

Political Missions

TO

B O O T A N,

COMPRISING THE REPORTS OF

THE HON'BLE ASHLEY EDEN,—1864;

CAPT. R. B. PEMBERTON,
1837, 1838,

WITH

DR. W. GRIFFITHS'S
JOURNAL ;

AND THE ACCOUNT BY

BABOO KISHEN KANT BOSE.



Calcutta ;

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1865.

L. L. M.

"haunts of the rhinoceros, of which there must have been hundreds,
 "as indicated by the numerous fresh foot-prints of these beasts in the
 "rich, dark, loamy soil. There were numerous streams meandering
 "silently through these enormous tracts of luxuriant jungle. Here and
 "there fire had passed through it and cleared it thoroughly of every-
 "thing; there was hardly a bird to be seen, and for the time it was
 "the very picture of desolation; its tenants, the wild beasts, (rhino-
 "ceroses, tigers, hogs, deer, bears, &c.,) had all taken flight. This shows
 "how easily the land might be cleared and reclaimed. There were also
 "some tracts of forest-jungle with an undergrowth of long grass,
 "which only required a little fire to disclose the rich soil it had
 "usurped. What splendid cotton land might not be found in all that
 "deserted waste! A few thousand ploughmen would very soon reclaim
 "every culturable acre of it." The Deputy Magistrate gives the
 following brief statement of the result of his negotiations with the
 Soubah* :—"The Soubah has by his own showing four British sub-
 "jects in confinement, whom he accuses of having made war against
 "him. He offered to hand over these men to me, with proofs of their
 "guilt, if I would grant him an interview. I proceeded to the
 "border and granted him the interview, but he neither delivered up the
 "men, nor did he furnish a tittle of evidence against them; on the
 "contrary, he requested me to seize a lot of other men, on a similar
 "accusation, against whom there was no evidence, and he now reiterates
 "that request, and wishes me, moreover, to punish them in anticipation
 "of his furnishing evidence of their guilt. The men he has in confine-
 "ment may or may not be guilty of the offence imputed to them, and
 "I fear that I was invited to the interview by the Soubah under the
 "chance of my being prevailed upon to seize and summarily punish,
 "under his bare accusation (or that of his Mookhee), all the other men
 "named in the list, and that he had in reality no intention of deliver-
 "ing up his prisoners. These four unfortunates, if they have not
 "been already put to death, are, I fear, doomed. I do not believe the
 "Soubah ever dreamt of giving them up, as he never alludes to them
 "now, although in every letter I have written to him I have demanded
 "them of him and assured him of my desire to have them punished
 "severely in the event of their guilt being established. I have done
 "all I could in the way of persuasion without avail. I have exhausted
 "every effort to induce the Soubah to listen to reason; but I find that
 "he is not a whit better than his predecessors, and, under the evil
 "influence of his Mookhee, I am led to expect that he will prove a very

* Letter No. 46, dated 24th March 1862, paragraph 3.

receive any further visits from him until he sent me a written apology for his conduct, and this he did the next day. Finding that it would be impossible to obtain supplies for our large Camp from the villages, I sent Captain Austen down to Julpigooree to buy rice, and to examine the road between that place and Dalimcote. The distance is about forty to fifty miles. The road is excellent; there is a gentle slope the whole way from Darling to Domohoni,—a small stockade opposite Julpigooree; heavily laden bullocks and elephants passed backwards and forwards every day, and till within three miles of Darling the road is as good as any in the plains. The country through which it passes is a rich, black, vegetable mould, at present covered as regards the higher portion of it with very fine forest trees, and on the lower portion with long grass. It is very sparsely inhabited, but there are some large Mechi villages near our Frontier. Under any other Government the whole tract would be one vast rice field, for it is not unhealthy like our Terai, and the surplus population of Cooch Behar and Rungpore would readily migrate into this rich tract. It abounds with herds of elephants and with rhinoceros, but tigers seem to be rare; at least they do not interfere much with the people, who are constantly passing to and fro on the road with pack cattle. I on one occasion went some sixteen miles down the road; we met a number of Mechis and other plainsmen on the road who complained bitterly of the oppressions of the Booteahs, for whom they evidently entertained feelings of deep hatred. They

The Mechis of the Dooars. were kept constantly employed in carrying up rice to the Fort, and received no sort of remuneration for their services. They are absolutely nothing better than slaves to the Bootanese, and their only hope appeared to be that we might be goaded by the misconduct of their rulers to annex their villages to British Territory. The Mechis are a quiet, inoffensive, weak race; they are precisely the same class as the men inhabiting our own Terai; like them they appear to enjoy perfect immunity from the ill-effects of malaria. They are, however, a finer and less sickly and sallow looking set than the Mechis of the Darjeeling Terai, probably because the Bootan Terai is more healthy and drier than ours. They welcomed us to their villages with unmistakable delight, and seemed to take it for granted that having once heard their grievances we should immediately take them under our protection. They appeared to be good cultivators; cotton was one of their principal crops, but the description of cotton was the poorest I ever saw; it had scarcely any staple, and it is difficult to understand how they ever separated the fibre from the seed. I imagine that finer soil for the production of cotton does not exist in India. The Mechis seem to change their cultivation

from the raids of the Tongso Penlow, for which purpose he keeps on the Frontier a force of 500 armed Lamas.

