

AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
KINGDOM OF NEPAUL,

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF OBSERVATIONS MADE DURING

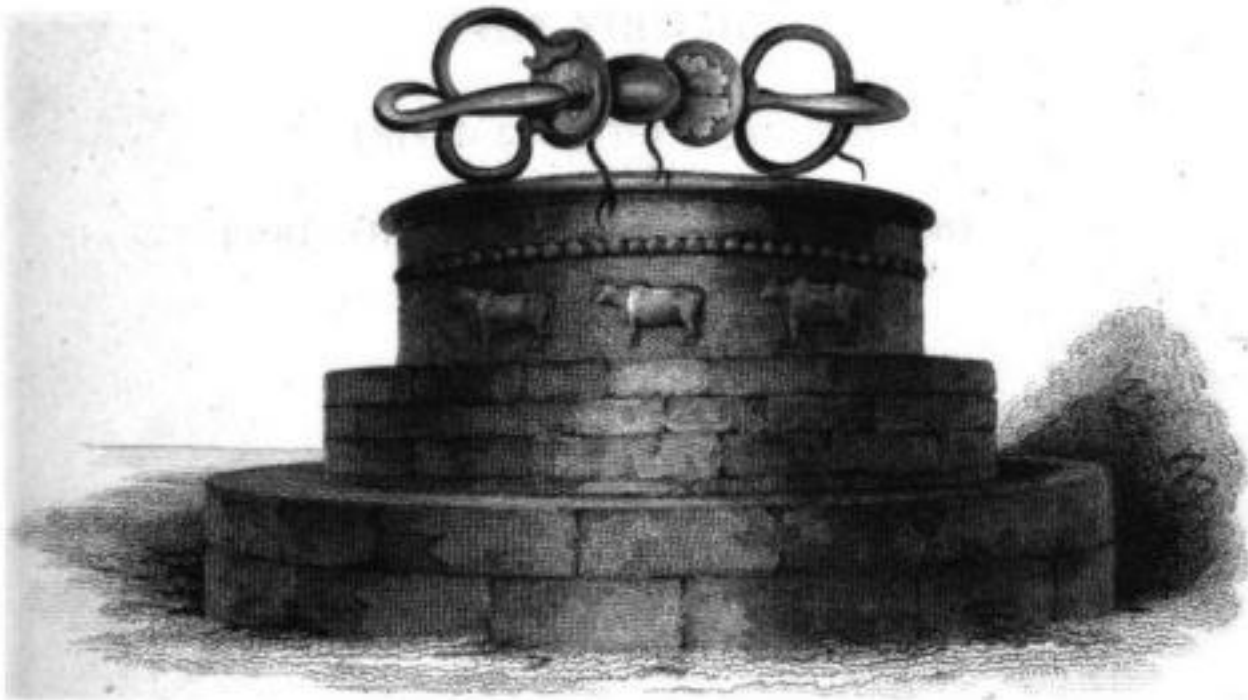
A MISSION TO THAT COUNTRY,

IN THE YEAR 1793.

BY COLONEL KIRKPATRICK.

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ILLUSTRATED WITH A MAP, AND OTHER ENGRAVINGS.



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them up the course of that river would have been utterly impracticable.

Soophye, which is but a mean village, stands very near the skirt of the great forest: we crossed the Jumne twice in our way to it. The only marks of cultivation we met with were limited to a few narrow patches on each side of the road; yet, from the appearance of the corn both here and to the southward of Bhâreh, the soil would seem to be tolerably fertile; and, indeed, I have been frequently assured by intelligent persons, that no land can be better adapted to the culture of rice than that of the Turrye in general. The waste state of the country, therefore, is to be referred to the want of population, and to the defects of the government, which but ill understands the means of promoting it. It is rather extraordinary, perhaps, considering the temptations held out by the vicinity of the Company's dominions, that this dreary tract should have any inhabitants at all; but it will be still more singular, if our late permanent settlement of the revenue, and recognition of proprietary right in the landholder, should not soon have the effect of entirely depopulating it.

