem—which attains the size, and somewhat resembles the body, of the boa-constrictor—round the trunks of the forest-trees, either mingling their flowers with its foliage, or flinging them from the festoons which it forms from branch to

similar promise to the foregoing, regarding the slaughter of cows; but no wise man will believethem; for it is known that their promises are full of deceit, and made only to suit their own purposes. They are lying and deceitful, and have always imposed on the people of Hindoostan. We shall never again have such an opportunity as this. Think well on it, and remember that a letter is half as good as a visit. I am hopeful that, having agreed to all above written, you will reply.—Printed for the information of the Pundits and Mussulmans, at the press of the Moulvie Kootub Shah, at Bareilly.”

When the above document had been read, the judge-advocate informed the court, that with the exception of the evidence of two more witnesses, Mrs. Leeson and Rissaldar Everett, of the 14th irregular cavalry, the case for the prosecution was closed; the president, therefore, requested the prisoner to prepare his defence, and inquired how long it would take to do so. A week was asked for the purpose; but a member of the court thought this too long a time, as more than a week had already been allowed him—if he had only taken advantage of it—during the recent adjournment. It was finally arranged that the court should meet on Saturday, the 27th, for the purpose of receiving the evidence of the above-mentioned witnesses, who were expected in Delhi by that date; and that the prisoners vakeel should then inform the court the precise day on which he would be prepared with the defence. The court accordingly adjourned until Saturday, the 27th of February.

On the eighteenth day (Feb. 27th), the court resumed its sitting. The prisoner was brought into court as usual, supported on either side by a servant, and was understood to be suffering from indisposition. The proceedings commenced by John Everett; rissaldar of the (late) 14th irregular cavalry, being called into court, sworn, and examined. The witness (a Christian) deposed to the outbreak on the 11th of May in Delhi. He was in the city at the time, and had been for some twelve or fifteen days previous. As soon as the firing in the direction of the magazine commenced, he, fearing for his own safety, betook himself to the premises of the late Colonel Skinner, his old employer, and remained there all the night of the 11th with Mr. George Skinner (son of the late Mr. Joseph Skinner). The next day, having considerable doubts of their safety, they went to the house of Mirza Azccm Beg, and claimed his protection. (The Mirza was an old soldier who had served under Colonel Skinner). Mirza Azeem Beg promised them protection, and gave them as much as lay in his power; but fearing that the fact of his having sheltered them would become known, he applied to the palace for a guard to protect his house. This was refused; and soon after a party of rebels came, seized Mr. Skinner and witness, and took them in the direction of the Khotwallee. A party of the troopers (3rd cavalry) coming up, asked what was the use of taking the prisoners to the Khotwallee, and why they should not be at once murdered? Saying this, they seized Mr. Skinner by the hair, dragged him to the aqueduct running up the centre of the Chandnee Chouk, and placing him with his back against the masonry, shot him to death with their pistols. The witness, fearing that his own fate would soon be decided in a similar way, remained quiet, and, to his great relief, saw the murderers ride off in the direction of the palace. He was then taken to the Khotwallee, where he remained a close prisoner, with between twenty and thirty others, for some twenty-five days, when he was released, with his fellow-sufferers, in consequence of one Moulvie Ismael having interfered on their behalf, and stated that most of them were Mohammedans; and those that were not, were willing to become such. From this time the witness remained in the city, harboured and protected by one Majood, an African, formerly in the service of Colonel Skinner, and, at the time of the mutiny, in the service of the king; and when the British troops entered Delhi, he was able to seek their protection.

