AN

ACCOUNT

OF AN

EMBASSY

TO

THE KINGDOM OF AVA,

SENT BY THE

GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA,

IN THE YEAR 1795.

By MICHAEL SYMES, Esq.

Lieut.-Col. in His Majesty's 76th Regiment.

Second Edition, in Three Volumes.

VOL. I.

LONDON,

PRINTED FOR J. DEBRETT, PICCADILLY,

BY WILSON AND CO. AT THE ORIENTAL PRESS,

WILD COURT, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

1800.

AN

ACCOUNT

OF AN

EMBASSY

TO THE

KINGDOM OF AVA.

A NEW EDITION.

TO THE

CHAIRMAN,

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN,

AND

DIRECTORS,

OF THE

Honourable East India Company,

THIS ACCOUNT

OF

AN EMBASSY TO AVA,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THEIR MOST OBEDIENT, AND

MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

MICHAEL SYMES.

WELBECK STREET,
Feb. 24, 1800.

176

PREFACE.

In presenting this Work to the Public, I obey the dictates of a duty incumbent on every person, the incidents of whose life have afforded him an opportunity of visiting countries that are either unknown, or imperfectly described; and, by communicating his information, to add somewhat to the stock of general knowledge.

Of the kingdom of Ava, or the Birman Empire, so little is known to the European world, that many persons of liberal education, when the name of the country has been mentioned, were at a loss on what part of the globe to seek for its position; and some were even unacquainted with the existence of such a nation.

This obscurity renders any apology for introducing my Work to the Public unnecessary; and I have only to lament my own inability to do justice to so important a subject. The military profession, in every part of the world, is unpropitious to literary attain-

ments; but in India, where no repositories of European learning are to be found, and armies are continually moving over a vast region, it can hardly be expected that the soldier and the scholar should be united. It has been my lot to serve in that distant country from an early age, until I attained the meridian of life; and it may perhaps soften criticism, that I aspire not to the ornaments of language, and little aim at a polished structure of style: I have written my own book; my chief object is, to be intelligible; and my single claim, to be believed.

The rise and fortunes of Alom-

pra, and the establishment of the present Birman dynasty, supply a short, but highly interesting, period of oriental history; these extraordinary events, having happened within the memory of many persons still living, are authenticated by individuals who themselves bore a part in the transactions: and although their relations are liable to that bias which is inseparable from the human mind, when the passions are engaged, and self-interest is concerned; yet the leading facts are such as do not admit of misrepresentation; to these, therefore, I have confined myself, as closely as perspicuity would allow.

For the account of the disastrous fate of our countrymen at Negrais, and the destruction of the English and French factories, I am chiefly indebted to the repertory of Mr. Dalrymple; a most useful and judicious compilation, which has rescued from oblivion many valuable and curious papers.

The invasion of Ava by the Chinese during the reign of King Shembuan, and the subsequent expedition into the Cassay country, were recounted to me by an old Mussulman soldier who bore arms in both: he could have no inducement to deceive, and the leading

circumstances of his narrative were confirmed from other quarters.

The events which took place in the southern countries, in Pegue and Siam, were so generally known, that inquiry need only be made to obtain information.

I am obliged to the kindness of Mr. Dalrymple for the construction of the General Map prefixed to this Work, which has been compiled from the materials collected by Dr. Buchanan, and transmitted to the Court of Directors; it is laid down on a contracted scale, being designed merely to point out

the relative situation of the kingdom of Ava, with reference to other countries, and to ascertain its local position on the globe. The materials requisite to give an accurate topographical display of all the parts of so extensive an empire, could not be procured during the short period of our residence; but the ability and indefatigable industry of Dr. Buchanan have effected much, to which the astronomical labours of Mr. Wood have considerably added. I cannot better do justice to the merits of these gentlemen, than by inserting the words of Mr. Dalrymple in a note on the subject of Ava geography.

"This part of Indian geography has hitherto remained in "inexplicable obscurity, although "much light has been thrown on "the subject in consequence of "the Embassy, of which this "Work lays an account before "the Public, not only from "the astronomical observations by "Ensign Thomas Wood, which "do him the greatest credit, but "from the great mass of native "geography, which the assiduous "pains of Dr. Buchanan, who ac-"companied the Embassy in a "medical capacity, have accumu-"lated from various persons.

"These maps obtained by Dr.

" Buchanan from the natives, al-
" though they elucidate the geo-
" graphy, cannot be considered as
" positive documents for the con-
" struction of an accurate Map of
" these countries, not being laid
" down geometrically, nor having
" even scales affixed; indeed, it is
" not certain that any of them
" were meant to be laid down by
" an uniform scale; the wonder is,
" that there should be any thing
" like uniformity."

The applause of such respectable authority, cannot be enhanced by an encomium of mine. I am, however, happy in having an opportunity to acknowledge the

able and friendly assistance which I received from these gentlemen: my thanks are also due to Captain Thomas, commander of the Sea-Horse, for his circumspect and prudent conduct in conciliating the inhabitants of Rangoon, during the time that I was absent at Ummerapoora.

Major Rennell, who never denies the use of his invaluable publications, to those who may require extracts from them to illustrate their own works, has been so good as to allow me to copy from his Map of Hindostan a part of the Pegue coast, which we had not an opportunity of observing.

The representations of the costume of the country, I am persuaded, are as faithful as pencil can delineate: the native painters of India do not possess a genius for fiction, or works of fancy; they cannot invent or even embellish, and they are utterly ignorant of perspective; but they draw figures, and trace every line of a picture, with a laborious exactness peculiar to themselves: the Plate of the Kioum, or monastery, Vol. III. p. 107, affords a curious specimen of their minute accuracy.

The Plate which represents the introduction of the English gentlemen, Vol. III. p. 168, does not in-

clude all the objects that were in the original drawing, there not being sufficient room to admit them; it, however, exhibits a just view of the manner in which the Court was assembled. A print cannot convey an adequate idea of the brilliancy of the dresses, or of the general effect.

The method of catching wild elephants in Ava, I was assured, was faithfully delineated in the Drawing from which the Plate, Vol. III. p. 9, was taken. This drawing was copied from a painting on glass, in the possession of the King: it corresponds with the mode practised in Siam, as de-

scribed in a book, intituled, "A "Relation of the Voyage to Siam, "performed by six Jesuits in the "year 1685;" in which the following passage occurs: "The "huntsmen, who were mounted on tame elephants, threw "their nooses so exactly in the "place where the elephants set "their foot, that they never failed "of catching them." This manner of securing these powerful animals, I imagine, is not commonly used in other countries of the East.

Several of the human figures bear a striking resemblance in

feature to the originals, particularly the Sere-dogee, or Secretary of State, Vol. II. p. 343, and the man and woman of the Kayn tribe, Vol. III. p. 243: the dress and character, in all the figures, are extremely well preserved.

The kindness of Colonel Sir John Murray supplied me with the Code of Arracan Laws, from which the Birman Dherma Sastra is compiled. It should be observed, that all the various Law Tracts in use amongst the Hindoos, throughout Hindoostan, in its extensive signification, the region of Hindoos, whether sectaries of

Boodh, or of Brahma, are but so many commentaries on the Law of Menu, the great and acknowledged founder of Hindoo jurisprudence, whose original work has been translated with much elegance by the late Sir William Jones.

The account of the city of Pegue, and the stupendous temple of Shoemadoo, has already appeared in the fifth volume of the Asiatic Researches, printed at Calcutta; I did not, however, conceive that it ought, on that account, to be omitted in a general description of the country. My official transactions are also in-

serted in the records of the Bengal government.

In the orthography of Birman words I have endeavoured to express, by appropriate letters, the sounds as they struck my own ear. At the same time it is proper to remark, that scarcely any two persons will apply the same English letters to the same Birman words: this variation, which extends to the writing of all eastern languages, and is not easily to be remedied, greatly discourages the English reader, and diminishes the pleasure of perusing books on the affairs of India. In the names of places I have in general followed

the orthography of Mr. Wood, in his excellent Chart of the Irrawaddy, the great river of Ava.

In the prosecution of this work I have experienced so many acts of friendly attention, that were I to enumerate all the favours conferred on me, I should occupy more room than the limits of a Preface will allow. The patronage of the East-India Company is ever extended to those who can supply useful information on oriental topics, whilst the encouragement which I received from this munificent body was rendered doubly gratifying by the politeness of Mr. Inglis, then Chairman, and

Mr. Bosanquet, Deputy Chairman, of the Court of Directors. To the spontaneous assistance of men pre-eminently distinguished for science, my book owes its most valuable contents. Sir Joseph Banks selected and described the Plants; Mr. Dalrymple, as before mentioned, compiled the General Map; and Mr. Wilkins favoured me with the Shanscrit Alphabet, and pointed out the analogy of the languages. To these gentlemen my acknowledgments are particularly due, whilst, abstracted from a sense of personal obligation, it is a subject of pleasing reflection, that, in England, the man who fairly endeavours to communicate beneficial or curious

information, can never fail, notwithstanding he may be a stranger, to obtain the disinterested aid of persons themselves amongst the most celebrated for learning, and who are the patrons of literature in others. It constitutes a part of the national character, of that native liberality, which may be traced under various shapes, and is manifested in different forms, through every gradation of society, and amidst every class of men, who have the happiness to boast a British birth-right.

I cannot quit the subject without offering my tribute of thanks to my noble friend, Lord Teign-

mouth, with whom the mission to Ava originated: he selected me to execute the plans which he had formed; and his approbation of my labours is numbered among the most flattering circumstances of my life.

MICHAEL SYMES.

Welbeck-street,
Feb. 24, 1800.

CONTENTS.

HISTORICAL MEMOIR of the AVA EMPIRE.... *Page* 1

NARRATIVE OF AN EMBASSY TO AVA.

CHAPTER I.

Embark on board the Sea-Horse—sail from Calcutta—make the Cocoa Islands—touch at Port Cornwallis, in the Great Andaman.—Hospitably received by Captains Ramsay and Stokoe.—Some Account of the Island—imperfectly known to the Ancients—Barbarism and wretched State of the Natives.—Singular Account of two young Women.—Frequent Scarcity of Food.—Brutal Behaviour of some Bengal Fishermen.—Natural Products of the Island.—Rains excessive.—Colony sickly—Causes.—Prepare to depart ..... *Page* 289

CHAPTER II.

Sail from the Andamans—make the Island of Narcondam.—Arrive at the Mouth of the Rangoon River—delayed for a Pilot—proceed—Precaution of a Custom-house Officer.—A Deputation from Rangoon—meets the Sea-Horse—Singular Appearance of the Deputies.—Arrive at Ran-

goon—extraordinary Conduct of the Government.—Uncomfortable Building allotted for our Residence—Restriction imposed on our People.—Commanders and Crews of the Ships in the River prohibited from holding any Intercourse with the Sea-Horse.—Situation unpleasant, and degrading—remonstrate—declare my Intention to withdraw.—Concession on the Part of the Rangoon Government ..... *Page* 320

EMBASSY

TO

AVA.

THERE are no countries on the habitable globe, where the arts of civilized life are understood, of which we have so limited a knowledge, as of those that lie between the British possessions in India and the empire of China. Concerning India beyond the Ganges, scarcely more was known to the ancients, than that such a country did exist. Undeserved importance is oftentimes attributed to that which is

imperfectly known; and hence we find, in the Map of Ptolemy, the terms Aurea Regio, Argentea Regio, and Aurea Chersonesus, bestowed on countries eastward of the Ganges, and on the Peninsula that divides the Bay of Bengal from the Magnus Sinus, or Gulph of Siam. But although no satisfactory information is to be obtained from writers of antiquity, respecting the population, produce, extent, or geographical position of those regions; yet it may be concluded, that, even at the remote era when Ptolemy compiled his chart, the ports of the Eastern Peninsula were the seats of commerce, and resorted to by foreign merchants; as that Author distinguishes places of note on the sea coast by the titles Emporia; but with what people trade was carried on, or in what commodities they trafficked, is not any where ascertained.

From this period, almost total darkness seems to have obscured India *extra Gangem* from the eyes of Europeans, until the enterprizing genius of Emanuel, at the close of the 15th century, opened a new world, and laid the foundation of general wealth to Europe, on the ruin of the Egyptian trade, and of the state of Venice. Early in the 16th century, the Portuguese made themselves masters of Malacca, and soon acquired influence among the neighbouring maritime states. To the writers of this nation, history is principally indebted for whatever information has been obtained of the eastern countries of India: but their narratives so abound in hyperbole, and they recount such extravagant stories, that credit must be denied to many of their assertions; whilst, at the same time, their writings furnish some accurate traits of the genius and disposition of the

people whom they describe. Even the accounts of Mendez de Pinto, the prince of fiction, although an intelligent traveller, will enable his readers to form an estimate of the importance and civilization of nations which, at a later period, have, by many, been erroneously considered as in a condition bordering on wild barbarity.

From the testimony of Portuguese historians it appears, that in the middle of the 16th century, four powerful states divided amongst them the regions that lie between the south-east province of British India, Yunan in China, and the Eastern Sea; their territories extended from Cassay and Assam*, on the N. W. as far south-eastward as the island of Junkseylon.

* There are some petty independent princes, whose lands intervene.

These nations were known to Europeans by the names of Arracan, Ava, Pegue, and Siam. Arracan, properly Yee-Kein, borders on the S. E. province of British India, and includes the sea coast, with what is called the Broken Islands, as far south as Cape Negrais*; Ava, the name of the ancient capital of the Birmans, has been usually accepted as the name of the country at large, which is Miamma. This empire is situated eastward of Arracan, from which it is divided by a ridge of lofty mountains, called by the natives Anou-pec-tou-miou, or the great western hilly country. On the N. W. it is separated from the kingdom of Cassay by the river Keen-duem; on the north, it is bounded by mountains and petty independent principalities, that lie contiguous to

* See Hamilton's new Account of the East Indies.

Assam; on the north-east and east, it touches on China, and North Siam; on the south, its limits have so often varied, that it is difficult to ascertain them with any precision. The city of Prome*, or Pee, seems to be the original and natural boundary of the Birman empire, although conquest has since stretched its dominion several degrees farther south. Pegue, called by the natives Bagoo, is the country southward of Ava, which occupies the sea-coast as far as Martaban, properly Mondimaa; Prome was its northern frontier, and Siam adjoined on the east. The kingdom of Siam, or Shaan, comprehended as far south as Junkseylon, east to Cambodia and Laos, and north to Dzemee

* It is doubtful whether Prome, of right, belonged to Ava or Pegue; it was claimed by both, and often changed its possessor.

(probably the Chiamee of Loubere), and Yunan in China. This nation calls itself Tai, and is further distinguished by the appellations Tai-yay, or great Tai, and Tay-nay, or little Tai; their former capital was named Yoodia*, or Yoodra; by De Pinto, Oodia; whence the Siamese are frequently, by the Birmans, denominated Yoodras. These boundaries, however, may be considered rather as the claim of each state, than its actual possession: vicissitudes of victory and defeat alternately extended and contracted their dominions.

Pinto, and Faria de Souza, agree that the Birmans, though formerly subject to the king of Pegue, became afterwards masters of Ava, and caused a revolution in Pegue about the middle of the 16th

* Called Juthea by Europeans.

century. Hamilton, a much more recent author, says, that the kingdom of the Birmans extended from "Maravi," probably Mergui, near Tenasserem, to the province of Yunan in China, about 800 miles from north to south, and 250 from east to west. The Portuguese assisted the Birmans in their wars against the Peguers, and, according to Pinto, performed prodigies of valour. The account of the capture of Martaban*, and of the treasures found therein, far exceeds the limits of belief.

*' Speaking of the capture of Martaban, Pinto says, "During this siege, they of the city ate 3000 elephants; there were found 6000 pieces of artillery: as for gold, silver, precious stones, and jewels, that were found there, one truly knows not what they were, for those things are ordinarily concealed; wherefore it shall suffice me to say, that so much as the king of Brama had of Chaimbainham's treasure, amounted to an hundred millions of gold." The account of the feast of Tinagoojoo is ludicrously extravagant.

The Portuguese continued to exercise an influence in the Birman and Pegue countries, and a still greater in Arracan, so long as they maintained an ascendancy over other European nations in the East; but on the seizure of their settlements and abridgment of their dominions by the Dutch, the consequence that had been deservedly annexed to the Portuguese name sunk into insignificance; and the Christian settlers degenerated into a contemptible race, distinguished only by their feebleness and vice. During the reign of Louis the XIVth several splendid attempts were made to propagate the doctrines of the church of Rome, and advance the interests of the French nation, in the kingdom of Siam. Concerning these expeditions, accounts* of unquestionable fidelity have

* *Vide* Loubere, &c.

been published; little, however, is related of Ava and Pegue, with whom, the Abbé Choisy says, "the king of Siam was constantly at war."

In the beginning of the 17th century, both the English and Dutch had obtained settlements in various quarters of the Birman dominions, which were afterwards forfeited by the misconduct of the latter; and Europeans of all nations were banished from Ava. The English, many years subsequent to this expulsion, were reinstated in their factories at Syriam and Ava, where they appear to have traded, rather in the capacity of private merchants, than on the part of the India Company, in whose service they were not regularly enrolled. The Island of Negrais was likewise taken possession of by the English, and a survey made of it by one

Weldon, in the year 1687. On this island the government of Fort St. George established a settlement. Little benefit, however, seems to have been derived from the acquisition: the affairs of the India Company, and indeed of the nation, were in too precarious a state, in another quarter of Asia, to admit of sparing the supplies of men and money requisite for its effectual support.

