

Political Missions

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B O O T A N,

COMPRISING THE REPORTS OF

THE HON'BLE ASHLEY EDEN,—1864;

CAPT. R. B. PEMBERTON, 1837, 1838, WITH DR. W. GRIFFITHS'S JOURNAL;

AND THE ACCOUNT BY

BABOO KISHEN KANT BOSE.



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and more punctual. In a word, they will understand that they are tolerated by—not the equals of—the gigantic British power. I have stated my opinion of them with some severity, but with impartiality, and my conviction is that they are, in all the higher attributes, very inferior to any other mountainous tribe I am acquainted with on the North-East Frontier.

It must not be supposed that, however disgusted with the inhabitants of the country, the Mission was not a source of great gratification to me. It afforded me an opportunity of visiting a very alpine country; and, what is much more important, of fixing, through the kindness and skill of Captain Pemberton, the localities of nearly 1,500 species of plants with such accuracy that the collection will be of much interest to all students of Botanical Geography. It afforded me, too, an opportunity of profiting from the valuable instructions of Captain Pemberton, so much so, that it will always be a matter of regret to me that I was so ignorant of so many essential requisites during the other journeys I have had the honor of performing.

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ACCOUNT

OF

B O O T A N .

By Baboo Kishen Kant Bose.

Translated by D. Scott, Esq.

THE Country of Bootan is bounded on the South by the Territories of the Hon'ble Company and of the Raja of Cooch Behar; on the East and South by Assam; on the North by the Lhasa Territories; by Mem, or the Lepha country on the West; and by Digurchee on the North-West. The country extends in length from East to West in some places twenty days, and in some parts twenty-five days' journey; but is less in breadth, being from South to North from ten to fifteen days' journey. The Bootan Territory is entirely mountainous except on the South, South-West, and Eastern parts, where there is level land. The low-lands, if well cultivated, are capable of producing a revenue of seven or eight lacs of Rupees; but they are in general waste, and at present the whole revenue of Bootan, including mal and sayer, and all items of collection, does not probably amount to three lacs of Rupees.

It is related by the people of Bootan that to the North of Lhasa there is a country called Leuja, in which Lam Supto, or the Dhurma Raja, formerly dwelt. From that place he went to Lhasa, and after residing there for some time he arrived at Poonakh in Bootan, which was at that time ruled by a Raja of the Cooch tribe. When the Dhurma Raja arrived there he began to play upon a kind of pipe made of a human thigh bone, and to act contrary to the observances of the Cooch tribe, and to perform miracles, at which the Cooch Raja was so terrified that he disappeared with his whole family and servants under ground. The Dhurma Raja, finding the fort empty, went in and took possession, and having deprived of their caste all the followers and slaves of the Cooch Raja who remained above ground, he instructed them in his own reli-

and changes at the annual festivals, to fill the principal offices with persons devoted to his interest. The Booteahs are full of fraud and intrigue, and would not scruple to murder their own father or brother to serve their interest; but what is wonderful is that the slaves are most faithful and obedient to their masters, and are ready to sacrifice their limbs or lives in their service; while their masters, on the other hand, use them most cruelly, often inflicting upon them horrid punishment and frequently mutilating them.

No complaints for assaults and slight wounding or adultery are heard. If a man catch another in adultery with his wife he may kill him without scruple, but if, under other circumstances, a man kill another, he must pay 126 Rupees to the Deb Raja, and something to the other Counsellors and to the heirs of the deceased. If he cannot pay this sum, he is tied to the dead body and thrown into the river. No distinction is made between what is called murder and manslaughter in English law. In cases of robbery and theft the property of the criminal is seized, and he is confined for six months or a year, after which he is sold as a slave, and all his relations are liable to the same punishment. There is no burglary or dacoity in houses in Bootan, and robberies take place upon the highway, the Ryots having nothing in their houses for dacoits to carry away.

The practice of the Courts is that if a man complains he can never obtain justice, but he may be subject to a fine if he fails to establish his claim. If a merchant has a demand against any one, and can by no means get paid, he can only go to the Deb Raja, or some other Judge, and say, "such a man owes me so much; pray collect the amount, and use it as your own." The defendant is then summoned, and if the demand is proved to be just, the money is realized for the use of the Judge, who, on the other hand, if the claim is not established, takes the amount demanded from the plaintiff.