In reply to the judge-advocate, the witness stated that, on the 9th of May, 1857, two days before the outbreak at Delhi, about 11 a.m., the African above referred to met him, and endeavoured to persuade him to leave the government service, giving as his reason for so doing, that the Persians were coming to Delhi, and would soon murder all Christians, and overrun the city. The witness asked how he knew this; and Majood replied, that Seedee Kumber, another African (mentioned in former evidence), had been sent by the king of Delhi to Constantinople, for the purpose of obtaining assistance to exterminate the English, and that the messenger went with others supposed to be on a pilgrimage to Mecca, but in reality for the purpose above mentioned. The witness

replied to a question put by the judge-advocate, that he had heard the men of his regiment converse among themselves about the chupatties which were circulated, but they did not appear to understand why they were distributed. After the first fight (at the Hindun, or Ghazee-oo-deen-nuggur), the prisoner gave out that he thought his troops (the mutineers) were disheartened, and reminded them that if the British once more set foot in Delhi, they would not leave one of the house of Timur alive. With the exception of what the witness had stated to the court, he does not remember anything occurring in the regiment indicative of a spirit of disaffection. The witness was then allowed to withdraw, and his statement was read by the interpreter, for the benefit of the prisoner and his counsel. Some documentary evidence was then produced, and the court adjourned till Wednesday, the 3rd of March, to allow the interpreter time to translate other documents necessary to the proceedings.

The following is the translation of a proclamation issued by the king of Delhi, on the 26th of August, 1857, and produced during the trial:—

***Seal of Bahadur Shah Badshah Ghazee, Muhammad Dara Bukht, Walt Niamut Khalaf, Mirza Karim Ul Sujah Bahadur.*—It is well known to all, that in this age the people of Hindoostan, both Hindoos and Mohammedans, are being ruined under the tyranny and oppression of the infidel and treacherous English. It is, therefore, the bounden duty of all the wealthy people of India, especially of those who have any sort of connection with any of the Mohammedan royal families, and are considered the pastors and masters of their people, to stake their lives and property for the well-being of the public. With the view of effecting this general good, several princes belonging to the royal family of Delhi, have dispersed themselves in the different parts of India, Iran, Turan, and Afghanistan, and have been long since taking measures to compass their favourite end; and it is to accomplish this charitable object, that one of the aforesaid princes has, at the head of an army of Afghanistan, &c., made his appearance in India; and I, who am the grandson of **Abel Muzuffer Sarajuddin Bahadur Shah Ghazee, king of India**, having in the course of circuit come here, to extirpate the infidels residing in the eastern part of the country, and to liberate and protect the poor helpless people now groaning under their iron rule, have, by the aid of the Majahdeen or religious fanatics, erected the standard of Mohammed, and persuaded the orthodox Hindoos, who had been subject to my ancestors, and have been, and are still, accessories in the destruction of the English, to raise the standard of Mahavir.

“Several of the Hindoo and Mussulman chiefs, who have long since quitted their homes for the preservation of their religion, and have been trying their best to root out the English in India, have presented themselves to me, and taken part in the reigning Indian crusade; and it is more than probable that I shall very shortly receive succours from the west. Therefore, for the information of the public, the present Ishtahar, consisting of several sections, is put in circulation; and it is the imperative duty of all to take it into their careful consideration, and abide by it. Parties anxious to participate in the common cause, but having no means to provide for themselves, shall receive their daily subsistence from me; and be it known to all, that the ancient works, both of the Hindoos and Mohammedans, the writings of the miracle-workers, and the calculations of the astrologers, pundits, and rammals, all agree in asserting that the English will no longer have any footing in India or elsewhere. Therefore it is incumbent on all to give up the hope of the continuation of the British sway, side with me, and deserve the consideration of the Badshahi or imperial government, by their individual exertion in promoting the common good, and thus attain their respective ends; otherwise, if this golden opportunity slips away, they will have to repent of their folly: as is very aptly said by a poet in two fine couplets, the drift whereof is—(Never let a favourable opportunity slip; for, in the field of opportunity, you are to meet with the ball of fortune; but if you do not avail yourself of the opportunity that offers itself, you will have to bite your finger through grief?