The supremacy of the Birmans over the Peguers continued throughout the last, and during the first forty years of the present century, when the Peguers in the provinces of Dalla, Martaban, Tongo, and Prome, revolted; a civil war ensued, which was prosecuted on both sides with savage ferocity. In the year 1744, the British factory at Syriam was destroyed by the contending parties, and the views

of commerce were suspended by precautions of personal security. Success long continued doubtful: at length the Peguers, by the aid of arms procured from Europeans trading to their ports, and with the assistance of some renegade Dutch and native Portuguese, gained several victories over the Birmans, in the years 1750, and 1751. These advantages they pursued with so much vigour, that, early in the year 1752, the capital of Ava was invested. The Birmans, disheartened by repeated defeats, after a short siege, surrendered at discretion. Dweepdee, the last of a long line of Birman kings, was made prisoner with all his family, except two sons, who effected their escape to the Siamese; from whom they found a friendly reception, and were flattered with assurances of security and succour.

Bonna Della, or Beinga Della, king of Pegue, when he had completed the conquest of Ava, returned to his own country, leaving his brother Apporaza to govern the late capital of the Birman king, whom he carried with him a prisoner to Pegue; enjoining his brother to reduce the refractory, displace suspected persons, and exact an oath of allegiance from such Birmans as should be suffered to retain their former possessions.

Matters at first bore the appearance of tranquillity and submission: the landholders and principal inhabitants of the country around Ava, acknowledged themselves vassals of the conqueror, and accepted the prescribed oath. Alompra, a Birman of low extraction, then known by the humble name of Aumdzea*, was

* Signifying huntsman.

continued by the conqueror in the chiefship of Monchaboo, at that time an inconsiderable village, about 12 miles from the river, west of Keoum-meoum. This man, who possessed a spirit of enterprize and boldness equal to the most arduous undertakings, at first, like many others, dissembled the reluctance he felt at the imposition of a foreign yoke, and submitted to the necessity of fortune; but, unlike others, he harboured hopes of emancipation, and meditated on the best means of accomplishing his future purpose.

Soon after the Pegue king had reached his capital, he caused a general proclamation to be issued, in terms of insolent triumph, announcing to all nations of the earth, that the Birman king was become his prisoner; that the Birman country,

being subdued by the prowess of his arms, was annexed, as a conquered province, to the Pegue monarchy, and that the city of Pegue was in future to be considered as the general metropolis. This proclamation, as might be expected, increased the hatred of the Birmans, and stimulated their desire of revenge. Alompra had at this time, in the town and neighbourhood of Monchaboo, 100 devoted followers, on whose courage and fidelity he could safely rely; he had strengthened and repaired the stockade that surrounded the town *, without awaking any suspicion in the minds of the Peguers, who never dreamt that a person so inconsiderable would at-

* Almost all towns, and even villages, in the Birman country, are surrounded by a stockade, in like manner as the villages in the Carnatic are inclosed by a bound hedge: the Birmans are very expert in erecting this kind of defence.

tempt an act of rebellion under the check of a numerous garrison, distant only 15 leagues. Their attention was directed to remoter provinces; and occupied by the fears they entertained, lest the sons of Dweepdee should return in force to recover the possessions of their dethroned father.

Thus resting in imaginary security, there were not more than 50 Pegue soldiers in Monchaboo, who, on all occasions, treated the Birmans with contemptuous arrogance. Alompra, availing himself of the resentment excited by some particular act of indignity, roused his already well-prepared adherents to active resistance, and, attacking the Peguers with irresistible violence, put every man of that nation to the sword.

Alompra, after this act of open rebellion, still dissembling his real intention, and with a view to gain time, wrote to Apporaza in terms of the utmost humility, expressing much contrition for what had happened, representing it as a sudden gust of intemperate violence arising from mutual irritation; at the same time, lavishly professing his attachment and fidelity to the Pegue government. These assurances, though they could not be expected to procure an unconditional pardon, yet had the desired effect, of rendering the Pegue governor less alert in preparation to reduce him; and so far was Alompra from being considered in a formidable point of view, that Apporaza, having urgent business at Pegue, left Ava under the government of his nephew Dotachew, with directions to keep Alompra in strict confinement, as soon as he

should be brought from Monchaboo, to which place a force, that was thought equal to the service, had been detached, on hearing of the massacre of the Peguers.

Approaching the fort of Monchaboo, the Peguers never dreamed of meeting resistance, and had come ill armed and equipped for encountering opposition; but they found the gates of the stockade shut against them, and heard threats of defiance, instead of supplications for clemency. Alompra did not give them leisure to recover from their surprise. At day-break the next morning he sallied forth at the head of his hundred adherents, and attacking the Peguers furiously with spears and swords, routed and pursued them for two miles. After this exploit he returned to his little fortress, and lost no time in preparing for a yet

more hazardous contest: he represented to his people, that they must now resolve to conquer or perish; and he invited the Birmans of neighbouring towns to enrol themselves under his standard. Some obeyed the summons, but many were cautious of embracing his yet desperate fortune. In this affair, the number of Peguers defeated by Alompra is estimated at one thousand.

News of this disaster reaching Dotachew at Ava, he seems to have acted with the most blameable irresolution; undecided what measure to adopt, whether to march in person at the head of his troops, which did not exceed three thousand, to wait until a reinforcement should arrive, or to retreat to Prome. Whilst he was thus deliberating, reports were daily received of some accession to the force of the ad-

venturer, which, though in part true, were greatly exaggerated by the general consternation that prevailed throughout the city. Alompra had certain intelligence of the state of his interests in every quarter; and determined, by advancing boldly to Ava, to strike a decisive blow, before the fears of the enemy had subsided, and without giving time to recal the numerous detachments of Peguers that were scattered over the neighbouring provinces. The prudence and promptitude of this measure met with all the success it merited; Dotachew, when he heard of Alompra's intention, fled from Ava, whilst the Birmans in that city rose on the few Peguers that either could not, or did not choose to accompany their leader; all of whom they put to death. Alompra, finding that Dotachew had retreated, altered his first resolution of pro-

ceeding in person to Ava, and remained at Monchaboo, sending his second son, Shembuan, to take possession of the city, and garrison the fort.

These events appear to have taken place about the autumn of the year 1753: Dotachew did not halt until he reached Pegue. The misfortunes of the Peguers in the remote provinces alarmed Beinga Della, their king, for the safety of his own territories, and particularly for the northern towns and districts of Prome, Keounzeik, Tambouterra, &c. where the Birmans considerably outnumbered the Peguers. A large force was, notwithstanding, collected at Syriam, the command of which was given to Apporaza, who, in the month of January 1754, sailed up the Irrawaddy, with a numerous fleet of war boats, to reduce the insur-

gents. At this time both the English and French nations had re-established their factories at Syriam, and, of course, had their separate interests. The French favoured the Peguers, whilst the English leaned to the Birmans; but until the vicinity of their residence again became the seat of war, neither engaged in open hostility: their partialities were manifested by petty assistance lent in secret, and supplies clandestinely conveyed, probably more with a view to private emolument, than from any enlarged political consideration.

When the English last took possession of Negrais, about the year 1751, their affairs were not conducted with prudence. A Mr. Hunter was appointed to the superintendance, who is represented as a man of capacity, but of an unconciliating

and perverse disposition; the settlement, under his guidance, continued in a state of unceasing ferment: the Caffre slaves, who had been introduced for the purpose of cultivating the lands, rose upon their masters, and, seizing on the boats belonging to the island, effected their escape. When Mr. Hunter died, he was succeeded by the person next in rank, under whose auspices the interests of the infant colony did not improve. In addition to their difficulties, the new settlers became unhealthy: these discouragements, however, did not induce them to evacuate the place; but their exertions were rendered languid by the diminished probability of ultimate success.

The season when Apporaza undertook his expedition to reduce Alompra, was the most unfavourable for making a speedy

journey. During the dry months of January, February, March, and April, the waters of the Irrawaddy subside into a stream that is barely navigable*; frequent shoals and banks of sand retard boats of burthen, and a northerly wind invariably prevails. These obstructions, whilst they delayed the Peguers, gave opportunity to their enemies to collect the whole of their force, and arrange it in the most advantageous manner, to avert the impending danger.

The progress of Apporaza was uninter-

* The Ganges, at the same season of the year, experiences a like reduction of its waters. The head of the Hoogly river continues shut for some months, during which, boats, to reach the Ganges from Calcutta, are obliged to navigate through the Sunderbunds, and afterwards surmount the stream with difficulty, owing to the impediments of numerous shallows and sand-banks.

rupted until he approached the city of Ava, in the neighbourhood of which small parties of Birmans from the adjacent banks, molested the boats of the Peguers by desultory attacks; they, however, did not much impede the fleet, which continued to advance. Approaching the fort, a summons was sent from the Pegue general to Shembuan, with a promise to spare his life provided he immediately surrendered, and threatening exemplary vengeance should he refuse.

The fort of ancient Ava was of sufficient strength to maintain a protracted siege against an enemy inexpert in war; and Apporaza had good reason to suppose that resolution would not be wanting in the besieged. Shembuan replied, that he would defend his post to the last extremity.

In the meanwhile Alompra was unremitting in his preparations to receive the enemy; he had collected a considerable fleet at Keoum-meoum, and his army was recruited to the computed number of ten thousand, whose confidence increased on the approach of danger; whilst, on the contrary, the troops of Apporaza were disheartened by the accounts of the valour and strength of their foes; the Pegue commander, therefore, judged it more prudent to lead them at once to battle, than to waste time in the operations of a siege, the termination of which seemed precarious and remote.

With this design he left Ava in his rear, and proceeded with his whole force towards Keoum-meoum, where he found Alompra prepared to give him battle: an engagement ensued; the contest was

chiefly confined to the fleets, whilst small parties of either army skirmished on shore. The action is said to have been obstinate and bloody: at length the Peguers, on a report being spread that Shembuan had left the fort of Ava, and was advancing to attack their rear, gave way, and fled with precipitation. Numbers were slaughtered in the retreat, and Shembuan, issuing from the fort of Ava, completed their overthrow; Alompra pursued the fugitive Peguers as far as the city of Sembew-Ghewn, after which he returned to Monchaboo. Apporaza, with the remains of his army, retired to the province of Pegue.

The power of the Peguers now seemed hastening to its wane: yet, notwithstanding the recent check they had received, fresh preparations were made to prosecute

the war. At this time, either real or pretended caution impelled them to a measure, not less repugnant to humanity than, as the event proved, injurious to their own interests. It was alleged, that a conspiracy had been formed against the Pegue government, by their aged prisoner, the dethroned monarch of the Birmans, which had been discovered when on the point of execution. All the principal men of the Birman nation were supposed to be confederated in the plot; and little formality was used to ascertain whether the accusation was true or false. On the 13th of October the Peguers rose, and, having first slain the unhappy monarch, slaughtered indiscriminately several hundred Birmans, sparing neither age nor sex. These sanguinary acts were as cruelly retaliated. The Birmans, though subdued, were still very numerous in the towns and dis-

tricts of Prome, Keounzeik, Loonzay, and Denoobew. Exasperated at the murder of their monarch, and the fate of their brethren, they flew to arms, and, with a barbarity nothing inferior to that which had been exercised by the Peguers, exacted a severe retribution. Prome, Denoobew, Loonzay, &c. changed masters, and their garrisons fell the victims of revenge.

During these transactions, the Birman adventurer was sedulously employed in improving his good fortune. The eldest son of the late deposed and murdered king, hearing that Alompra had raised the standard of revolt, returned to Monchaboo, and with a sect of brave and attached people, called Quois*, that inhabited an eastern province† of the empire, joined

* By some, Yoos.

† Called Muddora, east of Ava.

the fortunes of the adventurer. This young man, intoxicated by the successes of his party, had the imprudence to assume the distinctions of royalty, and attempt to exercise sovereign sway, as his hereditary right. Such claims, however, were wholly incompatible with the views of the ambitious chief, whose opposition soon convinced the prince, not only of the futility of his hopes, but likewise that, having harboured them, his own person was no longer secure; he therefore secretly withdrew, and again sought an asylum among the Siamese. This step so enraged Alompra, that, under pretence of a conspiracy, he caused near a thousand of the Quois to be put to death.

These events occupied the greater part of the year 1754, which was drawing to a close, when Beinga Della, having made

fresh levies, marched from Pegue, accompanied by his brother, to retrieve the late disgraceful defeats. The king proceeded with all expedition towards Denoobew and Loonzay; the Birmans, on his approach, evacuated those towns and fled. The Peguers then advanced to Prome, a city well-defended by a solid wall, a deep fosse, and a strong stockade. In this fortress the Birmans prepared to make a resolute defence, and wrote to Alompra to acquaint him of their situation, entreating him at the same time to come to their aid with all possible dispatch. Beinga Della drove in the straggling Birmans that defended the banks of the river; a general assault followed, which was vigorously repulsed by the besieged; the Peguers then altered the mode of attack into a blockade; and, finding that the garrison could only act on the defensive, Beinga Della dispatched

part of his fleet and army up the river, as far as Melloon, in order to cut off supplies from the northward, and afford his own people more convenient subsistence.

Alompra, although at this time threatened with an attack from the fugitive prince, and the exasperated Quois, on receiving intelligence of the blockade of Prome, immediately detached Meinlaw Tzezo*, an officer of distinction, with 36 war boats, to the assistance of the garrison. This general, notwithstanding his force was far inferior to that of the enemy, boldly engaged the advanced guard at Melloon, and drove them back to Prome; but, finding himself unequal to contend openly against the main body of the Peguers, he threw himself, by a skilful manœuvre, with a considerable supply

* Grandfather of the present Viceroy of Pegue.

of men and provisions, into the fort; a few of his boats only falling into the hands of the enemy, whilst the remainder effected their retreat to a place of security.

Forty days are said to have elapsed, without any material advantage on the part of the besiegers. The danger being past that threatened from the eastward, Alompra had, during this interval, collected the choicest of his troops, and, leaving the care of Monchaboo and Ava to his two eldest sons, proceeded down the river at the head of a formidable fleet, with a rapidity that equally tended to impress the enemy with dread, and inspire his own soldiers with confidence. The attack was not delayed beyond the hour of his arrival; the Peguers were quickly driven from a stockade which they had

erected on the north side of the fort; but the hottest action took place between the fleets: instead of an ineffectual fire from ill-directed musquetry, the boats closed, and the highest personal prowess was evinced on both sides; knives, spears, and swords, were their weapons; after a long and bloody contest, victory declared for the Birmans, whilst the vanquished Peguers sought safety in a precipitate flight.

Alompra, who never failed diligently to improve his advantages, suffered no time to elapse in inaction; proceeding to Loonzay, he found the town evacuated, and, on taking possession, changed its name to Mayah-oun, signifying rapid conquest, by which it is at present known; and such was the terror of his arms, that a body of his troops advanced within a few leagues of Persaim, or Bassien, un-

molested by the enemy, who did not attempt even to retard their progress.

The report of this disaster spread general consternation throughout the Pegue dominions; the fugitives that escaped gave such accounts, as the facts, exaggerated by their fears, might be supposed to dictate; a general insurrection of all the Birman subjects subordinate to the Pegue government was apprehended; and certain information of plots and conspiracies proved that these fears were not groundless. The Pegue king, who had retreated to Bassien, left that place by night, and retired to Pegue; his adherents, thus abandoned and terrified, thought of nothing but their own security; every man pursued what he judged the safest track; and so universal was the panic, that, on the 17th of February, the town and fort

of Persaim were completely deserted, the fugitives having first set fire to several houses, and consumed the public store-rooms, in which was deposited a large quantity of grain.

On the morning of the 23d, an advanced party of the Birman fleet came in sight; shortly after, a body of about 250 men landed, and marched up to a small factory* occupied by the English. These people were well armed, according to the country manner; but, not appearing to entertain hostile intentions against any except the Peguers, the English superintendant, Captain Baker, received them with confidence, and, in the character of

* This factory, under the control of the resident at Negrais, consisted of a few store-houses, erected near the river, for the purpose of facilitating the timber trade.

a peaceable trader, solicited protection for the servants and property of the India Company: his request was granted; neither depredation nor insult were offered to the English. About noon the Birmans departed, having first set fire to what remained of the town, and destroyed part of the stockade; they directed their route back to Kioukhoun, a town situated on the mouth of that branch of the great river that leads to Bassien and Negrais.

From this time until the 12th of March, frequent skirmishes took place between small parties of the Birmans and Peguers, in which the latter were generally worsted; an ineffectual attempt was made to repossess and defend Bassien, by the late Chekey, or Lieutenant, the man who had been second in authority whilst the place was subject to the Pegue government.

The seat of war was now likely to be confined to the mouths of navigable rivers, and the numerous creeks and canals that intersect the lower provinces of Pegue, and communicate between the larger streams; a vessel of burthen, provided with guns, and worked by a few Europeans, became a formidable foe to the open war-boats of the natives, though well manned, and conducted with skill and courage. Alompra, who was at this time at Loonzay, or Mayah-oun, formed a right estimation of the advantage to be derived from an alliance with nations so well versed in the arts of maritime war; in order, therefore, to engage the good offices of the English, or at least stipulate for their neutrality, he sent a deputation to Mr. Brooke, resident at Negrais, and at that time chief of all the English factories.

On the 13th of March, a fleet of twenty-five Birman boats arrived at Bassien, having on board two Birman deputies, accompanied by an Armenian and a Mussulman as interpreters. These personages brought a letter from Alompra, directed to Mr. Brooke, couched in terms of friendship; but, not deeming it prudent to venture with so small a force through the Pegue districts to Negrais, the English superintendant undertook to forward a copy of the letter, whilst the deputies returned to a secure post up the river, at no great distance from Bassien, there to wait an answer, which was expected in four or five days.