Whenever any Ryot, or landholder, or servant, has collected a little money, the Officer of Government under whose authority they happen to be placed finds some plea or other for taking the whole. On this account the Ryots are afraid to put on good clothes, or to eat and drink according to their inclination, lest they should excite the avarice of their rulers. Notwithstanding this, the latter leave nothing to the Ryots, but the Gylongs are often possessed of wealth, which they collect as charity, and fees of office, and by trade. Whoever borrows money from a Gylong, considering him as a revered person, pays back more than he borrowed, and if they complain to the Judge, they get the sum lent with interest, if their claim is proved, and if not, they are not subject to any fine; the servants of Government are also favored in like manner by the Courts. In all ways the Ryots are harrassed; whatever rice they grow is taken almost entirely for revenue by the Government, and they are also obliged to deliver the grass and straw. Of wheat they retain a larger portion, and they do not give to Government any part of their dhemsis. All

the husks and straw for the cattle, and are further obliged to carry all the bales of goods in which the Officers of Government trade gratis. For exemption from the last grievance those who can afford it pay something to the Deb Raja, which of course renders it still more burdensome on those who cannot do the same.

Sal, Saral, Sisu, Gambori, and Sida trees are produced in the low-land and small hills for two days' journey. On the interior hills nothing but fir trees are to be seen: the wood is used for fuel and all other domestic purposes, and as it is full of resin it also serves for lamps.

There was formerly no mint in Bootan, but when the Booteahs carried away the late Raja of Cooch Behar, they got hold of the dies, with which they still stamp Narrainee Rupees. Every new Deb Raja puts a mark upon the Rupees of his coinage, and alters the weight. The Dhurma Raja also coins Rupees, and besides them, no one else is permitted to put their mark upon the Rupees, but there are mints at Paro, Tongso, and Tagna.

To the North of Gowalparah lies Bijnee, the residence of Ballit Narain.

Route from Bijnee to Wandipoor in Bootan.

To the West of Bijnee, nine coss, is Bisjorra or Birjorra, situated on the confines of the Company's Territories in the Pergunnah of Khoontaghat. Half a coss North of this place the Bootan Territories commence with the Zemindaree of Sidlee. Three coss West from Bijnee we crossed the Ayi River; it is about eighty yards broad and fordable, except in the rainy season. To the North-West of Bisjorra lies Sidlee, distant six coss, the residence of Suraj Narain, Raja of the Zemindaree. The intermediate country is covered with long grass, with a few huts here and there, which are not observable until the traveller is close upon them. The jungle is very high, but there is a track or foot path as far as Sidlee. From Sidlee to the Northern Hills there is no road in the rainy season, or from Bysakh to Kartik: in the month of Assin the jungle begins to be burned, and after this operation has been repeated several times the road is cleared. The passage through this jungle is attended with innumerable inconveniencies, of which the following are some: From Bijnee to the Hills the whole country is covered with a species of reed called *Khagrah*, interspersed here and there with forest trees. The jungle is of such height that an elephant or rhinoceros cannot be seen in it when standing up, and it is so full of leeches that a person cannot move a hundred yards without having his body, wherever it has been scratched by the grass, covered with these animals, so that a single person cannot get rid of them without assistance. In this jungle, when the sun shines, the heat is intolerable, and when the sun ceases to shine a person cannot remain in it without a fire on account of innumerable musquitoes and other insects with which it is filled. When the sun shines they retire, but in the evening and morning, and all night, men and cattle are tormented by them, and they are only to be dispersed by the smoke of a fire. In this jungle there are tigers, bears, elephants, rhinoceroses, buffaloes, monkies, wild hogs, deer, &c.,