“No person, at the misrepresentation of the well-wishers of the British government, ought to conclude, from the present slight inconveniences usually attendant on revolutions, that similar inconveniences and troubles should continue when the Badshahi government is established on a firm basis; and parties badly dealt with by any sepy or plunderer, should come up and represent their grievances to me, and receive redress at

my hands; and for whatever property they may lose in the reigning disorder, they will be recompensed from the public treasury when the Badshahi government is well fixed.

“Sedttml.—Regarding Zemindars.—It is evident, that the British government, in making zemindary settlements, have imposed exorbitant jummas, and have disgraced and ruined several zemindars, by putting up their estates to public auction for arrears of rent, insomuch that, on the institution of a suit by a common ryot, a maid-servant, or a slave, the respectable zemindars are summoned in court, arrested, put in gaol, and disgraced. In litigations regarding zemindaries, the immense value of stamps and other unnecessary expenses of the civil courts, which are pregnant with all sorts of crooked dealings, and the practice of allowing a case to hang on for years, are all calculated to impoverish the litigants. Besides this, the coffers of the zemindars are annually taxed with subscriptions for schools, hospitals, roads, &c. Such extortions will have no manner of existence in the Badshahi government; but, on the contrary, the jummas will be light, the dignity and honour of the zemindars safe, and every zemindar will have absolute rule in his own zemindary. The zemindary disputes will be summarily decided according to the Shurrah and the S Rasters, without any expense: and zemindars who will assist in the present war with their men and money, shall be excused forever from paying half the revenue. Zemindars aiding only with money, shall be exempted in perpetuity from paying one-fourth of the revenue; and should any zemindar who has been unjustly deprived of his lands during the English government, personally join the war, he will be restored to his zemindary, and excused one-fourth of the revenue.

“Section 2.—Regarding Merchants.—It is plain that the infidel and treacherous British government have monopolised the trade of all the fine and valuable merchandise, such as indigo, cloth, and other articles of shipping, leaving only the trade of trifles to the people; and, even in this, they are not without their share of the profits, which they secure by means of customs and stamp fees, &c., in money suits, so that the people have merely a trade in name. Besides this, the profits of the traders are taxed with postages, tolls, and subscriptions for schools, &c. Notwithstanding all these concessions, the merchants are liable to imprisonment and disgrace at the instance or complaint of a worthless man. When the Badshahi government is established, all these aforesaid fraudulent practices shall be dispensed with, and the trade of every article, without exception, both by land and water, shall be opened to the native merchants of India, who will have the benefit of the government steam vessels and steam carriages for the conveyance of their merchandise gratis; and merchants having no capital of their own, shall be assisted from the public treasury. It is therefore the duty of every merchant to take part in the war, and aid the Badshahi government with his men and money, either secretly or openly, as may be consistent with his position or interest, and forswear his allegiance to the British government.

“Section 3.—Regarding Public Servants.—It is not a secret thing that, under the British government, natives employed in the civil and military services have little respect, low pay, and no manner of influence, and all the posts of dignity and emolument in both the departments are exclusively bestowed on Englishmen: for natives in the military service, after having devoted the greater part of their lives, attain to the post of subahdar (the very height of their hopes), with a salary of sixty or seventy rupees per mensem; and those in the civil service obtain the post of Sadder Ala, with a salary of 500 rupees a-month, but no influence, jagheer, or present. But under the Badshahi government, like the posts of colonel, general, and commander-in-chief, which the English enjoy at present, the corresponding posts of pausadi, punj-hazari, haft-hazari, and sippah-salari, will be given to the natives in the military service; and, like the posts of collector, magistrate, judge, sudder judge, secretary, and governor, which the European civil servants now hold, the corresponding posts of wezeer, quasi, safir, suba, nizam, and dewan, &c., with salaries of lacs of rupees, will be given to the natives of the civil service, together with jagheers, kheluts, inams, and influence. Natives, whether Hindoos or Mohammedans, who will fail fighting against the English, are sure to go to heaven; and those killed fighting for the English, will undoubtedly go to hell. Therefore all the natives in the British service ought to be alive to their religion and interest, and, abjuring their loyalty to the English, side with the Badshahi government, and obtain salaries of 2,000 or 3,000 rupees per month for the present, and be entitled to high posts in future.