At the expiration of the computed time, the schooner, that had been dispatched to Negrais, returned, bringing an order from Mr. Brooke to Captain Baker, to accom-

pany the deputies to Negrais, and to repair thither as speedily as possible: the deputation accordingly left Bassien on the 19th of March 1755, and reached Negrais on the 22d, at night.

The business of the deputies was not concluded until the 26th; when, having received an answer to Alompra's letter, and their final dismission, they departed, attended by Captain Baker. Approaching Bassien, they were astonished to find the place in the hands of the enemy. A detachment of 3000 Peguers, in 60 war-boats, had arrived during their absence; and on the 26th, engaged and captured all the boats that waited to convoy the deputies to their master. Captain Baker, finding it impracticable to proceed, conducted the deputies back to Negrais, where they returned on the 3d of April,

purposing to wait the occurrence of some more favourable opportunity.

The impediments that had thus prevented the return of the deputies were of short duration. On the 21st of April 1755, the Peguers received certain intelligence that Alompra had attacked Apporaza, in his camp at Synyangong, and that their countrymen had suffered a total defeat; their own numbers being greatly diminished by desertion, Bassien became no longer a place of safety; they judged it therefore most prudent to withdraw towards Syriam. On the 23d, the ruins of the town, and its vicinity, were completely evacuated, and the navigation of the river again opened to the Birmans.

The retreat of these troops was well

timed; several detached parties of Birmans appeared on the subsequent days; and on the 28th, a body of 1000 men arrived at Bassien, a small number by land, the rest by water, with 40 war-boats; they experienced no resistance, and made a few prisoners. A strong convoy was sent down to Negrais to escort the deputies, who now pursued their journey without molestation; they returned on the 3d of June to Bassien, and left it on the 5th, with a letter from the resident at Negrais to Alompra, who had reached Dagon* early in the preceding month.

The victory gained by Alompra at Synyangong, in the end of April, was decisive: the Peguers, disheartened, fled to

* Now called Rangoon. Dagon is the name of a celebrated temple, a short distance from the present city.

Syriam; and many did not halt until they reached Pegue. Among the latter was Apporaza, who left the defence of Syriam to a relation of the king of Pegue. The fortifications consisted of a feeble rampart, protected by a palisade, and an inconsiderable fosse, almost dry. Light as such obstacles would appear to regular troops, they presented a formidable opposition to the desultory attacks of an undisciplined rabble.

The French and English factories at Syriam were at this time in a state of rivalry, such as might be expected from the spirit of national emulation, and the avidity of traders on a narrow scale: the situation of both became at this juncture highly critical; danger approached, from which they could not hope to be entirely exempt. It was not to be expected that

they would be suffered to remain in neutral tranquillity, indifferent spectators of so serious a contest: it therefore became necessary to adopt some decided line of conduct, in order to avoid being considered as a common enemy, whilst the contending powers seemed equally anxious to attach them. In this difficult situation neither the French nor the English seem to have acted with policy or candour; and the imprudence of certain individuals finally involved others, as well as themselves, in fatal consequences.

Monsieur Bourno, the chief of the French factory, in the interest of the Peguers, but apprehensive of the power, and dreading the success of the Birmans, had recourse to dissimulation, and endeavoured to steer a middle course. Under pretence of occupying a station where he could

more effectually aid the Peguers, he embarked on board a French ship, and, with two other vessels belonging to his nation, dropped down from Syriam, and moored in the stream of the Rangoon river. Finding, soon after, that Alompra was likely to be victorious, he determined, if possible, to secure an interest in that quarter. With this intent, he quitted his ship, accompanied by two of his countrymen, and proceeded in a boat to Dagon, where Alompra received him with marks of distinction and kindness; but on the second day after the departure of Monsieur Bourno, the officer whom he left in charge of the ship during his absence, in concert with a missionary who had long resided at the factory, either impelled by fear, or prevailed upon by some secret influence, weighed anchor suddenly, and returned to the Peguers at Syriam, without per-

mission from his commander, or even advising him of his intention.

So extraordinary a step surprised Alompra exceedingly; he taxed Bourno with deceit; the Frenchman protested his own innocence, and argued the improbability of his assenting to any such measure whilst he remained in the Birman camp. He sent an order to his officers to return immediately; an injunction that was disregarded by them, under plea of their commander being a prisoner. He then requested leave from Alompra to go in person, and bring back the ship; to this the king consented, on condition of leaving one of his attendants (Lavine, a youth) as an hostage for his certain return.

From the procedure of Mr. Brooke, resident at Negrais, in his reception of the

Birman deputies, and the aid of military stores sent by him to the Birmans, the English, when it became necessary to avow the side they meant to espouse, seem to have declared explicitly for the Birmans; and this principle was adopted not only by the resident at Negrais, but also by the factory at Syriam. The Hunter schooner, belonging to the India Company, the Elizabeth, a country ship, commanded by Captain Swain, and two other vessels, left Syriam in the month of May, and joined the Birmans at Dagon. In the beginning of June, the Company's snow, Arcot, bound to Negrais, commanded by a Captain Jackson, and having on board Mr. Whitehill, a gentleman in the service of the East India Company, proceeding to Negrais in an official capacity, put into the Rangoon river, through stress of weather. A boat that had been sent in to

fetch a pilot returned, with an account of the state of affairs; and brought a letter, and an invitation from Alompra to Captain Jackson, to carry his vessel up to Dagon, promising him every aid that the place afforded.

On the 6th of June the Arcot reached Dagon, and Mr. Whitehill went on shore to pay his respects to the Birman king, by whom he was received in a manner that gave no apparent cause for complaint.

After the defeat of the Peguers at Synyangong, and the acquisition of Dagon by Alompra, the English ships sailed from Syriam voluntarily, and came to Dagon to assist the Birmans, in conformity to the evident determination of Mr. Brooke, whose reception of the Birman

deputies, together with his subsequent conduct, clearly evinced his friendly intentions towards that nation. Until the arrival of the Arcot, with Mr. Jackson and Mr. Whitehill, no subject of offence seems to have been given to the English by the Birmans.

A short time previous to the arrival of the Arcot, Apporaza returned from Pegue to Syriam, and reassumed the command; he had been made acquainted with the negotiation carrying on between Mr. Brooke at Negrais and the deputies of Alompra; and, in order to counteract its effects, commenced a secret correspondence with Captain Jackson. His arguments seem to have strongly influenced that gentleman, and given a decided bias in his favour. Ground of accusation was soon found against the Birmans; personal ill treatment was heavily complained of, which

the tenour of Mr. Jackson's dispatches does not satisfactorily establish.

An attempt was shortly after made by the Peguers to surprise the Birman camp, and recover Dagon. Notwithstanding the land forces marched by night, and the fleet advanced with celerity, increased by a rapid tide, they were discovered in time for the Birmans to prepare for their reception. The boats first arriving, were repulsed by a heavy fire from the banks, which were lined with Birman troops. The post of Dagon could only be taken on the side of the land by a resolute assault. The attack of the Peguers was feeble and ineffectual; disheartened by the failure of their fleet, and destitute of able leaders, they soon abandoned their enterprize. An irregular fire of musquetry continued until noon, when the Peguers retreated

to Syriam, little loss being sustained on either side.

During this spiritless contest the English maintained a perfect neutrality, not a shot being discharged from any of the ships; a circumstance that tended to create suspicion in the minds of the Birmans: their distrust, however, seems to have been lulled by assurances of friendship, and probably by the expectation of a supply of cannon and stores from Negrais, which Mr. Brooke had announced his intention of sending under care of Messrs. Baker and North, whom he meant to depute to the Birman king. Alompra had, a short time before, left Dagon to quell a disturbance in the northern provinces, caused by the Quois and Siamese; who, taking advantage of his absence, had invaded his country, and

excited an insurrection of the inhabitants in favour of the fugitive son of the ancient monarch. The sudden appearance of the victorious chief disconcerted his enemies; he soon reduced the disobedient, and obliged the Siamese to retire within their own frontiers.

Previous to his departure from Dagon, Alompra laid the foundation of the town now so well known by the name of Rangoon, or Dzangoon, which signifies victory achieved. Here stood, in former days, a large and populous city, called in the Pali, or sacred language, Singounterra; the site of which Alompra diligently explored, and raised on its ruins the present flourishing sea-port of the Pegue dominions. Dagon, often called Shoe Dagon, or the golden Dagon, is a name peculiar to the temple; a noble edi-

fice, three miles distant from the banks of the river. When Alompra left his camp, he appointed Meinla-Meingoun, an officer of approved reputation and valour, to command in his absence.

The clandestine negotiations between the English and Peguers appear to have been renewed after this action; several messages passed, in which a fresh attack on the Birmans was concerted, and the aid of the Company's ships promised to the Peguers, who were thus to be befriended by the whole European force, both French and English. Confiding in their new allies, and assured of victory, the war-boats of the Peguers, during the night, dropped down the Pegue river, and with the French ships moored in the stream of the Irrawaddy*, waiting the

* The name of the great river of Ava. This branch

return of tide to carry them to Rangoon. Dawn of day discovered them to the Birmans, whose general immediately sent for the English gentlemen, to consult on the best means of defence. At this interview, the Birmans candidly acquainted Mr. Whitehill how ill satisfied they were with the conduct of the English commanders during the late action, and desired a promise of more active assistance on the present occasion: Mr. Whitehill replied, that without the Company's orders he was not authorized to commence hostilities on any nation; but if the Peguers fired on the English ships, it would be considered as an act of aggression, and resented accordingly. How much it is to be lamented, that such prudent and equitable principles were not better observed! the departure

is often called the Rangoon river, to distinguish it from that which leads to Bassien.

from them affixed a stain on the national honour, which the lapse of more than forty years has not been able to expunge.

The Pegue force was, on this occasion, highly formidable; it consisted of two large French ships, and an armed snow belonging to the king of Pegue, with 200 Teilee, or war-boats. On the approach of this armament, the Birmans manifested their apprehensions, by repeating their entreaties to the English. Owing to the time of the tide, it was noon before the Pegue boats could advance. When within cannon shot, the French ships came to anchor, and opened their guns, whilst a brisk discharge of musquetry was poured from the Pegue boats on the Birman fleet, that, for the most part, had taken shelter in a creek, and were protected by the fire kept up from a grove of mangoo trees,

on the banks of the river, in possession of the Birmans, around which they had raised temporary works, and erected a battery of a few pieces of ship cannon, which, from being ill-served, did little execution. At this juncture the English ships Hunter, Arcot, and Elizabeth, commenced a fire on the Birman fleet. Thus assailed by unexpected foes, the Birmans were obliged to abandon their boats, and take shelter in the grove. Had the Peguers improved the critical opportunity, and pursued their advantage with resolution, this action might have retrieved their declining interests, and restored to them possession of the lower provinces. In vain the Europeans persuaded them to attempt the capture of the Birman fleet; too timid to expose themselves to a close discharge of musquetry from the grove, they were contented with the eclat of

having compelled the enemy to retreat from their boats, and the rest of the day was spent in distant random firing. During the night the English ships removed out of the reach of small arms, two men being killed on board the Arcot. The Peguers kept their situation for some days, during which much irregular skirmishing passed; when, having exhausted their ammunition without advancing their cause, the Peguers thought fit to return to Syriam, accompanied by the English and French ships, leaving the Birmans in possession of the fortified grove, and the lines of the newly-projected town.

Apporaza, who held the chief command at Syriam, received the English with every mark of respect; and, judging this a favourable opportunity to regain the alliance of their nation, he wrote to Mr.

Brooke at Negrais, inviting him to come in person to Syriam, and there settle terms of permanent connection. Mr. Brooke, in letters of a friendly tenour, excused himself from personal attendance, and requested that Mr. Whitehill might be suffered to proceed to his station at Negrais, and the Company's ships permitted to pursue their voyage to the same place; whither he ordered the several commanders immediately to repair. The compliance of Apporaza with this request demonstrated his ardent desire to recover the good will of the English. Mr. Whitehill left Syriam, escorted by 20 armed boats, and, proceeding through the rivers, reached Negrais on the 26th of August: the Hunter schooner sailed on the 26th of September following, the Arcot being delayed for some necessary repairs.

Whilst these matters were agitating at Dagon, Mr. Brooke was advancing his negotiations with Alompra; Captain Baker and Lieutenant North were delegated, with presents, and instructions, to conclude a treaty of amity and alliance with the Birman monarch.

It has been already mentioned, that Alompra was under the necessity of leaving his post at Dagon about the middle of June, in order to suppress an insurrection of his own subjects, and repel the Siamese: the object of his expedition was attained with little difficulty; and he had the additional satisfaction to learn, that his arms had been successful in Cassay, the inhabitants of which, taking advantage of the unsettled state of the empire, had thrown off their dependence. This country is separated from the kingdom of the Bir-

mans on the north-west by the river Keenduem, which, taking a south-east course, unites its waters with those of the Irrawaddy, a short way above the town of Sembew-ghewn. About the time that Alompra left Ava to relieve Prome, he detached a body of troops across the river, under the command of a distant relation, to chastize the Cassayers: these people had, for ages past, tasted the sweets of independence only at intervals, when the contests of the Birman and Pegue powers left them no leisure to enforce obedience. Thus accustomed to the yoke, though always ready for revolt, they were quickly reduced to submission; the prince, or rajah, who resided at Munnepoora, the capital of Cassay, sued for peace, which was concluded on terms advantageous to the Birmans; and, as is the custom, a young man and young woman of the

kindred of the rajah were delivered as hostages for the due observance of the compact.

The English deputation proceeded in boats slowly up the river, which, at that season of the year, is swelled by mountain torrents, and the navigation rendered difficult by the rapidity of the stream. A short distance above Prome, they met a detachment, commanded by a Boomien, or general of rank, in its route to Dagon; it consisted of eighty boats, and 4000 troops, to reinforce the army acting against the Peguers. Captain Baker had an interview with the chief, who expressed sanguine hopes of reducing Syriam, and destroying the French ships that had assisted the Peguers.

The late extraordinary conduct of the

English shipping at Dagon was no very favourable introduction to the delegates; nor did Captain Baker escape reproach for transactions in which he certainly had no share. To increase his embarrassment, he had the misfortune, the day after he parted with the detachment, to lose his colleague, Lieut. North, who died at Roung-Yooah, of a dysentery and fever. Captain Baker afterwards pursued his voyage, accompanied only by the Birmans. On the 8th of September he reached Ava, lately the metropolis of the empire. Alompra, partial to the scene of his first success, had removed the seat of government to Monchaboô, which he constituted his capital, and fixed on as the place of his future residence. At Ava Captain Baker was civilly entertained by the Governor; on the 12th he reached Keoum-meoum, situated on the west bank

of the Irrawaddy, and on the 16th received a summons to attend "the golden feet*." Leaving his boats, at noon the following day he proceeded by land to the royal presence; his reception was conducted with as much pomp and parade, as a king so recently elevated to his honours, and seated on a throne so imperfectly established, was capable of displaying. During this interview the new monarch, in his conversation, gave a striking instance of that intoxication which usually attends an unexpected and recent rise to power: yet his vain boastings were not accompanied by any mark of personal contempt or indignity to Captain Baker. He vaunted of his victories, and the extent of his empire, in a style of presumptuous vanity equal to the arrogance of Xerxes; he upbraided

* A Birman expression, used to denote the Imperial presence.

our national character in the affair of the shipping at Dagon, alleging that he had treated the English with kindness, which they repaid by perfidiously breaking the promise given to him on his departure from Dagon. To these reproaches Captain Baker could only reply by expressions of regret; and a solemn declaration, that Mr. Brooke, so far from having authorized, knew nothing of such proceedings. Alompra listened to his assurances with more complacency than could well be expected from a despot who had waded to a throne through the blood of his enemies.

At a second audience, a few days subsequent to the first, his Majesty dictated a letter, addressed to Mr. Brooke, in which he granted permission to the Company to establish factories at Dagon and Bassien;

having determined on the total demolition of Syriam. Captain Baker made a further requisition of the Island of Negrais. Although this desire was not refused, the formal assignment was postponed, owing to a domestic misfortune, which gave the King much uneasiness; but as it was his Majesty's intention shortly to repair to Rangoon, to conduct in person the Pegue war, the completion of the grant was deferred to a future opportunity. Captain Baker, having obtained his dismission, set out for Keoum-meoum, and on the 29th of September embarked to return to Negrais.

Whilst friendship and union were thus likely to be established between the Birmans and the settlement at Negrais, the Peguers hazarded another attempt on the Birman post at Dagon, and were again

assisted by the Arcot, and two private English ships, which, it is probable, on this occasion might have acted, in some degree, under compulsatory influence. Three English and one French ship, with 300 armed boats, constituted the Pegue force by water; and 10,000 men marched by land, to attack the heights at Dagon, and the fortified grove. The Birmans, with considerable ingenuity, constructed fire-rafts, consisting of a number of boats fastened together, and filled with combustible materials: these rafts were floated down a strong spring-tide to where the ships lay at anchor, and directed with such skill and effect, as to oblige them to slip their cables and get under weigh, the French ship narrowly escaping destruction. This manœuvre effectually removed the vessels for that tide, and prevented a co-operation with the land forces, who, thus

deprived of the support on which they chiefly depended, made an ineffectual charge on the Birman works; they were easily repulsed, and, with the fleet and army, retreated to Syriam, whence they never dared to hazard another enterprize.

