

D5
468
G43
1975
v.3

THE
SEIR MUTAQHERIN;
OR

REVIEW OF MODERN TIMES :

BEING AN

HISTORY OF INDIA,

From the Year 1118 to the Year 1194, of the Hedjah,

CONTAINING, IN GENERAL,

*THE REIGNS of the SEVEN LAST EMPERORS of
HINDOSTAN,*

AND, IN PARTICULAR,

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ENGLISH WARS IN BENGAL;

WITH A CIRCUMSTANTIAL DETAIL OF THE RISE AND FALL OF

THE FAMILIES OF

SERADJ-ED-DÖWLAH and SHUÛJAH-ED-DÖWLAH,

THE LAST SOVEREIGNS OF BENGAL AND OWD,

To which the Author has added

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE ENGLISH GOVERN-

MENT AND POLICY IN THOSE COUNTRIES,

AS FAR DOWN AS THE YEAR 1783.

The whole written in Persian

BY

SEID-GHOLAM-HOSSEIN-KHAN,

An Indian Nobleman of high rank, who wrote both

as Actor and Spectator.

VOLUME III

REPRINTED BY

SHEIKH MUBARAK ALI

ORIENTAL PUBLISHERS & BOOKSELLERS

INSIDE LOHARI GATE, LAHORE. PAKISTAN

DS
468
G
1
V

"and a very exact examination, destitute of any foundation; and that nothing had appeared from that excellent man, but proofs of fidelity, fair attachment, and zeal. That it followed therefore that the hard treatment he had experienced, had been unmerited, and far from what his valuable services had deserved." To this they added a dress of honour suitable to his rank and merits, with an elephant and a number of jewels; and he was dismissed to his former station of associate in the Council of Azim-abad. But the man had already broke his heart; accustomed these many years to the kindnesses and caresses of the English Rulers, he could not brook the ill return he had received for the many valuable services he had rendered the State. He fell into a despondent state of mind, and took a dislike against all the world, as well as against his own life. The truth is, that his predestined time being likewise at hand, a slight looseness, which chanced to come upon him on his arrival at Azim-abad, turned into a violent flux, and made him covet victuals and things he was not accustomed to. The steadiness of his mind, and his usual temper forsook him; and he henceforward made no distinction between what was hurtful, and what was beneficial to him. It is true that the learned Fáiz-aaly, (whom may this salute of mine reach at some lucky hour!) a famous physician, who in these days has not his equal at Azim-abad, had attended him some time; and there appeared evident signs of his good management having been beneficial; but there were about the sick man's person some sycophants, and illiberal men, who made it a point to represent me (who was one of Mr. Vansittart's friends), as inimical to his welfare; and at last found means to remove from his person the physician above, who then lived with me, after having represented his just reprimands, and his unfeigned zeal, together with his attachment to me, as so many proofs of hatred and enmity; insomuch that when the sick man was forced by necessity to recall him again, and he heard him strongly recommend his abstaining from the many compound medicines which ignorant persons of all sorts used to prepare in secret for him, this ill-fated man, already prisoner to death, abstained altogether from all physic, and left the whole to the course of nature. Nevertheless, in consequence of the solicitations of the Gentlemen of the Council,

And sent back to his former post; but dies of a broken heart.

who so far from being inimical to him, were sincerely desirous of his recovery, he applied to a doctor, which in English signifies a physician; but this doctor having conjectured that it was proper to evacuate and remove out of his body the impure mixture which had taken consistence in it, he gave him a purging dose, by which the sick man's stomach, already reduced to extreme debility, became weaker and weaker, and at last lost all power of digestion.

Radja Shytab-ráy, originally a Cahtri (25) by tribe, was a Kahut-suka-sun by race, and born at Shah-djehan-abad. He was bred in the family of Semsam-ed-döwlah, son to another Semsam-ed-döwlah, better known under the name of Qhandö8ran, Lord of Lords to Mahmed-shah; and he commenced by getting into the service of one Aga-soléiman, a Georgian, who was slave and steward to Semsam-ed-döwlah, as well as every thing in his house. He had at first but a small salary; but by his abilities in business, and by his meritorious services, he soon became the centre of all business in Aga-soléiman's house, and of course the absolute ruler of Semsam-ed-döwlah's affairs. On that nobleman's repairing to the mansions of God's mercy, and on that capital's becoming a continual scene of revolutions, he concluded that there was no safety for him in those parts; and he obtained the Imperial Divanship of Azim-abad, with the management of the Djaghirs of his master's son, being the districts of Pöluch and Malda in Bengal. Thus provided, he came into these eastern countries, and, as it has been already mentioned, soon raised himself to the summit of power. He was a man of great sense, a Minister knowing in business, and a clerk of a quick dispatch, keen, and full of penetration in every thing he took in hand; and he had so many other valuable qualities besides, that I always thought him the most deserving, and the ablest man amongst the most eminent men of Hindostan. Although originally a clerk and a penman, he proved that he did not want either courage or prowess upon an emergency; and although he had seen himself courted by Vezirs and by Emperors, nevertheless he had so little pride about him, that he behaved to men