59. The lower ranges of Hills and the Dooars abound with animal life. Elephants are very numerous, so much so as to be dangerous to travellers, and near Sipchoo and Jonksa they kept our Camp in a state of constant alarm. We found their tracks as high as 7,000 feet. Tigers are not common except near the Rivers Teesta and Berhampooter, but the Zimpen of Paro just before our arrival shot a large tiger at Chalomafee, close to Tassishujung, at a height of 7,000 feet. Leopards seemed to be plentiful in the Hah Valley. Deer of all sorts are abundant; some of them, judging from their foot-tracks, are of a very large species. The musk-deer is found in the snows. The barking deer is to be found on every hill-side. Wild hogs are met with at great elevations. Large squirrels are very common. Bears are found all round the Hah, Paro, and Poonakh Valleys. Rhinoceros abound in the Dooars. Pheasants, jungle fowls, and pigeons are in great abundance everywhere, and wild fowl are found in the Paro and Poonakh Rivers. The Booteahs are no sportsmen; they have a superstitious objection to firing guns, thinking that it offends the deities of the woods and valleys and brings down rain.

Wild Animals.

Botany.

60. The following Notes on the Botany of Bootan have been kindly drawn up for me by Dr. Anderson, the Superintendent of the Botanical Gardens:—

“Although Bootan has not been explored, botanically, to the same extent as the more accessible portions of the Himalaya, still we are able to form a tolerably correct idea of its Flora from its proximity and physical resemblance to Sikhim. The country was visited by Griffith while he was attached to Major Pemberton’s expedition. The Eastern portion of the Bootan range of Hills, North of Bishnath in Assam, has been partially made known botanically by Mr. Booth, who travelled there in 1849. Any accurate knowledge that we possess of the botany of Bootan is derived from the collections of these travellers. Mr. Griffith’s Notes on the general features of the Flora and vegetation were published in his private Journals and in the Itinerary Notes on plants collected during his travels. His extensive collections, made while he was with Major Pemberton in Bootan, were sent from the Botanic Gardens, Calcutta, to the Court of Directors of the East India Company with the view of their being examined and distributed to the Herbaria of the Botanic Gardens of Britain and Europe. They were, however, retained with the other collections of Mr. Griffith in the vaults of the East India

the husks and straw for the cattle, and are further obliged to carry all the bales of goods in which the Officers of Government trade gratis. For exemption from the last grievance those who can afford it pay something to the Deb Raja, which of course renders it still more burdensome on those who cannot do the same.

Sal, Saral, Sisu, Gambori, and Sida trees are produced in the low-land and small hills for two days' journey. On the interior hills nothing but fir trees are to be seen: the wood is used for fuel and all other domestic purposes, and as it is full of resin it also serves for lamps.

There was formerly no mint in Bootan, but when the Booteahs carried away the late Raja of Cooch Behar, they got hold of the dies, with which they still stamp Narrainee Rupees. Every new Deb Raja puts a mark upon the Rupees of his coinage, and alters the weight. The Dhurma Raja also coins Rupees, and besides them, no one else is permitted to put their mark upon the Rupees, but there are mints at Paro, Tongso, and Tagna.

To the North of Gowalparah lies Bijnee, the residence of Ballit Narain.

Route from Bijnee to Wandipoor in Bootan.

To the West of Bijnee, nine coss, is Bisjorra or Birjorra, situated on the confines of the Company's Territories in the Pergunnah of Khoontaghat. Half a coss North of this place the Bootan Territories commence with the Zemindaree of Sidlee. Three coss West from Bijnee we crossed the Ayi River; it is about eighty yards broad and fordable, except in the rainy season. To the North-West of Bisjorra lies Sidlee, distant six coss, the residence of Suraj Narain, Raja of the Zemindaree. The intermediate country is covered with long grass, with a few huts here and there, which are not observable until the traveller is close upon them. The jungle is very high, but there is a track or foot path as far as Sidlee. From Sidlee to the Northern Hills there is no road in the rainy season, or from Bysakh to Kartik: in the month of Assin the jungle begins to be burned, and after this operation has been repeated several times the road is cleared. The passage through this jungle is attended with innumerable inconveniencies, of which the following are some: From Bijnee to the Hills the whole country is covered with a species of reed called *Khagrah*, interspersed here and there with forest trees. The jungle is of such height that an elephant or rhinoceros cannot be seen in it when standing up, and it is so full of leeches that a person cannot move a hundred yards without having his body, wherever it has been scratched by the grass, covered with these animals, so that a single person cannot get rid of them without assistance. In this jungle, when the sun shines, the heat is intolerable, and when the sun ceases to shine a person cannot remain in it without a fire on account of innumerable mosquitoes and other insects with which it is filled. When the sun shines they retire, but in the evening and morning, and all night, men and cattle are tormented by them, and they are only to be dispersed by the smoke of a fire. In this jungle there are tigers, bears, elephants, rhinoceroses, buffaloes, monkeys, wild hogs, deer, &c., but from nine o'clock in the morning until three in the afternoon they keep in the jungle, and are seldom seen except in the morning and evening. To the