The affairs of the Peguers were in this desperate state when Alompra returned victorious from Ava: his presence animated his own army, and spread a heavier cloud over the unfortunate Taliens*. He immediately changed the plan of operation: instead of waiting at Dagon, in fortified posts, the attack of the Peguers, he, in turn, became the assailant, and leaving the great river, boldly advanced his boats to the mouth of the Syriam stream; thereby cutting off all communication with the sea, and the countries

* The Birmans call the Peguers Taliens.

to the west of Rangoon. Apporaza about this time retired from Syriam to Pegue, leaving his former station to be maintained by the chief Woon, or Woongee, of the Pegue empire. Permission had previously been given to the English ships to depart with the Company's stores. Mons. Bourno, the French resident, continued at Syriam, where, having moored his vessel close to the factory, he prepared to defend himself. The tide in the Rangoon river rises to an uncommon height; the river of Pegue, or, as it is often called, of Syriam, being fed by the influx of the sea, through the Rangoon river, sinks at low ebb into an inconsiderable stream. The French ship, when the water retired, touched the ground, whilst the Birmans, profiting by her unmanageable state, during the recess of tide, brought gun-boats to bear in such a direction, as to annoy her

without exposing themselves. This judicious mode of attack proved successful; the ship was quickly disabled, and Mons. Bourno, finding the post untenable, wrote a letter to Alompra, apologizing for his former conduct, and making fresh overtures of accommodation. The correspondence was either discovered or suspected by the Peguers, who suddenly removed Mons. Bourno and his adherents into the fort of Syriam, before the purposed negotiation had time to be completed.

Alompra immediately took possession of the evacuated factory and vessel; after which he seemed desirous of attaining his object of Syriam, rather by blockade and famine than by hostile approaches; without attempting to assault the place, he continued in its vicinity until the month of July 1756. By such apparent inactivity

on the part of the Birmans, the garrison was lulled into fatal security: Alompra, seizing a favourable opportunity, crossed the ditch in the dead of night, carried the outworks without resistance, and soon made himself master of the fort. The commandant, and the greater part of the garrison, favoured by the darkness, escaped to Pegue; many, however, were slain, and all the Europeans were made prisoners.

It has already appeared to have been the determined policy of the French to espouse the cause of the Peguers; and had succours from Pondicherry arrived before the state of things became too desperate, affairs would probably have worne a different aspect, and the Peguers obtained such an addition to their strength, as would have enabled them to conclude a

peace on advantageous terms. But assistance in war, to be effectual, must be timely; unless applied while the scales hang nearly even, it often comes too late, and is found, not only to be useless, but even productive of deeper disappointment. In the present case, the French brought those supplies, of which the Peguers had long buoyed themselves with hopes, at the unfortunate moment when the communication was cut off, when no relief could be conveyed to them, and all prospect of retrieving their disastrous fortunes had completely vanished.

Mons. Dupliex, Governor of Pondicherry, a man whose comprehensive mind perceived with clearness whatever could benefit his nation, at this juncture deeply engaged in the important contest that was ultimately to determine the sove-

reignty of the East, being aware of the consequence of maintaining an influence in Pegue, had, notwithstanding the exigencies of his own situation, equipped two ships, the Galathié and Diligent, vessels of force, well manned and armed, and sent them, with a supply of military stores, to the assistance of the Peguers. Shortly after leaving Pondicherry, they separated: the Galathié had a speedy passage; but owing to a fatal and frequent error of mistaking the mouth of the Sitang river, which is a few miles to the eastward, for that of Rangoon, she did not arrive at the bar until two days after Syriam had fallen into the hands of the Birmans. The boat sent by the French commander to bring down a pilot was immediately captured. Alompra, being apprized of the circumstance, ordered a pilot, in a country boat, to proceed to the Gala-

thié, and compelled Bourno, who was then under rigorous confinement, to write to the Captain, encouraging him to proceed, and come up to Rangoon, assigning some frivolous excuse for the delay of the Galathié's boat, which he was given to expect would meet him on the way to town. The Captain imprudently became the dupe of this artifice; he weighed, and stood in with a strong flood tide, which in a few hours carried him to Rangoon, where the sudden seizure of his vessel prevented all possibility of retreat; the stores were brought on shore, and the consignments and papers proved that these supplies were meant for the assistance of the Peguers, and directed to Beinga Della, and his brother Apporaza. Alompra became so incensed, that he gave orders for the instant execution of Bourno, Martine, and the Captain and officers of the Gala-

thié. This sanguinary mandate was obeyed with unrelenting promptitude; a few seamen and Lascars alone escaped, and these were preserved, for no other purpose than to be rendered of use in the further prosecution of the war, and survived but to experience all the miseries of hopeless bondage.

The Diligent was more fortunate; having separated from her consort, she met with adverse winds, and was obliged to bear away for the Nicobar Islands; this delay prevented her reaching her intended port until six weeks subsequent to the disaster. The caution of the Captain saved him from suffering a similar fate; he got intelligence of the massacre of his countrymen in time to retire, and carried back news of the failure of the expedition to Pondicherry, whence it was impossible to

attempt the extension of further succour to the unhappy Peguers.

The rage of the conqueror was, on this occasion, exhausted on the French. Foreigners of other nations, who had been captured in Syriam, were treated less rigorously; some who incurred his displeasure, and had reason to dread its effects, were dismissed with admonitions, and suffered to depart. Among these were a few English, who had not been able to withdraw from Syriam, before it came into the enemy's possession.

The fall of Syriam seems to have determined the fate of the Peguers; cut off from communication with the western countries of Dalla and Bassien, deprived of the navigation of the Rangoon river and the Irrawaddy, and shut out from all

foreign aid, their resources failed, and supplies by water could no longer reach them. The Bago Mioup, or Pegue river, extends a very short distance to the north north-east; the tide alone renders it navigable; where that influence fails, it degenerates into a streamlet which issues from a range of hills about forty miles above the city, remarkable only for their noisome and destructive atmosphere.

Notwithstanding these discouragements, the Peguers prepared to sustain a siege in their capital, which was in a better state of defence than is common in countries where the science of war is so imperfectly understood. Situated on an extensive plain, Pegue was surrounded with a high and solid wall, flanked by small towers, and strengthened on each face by demi-bastions, equidistant; a broad ditch con-

tained about three feet depth of water; wells or reservoirs supplied the town; the stupendous pagoda of Shoemadoo, nearly centrical, built on an artificial eminence, and inclosed by a substantial wall of brick, served as a citadel, and afforded an enlarged view of the adjacent country. The extent, however, of the works, the troops necessary to defend them, and the number of inhabitants within the walls, operated to the disadvantage of the besieged, and aggravated the distresses they were shortly to endure.

As soon as the rainy season subsided, and the country, which between Pegue and Syriam is low and swampy, had emerged from the inundations of the monsoon, Alompra ordered his General, Meinla-Meingoung, to advance towards Pegue at the head of a body of troops.

A few days after he followed in person with his whole army; and in four marches they reached the vicinity of the city, through a country laid waste and depopulated. Circumvallation is a favourite practice of warfare with the Birmans, and famine a weapon on which they repose the greatest reliance. Alompra, preferring these to the hazard of a repulse, in an attempt to storm, invested Pegue with his army, and erected numerous stockades, at once to protect his own troops, and prevent communication with the country. Thus secured by his defences from surprize and sudden attack, fearless of any external enemy, and commanding the navigation of the river, he sat down in the month of January 1757, to wait the slow but certain effects of hunger and distress.

The fort of Pegue was occupied by the royal family and the principal nobles of the Talien nation. Among the highest in rank were Apporaza, brother of the king, Chouparea, his son-in-law and nephew, and Talabaan, a general who, on former occasions, had been distinguished by rendering his country signal services, and had raised himself by his valour to the first military honours of the state.

The Birmans, though superior in numbers, persevered in the passive system of reduction, and were not to be allured from the protection of their stockades. Two months thus elapsed in defensive inactivity. The consequences, however, were inevitable; want, and its sure concomitants, discontent and mutiny, began to rage within the walls. On this emergency the king summoned a council of

all his family and chieftains: after expatiating on the straits to which they were reduced, and the hopelessness of relief, he declared his intention to sue for peace; and further, to propitiate the conqueror, he proposed sending to him his only unmarried daughter; as by such an act of homage alone he could expect to procure favourable terms. This proposal was listened to with sorrowful acquiescence by all but Talabaan, who is said to have cherished a secret passion for the maiden; for in this country, young women of the highest rank are not, after the manner of India, precluded from the sight and conversation of the other sex. The chief, with haughty indignation, reprobated the disgraceful sacrifice, inveighing against it in the sharpest terms; and concluded with an offer to sally forth at the head of six hundred chosen followers, and either

raise the siege, and procure an honourable peace, or perish in the attempt; provided, in the event of success, the King would promise to bestow on him his daughter, as the reward of valour.

Struck with the gallantry of this proposal, the King apparently assented, and the council broke up; but Apporaza and the other chiefs, who long had beheld with jealousy the growing power and increasing fame of Talabaan, remonstrated against the measure, as an act still more derogatory to their monarch, than yielding his daughter as a peace-offering to a sovereign potentate. The King, by these persuasions, was prevailed upon to retract the conditions. Talabaan, irritated at his disappointment, took an opportunity of leaving the fort at midnight, and with a few resolute attendants forced his way

in safety through the Birman camp: he afterwards crossed the Setang river, and marched to Mondimaa, or Martaban, where his family resided.

Two days after Talabaan had retired, the Pegue king, in pursuance of his first intention, wrote to Alompra, proposing peace on the terms which he had intimated to his council before the secession of his general. The Birman king readily accepted the offered pacification. A negotiation was opened, which terminated in an agreement, that the Pegue king should govern his country under the stipulation of doing homage to the Birman monarch; that the ancient boundary should be observed; and Prome, or Pee Miou, continue the frontier of the Pegue dominions to the north. A preliminary of these conditions was the surrender of the daughter of the

Pegue monarch to the royal victor: Apporaza, her uncle, was appointed to convey her to the Birman camp, where they were received with music, feasting, and every demonstration of joy and amity.

Some days elapsed in festive ceremonies, during which both the besiegers and besieged had frequent and almost uninterrupted intercourse; the guards on both sides relaxed in their vigilance, and small parties of Birmans found their way into the city, whilst the Peguers visited the Birman camp without molestation or inquiry. Alompra, who, it appears, had little intention of adhering to the recent compact, privately introduced bodies of armed men, with directions to secrete themselves within the city, until their services should be required; arms and ammunition were also conveyed and lodged

in places of concealment. Matters, however, were not managed with such circumspection as to prevent discovery; Chouparea, the king's nephew, received intimation of the meditated treachery: he instantly ordered the gates of the city to be closed, and having found out the repositories where the weapons were lodged, and detected many Birmans in disguise, he gave directions to put to death every man of that nation who should be found within the walls, and opened a fire upon such part of the Birman camp as was most exposed to the artillery of the fort.

Hostilities now recommenced with exasperated fury: Apporaza with his royal niece were detained in the Birman camp; the uncle under close confinement, whilst the lady was consigned to the guardians of the female apartments. The Peguers hav-

ing gained no accession to their strength, and added little to their stores, during the short interval of tranquillity, were not in a better condition than before to resist the enemy. The Birmans observed the system of warfare which they at first adopted; so that in six weeks, famine had again reduced the garrison to a deplorable state of wretchedness and want; the most loathsome reptiles were eagerly sought after and devoured, and the clamours of the soldiers could no longer be appeased. A few secret hoards of grain were by chance discovered, and many more were suspected to exist; the crowd thronged tumultuously round the quarters of Chouparea, on whom, after the secession of Talabaan, and the imprisonment of Apporaza, the care of defending the fortress entirely devolved. In order to silence and satisfy those whom he could not re-

strain, he ordered a general search for grain, and granted permission to the soldiers forcibly to enter whatever houses fell under suspicion. This licence was diligently improved, and the house of a near relation of the king was discovered to contain more grain than either the present situation of affairs or his own wants could justify. The deposit was demanded, and as resolutely refused. The crowd, authorized by the permission of Chouparea, proceeded to take by violence what was not to be obtained by entreaty; a riot ensued, in which some lives were lost, and the prince was at length obliged to abandon his house. Repairing, to the royal residence, he uttered violent invectives against Chouparea, whom he accused to the king of harbouring an intention to deprive his sovereign of life, and seize upon the imperial throne; and advised

his majesty rather to throw himself on the generosity of the besiegers, and obtain the best terms practicable, than hazard the danger to which his person and kingdom were exposed from the perfidy of a faithless and powerful subject. The king, whose imbecility seems to have equalled his ill fortune, lent an ear to the complaints of a man stimulated by sudden rage and personal jealousy: the unhappy and distracted monarch resolved to pursue his counsel; but being too timid openly to avow his weakness and suspicion, he sent secret proposals to Alompra to surrender the city to him, stipulating for life alone, and leaving the rest to the discretion of the conqueror. According to the plan agreed on, the Birmans advanced to the gates, which were immediately deserted: the Peguers fled in the utmost panic; many escaped in the confusion;

the Pegue king was made prisoner, and the city given up to indiscriminate plunder.

Alompra, having thus triumphed over his natural enemy, and to all appearance given a final blow to the Peguers, who, with their city, and their sovereign, lost the spirit of resistance, proceeded to bring into subjection the countries to the eastward, including the fertile districts situate between Pegue and the Three Pagodas; which were the ancient boundaries of the Pegue and Siam, or Yoodra, territories. Talabaan had fled to Martaban, where his influence was still considerable, and his enterprizing spirit rendered him an enemy not to be despised. This chief, on the approach of Alompra, finding that he had not force sufficient to oppose the Birmans, fled into the woods, leaving behind him

some of his family, and many persons who were attached to his cause. Alompra seized on these, and, conformably to the barbarous custom of nations of the East, the innocent were condemned to suffer for the guilty: the unfortunate Talabaan was summoned to surrender, and menaces of destruction, in case of refusal, were held out against such of his family and adherents as had fallen into the conqueror's power. The danger to which his dearest connections thus became exposed, suppressed in Talabaan's mind all personal apprehension; he surrendered himself a voluntary prisoner, to preserve those whom he loved more than life. When brought into the royal presence, with unshaken but respectful resolution, he demanded the release of his friends, and his own sentence. Alompra, struck with such an instance of magnanimity, generously for-

gave him, and ordered the captives to be liberated. He afterwards raised Talabaan to a distinguished station in his own service; the duties of which that general executed during the reign of Alompra with strict fidelity, although he was afterwards instrumental in exciting a rebellion against his successor.

The English interests in India were at this time suspended in a doubtful scale; little could be spared from the coast of Coromandel, then the theatre of most important struggles, to aid distant colonies, and support precarious projects; Negrais was in consequence neglected, though not yet abandoned. The Talien or Pegue government, by the surrender of their capital, being now extinct, it became necessary for foreigners to conciliate the new sovereign. Alompra had summoned Mr.

Newton*, resident on the part of the East India Company at Negrais, to attend him at Prome. Mr. Newton deputed Ensign Lyster to the Birman chief, with presents, and instructions to obtain for the Company the settlement of Negrais, with certain immunities and privileges of trade.

In pursuance of his orders, Ensign Lyster left Negrais on the 27th day of June 1757, and proceeded in the Mary schooner as far as Persaim, or Bassien, where he was detained until the 13th of July, waiting for a person named Antonio, a native descendant of a Portugueze fa-

* Mr. Brooke had retired: and Captain Howe, who succeeded Mr. Brooke, had died. Mr. Newton was only eventual resident. A Mr. W. Roberts was intended for that charge. He, however, was killed at the siege of Madras; and from that period Negrais was neglected. Mr. Brooke and Captain Howe had the reputation of being very honourable men.

mily, who was employed by the Birman government in the capacity of interpreter, and in consequence of that office possessed some share of power and influence. This man was charged with the provision of boats, and the safe conduct of the deputation. Matters being at length in readiness, Ensign Lyster with his attendants embarked on board four boats, ill equipped against the tempestuous and rainy weather which prevailed at that season of the year. Nearly at the same time, accounts reached Alompra, that symptoms of disaffection had again been manifested by the Cassayers, on the west bank of the Keen-Duem. Leaving the command of Rangoon, now considered the capital of the Pegue province, to a general named Namdeoda, with a respectable force to check the Peguers, he departed from Rangoon in the middle of July. On the 23d,

Ensign Lyster, who had suffered great inconvenience from the want of a commodious boat at this stormy season, met the king on his way up the river, and was honoured with an audience on board the royal barge: at which, though from circumstances, little pomp of royalty could be displayed, yet his majesty assumed a lofty tone, boasted of his invincible prowess, and enumerated the royal captives of the Pegue family, who were led prisoners in his train. After asking several questions, he postponed the further discussion of business to a future day, and directed Ensign Lyster to follow him. On the 29th the King halted at Loonzay, where the English deputy was honoured with a second admission to the royal presence. At this conversation Alompra upbraided Ensign Lyster with the conduct of his countrymen, in giving encouragement and pro-

tection to the disaffected Peguers. Having ordered presents of a trivial value to be presented, in return for those brought from Negrais, he referred the deputy to Antonio, and the Birman governor of Persaim, for a ratification and final adjustment of the treaty. Being pressed in point of time, the king departed from Loonzay on the following morning, and left the delegate of the English factory to complete his mission with the Portugueze shawbunder*, and the governor of the province.

After some unnecessary delay, said to be occasioned by the fraud and avarice of the governor of Persaim, or more probably of Antonio the interpreter, an in-

* " Intendant of the port." This is a Mussulman term, understood in all the sea-ports of the East. It is called Ackawoon in the Birman language.

strument was formally executed, consisting of nine distinct articles. Some valuable commercial immunities were by these ceded to the India Company, the island of Negrais was granted to them in perpetuity, together with a piece of ground opposite to the old town of Persaim, for the purpose of erecting a factory: in return for which, the Company engaged to pay an annual tribute, consisting of ordnance and military stores. A particular clause specified, that aid should be given to the Birmans against the king of Tavoy*.

