

BURGES

SERIES

OF
Indostan Letters
BY

BAR. BURGES

Bartholomew
Burgess

Containing

A striking account of the manners
& customs of the *Gentoo Nations* & of the
Moguls & other Mahomedan Tribes in
Indostan with other polemical East India facts
both amusing, interesting, & perfectly origi-
nal.

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wise, and the ends of some of them a foot and others a span deep, which they take care to let come out at the top, by way of ornament. Over this turban frequently is tied obliquely to the forehead, a handsome shawl, handkerchief, or a small silk or sattin sash, and fringed with gold or silver. The Moors esteeming themselves Seapoys, wear swords on all occasions, and when in *sawawry*, or on a visit, carry in their hands shields made of Rhinoceros or wild Buffalo's hide, thick enough to fend off the blow of a scymitar, but not an arrow or musket ball. The *Gentoos* go equally armed, but none but *Rajahpoots*, whose business it is to fight, and *Bramins* of distinction amongst them, wear any other arms than a *Chury* or *Chryfs*, except on particular occasions, as, for instance, on celebration of their nuptials, or the festivals held amongst themselves, when the addition of the sword and shield take place, though a mere matter of parade. These two casts of people made up the assembled crowd, excepting a few Armenians and *Callo-fringhees* that were intermixed with them, commonly called Portuguese, of which latter there are a great number in Bengal, and in all the European settlements in India. The Armenians are a fair complexioned people, and dress much like the *Moors* and *Gentoos*, except their caps, which they wear instead of turbans, which are mostly made of black velvet, or broad cloth. The Portuguese or *Callo-fringhees* dress exactly like the Europeans, and being as remarkable for their vanity as their superstitious attachment to the papist religion, endeavour to envy each other in finery and equipage. The *Gentoo* women and girls from all the neighbouring parts had likewise gathered together on this occasion, and were mixed with the multitude, but few or no Moor women were to be seen, except some of inferior stamp; the females amongst the

riders, who happened to be within the limits of their humorous cascades. The coast clear, the flying army had no sooner gained the river than a number of paper kites suddenly were seen flying in the air, different in their construction from such as are made in Europe, which had been mounted by boys who were dispersed in different parts of the plain, handsomely dressed with scymiters by their sides and poignards in their wastebands or sashes: and others in that of dragons or land or sea monsters, made of the finest transparent paper, painted, varnished and gilt, with glittering tails of the same materials, that mounted to considerable heights, and hovering over the river, palaces and plains, to me was a sight as pleasing as novel.

No. 14.

The Miss CHAPMAN's in general, at Castle-Michel and Castle-Raben, near Athy.

LADIES, I have been describing to Mr. Chapman, the diversions I was witness to yesterday forenoon, which letters there is no doubt but you have seen and will impart to those of your acquaintance, with whom I correspond.

The heat of the day coming on the *Soubab* retired within the walls of his palace, and the spectators withdrew to their respective homes, whose example I followed by going to my friend's at Moradbaugh, an English captain, commanding two battalions of Seapoys in this department. This gentleman had been some years in the country, spoke the Indostan language perfectly well, and was even a critic in it; and initiated along while into the ways of the natives, whether Gentoos or Mahometans; likewise of a satirical turn, and a young fellow of excellent wit and
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finished education, proved an agreeable companion, and was, during my stay at Muxadabads of great service to me, in his informations respecting the country.

In the cool of the evening we returned to the place of action, in a few minutes after which the Nabob, with his visitors and aumeers, appeared again in the same balcony they did in the morning, on which a rhinoceros, and an elephant prepared for battle, were brought forth, who on the sight of each other, instantly approaching, begun with the utmost fury to engage. The elephant, at the first onset, oversetting the rhinoceros in scringing back to get sufficient play for his teeth, which were at least between eight and nine feet long, he being a very large elephant, and upwards of ten feet in height, and proportionably strong and robust, and in appearance double the magnitude of his foe, but failing in his attempt by only helping the unweildly animal up by lifting him bodily with his teeth, that he ran compleatly under him, instead of through his vitals as he intended; the recovered brute, with all his might, rushing his head under the elephant's belly, in order to rip it open with the horn that projected out from his forehead (which is always the rhinoceros's play when engaging his common enemy the elephant) he continued poking at his antagonist's guts, having got at last both his head and shoulders between the elephant's hind legs, which being out of the reach of the elephant's teeth, giving him pain without his being able to disengage himself.

Provoked with his situation, he gave three sudden successive roars, followed by a violent jerk of his whole body backwards, which bringing the rhinoceros in front, with an incredible rapid push of one of his teeth, he maimed him to such a degree, that unable to continue longer the fight, he turned tail and
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marched off, and left him master of the field, amidst the shouts and acclamations of the crowd ; when he was conducted by an escort in the same manner the conquering elephant had been in the forenoon to salute the Soubah his sovereign lord and master. The rhinoceros I have been treating of, though described in the encyclopedia, and by writers of natural history, as an animal not so generally known as many others of a less note, I will, before I proceed in my account of the diversions I have promised in my letters, say something about this creature. The head of a rhinoceros has resemblance to both a camel's and a boar's, and so thick the bone of his skull that it will repel a musket ball, or the blow of an ax ; but disproportionate to his body, which with his legs and thighs resemble much an elephant's : upon his forehead grows a horn, turning inwards towards his ears, to which his forehead is a base, this horn being about six inches in diameter below that part of it that coheres to his face, and seven inches in length, terminating gradually from the base to a point ; which horn though not very large is very solid and stubborn and is the only weapon he has to trust to for offence or defence, except his hide, which is a compleat coat of mail, nature having provided this animal with, above all others known in the creation, the most redoubtable barriers against the missive weapons of men, or the formidable talons and voracious jaws of other beasts, an hard knobby crust of ramifications and thick impenetrable scales covering the superficies of his hide, excepting his belly and lower parts, that, though retained within a skin of an inch thick, and of a more glutinous and elastic nature than that of even a buffaloe's, lies exposed to the wound of shot and pointed weapons. His food is vegetable, and when kept up a while, he will grow docile and pacific ; and his horn is said to be so certain

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an antidote, that liquor even drank out of it, though mixed with poison, will have no fatal effects.

After this engagement, I observed the multitude suddenly broke the line they had formed on the south side of the plain, and were contending who should gain the banks of the river first, till by degrees thousands of spectators assembled on both sides. The ladies of the seraglio had been taking a party of pleasure on the water, and were then returning in their *Budgeroes*. A fleet of these *Budgeroes*, or Indian barges with about three hundred boats of different sizes and construction, appeared on the river winding into that branch of it that ran between Muxadabads and the opposite shore, that I amongst the rest of these spectators stood on. These boats formed a three distinct divisions, viz.—front, centre and rear. In the centre of each division was a large *Budgero*, commanding the rest, and in the centre of the middle division, seven of greater magnitude, the middle of which was at least as big again as the *Budgeroes* in general amongst the whole. The lesser boats were painted *Dingbees* and *Moor Punkies* with little *Kisties* attending them, and rowing a-head at times, and then dropping a-stern, according to the signals given from the rest of the fleet, which signals were made by the firing of small brass cannon from the large *Budgeroes*, and waving particular flags, and from the *Dingbees* and *Moor Punkies* by discharging several guns or large *Burghundasses*. In this order divided, they advanced down the river, but the current running against them, which was pretty strong, the progress they made was but slow, whilst the wind, being contrary, likewise which prevented their carrying sails; it gave good opportunity for examining the form of the boats, the dress of the people that managed them, and their mode of conducting them. The *Budgeroes* were all painted and gilded,