ANNEXATION OF THE INDIAN HILL STATES.

THERE exists unfortunately among various classes of persons in this country an extremely imperfect theory of Indian politics. They attribute to the lust of dominion, or the pursuit of military glory, those successive acts of extension, by which our Asiatic empire has been built up to its present grandeur, by which we have acquired a predominant influence in the East, and secured to ourselves incomparably the greatest and most lucrative trade in the world. It seems never to occur to them that every existing community, whether great or small, has a particular mission to accomplish, and that, to all appearance, it is ours to subdue and civilize the greater part of Asia.

It is, no doubt possible, by descending to a low level of reasoning, to perplex men's minds on this subject. You may by sophistry, confound acts of justice with oppression, and stigmatize the suggestions of the soundest policy with the names of ambition, cupidity, covetousness, and what you please. The only proper reply is to be sought for in the results. If we multiply poverty, distress, ignorance, and barbarism by the diffusion of our influence; if we find nations flourishing, free, and great, and by the sword plunge them into desolation; if we decimate the inhabitants; if we paralyze industry—if, in one word, we lock up the energies of the people, or terminate their intellectual and moral life, our sway must be regarded as a curse. On the other hand, if, wherever our rule has been established, men have been found to make progress in all the arts of life; if they have been emancipated from servitude, if they have been enabled to taste fearlessly of the fruits of their labours; if, as a mass they have grown wealthier, while their numbers have infinitely multiplied, we may regard these circumstances as a rufficient answer to all those hollow declaimers who go about from public meeting to public meeting, sullying our national character, and labouring in vain to tarnish the lustre of our arms.

But there is one great central idea which should never be lost sight of in considerations of this kind. There is a limit to all empires, assigned by nature, and impassable by ambition. Within this circle conquest is possible, and whenever and wherever possib'e, desirable, because the nation which makes it, is only acting in obedience to the laws of its own destiny. But nothing is more inconsistent with statesmanship than the attempt to discover this boundary in the physical conformation of the country. It is neither in rivers nor mountains that we are to look for barriers to the extension of political power. The conquests of a nation are circumscribed by the amount of its energies, and where these cease there is its frontier.

Let us hope that Great Britain has not yet found the line which separates the possible from the impossible, and that for many ages to come we shall be seen growing and spreading, more particularly in Asia. This we say in the interest of humanity, because no one in the slightest degree acquainted with the native governments can for a moment doubt, that the substitution of our sway for that of an ignorant Rajah or Khan, or Amir, must prove a blessing to the people. If you contrast the actual condition of India with what it was under the later

exists no reason except that of bad government, why the Nepalese should not apply themselves to various forms of industry, and ultimately rival their ingenious neighbours of the plains.

Kashmerian merchants, always remarkable for their enterprize, formerly carried their manfactures to Kutte where they exchanged them for the hair of the shawl goat, and if properly protected would have persevered in this trade. These goods were partly consumed in Thibet, partly conveyed by way of Teshu, Lumbu, and Lassa, to Sihing, on the western frontier of China. They likewise sent a portion of their merchandize by way of Katmandu into Bengal, whence they were frequently exported to Europe. From the Chinese they received in exchange such articles as suited the taste of the Hill tribes, as silks and teas. The merchants of Bhote, or Thibet, brought to Katmandu, horses, Chowry cattle, shawl goats and common goats, sheep, coarse woollen cloth, chowries, paper, musk, salt, sal-ammonia, hurtal or yellow arsenic, borax, quicksilver; from China, drugs, such as munjeet or Indian madder, chuater, or charas, or extract of hemp (called bang in Turkey), preserved fruits, such as almonds, walnuts, various dates, &c.

Of nearly the whole lofty table land of Asia we are still grossly ignorant. Looking over the above list of articles imported into Nepal from Thibet, we observe two which are brought from no one knows where. The report prevalent in the country is, that the salt and borax come from a lake or more probably from a series of lagoons, fifteen days' journey north of Katmandu. There the mode of transport reminds us of the earliest stages of human intercourse. The beasts of burden made use of are a large kind of sheep, with four horns, which appear to be commonly employed in commerce, in all those countries lying about the sources of the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra.

The Indian and European goods which find their way from the plains to Nepal, and from thence to the great central plateau of Asia, are extremely numerous, though seldom exported in great quantities; these are broad-cloth, cutlery, glassware, and other European commodities. Indian cotton manufactures, mother-of-pearl, pearls, coral, beads, spices, pepper, betelunt, and leaf camphor, tobacco, and phagos, or the red powder—sportively thrown upon each other by the Hindoos during the celebration of the Hooly—with buffaloes and goats, are also conveyed by the traders from the plains. Most of these articles, together with many utensils of wrought copper, brass, bell metal, and iron are sold to the merchants of Thibet.

Passing on to Sikkim, the annexation of which is strongly advocated at this moment in India, we find that its productions for the most part resemble those of Nepal. With the exception of a few small plains the whole country consists of confused groups of mountains piled up to various elevations, and covered with eternal forests. There are in Sikkim two marts, which in the opinion of the natives are considerable. These are Bilasi and Majhoya, and to them are brought rice, salt, extract of sugarcane, hogs, dry fish, tobacco, spirituous liquor, and various cloths. Previous to the conquest of the country by the Gorkhas, a tribe of Hindu, oxen were taken to these marts for slaughter, but as our eastern subjects worshipped the cow, they very naturally prohibited the killing and eating of their divinity.