This agreement, the conduct and completion of which seem to have been in-

* Tavoy, now in possession of the Birmans, seems to have once been an independent principality, and was recognised as such by the English in the year 1753. It probably owed its transitory independence to the wars that raged between the greater powers.

fluenced by the undignified application of a bribe to the intermediate agents, appears to have received the entire sanction and authority of the king. Negrais, in conformity with the tenor of the compact, was continued in the possession of the English; and on the 22d of August 1757, Ensign Lyster measured the allotted portion of ground, on which the British colours were hoisted, and three vollies of small arms fired, to solemnize the act of occupancy.

Elated with success, Alompra returned to Monchaboo, now the seat of imperial government. After some months spent in enacting laws, and regulating the internal police of the kingdom, he took up arms against the Cassayers, and, proceeding up the Keen-Duem with a fleet of boats, laid waste the western bank, burn-

ing villages, and capturing such of the inhabitants as could not save themselves by flight. Having landed his troops, he was preparing to advance to Munnepoora, the capital of Cassay, when information arrived that the Peguers had revolted, and, in their attempts to throw off the yoke, had defeated Namdeoda, and met with such success as threatened the loss of those territories which his valour had lately acquired. This intelligence induced him to abandon his views to the westward of the Keen-Duem, and return expeditiously to the southern provinces.

It was supposed by the Birmans, and perhaps not without good grounds, that this insurrection of the Peguers, after the departure of Alompra, sprung not less from the instigation of others, than from their own natural desire of emancipation.

Crowds of fugitives had fled from the fury of the Birmans, and taken shelter in the Siam country; some had settled on the east borders of the Sitang river; others found an asylum in the province of Martaban; and many wandered, with their families and flocks, over uncultivated plains, and through deep forests, without any fixed abode, or other preference of a place, than as it afforded them protection from their persecutors, and pasturage for their cattle.

The absence of Alompra was deemed a favourable juncture to make the attempt, and the Siamese were not unlikely to encourage the undertaking. The Peguers in the neighbourhood of Dalla and Rangoon rose suddenly, massacred many of the Birmans, and, engaging Namdeoda, beat him in a pitched battle. This general

after his defeat fled to Henzada, whilst Rangoon, Dalla, and Syriam again experienced a temporary change of masters.

Nor were the English at Negrais exempt from suspicion of being instrumental in bringing about this insurrection; no acts of publicity, however, have, on any occasion, been established against them: love of gain might have prompted individuals privately to sell arms and ammunition to the Peguers; and these transactions, if such did take place, were probably represented to the Birman monarch as instances of national perfidy, and the English described as a people hostile to his government, and conspiring to effect its overthrow.

The news of Alompra's approach dissipated this transient gleam of success;

Namdeoda, reinforced by troops and supplies from the northward, collected his followers at Henzada, and marched towards Rangoon. The army of the Peguers was encamped a little above the city, and their boats were drawn up to defend the stockade on the side of the river. An irregular but severe engagement ensued, which terminated in the overthrow of the Peguers: the Birmans again obtained possession of the city of Rangoon; Dalla and Syriam fell in course; and the arrival of Alompra, soon after, finally crushed an insurrection which at first was attended with formidable appearances.

About this time Mr. Whitehill, whose conduct on former occasions had given so much umbrage to the Birman chief, either supposing that the transactions were for-

gotten, or that he should be able to justify the part he had acted, revisited Rangoon in a small vessel laden with such commodities as were suited to the market. Whatever might have been the motives of his return, he was mistaken in the consequences. Alompra, being apprised of his arrival, ordered the vessel to be seized, and Mr. Whitehill made prisoner. He was sent up in close confinement to Prome, where he met the King returning from Monchaboo: the despot on this occasion displayed unexpected moderation; he spared the life of his prisoner, but compelled him to pay a heavy ransom; his property also was confiscated, together with the vessel that conveyed him. Some time afterwards he was permitted to depart in a Dutch ship.

The affairs of the British government

in India were by no means in such a state of prosperity, as to allow of sending the supplies that were necessary for the effectual support of the settlement at Negrais. Every nerve was on the stretch to maintain, in the Carnatic, the claims of Mahommed Ally against the French; it was therefore deemed expedient, for the present, to withdraw the settlers from Negrais. Captain Newton was accordingly recalled, and reached Bengal on the 14th of May 1759, with thirty-five Europeans, and seventy natives; having left a few persons to take care of the teak-timbers, and materials for ship-building, that could not conveniently be removed, and to preserve the right of possession, in case it should be determined at any future period to re-establish the settlement.

The tragical catastrophe that followed,

presents us with an instance of the sanguinary and cruel disposition that jealousy inspires, when rival interests are to be maintained by the arts of policy and fraud, rather than by open force of arms. The Armenians, the Jews of the East, a description of men subtle, faithless, and indefatigable, whose industry is usually seconded by a competent capacity, beheld with a malignant eye the progress of European colonies, threatening the annihilation of that influence which they had supported for a long series of years, in the administration both of the Pegue and Birman governments. Amongst these, Coja Pochas and Coja Gregory are represented to have been conspicuously active in their efforts to defeat the views and depreciate the credit of the English; the latter, in particular, who had obtained a considerable office, and carried some

weight in the councils of Alompra, especially in what related to strangers, as soon as the affairs of the French were ruined beyond redemption, adopted the policy of attaching to him the few Frenchmen whom Alompra had spared, in order to render them instrumental to the destruction of the English, now the favoured nation. Laveene, the youth before mentioned as having been left at Dagon by Bourno an hostage for his fidelity, instead of falling the victim of retaliation, had been kindly treated by the conqueror, who, pleased with his appearance and vivacity, early promoted him to a commission in the guards that attended on his person. The young man is said to have imbibed the strongest prejudices of his nation against the English; and in him Coja Gregory found an apt instrument to execute his purposes.

Soon after the return of Captain Newton, with his party, the government of Bengal thought proper to send Mr. Southby to Negrais, to take care of the timbers and shipping materials collected there for the use of the Company, and to retain possession of the settlement. The Victoria snow, Alves master, was dispatched on this service, with orders to convey Mr. Southby to Negrais. During her passage the snow suffered severely from a violent gale of wind; on the 4th of October she anchored in the harbour of Negrais, in a very shattered and distressed condition: happily for her, the Shaftesbury East Indiaman was at this time in the harbour, having put into Negrais for the purpose of procuring a supply of provisions and water.

Mr. Southby disembarked on the even-

ing of his arrival, and next day landed his baggage. Antonio, the interpreter, of whom mention has already been made, came down to Negrais to meet him, and, being a man of some official importance, was treated with civility and attention by Mr. Hope, at this time in the temporary charge of the settlement; as well as by Mr. Southby, the new resident. The pretext for the journey was, to deliver a letter to the English chief, from the King; this letter, however, was a forgery, to give plausibility to the visit, and afford an opportunity of carrying into execution the horrid plot with which he was entrusted.

The address and secrecy with which the intended massacre was concerted, gave no room for taking any precaution. Antonio, who had paid a visit to Mr. Southby

on the morning of the 6th, was invited by him to dinner on the same day, at a temporary building belonging to the English. Whilst the entertainment was serving up, the treacherous guest withdrew. At that instant a number of armed Birmans rushed into the room, and put Messrs. Southby and Hope to death: this transaction took place in an upper apartment: Messrs. Robertson and Briggs happened to be below, with eight Europeans of inferior note; a separate attack was made on these by another set of assassins, in which five Europeans were slain; the rest, with Mr. Robertson and Mr. Briggs, shut themselves in a godown, or storeroom, where they continued on the defensive until the afternoon, when, receiving a solemn assurance that their lives should be spared, they surrendered, and experienced the utmost brutality of treat-

ment from the murderers. Mr. Briggs being wounded, and unable to move with the alertness required of him, was knocked down, and a period put to his sufferings, by having a spear run through his body; the rest were escorted to the water side, where Antonio, who had retired when the massacre commenced, was waiting with a boat to receive them. This fellow had the humanity to unchain the prisoners, and pursued his journey with them to Dagon or Rangoon, where he expected to find the King, and doubtless to receive a reward for the meritorious part he had acted.

A midshipman, of the crew of the Shaftesbury, was about to enter the house when the slaughter commenced; but on hearing the cries of his countrymen, and perceiving the danger, he fled to the water

side, wounded by a spear that was cast at him in his retreat. The Shaftesbury's pinnace brought away the midshipman, with several black people belonging to the settlement, the fury of the murderers being indiscriminately levelled against Europeans and their Indian attendants. The long boat also, that had brought on shore some of Mr. Southby's baggage, was fortunate enough to push off before the Birmans could get possession of her, and letting the ensign fly with the Union downwards, gave intimation to the ship, by that token, of some unexpected mischance.

The Birmans thus becoming masters of the fortified works, and having dispersed or put to death all the settlers, turned the guns of the battery, nine in number, against the Shaftesbury. In the performance of this service, Laveene, the French-

man, was conspicuously active; indeed, the whole of this diabolic assassination seems to have been executed under his direction: it was afterwards ascertained, that when the English were surprised and overpowered by the Birmans, this man rushed into the works at the head of a body of banditti, and completed the slaughter. The precision with which the guns were pointed, sufficiently demonstrated that he who had the management was not deficient in the art of gunnery. The Shaftesbury returned the fire, but suffered considerably from that of the enemy; the second officer was killed, the running rigging damaged, and nine shots received between wind and water; many of the Birmans are said to have fallen by the fire from the ship; the action continued till dark, and was renewed next morning on the part of the enemy. The Shaftesbury,

having unmoored in the night, weighed at day light, and dropped down with the ebb to the mouth of the harbour, where, beyond the range of shot, she rode secure: the Victoria snow followed her example.

On the 16th of October 1759, the Shaftesbury sailed, and the Victoria proceeded to Diamond island to procure water and ballast. Whilst they were at this place, a small vessel was perceived standing into the harbour of Negrais. Captain Alves humanely sent to warn her of the danger; but before the intelligence could reach her, she had cast anchor within the harbour. It does not however appear, that the Birmans had any intention of doing further mischief; they contented themselves with setting fire to the place, and abandoned it on the night that the

vessel arrived. In a few days Captain Alves returned from Diamond island to Negrais; where venturing on shore, he was shocked at the sight of the unburied and mangled bodies of his unhappy countrymen. Amongst these he recognized the remains of Messrs. Southby, Hope, and Briggs; the bodies of near 100 natives, who had been attached to the settlement in various capacities, lay scattered around; the boats, buildings, gun-carriages, and every thing combustible, were consumed, except the teak-timbers belonging to the Company, which would not easily take fire, and were too heavy to be removed. Some Birman boats appearing in sight, Captain Alves thought it most prudent to depart; he accordingly weighed anchor, and leaving the shore that had proved so fatal to his friends, prosecuted his voyage to Bengal, where

he arrived on the 10th of November 1759.

After so many proofs of a friendly disposition, the assurances given to Captain Baker, and the compact concluded with Ensign Lyster, it is reasonable to suppose, that some acts of hostility, not thoroughly explained, must have been committed, or that very plausible misrepresentations must have been used, to excite the Birman monarch to take such sanguinary revenge. That Gregory, the Armenian, was the principal instigator, is a fact of which no native of the country, who remembers the transaction, entertains the smallest doubt; as well as that Laveene was the principal agent and instrument of execution. It is said, that the former accused Mr. Hope, who commanded after the departure of Lieutenant Newton, of hav-

ing supplied the Peguers with provisions, and sold to them four or five hundred musquets; that he had taken pains to instil into his Majesty's mind, a persuasion that the English were a designing and dangerous people; who, having acquired Indian territory, first by fraud, and afterwards by violence, meditated the practice of similar treachery upon them: and only waited a fit opportunity to wrest from him his empire, and enslave his subjects, as they had recently done in the instance of the unsuspecting and abused Mogul. He also added, that the Governor of Negrais prevented vessels from going up to Bassien, by which the royal revenue was defrauded. These arguments, whether groundless or founded, were sufficiently plausible to produce the desired effect; and there is but too much reason to think that some provocation had been given, though perhaps

of a trivial nature, and certainly not sufficient to warrant a step unjustifiable by every law human and divine.

When Alompra, after returning from the Cassay country, found his presence required in the southern provinces, he left his eldest son, Namdogee Praw, to govern Monchaboo during his absence. Attended by his second son, Shembuan Praw, and the female part of his family, he then proceeded on his expedition to Tavoy, a sea port on the eastern coast of the gulph of Martaban, which had been wrested from the Siamese by the Birmans. Many Peguers had taken refuge there from the persecution they experienced in the districts of Dalla, Rangoon, Pegue, and Tallowmiou. Encouraged by the first successes of the insurgents, and secretly instigated by the Siamese, the Birman com-

mandant threw off his allegiance, and declared himself independent. Alompra sent a large detachment by land, under Meinla Raja, against Tavoy; and also a considerable maritime force to act in concert, commanded by Namdeoda. The previous defeat of the Peguers at Rangoon had tended to dishearten the rebels; when Meinla Raja had advanced as far as Killegoung, within one day's march of Tavoy, the Commandant came out in a supplicating form to meet him, and surrendered without any stipulation: he was afterwards put to death by order of Alompra.

After the junction of the forces under Meinla Raja and Namdeoda, Alompra sent his women, and the younger part of his family, back to Monchaboo, and, accompanied by Shembuan Praw, joined the army at Tavoy. Having now a formi-

dable force collected and embodied, he determined to chastise the Siamese for the encouragement they had given to his rebellious subjects. He accused them of affording protection to delinquents and fugitives, and of secretly abetting the Peguers in all their hostile machinations against his authority. Under this plea he ordered the fleet to sail to Mergui, a sea port belonging to the Siamese, situated south of Tavoy, whilst the army advanced by land. Mergui, being ill fortified, was easily taken. Leaving a garrison for its defence, the Birmans marched against Tenasserem, a large and populous town, surrounded by a wall and stockade; notwithstanding which it made but a feeble resistance.

These conquests being achieved, Alompra determined to cross the peninsula, and

carry the war into the heart of the enemy's country. After a very short halt at Tenasserem, he undertook an expedition against the capital of Siam. The enemy impeded his progress by harassing his troops, and endeavouring to distress him in his route, without venturing on a decisive action. A month elapsed before he reached the vicinity of the metropolis, which was well prepared to sustain a vigorous siege. Providence, however, interposed, and, by abridging the days of the conqueror, in all probability saved the Siamese from total destruction. Two days after the Birman army had erected their stockades, Alompra was taken ill of a disease, which in the event proved mortal; the natives call it Taungnaa, and describe it as a species of scrophula. On the first attack, Alompra foresaw that his end was drawing nigh. He gave orders

for an immediate retreat, in the expectation of reaching his capital alive, and of being able to settle the succession, and adjust the affairs of his empire in such a manner as to avert the calamities of civil discord after his decease. On his return, he did not pursue the route by which he had advanced, but took a direct road by the way of Keintubbien, and the Three Pagodas, which are considered as the boundaries between the Yoodra (or Siam proper) and Birman countries. His intentions, however, were frustrated; the approaches of mortality were too rapid; he grew worse; and death overtook him within two days' march of Martaban, where he expired about the 15th of May 1760, and carried with him to the grave the regrets of his people, to whom he was justly endeared.

Considering the limited progress that the Birmans had yet made in arts that refine, and science that tends to expand the human mind, Alompra, whether viewed in the light of a politician, or a soldier, is undoubtedly entitled to respect. The wisdom of his councils secured what his valour had acquired: he was not more eager for conquest, than attentive to the improvement of his territories and the prosperity of his people; he issued a severe edict against gambling, and prohibited the use of spirituous liquors throughout his dominions; he reformed the rhooms, or courts of justice; he abridged the power of magistrates, and forbade them to decide at their private houses on criminal causes, or on property where the amount exceeded a specified sum; every process of importance was decided in public, and every decree registered. His

reign was short, but vigorous; and had his life been prolonged, it is probable that his country would at this day have been farther advanced in national refinement and the liberal arts.

Alompra did not live to complete his fiftieth year: his person, strong and well proportioned, exceeded the middle size; his features were coarse, his complexion dark, and his countenance saturnine: and there was a dignity in his deportment that became his high station. In his temper, he is said to have been prone to anger; in revenge, implacable; and in punishing faults, remorseless and severe. The latter part of his character may perhaps have arisen, as much from the necessities of his situation, as from a disposition by nature cruel. He who acquires a throne by an act of individual boldness, is commonly

obliged to maintain it by terror: the right of assumption is guarded with more jealousy than that of prescription. If we except the last act of severity towards the English settlers, his conduct on most occasions seemed to be marked by moderation and forbearance; even in that one disgraceful instance, he appeared to have been instigated by the persuasions of others, rather than by the dictates of a vindictive mind; and it is manifest, from the expressions of his successor on a public occasion, that it never was his intention to consign the innocent, with the supposed guilty, to the same indiscriminate and sanguinary fate.

Be the private character of Alompra what it may, his heroic actions give him an indisputable claim to no mean rank among the most distinguished personages

in the page of history. His firmness emancipated a whole nation from servitude; and, inspired by his bravery, the oppressed, in their turn, subdued their oppressors. Like the deliverer of Sweden with his gallant band of Dalecarlians, he fought for that which experience tells us rouses the human breast above every other stimulant to deeds of daring valour. Private injuries, personal animosities, commercial emulation, wars of regal policy, are petty provocations, compared to that which animates the resentment of a people whose liberties are assailed, whose right to govern themselves is wrested from them, and who are forced to bend beneath the tyranny of a foreign yoke.