North of Sidlee, six coss, lies the Village of Bengtoli; between these places there is nothing but jungle, and at Bengtoli there are only four or five families. To the North-West of Bengtoli lies Thannah Gendagram. There is here a party of Booteahs but no village, nor are there any houses on the road; the same sort of jungle continues, but begins at Bengtoli to be interspersed more thickly with sâl trees. Just before arriving at Gendagram we crossed the new and old Bhur Rivers about eighty yards broad and fordable, except in the rains. To the North-West of Gendagram, six coss, lies the Village of Zilimjhar, containing about fifteen or twenty families of the Mech caste. The road is a continued jungle with trees, and without a single habitation or cultivated spot. The Mechs cultivate rice and cotton, and a space of about a mile in diameter is cleared around the village. One coss West of Gendagram we crossed the Champamatee River, about twenty yards broad and exceedingly rapid. It is fordable except after heavy rain. To the West of Zilimjhar, eight coss, lies Kachubari, containing five or six Booteah houses called Changs. There are a few houses and rice fields at one place on the road. The country is covered with forests, and the long weeds begin to disappear. As far as Kachubari the ground is level, but somewhat higher than the intermediate space between Zilimjhar and Sidlee. West of Zilimjhar we passed the Dulpani, a river of the same description as the Champamatee. To the North of Kachubari, six coss, lies Pakkeehagga, which is merely a large stone on the side of the river. The road leads through a forest of sâl trees and runs chiefly along the banks of a river: at Pakkeehagga small hills commence; there are no habitations on the road. One coss North-West of Kachubari we crossed the Sarabhanga River. It is about eighty yards broad and exceedingly rapid, but is fordable except after heavy rain. To the North of Pakkeehagga, eight coss, is the hill of Bissu-sing where the Soubah of Cherrung resides during the cold weather. There is no village here nor on the road, which runs over small hills and through forests of sâl and other trees. We crossed three small streams on this march without bridges. To the North-West of Bissu-sing, sixteen coss, lies Dubleng, where there is one Booteah house. There are no villages on the road, but the country to the West of Dubleng is inhabited, and furnished us with porters. The road leads over to the hill of Kamli-sukka, a very lofty mountain, from which the Berhampooter and the Garrow Hills are distinctly seen; the road is about a cubit broad, and passable for loaded horses. There are no bridges on this day's route. We started before sunrise and arrived at Dubleng at ten o'clock at night; the Hills are bare towards the top, but lower down they are covered with trees, and a few fir trees begin to be seen on the North-West declivity of Kamli-sukka. At the bottom of this Hill, previously to arriving at Dubleng, we crossed a small rivulet. To the West of Dubleng, eight coss, lies Cherrung, the residence of a Soubah during the hot weather. The road is hilly, but no very high mountains were passed, and it is practicable for cattle of any description;

proceeding half a coss from Dubleng we crossed a river over wooden bridge; an elephant might pass this part of the road by going below. After crossing this river fir trees begin to prevail scantily interspersed with other kinds. At Cherrung there is no village, but to the South of it the country is said to be inhabited. At Cherrung there is a stone-house inclosed with walls after the fashion of the Booteahs. To the North of Cherrung, ten coss, lies Majang, from which place Cherrung is visible without the aid of a glass. The direct distance is estimated at only three coss, but we were from sunrise to about three in the afternoon on the way. The road is hilly but passable for cattle all the way. We crossed one river about half-way by a substantial wooden bridge. The river was rapid not fordable, but to the South the bed was wider and the water shallow. No houses or cultivation were seen on this day's march. At Majang there is a village of about seven or eight families, living in houses with earthen walls, the Lyots not being allowed to build with stone. To the North East of Majang, nine coss, lies Harassu, where there is only one house, and none on the road. After descending the Hill from Majang we arrived at the bank of the Patchoo-Matchoo River, which runs by Poonakh and Wandipoor, and continued not far from its left bank all the way, as we judged from the noise of the waters when we could not see it. On this day's march scarcely any trees except firs were seen. Some of the Hills were bare towards the top. The road was the worst we had hitherto travelled over, running in many places along the sides of precipitous banks. It is barely passable for horses, but there is a road along the river by which it is said elephants can proceed. We started from Majang at sun-rise and arrived at 3 p. m. at Harassu immediately after crossing a river by a wooden bridge. To the right of our route there was a very high mountain. From Harassu North-West, eight coss, lies Kishnyéi, where there is a single Chowkcedar. Before arriving at Kishnyéi we crossed a river by a wooden bridge; the road was entirely destitute of habitations, but better than that of yesterday and passable for horses or elephants. We started in the morning and arrived at 2 p. m. From Kishnyéi West, ten coss, lies Jhargaon, where there is one house for the Pillo, and some huts for slaves. On the road we saw no houses or cultivation. The road is like that of yesterday, but there is one very steep ascent passable, however, for cattle of any description. We started from Kishnyéi early in the morning and arrived about 5 p. m. at Jhargaon. There is some rice cultivated at this place. On this day's march we crossed one river on a wooden bridge and three smaller streams. From Jhargaon West, twelve coss, lies Challa, where there is a village containing eight or ten families and an extensive tract of cultivated land to the South-East. Half-way there is a small village and some cultivation. Our route of this day and yesterday was along the left bank of the Patchoo-Matchoo River which comes from Poonakh, but at some distance from it. Before arriving at Challa we forded a small river about knee deep. From Challa North, ten coss, lies Khodakha, where the Governor of Wandipoor resides during the hot weather.