

INDIAN RECREATIONS;

CONSISTING

CHIEFLY OF STRICTURES

ON THE

DOMESTIC AND RURAL ECONOMY

OF THE

MAHOMEDANS & HINDOOS.

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AND LATELY ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S CHAPLAINS IN INDIA.

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SECT. XLVI.

THE COURT OF LUCKNOW, AND CABINET ON THE DOWLAT KHANAH.

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Lucknow, March, 9, 1799.

WE had this day an opportunity of seeing the Mahomedan spring festival, (*eida*) celebrated by the Nawab. This takes place annually on the first day in March, after the new moon becomes visible, and is kept in commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice. A camel instead of a ram, is here held to be the substitute. The princes of Hindostan march in procession, at this ceremony, with all their courtiers, and a large military escort. On such occasions the oriental taste for show, and gaudy magnificence, is displayed with laborious and studied attention. And their success must be acknowledged; for though on a close inspection their dress and ornaments will not gratify a chaste taste, yet in procession they have a grand effect. The howdaah's, palankeens, and har-

nessing of the elephants, are so contrived as to exhibit one blaze of gold, in which the ornaments, from their number cannot well be distinguished.

THE most splendid European court probably falls much short of the magnificence of Saadut Ali upon this occasion. At day break he marched from the palace with more than ten thousand men in his train, exclusive of the military escort, which might amount to two thousand more. His progress was directed to a large plain where tents had been pitched on the preceding day for the entertainment of the company. The prince all the way, as well as one of his courtiers, was supplied with bags of money, which they scattered among the multitude. In this exercise it was remarked that his highness was extremely tardy; the courtier dispersed two bags in less time than he did a single one. His hands seemed to perform with awkward reluctance an office in which they were but feebly supported by the parsimonious sensations of his heart.

As notwithstanding its pomp and ostentation this is a religious ceremony, the first part of it, after arriving at the ground, consists in a solemn invocation of the Deity for plenty and prosperity during the ensuing season: and though the prayers are here accompanied with alms, it is probable that few beneficial effects are produced by these indiscriminate donations. That idle crowd which haunts every large capital, here consists of the most profligate and worthless

worthless of the human race; and of these it is only the most resolute and daring who profit by the scramble. Their gains serve perhaps no other purpose than to supply their dissipation for a few days, when they are again forced by their indigence to desperate courses.

HERE the transitions from transient acts of devotion to the grossest crimes, is short and frequent. Only two days before this devout procession, an attempt was made by some of these ruffians to assassinate Houssein Reza Khan, a very popular minister of the prince. It failed in the execution, and may therefore probably be soon reiterated. A few days before this period several of the troops were found out in a traitorous correspondence with the deposed Nawab. Superstition, treachery, and cruelty go here so closely connected, that few moments only can intervene where reason guides the conduct. The religious solemnity probably, amidst all its splendour, did not afford one sacrifice either of clean hands, or a truly devout heart. Ten thousand rupees were given as donations to the Company's troops; a few of whom were added to contribute to the splendour of the occasion. Amidst all this blaze of wealth and magnificence, thousands of poor wretches are seen on the road to all appearance in real want. There is not, perhaps, in the whole compass of human affairs a more striking display of the inequality of conditions, than this scene affords. Extravagant wealth is amassed in the hands of one man, and is confined to the

narrow circle of his favourites; and this superfluous store is grinded from the faces of the indigent, who are wallowing in all the filth of penury and wretchedness.

THIS ceremony, grand as it appeared, is probably a miniature only of the Court of Delhi, in the prosperous times of the Mogul Empire. There the wealth was nearly tenfold of what is possessed by the Court of Lucknow, and equally under the controul of a single person.

THE festival of Eida seems to resemble the feast of Tabernacles among the Jews, which by that people was observed, we are told, with as little moral effect or purity of intention. "Your new moons, and your Sabbaths, I cannot away with; wash ye and make you clean; put away the evil of your doings, &c." The Muffulmans and the Jews seem to have equally regarded superstitious observances, as a substitute for every moral virtue, and a compensation to the Deity for the violation of his laws.

MARCH 15.—I this day went to view the Nawab's Menagerie, which consists of different birds and quadrupeds. In this collection, variety or usefulness has not been so much sought after, as the oddities of nature. Such a cabinet might be extremely useful, of models of machines for the improvement of husbandry or manufactures, or superior breeds of cattle for the purposes of agriculture, were collected for the inspection

inspection of the people; but no views of this kind seem to have actuated the Princes of Oude in the formation of their collection.