The decease of an eastern monarch commonly serves as a beacon to light up the flame of civil discord. The letter of

the Birman law immutably vests the right of succession in the heirs male. Laws, however, in all countries, are made subservient to power. Neither the mandates of law, nor the claims of equity, can curb the career of restless ambition. Shembuan, the second son of the late king, who was with the army at the time of his father's demise, endeavoured to influence the troops in his favour. Having gained over a part, he issued a proclamation declaratory of his right to the throne, on the grounds, that Alompra had, on his death-bed, nominated him to be his successor. In this step he was premature, and his measures were ill concerted. The ardour of youth seems to have blinded the prince to the dictates of prudence, as well as to the duty and allegiance he owed his elder brother and lawful sovereign. He soon found that he

had been deceived; that his followers were not firm in his interest; and that, even if they had been sincere, they were not sufficiently powerful to support his pretensions: he therefore hastened to repair his error by timely submission, which his brother, through the intercession of their mother, was prevailed on to accept. Shortly after, Shembuan was restored to favour, and no mention is made of his ever attempting a second time to disturb the government of his brother.

Namdogee Praw, although his brother's designs were frustrated, found in a less dignified subject a still more dangerous competitor. A rebellion that bore a serious aspect was planned and executed by a person of superior capacity. Meinla Raja, surnamed Nuttoon, a general high in the good graces of the deceased mo-

narch, commanded the rear of the army that was returning from Siam. Namdogee had always harboured an enmity towards this man, who, sensible that he could expect no protection against the resentment of a vindictive despot, and possessing a considerable share of popularity, determined to contend for empire with his new sovereign. When certain intelligence arrived of the actual decease of Alompra, instead of proceeding to Rangoon, where boats were provided to transport the army up the Irrawaddy, he marched with the utmost expedition, at the head of the division of the army under his command, to Tongho, and took possession of that fort, which is accounted the strongest in the Birman empire. Encouraged by the alacrity with which the soldiers espoused his cause, and anxious to push his rising fortunes, he left a gar-

rison in the fort, and advanced by forced marches towards the capital: as he approached his party strengthened, and the fortifications of Ava were surrendered to him without resistance.

Namdogee Praw was at this time at Monchaboo, making levies to oppose the insurgents. Affairs, however, were not yet in a state of sufficient forwardness to enable him to take the field, as he placed his chief reliance on the arrival of the loyal division of the army that had embarked, and were on the way from Rangoon; but the progress they made against a rapid stream was slow, in comparison to the celerity of a bold adventurer, whose success depended on his expedition and promptitude.

The distance from Rangoon to Mon-

chaboo, by the Irrawaddy, is about 500 miles. In the months of June, July, and August, the river, which, in the hot and dry season, like the Ganges, winds over its sandy bed a slow and sluggish stream, as soon as the mountain torrents fall, swells over the summits of its banks, inundates the adjacent country, and rolls down an impetuous current, unchecked till it approaches the sea, and is repelled by the influence of the flowing tide. Such violence would be insurmountable, and must render the navigation of the river during this period impracticable, were it not counteracted by the strength of the south-west monsoon. Assisted by this wind, and cautiously keeping within the eddies of the banks, the Birman boats use their sails, and frequently make a more expeditious passage at this, than at any other season of the year.

The division of the army that embarked at Rangoon reached Chagaing, a large fortified town on the west bank of the Irrawaddy, opposite to Ava, shortly after the latter city had fallen into the hands of Nuttoon; whom the breadth of the river, and a want of boats, prevented from taking any effectual measures to oppose the junction of this detachment with the royal standard. Namdogee Praw, when advised of their approach, marched down from Monchaboo with the troops and boats that had been collected. Strengthened by this union, the King's force considerably exceeded that of the rebel general; especially as the numerous fleet that commanded the river not only secured the safe embarkation and landing of men and stores, but likewise cut off all supplies by that channel from the enemy. These disadvantages depressed the spirits of Nuttoon's adhe-

rents. A party of Namdogee Praw's forces having crossed the river, an irregular action took place, which ended so little in favour of the adventurer, that he threw himself into the fort of Ava, and, no longer able to keep the field, prepared to act a defensive part, relying on the arrival of succours from Siam, a quarter to which he had applied with earnest solicitation.

These occurrences occupied little more than two months, from the middle of May, the date of Alompra's decease, to the end of July; about which time the engagement happened that obliged Nuttoon to withdraw from the field, and seek security in the walls of Ava.

Whatever might have been their inclination, the English settlements of India

were not, at this juncture, in circumstances to revenge the murder of their servants, and exact retribution for the insult offered to their flag. Perhaps, also, they were not ignorant that a discussion of the causes might only produce useless explanations: a conjecture that is in some degree corroborated, by there being no steps taken at any subsequent period, when the British superiority in Asia had crushed all rivalry, to vindicate the national honour, and chastise the perpetrators of the cruelty. Humanity, however, urged some interference in order to obtain the release of the few survivors, who, on the destruction of Negrais, had been carried into captivity. Policy also rendered it expedient to avoid an irreconcilable breach with the Birmans, as tending to give the French interests an ascendancy in that quarter, and enable them to gain a firmer

footing in a country whose maritime advantages, and contiguity to our possessions, might afford them opportunities hereafter to disturb our tranquillity and molest our trade.

Captain Alves, who in the preceding year had conveyed Mr. Southby to Negrais, and brought back news of the fate of the settlers, was selected to return as the bearer of conciliatory letters and presents to the Birman monarch, from Mr. Holwell governor of Bengal, and Mr. Pigot governor of Madras. These letters appear to have been couched in terms of solicitation, rather than resentment; the liberation of the Englishmen that were carried into confinement, was the principal request; to which a desire was added, that the vessel and property belonging to Mr. Whitehill, confiscated by order of

Alompra, should be restored. Mr. Pigot's letter, however, went farther, and intimated expectation that the murderers of the English settlers should be brought to punishment; a requisition that was little attended to, and which the British government of India never manifested any inclination to enforce.

Pursuant to his instructions, Captain Alves sailed from Madras on the 10th of May 1760. Instead of proceeding direct to Negrais, he shaped his course to the island of Carnicobar, whence he sent a letter by a Dutch ship to Gregory the Armenian, who held the office of Shawbunder, or *Ackawoon* of Rangoon, informing him of his mission, and entreating his good offices with the Birman monarch, to procure the release of the English prisoners; at the same time conciliating him by a present

of such articles as he conceived would be most acceptable.

On the 5th of June, Captain Alves reached Diamond Island, but declined entering the harbour of Negrais until he could ascertain the disposition of the natives towards the English, which, after the recent catastrophe, there was room to suspect. His doubts being removed, he sent an officer up to Persaim, with a letter to Antony, the Portuguese superintendant, who on receipt of it came down, as a mark of respect, to meet the English deputy, at a chokey or guard-house, near Negrais. Captain Alves, dissembling his knowledge of the part which Antony had acted in the late affair, received his visitor with apparent cordiality, whilst the other took no small pains to convince him that he was guiltless. After a short residence

at Persaim, Captain Alves received a very friendly letter from Mungai-Narrataw, a relation of the royal family, and vested with the office of Maywoon or Viceroy of Pegue, inviting him to Rangoon; desiring him at the same time to bring with him the presents intended for the King. This invitation Captain Alves thought it prudent to accept; and on the 5th of August arrived at Rangoon, where he was received with sufficient politeness by the Viceroy, and made acquainted with the rebellion of Nuttoon, and the deranged state of public affairs at the capital.

Mr. Robertson, and the soldiers who had escaped the massacre at Negrais, were at Rangoon when Captain Alves arrived, and, though under restraint, were by no means treated with harshness. Captain Alves solicited their discharge from the

Viceroy; who, though he could not grant the request without special authority from the King, yet consented that Mr. Robertson should accompany Captain Alves back to Persaim: and added, that there was little doubt of procuring a general release. In the course of this communication, the Viceroy gave Captain Alves solemn assurances, that Gregory the Armenian, by his misrepresentations and artifice, was the principal instigator of the tragical scene at Negrais; and that Laveene, who was in league with Gregory, was the person to whom the execution of the act had been committed; intimating also, that he himself, through the intrigues of these men, had incurred the displeasure of the King, on account of his manifest attachment to the English nation.

Captain Alves continued at Rangoon

no longer than was necessary: he left it on the 9th of August, the Maywoon having previously received from him the presents intended for the Birman monarch. An officer belonging tothe provincial court accompanied Captain Alves back to Persaim.

Captain Alves expecting to receive a summons to attend the golden feet, was making preparation for his journey, when Gregory the Armenian returned from Monchaboo, whither he had proceeded with all expedition on receipt of the letter which Captain Alves had written from Carnicobar. His zeal on this occasion was prompted by a desire to prevent, if possible, any amicable arrangement; or, in case he should fail in that view, to make himself of personal consequence, from being the ostensible mediator and instrument of reconciliation.

On receiving intelligence of the expected arrival of an authorized agent from the British government, Namdogee-Praw directed Gregory to return to Persaim, and dispatched along with him a Birman officer as the bearer of an order to Captain Alves, commanding him to repair to the royal presence. In the translation which Gregory, as interpreter, delivered to Captain Alves, the crafty Armenian introduced passages favourable to himself, attributing the obtainment of any attention to his intercession: these interpolations were fabricated, as the imperial mandate did not even mention the name of Gregory.

The terms in which the royal order was expressed, encouraged Captain Alves to undertake the journey; he accordingly left Persaim on the 22d of August, ac-

companied by Antonio the Portuguese, Gregory, and two Birman officers. The unsettled state of the country subjected him to several unpleasant interruptions; his boat, during the course of the voyage, was frequently searched, with the excuse of looking for contraband commodities, and many articles were carried away under various fraudulent pretences.

On the 22d of August, Captain Alves reached Chagaing, at that time the head quarters of the Birman king, who with a numerous army was besieging the rebel general in Ava; and on the 23d he was honoured with an audience, to deliver his credentials. The letters from the governors of Madras and Bengal were translated into the Persian, Portuguese, and Birman languages; and the different versions carefully collated. His majesty expressed his

surprise that the Governor of Madras should demand satisfaction for consequences, which the misconduct of the Company's servants had drawn upon themselves; adding, that the disaster of Mr. Southby was an accident which could not be foreseen or guarded against: at the same time he used a forcible metaphor; "for," says the Birman king*, "I suppose you have seen that in this country, "in the wet season, there grows so much "useless grass and weeds in the fields, "that in dry weather we are forced to "burn them to clear the ground: it "sometimes happens that there are salu-"brious herbs amongst these noxious "weeds and grass, which, as they cannot "easily be distinguished, are indiscrimi-"nately consumed with the others; thus

* Journal of Captain Alves, recorded in the Bengal Proceedings.

" it happened to be the new Governor's " lot." Compensation for Mr. Whitehill's property that had been confiscated, and restitution of the vessel, were peremptorily refused, for the alleged reason, that Mr. Whitehill and the Governor of Negrais were the aggressors: but his majesty was pleased to agree, that the property of the East India Company should be restored. Having given an order for the release of all English subjects that were prisoners in his dominions, he desired that two of the most prudent should remain to take care of the timbers, and reside at Persaim, where he consented to give the Company a grant of as much ground as they might have occasion to occupy, under the stipulation that their chief settlement should be at Persaim, and not at Negrais. He assigned as a reason, that at Negrais they would be exposed to the depredations

of the French, or any other nation with whom the English might be at war, without a possibility of his extending that protection to them that he wished; but of which they could always have the full benefit at Persaim. In requital for these concessions, his majesty intimated his expectation of a regular supply of arms and ammunition from the English settlements, together with several other products of a useful nature; to all which Capt. Alves prudently returned a conditional acquiescence.

During these conferences, explanations took place, which created at court suspicion of the fidelity of Gregory in his capacity of interpreter: a minute investigation lost him the confidence of his master, and had nearly caused the forfeit of his life. His disgrace was sudden, public, and ignominious.

On the 27th of September, Captain Alves attended in company with the great officers of state and the principal nobility, to pay his respects at the golden feet, as is the custom on the annual feast of Sandainguite. On this day the King desired Captain Alves to request whatever mark of favour he thought proper, with an assurance that it should be granted to him. The freedom of all the English subjects having been already procured, Captain Alves humanely entreated the emancipation of three Dutchmen, who had been captured by Alompra during his expedition to the Siam country. In compliance with his desire, an order was immediately issued for their release.

The distracted and critical state of public affairs necessarily weakened the hand of power, and diminished the authority of

the King. That rigid severity of police which characterizes the Birman government became relaxed, and illicit exactions were imposed and levied by inferior officers, with little dread of punishment. Captain Alves experienced in his own person the inconvenience which an individual, at such a juncture, may expect to suffer. Under frivolous pretences, his final dismission was protracted, nor could he procure the promised answers to the letters of the Governor of Bengal and Madras, until he had paid fees to certain officers of government, who took advantage of the times to extort unauthorized emoluments. After suffering much vexatious imposition, he at length, on the 10th of October, received in form the long expected documents, and on the same evening left Chagaing to proceed to Persaim, accompanied by Antonio. The mandate for liberating

the English prisoners was punctually obeyed: there were five in number, two of whom, Messrs. Robertson and Helass, Captain Alves, conformably to the promise made to the Birman king, left at Persaim, to take care of the property belonging to the India Company. On the 1st of November he arrived at Rangoon, where he was received with kindness and hospitality by Mungai-Narrataw, the Viceroy. On the 4th he took leave of his host, and on the 14th got to Persaim, where he again embarked, and, sailing from Negrais, reached Calcutta a few days before the expiration of the year.

In the mean while the siege of Ava was carried on with vigour, and the assailants were resolutely resisted. The royal army, computed at 100,000 men, advanced their stockades within fifty yards

of the ditch. The batteries, consisting of a few old nine and six pounders, casually procured from shipping at the ports, made little impression on the walls, which were unprovided with artillery, but of an uncommon thickness, being composed of earth and loose stones, supported by a well built face of brick and mortar. The water in the ditch, which during the rains is full, had subsided so low as to become fordable in several places; the besiegers made repeated attempts to carry the place by storm, but were repulsed at every onset. In these attacks many lives were lost. The rebels, knowing that sure destruction awaited those who should be taken, defended themselves obstinately; capitulation was not thought of: whenever the enemy advanced with intent to escalade the works, they poured on them melted lead, boiling petroleum, and hot pitch,

whilst a brisk fire of musquetry annoyed them at a distance. The siege was thus protracted for seven months, Nuttoon still cherishing sanguine hopes of succour from the government of Siam.

These expectations were not realized. Supplies from the country failed, and want began to make ravages within the walls, although the magazines, which at the commencement of the siege were full, had been husbanded with the utmost economy. Discontent is ever the concomitant of distress. The Governor of Mayah Oun, who had embraced Nuttoon's fortune, deserted from the fort. Flying to Mayah Oun, he collected his adherents; but not being able to resist the royal forces, they set fire to the town, and betook themselves to the woods and jungles, whence they afterwards withdrew to the

Eastern provinces, where the authority of the Birman monarch was yet scarcely acknowledged. The rebels had likewise evacuated the fort of Tongho. Towards the end of the year, the garrison in Ava was reduced to the greatest extremity, and their numbers diminished above one half by sickness, famine, and desertion. In this helpless state, without any chance of relief, Nuttoon made his escape from the fort in disguise; but had proceeded only the distance of two days' journey, when he was discovered by some peasants, and brought back in fetters. The fort of Ava fell shortly after the flight of its commandant. Such of his unfortunate adherents as could not effect their escape, were without mercy put to death. Nuttoon likewise suffered the doom of a traitor.

The destruction of Nuttoon did not put

an end to the disturbances that agitated the Birman empire. A younger brother of Alompra, uncle to Namdogee-Praw, who had recently been appointed Viceroy of Tongho, aspired to independence, and refused to pay homage to his brother's son. Whilst measures were taking to reduce him, he suddenly detached a body of troops, under a general named Bala-meing-tein, who surprised the fort of Prome; but the Chekey or Lieutenant of Shoe-dong-northa soon after assembled a respectable force, and compelled Bala-meing-tein to abandon his conquest. Namdogee-Praw raised an army, and, accompanied by his brother Shembuan, marched in person to Tongho to punish the contumacy of his rebellious relation, who, not daring to risk an open action, shut himself within the walls of Tongho. After a siege of three months, the garrison

surrendered. Several of the ringleaders were punished with death; mercy, however, was extended to the rebellious uncle. The King spared his life, but during the rest of his reign kept him a close prisoner in the fort of Ava.

