

From the Asiatic Journal.

SPLENDOURS OF THE EAST. OUDÉ.

The King of Oude has kept up a greater degree of state than his more highly descended, but less fortunate, contemporary of Delhi, and, in fact, Lucknow is the only native court throughout Hindooostan, which can afford any idea of the princely magnificence affected by the former rulers of India; that of Gwalior can bear no comparison, nor are those in the central provinces distinguished by the pomp and splendour which still characterise the throne of this ill-governed kingdom.

Like the generality of Indian cities, Luck now presents a more imposing spectacle at a distance, than its interior can realise, though some of its buildings may bear a comparison with those of the most celebrated capitals in the world. When viewed from some commanding point, the city exhibits a splendid assemblage of minarets, cupolas, pinnacles, towers, turrets, and lofty arched gateways, through which, with many windings, the river glides, while the whole of this bright confusion of palace and temple is shadowed and interspersed with the rich foliage of trees of gigantic growth, and redundant luxuriance. But when visited in detail, the gorgeousness of the picture is obscured by the more than ordinary degree of dirt, filth, and squalid poverty, which are placed in juxtaposition with its grandest feature: the lanes leading from the principal avenues are ankle-deep in mud, and many of the hovels, which afford an insufficient shelter to a swarming population, are the most wretched habitations the imagination can conceive.

The palace, which faces the Goomtee, comprises six principal courts or quadrangles, surrounded by pavilion-like buildings. In the first of these, which is entered by two lofty gateways, the attendants of the court have their apartments. Over the outer gate there is a handsome chamber, called the Nobut Khana, or music-room, forming an orchestra upon a very splendid scale. The second court, encompassed by state apartments, is laid out as a garden, having a well, or bow-

lee, in the centre. Round this well are pavilions, opening to the water, and intended to afford a cool retreat during the hot weather; the air is refreshed by the constant dripping of the fountain, and the piazzas and arched chambers beyond, within the influence of its luxurious atmosphere, are well calculated for sleeping chambers in the sultry nights so constantly occurring throughout the period of the hot winds. Parallel to the second court, and to the eastward of it, stands a splendid edifice, raised upon an arched terrace, entirely of stone. This fabric, which is called the Sunghee Dalaun, contains a grand hall, surrounded with a double arcade, crowned with a cupola at each angle, and one over the principal front, all of copper doubly gilt. At the extremities of the terrace there are wings, and flower-gardens stretch along each front, divided into parterres by walks and fountains. A corridor extends round this court, planted with vines, and out of three entrances, one with a covered passage is appropriated to the ladies. These gateways are decked with gilded domes, and the mosque, zenana, and other buildings attached to the palace, give to the whole edifice the air of a city raised by some enchanters.

Without entering farther into dry descriptive details, it may be sufficient to say, that in no place in India can there be a more vivid realisation of visions conjured up by a perusal of the splendid fictions of the *Arabian Nights*. Those who have visited the Kremlin, have pronounced that far-famed edifice to be inferior to the Imambara; and the palaces of the Hyder Baugh, Hossein Baugh, and Seesa Mahal, have nearly equal claims to admiration. The banks of the Goomtee are beautifully planted, and its parks and gardens rendered singularly attractive by the multitude of animals kept in them. At a suburban palace, European visitants are delighted with the novel sight of a herd of English cattle, their superior size, roundness of form, and sleek looks, offering a strong contrast to the smaller, humpet, and dewlapped breeds of Hindooostan: the latter are perhaps more picturesque, but the associations connected with cows bred in English meads, the numerous pastoral recollections which their unexpected appearance revive in the mind, render them, when viewed beneath the shade of the tamarinds and banians of a tropical clime, objects of deep and peculiar interest.

