

Then Captain H. N. Davies in the charge of the State Prisoners in Rangoon says in a despatch¹ of 3rd August 1859:

' The house is situated within a few yards of the Main Guard and like wooden houses of the country is considerably raised off the ground. It is in an enclosure 100 ft. square and is surrounded by palisading 10 ft. high. The accommodation consists of 4 rooms, each 16 ft. square, one of which is allotted for the use of the ex-king, another is occupied by Jawan Bakht and his young Begum, a third is appropriated by Zinat Mahal Begum; to each of these rooms a bathing is attached, Shah Abbas and his mother occupying the remaining rooms. . . . There are two bath rooms also a place to cook in.

The cost of dieting the prisoners—16 in number—is about 11 rupees a day and an extra rupee is allowed every Sunday and Rs. 2 per head on the 1st of each month to meet their toilette necessities; but pen, ink and paper are strictly prohibited. The public are not allowed to hold intercourse with the prisoners and the servants gain admission under a pass.

The health of the ex-king has improved. . . . His memory is still good when time is allowed him to fix his ideas but his articulation is indistinct consequent upon the loss of the teeth. He certainly does not give

¹ F. C. No. 125, 11th November, 1859.

the impression of being capable of an extended mental energy of capacity, but on the whole he appears to bear his weight of years remarkably well; he passes his days in listless apathy manifesting considerable indifference to all external affairs. This apparently has been his normal state for a long time past and may continue so for some time to come until all of a sudden his career may come to a close.

The ex-king's wife Zinat Mahal is a middle-aged woman. She enjoys very good health; I have had several conversations with her from behind the screen. She frequently enlarges on the step she took at the time of the outbreak at Dehli in writing to the late Mr. Colvin, the Lieutenant-Governor of the N.W. Provinces, begging of him to come to her assistance implying thereby that at that time they were thus helpless even to protect the unfortunate European girl who sought her protection. She also frequently alluded to the loss of her private treasure and jewels and states that Major Hodson pledged his word and gave her a written document as security for the safety of her personal property. . . . She states that her property was not disturbed till after Major Hodson's death when she was required to give up the document he had given her as a protection; she was then dispossessed by Mr. Saunders, the Commissioner at Dehli, of all her valuables to the extent of twenty lacs rupees in value and he refused to return the document.

I have explained to her that on her husband being convicted of rebellion all the property of the family became escheated to the Government and that her establishment being distinct from the King's and her residing in a separate mahal has nothing to do with it.

She seems however to think that the sequestration of her private property is somewhat contrary to custom. . . . She appears to be a woman of masculine turn of mind judging from her conversation and deportment; and of the two most probably she had more to say to the intrigues of the Rebels than her imbecile husband. . . .

In connection with the loss of her treasure a certain Ahsanullah Khan appears to have had a hand; all the prisoners are very bitter against him and assert that this individual who was the king's Hakeem and adviser was the principal person through whose insidious counsel the destruction of the European prisoners was brought about. This is I believe contrary to fact; but it is not improbable that this man may have given some information regarding the secret treasure and thus incurred the enmity of the queen's party. This Hakeem from the account given appears to have gained the confidence of the British authorities at Dehli no doubt with good and sufficient reason, and the spleen displayed by the Begum and her associates only adds to confirm this opinion.

The younger Begum—Zamani—the wife of Jawan Bakht is described as a young and pretty woman probably not more than 15 years old although she has already been the mother of two children. She feels the restraint of prison life more than the others, due to delicate state of her health consequent upon her accouchement which took place shortly after her arrival here. The child was a male one and was still-born. Both the old king and his daughter-in-law are particularly fond of soliciting the services of the Doctor upon every trifling occasion and the young lady is very

solicitous of being allowed to go out for an airing occasionally.

The two sons are both healthy and rather promising youths. Both are extremely ignorant, the attainments of the elder (Jawan Bakht) embracing merely a slight knowledge of reading and writing in Persian character and when interrogated on the most ordinary topics their want of knowledge is very apparent; even the boundaries of their native country are wholly unknown to them.

I felt it my duty to record the very laudable desire both these lads exhibit to learn; they have frequently expressed a very earnest wish to acquire a knowledge of the English language in particular and they seem to be fully aware that by so doing they will have adopted the very last course for removing the misfortune if not disgrace attendant on their present state of ignorance and they state they expressed a wish to the Commissioner of Dehli to be sent to England in preference to any other place. Both the parents of the lads have talked to me on the subject and appear anxious that a commencement should be made. The lads are possessed of sufficient intelligence to warrant a hope of speedy progress and have promised me earnestly to apply themselves if Government permits the scheme to be undertaken.

Rangoon,
3rd Aug. 1859.

Sd. H. Nelson Davies.