If they, for any reasons, cannot at present declare openly against the English, they can heartily wish ill to their cause, and remain passive spectators of the passing events, without taking any active share therein. But, at the same time, they should indirectly assist the Badshahi government, and try their best to drive the English out of the country. All the sepoys and sowars who have, for the sake of Hieir religion, joined in the destruction of the English, and are at present, on any consideration, in a state of concealment either at home or elsewhere, should present themselves to me without the least delay or hesitation. Foot soldiers will be paid at the rate of three annas, and sowars at eight or twelve annas per diem for the present, and afterwards they will be paid double of what they get in the British service. Soldiers not in the English service, and taking part in the war against the English, will receive their daily subsistence money, according to the rates specified below, for the present; and, in future, the foot soldiers will be paid at the rate of eight or ten rupees, and sowars at the rate of twenty or thirty rupees per month; and on the permanent establishment of the Badshahi government, will stand entitled to the highest posts in the state, to jagheers, and presents;—^{**}Matchlock men, per day, two annas; riflemen, two-and-a-half; swordsmen, one-and-a-half; horse men, with large horses, eight; horsemen, with small horses, six—annas a-day.

“ Section 4.—Regarding Artisans.—It is evident that the Europeans, by the introduction of the English articles into India, have thrown the weavers, the cotton dressers, the carpenters, the blacksmiths, and the shoemakers, &c., out of employ, and have engrossed their occupations, so that every description of native artisaus has been reduced to beggary. But under the Badshahi government, the native artisans will exclusively be employed in the services of the kings, the rajahs, and the rich; and this will no doubt ensure their prosperity. Therefore those artisans ought to renounce the English services, and assist the Majahdeens or religious fanatics engaged in the war, and thus be entitled both to secular and eternal happiness.

“ Section 5.—Regarding Pundits, Fakirs, and other Learned Persons.—The pundits and fakirs, being the guardians of the Hindoo and Mohammedan religions respectively, and the Europeans being the enemies of both the religions, and, as at present a war is raging against the English on account of religion, the pundits and fakirs are bound to present themselves to me, and take their share in the holy war; otherwise they will stand condemned, according to the tenor of the Sburrah and the Shasters; but if they come, they will, when the Badshahi government is well established, receive rent-free lands.

“Lastly, be it known to all, that whoever, out of the above-named classes, shall, after the circulation of this Ishtahar, still cling to the British government, all his estates shall be confiscated and property plundered, and he himself, with his whole family, shall be imprisoned, and ultimately put to death.—Interior of the Azimghur district. **The 16th Mohurram 1275 Hirji, corresponding with Bhadobady Tij 1265 Fusly.**”

On the 3rd of March, the court assembled for the nineteenth time, for further evidence, and again adjourned until the 9th of that month; when the vakeel of the prisoner declared, in the name of his royal master, that he did not recognise the authority of the tribunal before which he had been brought, and therefore declined to make answer to any charges brought against him. The public prosecutor then summed up the whole of the evidence adduced; by which it was proved, that, in defiance of existing treaties, the prisoner had assumed the powers of independent sovereignty, and levied war against the British government; and, moreover, that the murders of the Europeans in Delhi were perpetrated with the sanction, if not by the positive orders of the king, in the presence of his sons the princes, and other individuals connected with the royal house, and by the instrumentality of the Kliassburdars of his own special body guard. The court, after a short deliberation, adjudged the prisoner, Mirza Aboo Zuffur, alias Mahomed Suraj-oo-deeu Shah Ghazee, guilty of all the charges alleged against him; whereby he became liable to the penalty of death, as a traitor and murderer: but, in consequence of the assurance given to him by Captain Hodson, previous to his capitulation on the 21st of September, 1857, the court, by virtue of the authority vested in it by Act XIV., of 1857, sentenced him to be transported for life to the Andaman Islands, or to such other place as should be selected by the governor general in council for his place of banishment.