Through Sikkim much the same articles find their way to and from

the plains, as through the kingdom of Nepal, though the traffic is carried on in a more primitive manner. At Dimali, on the Balakongyar river, there is a large square place surrounded by buildings, where the merchants from the mountains and the plains assemble to barter their commodities, and when the exchange has been effected there the Thibetans return towards their lofty table-land, for the purpose of distributing the manufactures of India and England through the whole interior of Asia, while the Hindu and Mohammedan merchants bear the gold of Thibet and the teas and flowered silks of China, to the bazaars of Lahore, Delhi, Benares, and Calcutta.

East of Sikkim lies the territory of Butan, whose aspect is singularly magnificent, consisting of an assemblage of snowy mountains, green heights, fertile valleys, innumerable streams, and belts of forests of unparalleled luxuriance and beauty. Owing, however, to the absence of energy and enterprize in the inhabitants, the moist jungle at the foot of the mountains has been allowed to become so dense and matted, that it emits the most pestilential effluvia, denominated by the natives the essence of owl. The forests abound with the most superb timber, though strange to say, the oak tree does not appear to flourish in Butan. Here is the natural retreat of the elephant and the rhinoceros, the chase of which would form a profitable occupation to a race of British back-woodmen, should the country come properly into our hands.

From the number and quantity of the fruits, it is clear that this region might be converted into one of the gardens of northern India, where people from the plains would be tempted to emigrate into it, by ample protection being extended to life and property. Even the rude horticulture at present practised there, produces the most delicious fruits, such as walnuts, oranges, and pomegranates, peaches, apricots, and apples and pears. Strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries, are found growing wild, equal no doubt in flavour to those of Sikkim. The turnips of the country are excellent, being large, free from fibres, and very sweet.

Through the defective nature of the government and the oppression and ignorance of the people, the trade of Butan has been reduced to insignificance. What exists is carried on on account of the Prince, who is called the Deb Rajah.

With all these hill states our Indian Government has relations more or less intimate, but over none of them does it exercise that influence which belongs to us as lords paramount of the Mogul empire. Nothing can be further from our thoughts than to advise the practice of injustice, for the purpose of becoming possessed of the countries secluded and of difficult access, but naturally abounding with the materials of wealth. Our counsel is not to let slip an opportunity of annexing them. One taken separately might pay but indifferently the expense of conquest, and the trouble of holding it, but if the whole were subdued and incorporated with our empire, it must be obvious that the difficulty of ruling each would be diminished. On the subject of the obstacles themselves, the greatest possible prejudices and misapprehension usually exist. Many of the East India Company's civil and military servants, men of natural abilities and full of acquired information, used constantly before the annexation of Scinde, to insist upon the impossibility of holding that country, infested, as they thought it would necessarily be, by the Beluchees

and Affghans. Experience has shewn all their prophecies to have been without foundation, and exactly the same remark may be applied to the Punjab.

Nothing could be more monstrous than the idea of projecting conquests for the purposes of science; but supposing the conquests made from political motives and upon just principles, we may then very properly convert the accession made to our empire by arms, to advantage in the way of science also. Now suppose the whole range of the Himalaya to belong exclusively to us, would it not be a proud thing to throw open its mysterious solitudes to the traveller? We should then, from our own frontiers, look down upon the Chinese empire, our piquets would be advanced within hail of the piquets of that country, and the intercourse which must arise out of their close proximity might gradually open to us the golden regions of Central Asia.

But the great inducement to annex these states remains yet to be mentioned. We mean the delivery of the inhabitants from that wretched and degrading servitude which now keeps down their numbers, prevents all improvement, and holds them in perpetual misery. No countries in Asia would be more coveted than the hill provinces, supposing them to be governed on systems of enlightened justice and humanity, which would gradually put to flight all the impediments which now oppose the progress of civilization. Nearly all uncultivated countries are pestilential in proportion to their fertility. The energies of nature like those of man, if not turned to good, will inevitably turn to evil. It is the plough that renders the air of a district salubrious; turn up the soil, drain it, plant it, and inhabit it—and the breath of nature once harsh and rude, becomes genial as that of spring. Already many of the hill stations are resorted to as places of pleasure, and as Englishmen can live in the Himalaya as well as in Hampstead or Highgate, it is much to be regretted that nearly all its finest provinces are closed against us by our folly.

The progress of events will, however, lead inevitably to a change of policy. We cannot, if we would, resist the impulse which urges us to enlarge the limits of our empire. We must conquer, we must advance, till we have expended our national energies; and then, instead of standing still, we shall in our turn be compelled to retreat before some newly risen victorious power. There is no choice for political communities but to vanquish or be vanquished. The sword can never be still. It is an inevitable law of society that stagnation is death. We may declaim, if we please, about moderation and forbearance, and what not; but it is the weak only that forbear when legitimate provocation is offered them; no one ever insulted the powerful with impunity, and with respect to prudential calculations, nothing can be more obvious, than that the wider the empire the more active the trade carried on, and that our prosperity, as a manufacturing and commercial people, flows exclusively from our naval and military power, which enables us to gain for science and history, a peaceful hearing in the world. We earnestly trust therefore, that, on the first fitting occasion, all the hill states will be annexed to our Indian empire.