The appointment of a new Viceroy, and the arrangements necessary to the restoration of good order in these provinces, next occupied the attention of the King. This task being accomplished, he returned with his brother to Monchaboo, from whence he soon after removed the seat of imperial government to the city of Chagaing, the situation of which, equally convenient and salubrious, enjoying a pure air, and surrounded by the most picturesque scenery of nature, had delighted the King during his late residence, whilst directing the operations against

Ava. The three succeeding years of his reign were employed in reducing the refractory to obedience, and establishing the royal authority on a firmer basis. Amongst the turbulent was Talabaan, the Pegue chieftain, who had formerly experienced the clemency of Alompra: this man, after he had been received into favour, was sent by the conqueror to the Martaban province, the residence of his family and friends, invested with an office of dignity. So long as that monarch lived, he conducted himself like a dutiful servant: the death of his sovereign, however, cancelled in Talabaan's breast the bonds of duty and gratitude; and, though faithful to the father, he took the earliest opportunity to revolt against the son. On this occasion, he seems to have lost his prudence with his principles. His rebellion was feeble, and easily subdued;

he was made prisoner, and at last suffered that death which he had before so narrowly escaped. The Peguers at Sitang, a very numerous body, likewise revolted, but were suppressed by the activity of the Viceroy of Pegue, without causing any serious danger to the state. No foreign expedition was undertaken by Namdogee-Praw; indeed the internal situation of his empire hardly rendered such a project practicable: his reign was but of short duration, yet he is said to have diligently improved his time, and benefited his country as much as circumstances would admit. He died at his capital about the month of March 1764, of the same disease that brought his father to the grave, leaving behind him one son named Momien, yet an infant. Of the general character of Namdogee-Praw people speak favourably; bigotry is ascribed to him as

his principal failing: he was inflexibly severe on those who transgressed against the tenets of religion, or omitted aught of the respect due to the Rhahaans, its ministers. He punished slight immoralities with the rigour due only to atrocious crimes; slaying animals for the purposes of food was strictly prohibited, and a second conviction of drunkenness incurred the inevitable penalty of death.

The imbecile minority of the legal heir to the throne gave his uncle Shembuan, who, as the nearest relation, became the natural guardian of the child, an opportunity to undermine the claims and to usurp the right of the son of his deceased brother. Shembuan, on the demise of Namdogee-Praw, assumed the reins of government with a strong hand; nor is it ascertained that he ever acknowledged

holding them in trust for the minor. Whatever he might have done on the first assumption of regal power, he soon threw aside all disguise, and was proclaimed and acknowledged lawful sovereign of the Birman and Pegue nations.

Nor would Shembuan, who had thus unjustly deprived a nephew of his birthright, have scrupled to secure a more firm possession of the throne by imbruing his hands in innocent blood, had not a sister of Alompra humanely interfered, and obtained charge of the child, under a promise that he should be educated in religious obscurity among the Rhahaans, and never be in a situation to disturb the government of his uncle.

Thus freed from the dread of competition, Shembuan had leisure to follow the

bent of his own disposition, which was by nature ardent and ambitious. His first undertaking was against the Siamese; assigning for the rupture the customary excuse, that certain delinquent subjects of the Birman government had received protection from them; and further, that Alompra, his father, had enjoined his children in his last moments to prosecute the war against the Siamese, which he had been prevented by death alone from bringing to a successful issue. Such were the pretences, and perhaps as well founded as pretences for war usually are. Two armies were embodied; one destined to invade North Siam, commanded by a general named Deebedee; the other proceeded to the southward by Sitang and Martaban, under the conduct of Mahanortha; whilst a fleet of small vessels, fitted out for the reduction of

the maritime towns, was entrusted to Chedookaminee.

The equipment of these armaments was not completed until the commencement of the year 1765: and their progress, after they were in readiness, was so slow, that nothing of importance could be effected during that year. In the beginning of the next, Deebedee over-ran the province of Zemee, whilst Chedookaminee with the fleet captured Tavoy; which, though it had been reduced by Alompra, was too remote to be retained, and soon reverted to its former possessors. The detachment led by Mahanortha also penetrated to Tavoy by land; and cantoned there during the rains. The forces of Deebedee passed the wet season on the borders of the Yoodra country: these different parties were prepared to act in concert, and attempt the conquest of the Siamese capital.

Whilst matters were thus transacting in the south-east quarter, Shembuan marched in person against the Munipora Cassayers; who, taking advantage of the state of affairs, had thought fit to disclaim the yoke of foreigners, and refused to acknowledge the supremacy of the Birman monarch. This enterprize, however, appears to have been a predatory incursion, rather than an invasion with a view of permanent conquest. The stay that Shembuan made in the country did not exceed a month; he returned in obedience to more urgent calls, laden with the booty of the frontier towns, and accompanied by a numerous train of prisoners of every age and sex.

In the beginning of the year 1766, the southern armies commenced their operations against the Siamese. Deebedee en-

tered the Yoodra country by the route of Taunglee and Mainhoot, afterward pursuing a more southerly direction, in order to effect a junction with Mahanortha, who moved from Tavoy in a corresponding time. Their union was resolutely disputed by the Siamese; and Deebedee's division suffered seriously during a march of fifteen days. Notwithstanding this resistance, a junction was effected; after which they advanced against Siam*, the enemy still continuing to harass them in their march, by irregular attacks and frequent

* The city of Siam is frequently called by the Birmans Dwarawuddy, and by the Siamese See-y-thaa. Both these are Pali or Shanscrit appellations. Most places of note are distinguished by two names; one in the vulgar tongue, which is the most general; the other, a Shanscrit term, seldom used but by the learned, and to be found only in books treating on religion and science: thus Pegue is called Henzawuddy; Arracan, Deniawuddy, &c.

skirmishes. Having at length penetrated as far as the banks of a river*, seven or eight days' journey from the fort, the Siamese tried the fortune of a general action; which terminating unfavourably, their army dispersed; part retreating to Siam, whilst the remainder either concealed themselves in the woods, or sought security in distant provinces. The consequence of this defeat was the immediate investiture of Siam by the Birmans. The fort†, by nature strong from its almost insulated situation, is represented to have been well built, according to the Eastern fashion, having a good ditch, protected by a strong rampart faced with masonry, and strengthened by equidistant towers.

* Probably what is called by the Birmans the Boomagurry Meep.

† During the monsoon, the city of Siam is insulated.

The artillery on either side was of little use; for though there were a few guns mounted, and some brought against the place, yet they neither contributed to the success of the attack, nor the security of the defence: passive blockade is the favourite system of Birman warfare.

The Birman army had been before the city two months, when Mahanortha died. As the officer of highest rank, he held the chief command, which, after his decease, devolved on Deebedee, who is represented as better qualified for the trust than his predecessor. In a short time after this event, the King of Siam, panic-struck and hopeless, secretly withdrew from the fort, in order to avoid falling into the hands of his enemies, and, eluding the Birman outposts, sought refuge among the hills. The Siamese, thus de-

serted by their leader, offered to capitulate; terms were proposed and accepted: a heavy mulct was imposed upon the inhabitants, the defences of the city were destroyed, and a Siamese governor appointed, who took an oath of allegiance to the Birman monarchy, and engaged to pay an annual tribute. Deebedee returned with his victorious army to the province of Martaban, enriched by the spoils of Dwarawuddy.

Scarcely was the Siamese expedition drawn to a conclusion, when a new danger threatened from an opposite direction. The Chinese government, whose ambition is only exceeded by its pride and arrogance, had planned the subjugation of the Birmans, intending to add the dominion of the Irrawaddy, and the fertile plains of

Zomiem *, to their empire; already stretched beyond the limits to which any government can efficiently extend the force of restrictive authority. In the beginning of the year 1767, or 1131 of the Birman æra, the Governor of Quantong sent intimation to Shembuan, that an army of Chinese was advancing from the western frontiers of Yunan, and had already passed the mountains that skirt the Chinese and the Birman empires: this intelligence was scarcely communicated, when it was confirmed by the actual invasion. The Chinese forces, computed at 50,000 men, approached by unremitting marches. Leaving the province of Bomoo to the west, they penetrated by a town called Gouptoung, between which and Quan-

* The name by which the country of Ava is known to the Chinese.

tong * there is a jee † or mart, where the Chinese and Birmans meet, and barter the commodities of their respective countries: this jee was taken and plundered by the Chinese. Meanwhile Shembuan appointed two separate armies: one, consisting of 10,000 infantry and 2000 cavalry, under the conduct of a general named Amioumee, took the direct road leading to Quantong, through the districts of La-be-nagoo, and Tagoung; the other army, of much greater force, was committed to Tengia Boo, a general of high rank and

* Quantong, or Canton, signifies a port.

† A similar emporium is established between China and Russia.

" On the boundary of these two empires two small towns were built, almost contiguous, the one inhabited by Russians, the other by Chinese; to these all the marketable productions of their respective countries are brought by the subjects of each empire."

Robertson's Ind. Note 52.

reputation. This latter was directed to make a circuitous march over hills that lay more to the southward, to endeavour, if possible, to get into the rear of the Chinese army, and prevent their retreat. The Governor of Quantong, named Ledougmee, finding that it was not the design of the Chinese leader to waste time by attacking his fort, collected a considerable body of men, and took the field against the invaders. The division of Amiou-mee first met the enemy near a town called Peengee, where they encamped, within eight miles of the Chinese army; on the following day a partial action took place, in which the Birmans were worsted, and obliged to retreat to the southward of Peengee. The Chinese, animated by this first success, and ignorant of the approach of Tengia Boo, imagined that they should meet no fur-

ther impediment until they reached the Birman capital. With that persuasion, they continued their march, and, deviating from the most frequented road, probably for the convenience of forage, pursued another route by the village of Chenghio. Amiou-mee, though repulsed, still kept hovering on the skirts of the Chinese army; which had proceeded only two days farther, to a town called Chiboo, when the division commanded by Tengia Boo suddenly appeared in their rear. Ledougmee, the Governor of Quantong, approached at the same time, with his party: thus inclosed on all sides, a retreat became impracticable, and to advance was desperate. The Tartar cavalry, on whose vigour and activity the Chinese army depended for provision, could no longer venture out, either to procure supplies, or protect convoys. In this situation, the

Birmans attacked the enemy with impetuosity, while, on the other hand, the defence made by the Chinese was equally resolute. The conflict had lasted three days, when the Chinese, in an effort of despair, tried to cut their way through the division commanded by Amiou-mee, that occupied the road by which a retreat seemed least difficult. This last attempt proved fatal; Amiou-mee's troops, certain of support, maintained their ground until the coming up of Tengia Boo, which decided the fortune of the day. The harassed Chinese now sunk under the pressure of superior numbers, and the carnage was dreadful. Birmans, when victorious, are the most unpitying and ferocious monsters on earth. Death, or rigorous slavery, is the certain doom of those they subdue in battle: of the Chinese army, not a man returned to his native country;

about 2500 were preserved from the sword, and conducted in fetters to the capital, where an exclusive quarter in the suburbs of the city was assigned for their residence. Those who did not understand any particular handicraft were employed in making gardens, and in the business of husbandry: mechanics and artificers were compelled to ply their trades according to the royal pleasure, without any other reward for their labour than a bare subsistence. These people, however, were encouraged, as are all strangers, to marry Birman wives, and consider themselves natives of the country. Compliance with so hospitable and general an invitation, confers even on slaves taken in war certain immunities, from which those who refuse the connexion are by law debarred.

This custom, in which the Birmans

follow the example of the wisest and best governed nations of antiquity, is singular amongst the civilized countries of the East; and peculiarly remarkable in a people who believe in the Shaster, and derive their religious tenets from an Hindoo source; who are surrounded also by kingdoms where women are kept inviolably sacred from the sight and converse of strangers, and where the exclusive system of casts or tribes admits of no proselytes. It is well known, that even the public prostitutes of China are strictly prohibited from having intercourse with any other than a Chinese; nor is any foreign woman permitted to enter the territories, or visit the ports of that jealous nation. The Hindoo women of rank are no less inaccessible; and admission into a respectable cast is not attainable by money. To such narrow prejudices the Birmans are supe-

rior; with a Lacedemonian liberality, they deny not the comforts of connubial commerce to men of whatever climate or complexion. They are sensible, that the strength of an empire consists in its population, and that a prince is great and powerful, more from the number of his subjects, than from the extent of his territory: hence the politic indulgence that the Birman government grants to every sect freely to exercise its religious rites: they tolerate alike the Pagan and the Jew, the Mussulman or Christian, the disciples of Confucius, or the worshippers of Fire; the children of whom, born of a Birman woman, equally become subjects of the state, and are entitled to the same protection and privileges, as if they had sprung from a line of Birman ancestry.

When Shembuan succeeded to the

throne, he removed the seat of government from Chagaing, the residence of his brother and immediate predecessor, to Monchaboo, where his father Alompra had kept his court. With this situation also he became discontented; and, it is said from certain superstitious reasons suggested by astrologers, again changed his abode, and made Awa Haung, or ancient Ava, the metropolis of the empire. The city, which had fallen into ruin, was quickly rebuilt; new keoums* and praws† arose; a strong stockade was erected; and the fortifications, which had been neglected since the expulsion of Nuttoon, were put into a respectable state of repair.

The brilliant success that attended

* Monasteries.

† Temples. Praw is a term applied to all sacred objects.

the recent irruption of the Birmans into the Siamese country was productive of no permanent advantages: though beaten, the Siamese were far from being a subjugated people. The inherent enmity that subsists between these two nations, will probably prevent the passive vassalage of one to the other, unless broken by such repeated defeats as must nearly amount to extirpation. Soon after Deebedee had led his army within the confines of the Birman dominions, the yoke of the conquerors was disclaimed in Dwarawuddy: a man named Pieticksing, a relation of the king, and one who held an official station about his person, had, previous to the capitulation, retired to a town at some distance, attended by his followers. As soon as it was known that the Birmans had withdrawn into their own territories, he returned, at the head of a

numerous troop of adherents, by whose aid he easily displaced the new government, and abolished the regulations made by the Birman general. The king, who had pusillanimously abandoned his throne and people, is said to have perished in the woods, but through what means is not clearly ascertained; probably by the dagger of the usurper, who, having gained over the populace and conciliated some men of influence, found few obstacles to impede his way to the throne.

Deebedee, who had so eminently distinguished himself, was received on his return to Ava with many flattering demonstrations of applause; his Tsaloe, or cord of nobility, was increased from six to nine strings, and he was farther honoured with the title of Na-ma-boo-dee, or most illustrious commander. The

Chinese being vanquished, and the Peguers to appearance so depressed as to leave no apprehension of disturbance to the state, Deebedee was again detached to punish the contumacious Siamese, and reduce them to vassalage and submission. He left Ava on this service, with a fleet of war-boats, early in the monsoon of the year 1771: the troops were debarked at Rangoon, and proceeded thence by land. On this occasion, the Siamese anticipated the intention of the Birman general, and met him in force on the frontiers, where the opposition he experienced from the enemy, and the difficulty of passing the rivers, which had not yet subsided, were such as to oblige him to retreat; he encamped on the borders of the Sitang river, whence he wrote to Ava to represent the necessity of sending him further reinforcements.

In consequence of this application, Chedookaminee, who had served on the former expedition, received a commission, appointing him Maywoon or Viceroy of Martaban, and of all the possessions belonging to the Birmans southward of Martaban. This officer was ordered to make the levies necessary for the assistance of Deebedee within his jurisdiction; after which he was to join that general, act in concert with him, and, uniting their forces, recommence hostilities against the Siamese.

The southern provinces, over which the authority of Chedookaminee extended, were chiefly inhabited by the families of Taliens, or Peguers, who had either voluntarily left, or were expelled from the ancient city of Pegue, from Dalla, and the districts adjacent; and out of these

Chedookaminee was obliged to form his new levies. The Peguers, who were then supposed to be sufficiently reconciled to the Birman government, and considered, in many respects, as naturalized subjects of the state, were accordingly required to contribute to the public exigencies, by furnishing men and money, in like proportion as the native Birmans. In fact, the southern countries were not capable of supplying Birman recruits sufficient for an army; but the confidence reposed in the Peguers was, in this instance, fatally misplaced, and their treachery averted from the Siamese the gathering storm.

Deebedee, probably disgusted by the appointment of Chedookaminee to the Maywoonship of Martaban, obtained permission to retire from the army, and

return to the capital: on his departure, Chedookaminee succeeded to the sole command.

Among the troops thus raised, were three popular chieftains of the Talien nation, named Tellakien, Tellasien, and Meenatzi, men of enterprizing, intriguing spirit, and of great influence amongst their people. The Peguers thus collected in a body, and provided with arms, became conscious of their own strength; a sense of which, stimulated by the influence of their chieftains, inspired them with a desire to regain their empire, and retaliate their wrongs on their oppressors. The army was assembled at Martaban when the conspiracy was formed: at the close of the first day's march, the Peguers suddenly rose upon their Birman companions, and commenced an indiscrimi-

nate massacre; the officer second in command of the Birman army was slain, and those who escaped the fury of the assassins fled into the woods. Chedookaminee himself, accompanied by 500 followers, with difficulty effected a retreat to Rangoon; the elated Peguers followed the blow, and pursued the fugitives to the very gates of the city, where, their numbers increasing, they formed an encampment, and commenced a regular siege.

Rangoon could not have been attacked at a time when it was worse prepared for defence. Imaginary security had lulled the Birmans into unsuspecting repose. The Maywoon of Pegue, whose residence was in Rangoon, had, a short time before, proceeded on an annual visit of homage to the capital, accompanied by the principal officers of his government;

he had also taken with him the greatest part of the troops, particularly those who manned the war-boats; a hardy and ferocious tribe, who usually attend on the governor, or viceroy, on occasions of ceremony. During his absence, a lieutenant or chekey, named Shoe-dong-northa, commanded in the city, and by the gallant defence he made proved himself no undeserving substitute. News of the revolt quickly spread, and, from its first success, created a general alarm among the Birmans resident in the adjoining districts. The Miou-gees, or chief men of Henzada, Denoobew, and Padaung, assembled all the force they could collect, and in a spirited manner came down the river in light boats, and threw themselves into Rangoon, which stood in need of such timely succours. The Peguers thrice attempted to storm a strong

stockade that encompassed the walls of the town, and were each time beaten off with serious loss. Intelligence of these events reaching court, the Maywoon, with his train of attendants, and a few additional troops, amounting in the whole to about 3000 men, were ordered to proceed without delay to the relief of Rangoon. The rapid stream of the Irrawaddy quickly transported this detachment to the place of its destination: the Peguers, on their approach, thought it most prudent to raise the siege, and, without making any further attempt to oppose the junction of the reinforcement, retired to the banks of the Saloenmeet. The arrival of the Viceroy of Rangoon was speedily followed by that of a still more respectable force, under an officer of the highest rank in the empire. Maha-see-soo-ra, one of the Woongees, or chief counsellors

of state, was entrusted by the king with the conduct of the southern war, and the restoration of order in the disturbed provinces.