A very considerable delay occurred in carrying the sentence of the court into effect; and in the meantime, the ex-king, with the females of his family and some native attendants, remained in close confinement within the precincts of the palace; in which seclusion he might, probably, owing to his advanced age, have been permitted to linger out the very few remaining years of his existence, but for the injudicious interference of individuals, who availed themselves of his miserable position to create political capital, for the purpose of impugning the policy of the government at Calcutta. Among these busybodies was a late member of the English parliament; who, while itinerating through India, stumbled upon Delhi, and, as a matter of course, among the other lions of the place, was permitted to visit the ex-king in his state of duress; and of which visit he subsequently gave the following detail at a public meeting held at St. James's Hall, London, on the 11th of May, 1858. Upon this occasion, the ex-M.P. for Aylesbury, in the course of a very animated speech on the Indian revolt, expressed himself, in reference to the late king, in the following terms:—"Many persons regret that the king of Delhi has not fallen in just punishment for his offences. I saw the king of Delhi; and I will leave the meeting to judge, when it has heard me, whether or not he is punished. I saw that broken-down old man, not in a room, but in a miserable hole of his palace, lying on a bedstead, with nothing to cover him but a miserable tattered coverlet! As I beheld him, some remembrance of his former greatness seemed to arise in his mind. He rose with difficulty from his couch; showed me his arms, which were eaten into by disease and by flies, and partly from want of water; and he said in a lamentable voice, that he had not enough to eat! I will not give any opinion as to whether the manner in which we are treating him is worthy of a great nation; but is this a way in which, as Christians, we ought to treat a king? I saw his women, too, all huddled up in a corner with their children; and I was told that all that was allowed for their support was 10s. a-day. Is not that punishment enough for one that has occupied a throne?"

This statement excited, as it was intended to do, a large amount of sympathy among those to whom it was addressed, and, for some time, opinion ran strongly against the alleged treatment to which the royal octogenarian captive was subjected; but at length the echo of the speech at St. James's Hall became audible even in the palace at Delhi, whence it promptly evoked a distinct and positive refutation from the individual to whose medical supervision the health of the prisoner and his family had been entrusted by the resident authorities. This gentleman, writing from Delhi on the 25th of June, 1858, quoted the allegations of the ex-member, and proceeded thus:—"I hope that the report of this speech is incorrect; for the words as they stand are likely to mislead. For a man of his years, the ex-king of Delhi is particularly active and intelligent; and I have seldom seen so old a man in England with equal mental and bodily energy. He resides, not in a hole, but in (for a native) a large room, square, with windows looking inwards and outwards. This room is divided about equally by curtains from one side to the other, separating the females from the males. On either side, the centre room opens on to a square court—one reserved for the females of the family, and containing one or two small buildings (or gaddows), used for sleeping; the other, or entrance court, provided with temporary dwellings for the male attendants, of whom there are several, besides eunuchs and women for the service of the concealed ones. The whole suite of buildings is elevated some twelve or fourteen feet; and, on the ex-king's side, overlook a garden, in the centre of which reside the officers in charge of the prisoners.

At the season of the year Mr. Layard visited Delhi, no covering further than a sheet is, as far as my experience goes, ever used by the natives of Central India; and the old man has no deficiency either of clothes, pillows, or cushions. There is no limit whatever but the individual's own desire, to the amount of water used for bathing or other purposes. At one time the ex-king was suffering from a disease not uncommon in India, but rarely mentioned in polite English ears; the skin was abraded slightly in one or two small patches about the fingers, arms, &c., from scratching only. Although he has been months under my care, he has not once complained of a deficiency of food, though, as has been his custom for thirty-five years, he usually vomits after every meal. I have, on more than one occasion, seen him superintending the preparation of sherbet by his own attendants.

"The ordinary pay of an inferior workman at Delhi is seven rupees per month—that is, 10s. 6d."