Brilliant character of Shytab-ráy.

(25) The Cahtries are one of the four grand tribes or races, into which the Hindoos are divided; it is the second. The Sucasuns are a subdivision; and there is an infinity of subdivisions.

D5
468

of virtue or of distinction with a modesty and an humility that disarmed envy itself. He comprehended at once, and at the very first outset, the intent of every one's supplication; and he used to grant it with a deal of condescension, if he had it in his power, and the subject deserved it; or else, he would offer a handsome excuse, in a condoling language; so that no petitioner ever went away from his presence, dissatisfied or discontented. Perpetually in the hurry of business, and in conference with a variety of people, from day-break till noon-day, and from the evening to three o'clock in the morning, he seemed neither fatigued with the number, nor impatient with the singularity and extravagance of the demands endlessly crowding upon him; but would attend to every one with a regard always proportioned to the petitioner's rank, never chiding or reprimanding any one, or making use of a harsh or dishonest expression; nor did ever a word of abuse or rudeness come out of his mouth. Keen and knowing in every thing, and well apprised of the prices of all kinds of wares, he never disputed with merchants, but would give them a handsome price at once; nor would he admit stinginess or economy, whenever he wanted to make a present. Fond of living high and with elegance, he used to procure from distant, cheap places, such provisions as he wanted for his own use; endeavouring to reconcile that taste of his with the dimensions of his purse. Magnificent and generous in his household, he strove as much as his finances could afford, to live up to the grandeur, and hospitality of a middling Omrah of Hindostan. For on the very arrival of some person of distinction in town, he would send him, according to his rank and station, a number of tables covered with a variety of sweetmeats, delicacies, and dressed victuals, of which he had always quantities made with the utmost nicety and attention. In the entertainments and feasts which he used often to give, he always imitated the splendour and the customs of the Moghuls⁽²⁶⁾; and when at table, he used to invite his

(26) Although the Moghul, that is the Hindostany, way of living is so very inferior to an European table, both for the variety and costliness of the victuals, and for the expensiveness of liquors and other articles, yet such as it is, it is incomparably superior to the Hindoo or Gentoo way of living; the very Radjahs and Kings of that persuasion living with such an abstemiousness as would frighten but of their holes, all the hermits of Europe.

guests with the utmost politeness and courtesy to taste of such and such particular delicacies. But his modesty and sense of decorum were such, that no man, not even his nearest relations, have ever seen him repair to the apartments of a woman, called Ram-dji, of whom he was very fond, and to whom he shewed a constant attachment; nor could any one say at what particular time he repaired into the inner apartments of his women, nor when he came out. His consort, a person of his own tribe, from whom he had his two sons, Cayan-sing and Bagvaany-sing, he kept no connections with this longwhile; but he entertained her at a small distance from his own palace, in a house expressly built for her use; and thither he repaired two or three times in the year, at those stated times prescribed by the Gentoo law, but in such a secret manner, however, that his visits were very seldom known to any one. His behaviour to some persons inimical to his welfare, was no less singular. These having found access to some Englishman in office, for instance, to the Chief of Azimabad, had grown so jealous of his greatness, that when they came to be complimented with some concern in the Company's affairs, or with some other advantage, they had in a course of years so far estranged themselves from him, as to express their enmity in every thing in their power; and with such a conduct he used to put up. But the moment a change of times had taken place, or any disgrace had happened to them, which might endanger their honor or their fortune, he from that moment forgot the past, and flew to their assistance with all his might and influence; from that moment, he turned his own breast into a shield and buckler for them, and would exert himself so strenuously, as often to rescue them from perdition. Whenever he heard of any one come from Shah-djehan-abad, he used to send for him, and if he happened to be of his acquaintance, and in distress, he never failed to relieve him in the best manner he could afford; but as his own salary was small, and not exceeding what had been appointed; and he did not choose to lay a finger upon any thing belonging to the Government; he contrived to give him a pension; and when he found it inadequate, and could not afford to give a better one, he used to employ him abroad in the collections of the revenue, in such a manner as he might benefit by the employment. But when matters did not succeed to his