The menageries of Lucknow are very extensive, and besides those wild and savage animals kept for the purpose of assisting at "the pomps of death and theatres of blood," in which this barbaric court delights, there are many fierce beasts, not intended for fight-

ing, retained merely as ornamental appendages. Several rhinoceroses are among the number; they are chained to trees in the park, but some of the tigers appear to be so ill secured, rattling the wooden bars of their cages with such vigorous perseverance, that it requires rather strong nerves to approach the places of their confinement. Delkusha (heart's delight) is one of the most celebrated parks belonging to the king; it is planted and laid out with great care and taste, open glades being cut through the thick forest, in which numerous herds of antelopes, Indian deer, and the gigantic variety of this interesting species, the nylghau, are seen disporting. This park abounds with monkeys, which are held sacred; for, though the Moslem religion has the ascendancy, that of the Hindoo is not only tolerated but allowed the fullest enjoyment of its superstitions: the monkeys in this district are under the guardianship of a party of fakirs, who have established themselves in the private park of a Mahomedan monarch. The palace of Delkusha possesses no great exterior pretensions to elegance, but it is handsomely fitted up, and, in common with the other royal residences, contains toys and bijouterie sufficient to stock a whole bazaar of curiosity-shops.

The pigeons belonging to Lucknow even exceed in number those of Benares, and other places where they are objects of reverence; here they are more esteemed for their beauty than for any peculiar sanctity, and the different breeds are preserved with the greatest care. On the summits of nearly all the roofs of the palaces, particularly the zenanas, these interesting birds are seen in flocks of from seventy to a hundred in each; they are selected for the beauty of their plumage, and each variety is kept in a separate flock. Boys are employed to teach them different evolutions in their flight. When on the wing, they keep in a cluster, and at a whistle fly off into the fields of air, ascend, descend, or return home as the signal directs. When turning suddenly, and darting towards the sun, the gleam of their variegated necks produces a beautiful effect, and when they alight upon the ground, they form a carpet of the most brilliant colours and the richest design imaginable. So great is the native attachment to the amusements which these birds afford, that it is recorded of some of the sovereigns of Lucknow that, in their country excursions, "they were accompanied by their women and pigeons."

Another remarkable feature of this extraordinary city is its elephants, which are maintained in multitudes; immense numbers belong to the king, and all the nobility and rich

people possess as many as their means will admit. In royal processions, festivals, and state-occasions, they appear in crowds. A battalion of elephants, fifteen abreast, formed into a close serried column, richly caparisoned in flowing jhools of scarlet and gold, with silver howdahs, and bearing natives of rank clothed in glittering tissues, form an imposing sight; but this can only be seen with full effect in the open country beyond the city. Once within the streets, the jostling and confusion are tremendous, and not unfrequently, in very narrow passes, ladders, and housings, or perhaps part of the roof on the verandahs of the projecting buildings, are torn away by the struggles for precedence displayed by elephants, acquainted with their strength, and entering with ardour into the resolves of the mahouts to gain or maintain the foremost places. Elephants breed in a state of domestication, and young ones not larger than a good sized pig, are frequently seen frolicking by the side of their mothers through the streets of Lucknow; a spectacle fraught with interest to the eye of an European stranger. Camels are equally numerous, and when handsomely caparisoned, add considerably to the splendour of a procession. The king's stud does not consist of fewer than a thousand horses, many of which are perfect specimens of the finest breeds, and considered paragons of their kind; these are brought out to increase the splendour of his retinue, and, even upon ordinary occasions, his suwarroo exceeds in multitudine and variety any European notion of ostentatious show. When seeking amusements at his numerous parks and gardens, the king is attended by immense numbers of people, and spare equipages of every description, dogs, hawks, hunting leopards, with their keepers; and an almost endless train of guards and domestics, both on horseback and on foot, form his multitudinous accompaniments; and though the delight in show, which characterises Asiatics, may be esteemed a childish and puerile taste, and we could wish the sovereign of so interesting a territory to be guided by nobler aims, and to seek higher pursuits, one can scarcely desire that these pomps and pageantries, the reliques of old romance, should be numbered with by-gone things.