There is a shorter road from Cachouriva to Soophye than that by Bhâreh; it passes to the southward of the latter place; but was described to me as being impracticable except in hammocks.

The Billye or Billarie nullah, a dull stream, which is crossed a few minutes before you enter the great forest, would appear to be a branch of the Bukkia, because its source cannot be traced to the

Cheeriaghati hills, on account of the interposition of the Bukkia; and, on the other hand, cannot be attributed to any springs situated to the southward of the Bukkia's course, on account of the nature of its bottom, which is stony. It probably also reunites with the Bukkia at no great distance from the point where we passed it.

I was three hours in proceeding from what is considered as the proper entrance of the great forest, to the village of Jhurjhoory, which may be said to mark its northern limit; I therefore judge its breadth by the road to be somewhat under ten miles; for though the ground throughout was very good, yet as we were occasionally not a little impeded by trees that lay felled across our path, and by others under which it was not easy to pass, I cannot allow more than three miles and a quarter per hour. The horizontal depth assigned to this forest in the Map, is eight miles and a half. Our course, for a short time after we entered it, was about north; it was next a good deal easterly; and during the last hour lay considerably to the westward.

This forest skirts the Nepaul territories throughout their whole extent from Serinugur to the Teesta, separating them every where, either from the Company's or the Vizier's possessions. It is not, of course, equally close or deep in every place; some parts having been more or less cleared away, especially those which are situated most favourably for the commerce of timber, or in the vicinity of flourishing towns. To the eastward some considerable tracts are reported to be quite clear. I cannot pretend to enumerate the great

varieties of its trees; but the principal for size or utility are, the Saul, the Sissoo, the Setti-saul, the Phullamikhd (or iron-wood), the Kalikâht (a sort of black wood), the Sâjh, the Bhurra, the Summi, and the Mûlta. The ebony is also, I understand, found here. This forest is much over-run in the Jhurjhoory quarter with underwood and long grass. The part most resorted to by the wood-dealers appears to be that which borders on the Boggah district, timber being transported from thence even to the distance of Calcutta. I am inclined to think, however, that, notwithstanding the convenience afforded by the vicinity of the Gunduck, a more advantageous spot might be selected for the operations of the wood-merchants. The Nepaul government levy, I believe, very high, and consequently, in a commercial view at least, impolitic duties on this traffic: whether or not they are influenced, in this respect, by the idea that the vigorous prosecution of it would have the effect of diminishing the strength of the barrier which this forest no doubt constitutes, I had not an opportunity of ascertaining. Upon my remarking on the ill tendency of such restraints, it was thought a sufficient justification of them to declare, that they had not originated with the present government, which did no more than follow the ancient practice in this particular.

Besides valuable timber, this forest affords another source of profit to the Nepaul government in its numerous elephants; but this, like the timber, is not improved so much as it might be. The Governor of the Turrye told me, that in his district, which reaches

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from Somoisir to the Kousi, there were caught annually between two and three hundred elephants; much the greater part of these, however, are very young, being not above five hauts, or seven feet and a half high; nor can they well be supposed able to catch any of a superior size, as the animals are not driven into a keddah, or inclosure, but are caught by snares or nooses thrown over their necks by a mahoot seated on a decoy elephant. The rope being immediately drawn, the end of it is secured round a tree, from which it is easy to conceive that they often break loose, and are not unfrequently strangled in their struggles. There is, therefore, a double disadvantage attending this imperfect mode of catching these animals, for while it clearly tends to diminish the breed, it renders the elephants so prematurely caught of little value; there are, accordingly, very few of this great number sold for the benefit of the government, who claim an exclusive right to the whole, and dispose of them, for the most part, in presents, or in commutation of occasional services, and pecuniary demands.

A third branch of revenue arising from this forest consists in a duty levied upon the cattle of Chemparun and other districts, bordering on the Nepaul territories, which graze here annually about four months, the pasturage between October and January being deemed excellent; but as this duty is confined to buffaloes (cows being exempted under the present government), and never exceeds two annas per head for the season, its amount cannot be very considerable.