we see to-day; and although those times were not free from partialities and private views neither, yet upon the whole matters flowed on swiftly, be it in what manner soever it seemed best to their rulers. Nor did the miseries of endless delay and endless expectation melt mankind away; nor did the people of God become the victims of endless altercation amongst their rulers. For I remember that on the dismissal of Radjah Shytáb-ráy, when Mr. George Vansittart was appointed Chief, and became the centre of all business, I took the liberty to represent to him, "That Radjah Shytáb-ráy used to spend his time from one-half of each day down to one-third of each night in hearing petitions, and in giving decisions, by which assiduity he dispatched much business, and gave a great deal of ease to every one. I added, that the people of God, deprived of such a man, would very naturally express their anxiety, about what might be his pleasure now on that head." He answered that, *being not accustomed, like Shytáb-ráy, to sit in public amongst hundreds of people, nor to listen to complaints, and to determine causes, he could not believe that he would be able to comprehend one-half of them; but that those that had any business with Government might apply to himself privately, as he conceived that in the recess and silence of a closet he would be more recollected and better able to give a decision.* Upon this I requested that orders should be given to the sentries to admit all comers, and directions to the ushers or chopdars to introduce every one. Immediately he gave the necessary orders, and they proved strict orders; and as he was a man of quick apprehension, and very active in body and mind, and could not bear to have his lesson taught him by a Moonshy or Secretary, or his task dictated to by a Divan, or indeed by any man, he proved to be as good as his word, and he constantly dispatched a great deal of business. This state of things did not last, and the affairs and petitions growing numerous, people began to suffer from delays; when after a little time Mr. Law arrived, and wiped clean the eyes of the people of God with the sleeve of goodness and affability. After this, God knows, what is likely to happen. For it appears that to find out one single man's way, and to be upon good terms with him, is an easy matter; or if he be discontented, it is not difficult to make up matters with him; but

to find one's way to the favor of fifteen or twenty persons, or even more, that compose a Council, (including their dependants and officers), or to guard against their resentment, is a task very difficult and complicated, and such as exceeds the power and abilities of a poor suitor, and indeed such as would prove above the patience of any one. Never was this so well brought to the proof as after Radjah Shytáb-ráy's dismissal, and the establishment of a Council in his stead. It was at the festival ending the Ramazan, or month of fast, when the Nobility, Gentry, and principal men of the city, who used in that day to offer their nezurs to Radjah Shytáb-ráy, were necessitated to pay that mark of respect to every one of the five Members of the Council. Vansittart, on seeing this, could not help observing openly, that whoever hitherto had been clear with presenting one mohur or one rupee only, would be now obliged to provide five, which was what many could not afford; whereupon having conferred upon the subject with the others, he published, that at the next festival of the Corban or Sacrifice, people should present one nezur to the Chief only, and that would be enough, as no other was wanted, or expected; and in fact, so it came to pass. But some professed flatterers, who wished no good to any money that might remain in an Hindostani's pocket, went out, notwithstanding the prohibition; and, to shew their sentiments of respect to greater advantage, they repaired to the houses of the other Members, and presented a particular nezur to each of them. Some that could ill afford the contribution, did the same, lest the Gentlemen, thinking themselves slighted, should bear them a grudge; and those that were utterly unable, submitted to their fate, and remained moping in their corners.

The fifth cause consists in the difference betwixt the manner in which the English in office appear in public, and give audience to suitors, and that in which it has been at all times customary to hold a Durbar in this country.

Our illustrious Sovereigns of Hindostan, those Princes so studious of justice and equity, had it in custom to divide their time for different purposes, and had made a rule of that distribution, on which they never encroached by any other occupation; but in that division, two kinds of businesses held always the first rank. The first was the examination and decision of affairs

The fifth cause arises from the extreme difference betwixt the English way of giving public audience to suitors, and that which was customary in these countries, and also from their engraving everything to themselves.