

NEPAUL.

If we apply to literary commodities the general mercantile rule, that demand creates supply, we are bound to believe that the British public is in a fever of curiosity concerning Nepaul and the Nepaulese. Such is the inference naturally to be drawn from the almost simultaneous appearance of four works relating to that country and people, at least two of which are manifestly mere speculations on the popular avidity, real or supposed, for further information concerning the history, circumstances, and peculiarities of one of the most remarkable neighbours of our Anglo-Indian empire. It is now just two years since the meteor-like apparition of the brilliant Nepaulese ambassador and his showy suite flashed for a few weeks through the tepid atmosphere of a London season, causing a pleasurable excitement amongst used-up fashionables and languid belles. The tawny, jewel-bedecked strangers from the distant East, with their strange habits and profuse expenditure, their rumoured crimes and exploits, produced so great a sensation here, and were so evidently suggestive of scribbling to any one possessing a slight personal knowledge of Nepaul, and sufficient literary skill to fabricate a book concerning it, that we cannot but wonder that, with the exception of Captain Cavenagh's meagre and unsatisfactory volume, no books upon the subject have appeared until two years after the period of the Nepaulese mission to this country. Now, however, they come in crowds. With-

in one month we have three authors in the field. Captain Cavenagh, whose work preceded those of these three gentlemen but by a few months, is a Bengal officer, writing from Dum Dum, and publishing in Calcutta. His successors are persons of very various professions and social position. A highborn naval commander, whose life has been divided between Belgravia and the quarterdeck, claims precedence by rank, although the latest to appear. Just before him came Mr Oliphant, a young lawyer from Colombo, who in his turn had been anticipated by Captain Thomas Smith. We learn from the title-page of this last-named writer that, from the year 1841 to 1845, he was assistant political agent at Nepaul. From him, therefore, we had a right to expect infinitely the best account of that country, seeing that he passed in it almost as many years as each of the three other writers passed days. How far he profited by his opportunities, and will bear comparison with his contemporaries, we shall presently attempt to show.

At foot of this page we have placed the names of two old but excellent works upon Nepaul—those of Colonel Kirkpatrick and Dr Hamilton. This may at first seem superfluous, seeing that the two respectable quartos were published as long back as 1811 and 1819; but upon examination we have found that some of the four modern works we have taken in hand are so very largely indebted to the colonel and the doctor, that we are

An Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul, &c. By Colonel KIRKPATRICK. London, 1811. 4to.

An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal. By FRANCIS HAMILTON, M.D. Edinburgh, 1819. 4to.

Rough Notes of the State of Nepal, its Government, Army, and Resources. By Captain ORFEUR CAVENAGH, 32d Regiment, Bengal Native Infantry. Calcutta, 1851.

Narrative of a Five Years' Residence at Nepaul. By Captain THOMAS SMITH. London, 1852. 2 vols.

A Journey to Katmandu with the Camp of Jung Bahadoor. By LAURENCE OLIPHANT. London, 1852.

Journal of a Winter's Tour in India; with a Visit to the Court of Nepaul. By Captain the Hon. FRANCIS EGERTON, R.N. London, 1852. 2 vols.

convinced their authors, although they have themselves rarely remembered to acknowledge their obligations, will feel grateful to us for taking the trouble to point them out.

Captain Cavenagh accompanied the Nepaul mission to England in the year 1850. His three months' abode in this country, in company with the Nepaulese, does not, however, necessarily imply a residence in Nepaul of sufficient length to enable him to give even the "rough" account of its "state, government, army, and resources," promised on his title-page. Allured by this promise, we hoped and expected to find in his volume a brief but satisfactory sketch of the present state of Nepaul, with perhaps (what was much wanted) a concise review of its history and progress since the days of Kirkpatrick and Hamilton. But we soon found, from his own admissions, that the time he had passed in the country was totally inadequate for the necessary investigations, and for the acquisition of anything like an accurate knowledge of its political condition or physical features. In short, however intelligent he may be, a few days could not suffice to acquire much information regarding Nepaul; and we are driven to the conclusion, fully borne out by his own preface, and by many passages of his book, that this is compounded of hasty surmises, ill-digested observations, and of such scraps of information as he collected in conversation with the Nepaulese envoy and the members of his suite. The value to be attached to this last ingredient of his pages strikes us as infinitesimally small, when we call to mind the wily character of the Ghoorkas, their skill in dissimulation, and their fondness for misleading those who plague them with questions. Such considerations were too trivial to impede Captain Cavenagh's progress. There seems to have been vividly present to his mind the necessity of giving to the world a volume which, if it did nothing else, should at least advertise all men of the important fact of his having been lately in political charge of the mission from the court of Khatmandu to that of St James's. This is the sole result likely to ensue from his publication, whose really valuable

and solid portions are due to previous writers from whom he frequently borrows — sometimes with acknowledgment, often without — at the same time that he coolly declares in his preface that Nepaul was a *terra incognita* until he unfolded its secrets. The fact is, that he has taken up quite the wrong line. Had he limited himself to an account of the origin, progress, reception, travels, and adventures of the Nepaul mission, he had abundant opportunities, and possibly sufficient talent, to compose a very interesting volume, such as would have conferred upon his Hibernian patronymic a twelve-month's immortality. Instead of that, he goes into various matters upon which he is imperfectly informed, pilfers Kirkpatrick, commits blunders, and exposes himself.