In imitation of European sovereigns, the king gives his portrait set in diamonds to ambassadors and other persons of rank, this distinction being also bestowed upon the aides-de-camp, and officers who have accepted situations of equal honour at the court. There is nothing very remarkable about the audience-chamber, but the king's throne is extremely splendid. It is a square platform, raised two feet from the ground, with a railing on three sides, and a canopy supported upon pillars; of these the frame-work is of wood, but the casing pure gold, set with precious stones of great value; the canopy is of crimson velvet richly embroidered with gold, and furnished with a deep fringe of pearls; the cushions, on which the king is seated, are also of embroidered velvet, and the emblem of royalty, the chattah, is of the same, with a deep fringe of pearls. The king appears

literally covered with jewels, the whole of the body down to the waist being decorated with strings of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, &c.; his crown is a perfect constellation of gems, and overshadowed by plumes of the bird of paradise. A native of rank stands on either side of the throne, waving chowries of peacocks' feathers set in gold handles. To the right of the throne are gilt chairs for the accommodation of the resident and his wife, if he be a married man; the rank of the British ambassador (who certainly acts the part of viceroy over the king) being recognised as equal to that of the monarch himself: he is the only person permitted to use the chattah, the chowrie, and the hookah, in the sovereign's presence. The English persons attached to the residency take up their position behind and at the side of these chairs, standing; those in the service of the king wearing very handsome court-dresses of puce-coloured cloth, richly embroidered with gold. The left of the throne is occupied by natives of rank holding high official situations, splendidly attired in the picturesque costume of the country. The prime minister stands at the king's feet to receive and present the nuzzur. These consist of money, from twenty-one gold mohurs down to a few rupees in silver, according to the circumstances of the parties. The person offering, advances to the throne with many salaams, and having his gift placed upon a folded handkerchief, presents it to the king to touch in token of acceptance; it is then given to the minister, who adds it to the heap by his side. After this ceremony, the king and the resident rise; the former takes from the hands of the person in waiting certain necklaces composed of silver riband, ingeniously plaited, which offers a cheap mode of conferring distinction; the investiture is made by the king in person, and upon taking leave, the resident is accompanied by the king to the entrance, where he salutes him with a short sentence, "God be with you!" pouring atta on his hands at the final exit. Should the ambassador happen to be in great favour at the time, the compliment is extended to all the English visitants as they pass out. Titles of honour, khillauts, and their accompanying distinctions, such as an elephant fully caparisoned, a charger, or a palanquin, are frequently conferred upon these court-days; the nuzzur is then of proportionate value, persons anxiously coveting some grant or distinction, offering not less than a lac of rupees; this sum is conveyed in a hundred bags, covered with crimson silk, and tied with a silver riband, and so solid a proof of attachment is not unfrequently rewarded by an embrace before the whole court, a mark of royal favour well worth the money bestowed upon it, since any person's fortune is made in native states, who is known to have interest at court.

The king's dinners are better than his breakfasts; there is an abundance of wine for the English guests, and though the native visitants do not partake in public, many confess that they indulge at their own tables. Nautches and fire-works conclude the evening's entertainment; the latter can never be

shown off to so much advantage as in an Indian city, where the buildings they illuminate are of the same fairy-like nature. No description can do justice to the scene presented on some fine, dark, clear night, when the Goomtee is covered with boats, of those long canoo-shaped graceful forms, belonging to the king, some resembling alligators, others swans, peacocks, or dolphins, enamelled in various colours, intermingled with gold, and filled with a splendid company glittering in gems and tissues. Blue lights, so artfully disposed as not to be visible, while they clothe the whole pageant with their unearthly gleams, render every adjacent object distant, and as the blaze of ten thousand rockets bursts forth, palaces, mosques, and temples seem to rise majestically during the brief illumination. In the next moment, all is dark save the pageant on the Goomtee, and again minarets and domes, cupolas and spires, spring up, silver and gold, as the marble and the gilding catch the vivid gleams of jets and spouts of fire ascending to the skies.