THE different specimens of clock-work are curious and expensive, but by no means calculated to explain to the natives the principles of that useful machine. They are viewed here as elegant toys or play-things, which captivate by the surprize which is necessarily occasioned by seeing their effects; but I do not find that any native has yet attempted the construction of a watch or clock.

In the same apartments in which these machines are kept, there is a considerable number of mirrors and other toys, which, though useless here, must have cost an immense sum in bringing them from Europe. Some paintings are here shewn, both native and European: the most striking of these is a portrait of Sujah Dowlah in the act of shooting a tiger, which had leaped upon the howdah of Colonel Harper, and was ready to carry him off. This engaging picture is hurt in the effect by being too small.

A considerable number of tigers are kept in different apartments near the palace, but so mean and nasty in their appearance that a considerable tax is laid upon your patience in going to view them. To their keepers the tigers are so tame, that they allow them

them to stroke them on the back, as a cat, and like that animal, seem gratified by your attention.

THE rhinoceros is the most remarkable animal in this collection; the only one here is about twelve years old, and seems not yet to have attained its full growth, being of a much less size than the species generally attains. His strength and ferocity are prodigious: no elephant dares to attack him; for his horn proves at first stroke fatal: it is a large protuberance growing exactly upon the snout, and sharpening into a point, and with it he can rip up the belly of the largest elephant.

THE rhinoceros is protected by a thick horny substance, studded over like a shield; which from its hardness and thickness must protect the animal from any foe. A sword would make no impression upon this singular hide, and where it overlaps, it would probably repel a musket ball.

OF the sheep there is a great number, and some variety; but the Cabul breed seems to enjoy the largest share of royal favour. They are in general very fat, and distinguished by a large protuberance on the rump far exceeding that of the Cape sheep. This excrescence is semicircular in form, and of nearly half the size of the whole body. Some of these sheep are painted in different colours to gratify the fantastic taste of the natives, a practice which they follow with their bullocks and horses. When they

they intend to appear very fine, they go so far as to gild the hoofs and horns.

THE stables of the Nawab consist of a large square court of buildings, supported on brick pillars, with a view to the admission of air: these consist of more than one range; that which I examined contained about four hundred stalls, almost all filled with very excellent Persian horses. There are separate studs for mares; but breeding does not seem the favourite pursuit here: I saw but four foals; probably the confinement in which they are kept is unfavourable to the dam and the colt. A park of mares and colts is deemed in England a very agreeable object, but in India it is unattainable, the fields being parched for nine months in the year. A groom is here put to his wits end for provender; hay is unknown; grass roots scraped up with a sharp trowel, being the substitute for this provender; and it is often procured on places which you would declare absolutely bare earth, every thing above ground being completely burnt away.

A very large breed of Guzarat bullocks is kept in a cow-house near the stables: the introduction of this breed among the peasants, one would imagine, would prove of great advantage in a country where the draught cattle are so small and pitiful as those of Oude. But the Ryut, if he gets his labour done, cares not in how slovenly a style it may be executed;

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or even how small the quantity performed. This is the nature of the race even where it is fully protected; what then can we expect here, where nothing is secure, and where a good team of cattle would be a kind of attractive bait, to bring the robbers to a farm, or an aumil from the Court, both equally addicted to plunder?

ONE of the curiosities of this place is a mixed species between the goat and deer, which is spotted, and neater in its form than the ordinary goat. The variety of horned cattle, horses, and sheep, is much greater than in Europe. Here are kept a few buffaloes in remarkably fine condition: they are not fully tamed; and by some means or other are much handsomer than the common domestic kind. Apes, monkeys, and a variety of the tropical animals, make a part of the rare show exhibited at this Court: one of the former is taught to make a very genteel salutation to his visitors. The natives of India are very fond of these accomplishments; many of them spend whole days in teaching parrots to speak a few Persian words. The management of the Menagerie employs a great number of people; and although their allowances have been much curtailed since the commencement of the present reign, the department must swallow up large sums. Many crores of pigeons are kept at the public expence, and elephants and camels to a large amount.

THE food employed in this manner would remove want from the city, if not from the kingdom of Oude: but the art of government is less understood, or more perverted, by the Indians, than any other science, meanly as we may regard their attainments in them all.

SECT.