But we almost lose sight of the delinquencies of Captain Orfeur Cavenagh, when his book is placed in juxtaposition with the next in order of publication, the "Narrative" of Captain Thomas Smith. It is impossible not to be prepossessed in favour of two such tidy volumes, bound in laurel green, (allusive, doubtless, to the Captain's bays,) and bearing on the lid a stately golden elephant, upon whose back sit the Captain and two companions, on their way, we presume, to one of those tremendous hunting parties in which our author performed feats that would make Gordon Cumming or Gerard the Lion-slayer tear their hair for envy. Passing on to the dedication, we are further induced to consider the book respectfully, by finding it inscribed, "by gracious permission," to Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cambridge. We ourselves attach little importance to dedications, which, whether to dear friends or to exalted patrons, are apt to border upon the fulsome or the fawning. But there are writers who take a different view of the subject, and who are anxious, but often unable, to obtain license to address their books specially to some person notable for virtue, genius, or elevated rank. Such license, it appears to us, should not be conceded without a certainty that the book will at least do no discredit to the patronage.

parts of that extensive tract than in others. They would not appear, however, to be very numerous anywhere ; and though a considerable portion of the Kuchâr is subject to the Ghoorkalis, the Nepaulians procure the Kustoora principally from the vicinity of Neyat, Dhyboon, and one or two other places. This animal is most usually caught by means of a snare, made of a particular kind of mountain bamboo, of which it is reported that the whole species is occasionally blasted at once, not a single tree remaining that does not rapidly decay. The blight, however, never happening till the annual seed has fallen into the ground, the plant is abundantly renewed in due course of production. Very little pure musk is to be obtained at Khatmandu ; and there is still less exported from Nepaul. Indeed, I have been assured that even the musk contained in the nâfeh, or bag, still attached to the body of the animal, is not always found unadulterated, and that its purity can only be relied on when the Kustoora is received directly as a present from some person on whose lands it has recently been caught."

Having read this description of the small animal which supplies the precious perfume in niggard quantities, we hunted further, but in vain, for some mention of the musk-elephant, of which we had never before heard. We thought how delighted would be Mr Atkinson of Bond Street, and Mr Smyth, of the Civet Cat, and other proprietors of similar sweet-scented establishments, at this sudden and enormous augmentation of their resources, for which they were doubtless indebted to the zoological zeal of the young Cingalese jurist. Presently, however, on examination of the context, our fragrant illusions were dispelled. We had already been puzzled, whilst reading Captain Egerton, by that officer's repeated mention of "a rogue elephant ;" and it now struck us that the naval commander's "rogue," and Mr Oliphant's "musk," were intended to designate the state of sexual madness in which an elephant is said to be *must*. We cannot sufficiently laud the playful and exquisite delicacy of the sea-captain, at the same time that we admonish the proctor to rub up his Oordoo, and to correct, in any future edition of his book, the not unfrequent errors he has committed when writing names of places and

employing native terms. At page 81, for instance, when describing the great square in Khatmandu, he tells us that it "is well paved, and contains the Chinese pagoda, composed entirely of wood, from which it is said the town derives its name." We should have expected him to know that Khatmandu, or Kathipore, means "the town of wood," (the original material of its construction,) with the name of which the temple has neither more nor less to do than any other wooden edifice in the place. We are rather curious to know where Mr Oliphant picked up the remarkable piece of information with which, a few lines further on, he presents his readers :—

"In Nepaul it is a rule that the death of one great animal should be immediately followed by that of another ; and when a Rajah dies, a rhinoceros is forthwith killed to keep him company."

Surely some waggish Oriental has been amusing himself at the expense of the smooth-faced Feringee.

Any reference to blunders naturally reminds us of Captain Smith, whom we left some pages back, clipping paragraphs from Kirkpatrick, and sticking them into his own dapper duodecimos. After a while he lays aside Kirkpatrick, turns to the Nepaul Blue Book, and from it concocts a sort of history of the Nepaulese war. This fills about two hundred pages, and gets him well on into his second volume. "Nepaul, since the war," is dismissed in sixteen scanty pages. Brief as these are, they abound in mistakes. Khatmandu is printed *Estnordoo* ; Mr Brian Hodgson is Mr W. Hodgson ; the ex-king of Nepaul is stated to be dead, which must be very recently, for only a few months ago he was all alive. But perhaps the Captain has been consulting a somnambulist. With his opportunities, as political assistant in Nepaul for five years, how easy ought it to have been for Captain Smith to have produced a really good and useful book, which should have worthily succeeded Kirkpatrick and Hamilton. We hope some day to witness the appearance of such a work. Nepaul and Khatmandu are far-off places and outlandish names, known until lately but to