These events did not deter Shembuan from pursuing his favourite scheme of conquest to the westward. The fertile plains and populous towns of Munnipoora, and the Cassay Shaan, attracted his ambition. Early in the year 1774, a formidable force was sent against these places, under the command of three generals of distinction, Moung-wamaa, Captain of the king's guard, Oundaboo, and Kameouza. Part proceeded by water up the Keen-duem, and the remainder by land, taking the route of Monchaboo, Kaungnaa, and Naky-oun-mee; the armament by water arrived unexpectedly at a town called Nerting, where the Birmans, land-

ing, surprised and carried away 150 women who were employed in the labours of the harvest. Monadella, the Raja of Nerting, made an ineffectual attempt to rescue the captives: he fell after a gallant struggle, and 250 of his followers lost their lives. The Birmans, having ravaged the country, and committed many acts of wanton barbarity, proceeded to join the detachment that advanced by land: when the forces were united, they marched towards Munnipoora, the Raja of which came forth to meet the enemy, and gave them battle at a village called Ampatalla, fourteen miles short of Munnipoora. The conflict was long and obstinate, but fortune in the end favoured the Birmans; the Munnipoora Raja fled from the field of battle to his capital, where confusion and terror prevailed: thence he withdrew to the Corrun hills,

five days' journey north-west of Munnipoora, accompanied by his family, and carrying with him his most valuable effects. The city of Munnipoora submitted to the conqueror, who took possession of whatever the inhabitants had not been able to remove or conceal. The spoils, consisting chiefly of merchandize, and vessels of gold and silver, were forwarded to the golden feet, together with 2000 prisoners of both sexes.

Having reduced the Munnipooreans, Oundaboo left to his colleagues, Moungwamaa and Kameouza, the task of enforcing submission from the Cassay Shaan, and several neighbouring petty states; whilst, putting himself at the head of 10,000 men, unincumbered with baggage or artillery, he marched against Chawal, Raja of Cachar, who possessed the inde-

pendent sovereignty of a rich, though mountainous, territory north-west of Munnipoora. In his progress he overcame Anousping, prince of a country called Muggaloo*; thence he is said to have penetrated within the Hamalaya hills, which form a continuation of the lofty Imaus, and seem to be a barrier raised by nature to protect the mild unwarlike inhabitants of India from the more hardy natives of the East, who, unrestrained by such impediments, would ages since have spread desolation along the fertile banks of the Burhampooter and the Ganges. Pursuing his conquests, Oundaboo advanced within three days' march of Cospore†, the capital of Cachar,

* Mr. Wood frequently heard of this country whilst he was at Assam, as engineer to a detachment sent thither by Lord Cornwallis.

† Cospore is said to be twenty days' journey from Munnipoora by an Hircarra, or messenger.

passing many rugged mountains and pleasant valleys embosomed in their range.

Chawal, aware of the storm with which he was threatened, had taken the necessary precautions for his own security. He joined in a defensive league with the lesser rajahs of the hills; who, though waging endless warfare with each other, united in the hour of danger to repel the common enemy. The chief of these was the Prince of Jointy, surnamed the Gossain Raja. Oundaboo, blinded by the ambition of conquest, imprudently pressed forward, until he found himself environed with difficulties that he could not hope to surmount, and from which there was now no retreat. To complete his misfortunes, that deadly disease too fatally known to British troops by the name of the hill fever, had spread its baneful in-

fluence through the Birman ranks; famine and pestilence accomplished what the swords of the mountaineers could never have effected. Oundaboo's troops dispersed, and in the defiles of the mountains and the mazes of the forests were cut off by the natives in detail, or perished the unresisting victims of a supernatural foe.

The misfortunes of Oundaboo and his army, instead of intimidating the Birmans, excited an insatiable spirit of revenge. Kameouza undertook to exact retribution from the Cachars, for the blood of his slaughtered countrymen; Moungwamaa remained at Munnipoora, with a garrison sufficient to defend the fort; whilst Kameouza marched against Chawal, with a yet greater force than had accompanied the unsuccessful general, whose error af-

forded an useful lesson to his successor. Avoiding the rash haste made by his predecessor, this more prudent leader diligently explored his ground, halting wherever subsistence could be collected, with which many of the rich and luxuriant valleys of Cachar abounded: thus continuing a cautious progress, he penetrated as far as the pass of Inchamutty*, two days' journey from Cospore, where he was met by a deputation from the Raja to solicit peace. Kameouza prescribed terms, which, though severe and humiliating, were accepted. Chawal consented to pay, besides a sum of money, the abject homage of a maiden of the royal blood to the King of Ava, and to send him a tree with the roots bound in their native clay; thereby indicating, that

* There are passes of the same name in Hindostan.

both person and property were at the disposal of his sovereign pleasure; these acts being considered as the most unequivocal proofs of vassalage, expressing, on one hand, the extreme of submission, and on the other, the most absolute power.

Kameouza, in his return to Munnipoora, chastised a race of mountaineers named Keingee, by whom he had been harassed in his march, burning several of their villages in the districts of Bodasser and Chaumgaut. Raja Anoupsing likewise made his submission; and repossession of Munnipoora was granted to the fugitive prince, on condition of paying an annual tribute, and offering the acknowledgment of a royal virgin, and a tree. Matters being thus adjusted, the Birmans returned to their own country, having lost above 20,000 men, from the commencement to

the close of the expedition, by the various casualties of war.

These victories only lent a transitory splendor to the Birman arms, without contributing to the real and permanent advantage of the state; it was impossible to keep possession of the tracts they had over-run, the towns they had stormed, and the countries they had subdued. The Birman nation was far from being populous, in proportion to its widely extended empire. To retain the late acquisition of Pegue, and keep in subjection its discontented and numerous inhabitants, required the utmost vigilance, and occupied all the troops that could with prudence be spared. Oaths of allegiance are considered by eastern vassals as obligations of convenience, as mere nugatory forms, to be observed no longer than there is power to

punish a breach of them; the conquests made by the Birmans to the westward, therefore, were attended with no other effect, than to add to their native arrogance, and to increase their already inordinate pride.

The Peguers, as before related, having raised the siege of Rangoon, had returned to the Saloenmeet, or the Martaban river, when Maha-see-soo-ra, to whom the management of the southern war was intrusted, arrived at Rangoon with an additional reinforcement of troops, and several pieces of artillery. Having augmented his strength with the soldiers that accompanied the Maywoon, and drafted part of the garrison, his army amounted to 20,000 men; whilst twenty-four pieces of ordnance rendered him formidable to

foes casually armed with whatever weapons they could procure.

With this respectable equipment Maha-see-soo-ra took the field about the end of the year 1774. The enemy were in possession of Martaban, and had collected, from various quarters, a discordant rabble, ill provided with necessaries, and altogether unamenable to control; from whom the Birman commander met with little opposition, in a march rendered tedious by the transportation of heavy guns, and the difficulty of crossing the numerous watercourses that intersect the lower country. On reaching the vicinity of Martaban, overtures of a pacific nature were made by the rebel leaders, which were rejected with contempt and menace: the Peguers in despair shut themselves

within the fort; a siege was commenced, and sustained for a considerable time. The Peguers, however, were at length forced to yield. Tellasien and Meenatzi, with several of their adherents, effected an escape to Siam; but Tellakien was not so fortunate; he was captured in the fort, with many others, and, being a leader of the rebellion, his fate was reserved for the decision of his sovereign.

Maha-see-soo-ra was preparing to carry the war into the country of the Siamese, when he received intelligence of the intentions of the king to visit Rangoon in person: this circumstance, together with the little probability of his being able to advance far before the season* when the

* The rivers in India usually begin to swell before the actual fall of rain in the low countries. This is to be ascribed to the monsoon commencing earlier among

rivers swell, determined him to pass the monsoon in cantonments at Martaban.

Shembuan having repelled the formidable invasion of one enemy, and carried his victorious arms into the territory of another, and having, by prudent conduct, established his throne on the strong foundations of terror and respect, conceived that his presence would contribute to a more speedy termination of the troubles that agitated the lower provinces, and more effectually destroy the seeds of disaffection among the Peguers, which had so often, at intervals, broke out into open rebellion. The temple of Dagon, called Shoe-Dagon, or the Golden Dagon, an edifice of venerable sanctity and stupen-

the mountains, and to the melting of the snow, with which the tops of the eastern hills are covered in the hottest season.

dous size, where Gaudma, the Birman and Pegue object of religious worship, was, from time immemorial, accustomed to receive at an annual festival the adorations of the devout, had, in the year 1769, suffered much damage from an earthquake; in particular the Tee, or umbrella, which, composed of open iron-work, crowned the spire, had been thrown down by the concussion, and rendered irreparable from the fall. In the Birman empire, a pagoda is not deemed sanctified until it receives the umbrella; and the erection of this last, but most important appendage, is an act of high solemnity. Shembuan, who on this occasion is said to have covered policy with the cloak of religion, caused a new and magnificent Tee to be constructed at Ava, and declared his intention to assist in person at the ceremony of putting it on. For this

avowed purpose he left his capital, attended by a numerous train of Birman nobility, whilst, to increase the pride and pageantry of the display, Beinga Della, the unfortunate monarch of Pegue, who had surrendered his sceptre and person to Alompra, was led captive in the procession. An army of 50,000 men composed the body guard: this splendid array, having embarked in boats, sailed down the Irrawaddy, and arrived at Rangoon in the month of October 1775. Tellakien, the Pegue rebel, who had been sent up the country loaded with irons, met the king at the town of Denoobew, and expiated his treason by a painful death.

Whatever respect the glory of conquest, and the wisdom of a well regulated government, might attach to the reign of Shembuan, it must be wholly obscured

by the cruelty exercised on the present occasion towards his royal prisoner, the unhappy king of Pegue; and this too, like a more recent and equally inhuman regicide, in a nation professing Christianity and enlightened by Science, was perpetrated under the mockery of justice. Shembuan, not content with exhibiting to the humbled Peguers their venerable and yet venerated monarch, bound in fetters, and bowed down with years and anguish, resolved to take away his life, and render the disgrace still deeper, by exposing him as a public malefactor, to suffer under the stroke of the common executioner. In most countries to the east of Bengal, decapitation is the punishment allotted for common thieves; and he who inflicts the sentence is usually a culprit that has once been convicted of the crime. To die by such a hand, is

deemed an ignominy which the Birmans dread even worse than death itself; but for any subject to spill royal blood, is forbidden by the Birman and Pegue laws, as an act of inexpiable impiety; nevertheless the unfeeling Shembuan, regardless of law and devoid of humanity, issued orders for his ill-fated prisoner to prepare for trial on a charge of high treason.

The process of law, in Birman courts of justice, is conducted with as much formality as in any country on earth. Beinga Della was brought before the judges of the Rhoom, among whom the Maywoon of Pegue* presided. The late

* In the absence of the King, the Maywoon, or viceroy, never attends in person at the Rhoom; he then represents the King; remains in his palace, and receives the report of the judges; to which he applies the law, and finally awards the sentence.

king of Pegue was there accused of having been privy to, and instrumental in, exciting the late rebellion. Depositions of several witnesses, supposed to be suborned, were taken; the prisoner denied the charge; but his fate being determined on, his plea availed him nothing. He was found guilty; and the proceedings, according to custom, were laid before the King, who passed sentence of death, and accompanied it with an order for speedy execution.

In conformity to this cruel mandate, on the 7th of the increasing moon, in the month Tabouńg, the aged victim was led, in public procession, through an insulting populace, to a place called Awabock, three miles without the city, where he met his doom with fortitude, and had no distinction paid him above the meanest

criminal, except that all the municipal officers attended in their robes of ceremony to witness his last moments.

State necessity is sometimes found to be incompatible with individual justice, and, on some occasions, must be allowed to plead for measures which, abstractedly considered, seem harsh, and bear hard upon particular members of the community; but such necessity, to be admissible, should be made unequivocally evident. Men whose designs against the public peace cannot be doubted ought to be restrained by the hand of coercion, even before the commission of any overt act to which the law attaches: the proof of intention warrants and demands such interference. A despot, who dreads the extinction of his power, and the loss of his crown, will resort to unjustifiable

means to remove the object of his jealousy, and anticipate on his enemy the meditated blow; but the circumstances of the present case appear neither to admit of palliation nor excuse: the security of the state was not endangered, and no rivalry could be dreaded. The Pegue king had passed more than twenty years a contented and inoffensive prisoner: had he been only suspected of encouraging his former subjects in any one of their several attempts at emancipation, his life would have paid the forfeit of his temerity; but, in the last instance, when bending under the pressure of years and infirmity, there was scarce a possibility of his being accessory to so daring a revolt. On the part of the Birman monarch, it was a wanton and barbarous display of power, designed, perhaps, as a humiliating spectacle to the Peguers, whose attachment to their an-

cient sovereign bordered on idolatry. It casts a deep shade over a splendid reign, and justly brands the memory of Shembuan with the odious appellation of tyrant.

The execution of many Taliens of rank followed that of the king; all who were suspected of having borne a part in the late rebellion, and all whose influence rendered them formidable, were included in the list of the proscribed. Several fled from persecution, and, after the storm blew over, settled in Tongho, or the tributary provinces of Zemee, Sandepoora, and the districts adjacent.

These are among the last transactions of Shembuan's life: after duly solemnizing the ceremony of putting on the Tee, he prepared to return to his capital,

having given instructions to his general, Maha-see-soo-ra, to prosecute the war against the Siamese.

In the beginning of the year 1776, Shembuan left Rangoon with the same retinue and in the same pomp which before attended him. During the early stages of his progress, he felt the first symptoms of his mortal illness. Alarmed at the danger, and impatient under his sufferings, he quitted his slow-drawn boat of state, and, embarking in a lighter vessel, hastened to his capital, hoping there to find relief; but his days were numbered, and he was doomed shortly to resign his diadem and life to that Power which disregards even the boasted immortality of Birman kings.

Languishing under a slow fever, and

distempered with scrofula, Shembuan obtained little benefit from the efficacy of medicine. In order to breathe a freer air, he changed the fort of Ava for the open plains: temporary wooden houses were erected on the highest banks that overhung the stream, and on spots to which superstition pointed as the site of health. But the skill of astrologers proved fallacious, and no wind that blew wafted alleviation to his pains: after fatiguing himself by frequent removals, he felt that it was but an useless aggravation of his sufferings; hopeless of life, he returned to the fort to prepare for the last scene, and settle the affairs of the empire and the succession to the throne.

Shembuan had two sons, Chenguza and Chelenza, by different mothers; the first, at this time eighteen years of age, was

born of the principal queen; the latter, not more than thirteen, the offspring of a favourite concubine. Competition between these brothers was an event scarcely to be dreaded; and Momein, the son of Namdogee-Praw, seemed to be too closely immured in monastic privacy, to raise a bar to the succession. Nevertheless Shembuan took every prudent precaution to transmit an undisputed sceptre: he exacted from the nobility a solemn promise of allegiance to his heir, which the respect entertained for the character of the father inclined few to withhold from the son. Having satisfactorily adjusted his temporal concerns, the monarch yielded up his breath in the city of Ava, about the middle of spring in the year 1776.

The character of Shembuan is that of an austere, intelligent, and active prince.

He reduced to a state of permanent vassalage the petty sovereigns of several neighbouring provinces, who had before only yielded to desultory conquest: these he compelled, as Chobwas, or tributary princes, to repair in person, or by representatives, at stated periods, to his capital, and pay homage at the golden feet; among them are numbered the lords of Sandepoora (Cambodia), Zemee, Quantong, Bamoo, and others; together with several less civilized* tribes, inhabiting the western hills, and the mountainous tracts that intersect the country eastward of the river Irrawaddy.

Shembuan was in most points a superstitious observer of the rites and precepts of the Birman religion, which originating, as it indisputably does, from the same

* Carreaners, Keins, and Yoos.

source as that of the Hindoos, differs nevertheless from the latter in many essential tenets. Admitting the sanctity, and reverencing the learning of the Braminical sect, the Birmans, votaries of Buddho Tachor, altogether deny the supremacy of the Bramin professors over their Rhahaans, or Phonghis. The Birmans, Peguers, and Siamese, as well as all nations whose fundamental principles of religion can be traced to the Hindoo system, and who acknowledge the Shanscrit as their holy text, unite in one benevolent doctrine, the sinfulness of depriving any animal of life, to satisfy a carnivorous appetite. To eat flesh, is not deemed a crime by the Birmans; but he who eats it is not exempt from sin, unless the creature died a natural death, or was slain by accident, or by other hands. This precept of the church, it may be supposed, is not very scrupu-

lously observed, and in many parts of the empire is wholly disregarded, except by the priesthood, who never even prepare their own victuals. Mandates have been issued by viceroys, and proclamations gone forth from the golden palace, to enjoin obedience to the sacred law; but these were little more than expiatory manifestoes, suggested by remorse, danger, or superstition. It is likewise at times used as an instrument of venal oppression; the greedy retainers of the law being entitled to a certain quota of the fine levied from a convicted delinquent. Shembuan, strongly tinctured with bigotry, often, in the course of his reign, repeated the pious prohibition, with no other effect than causing that to be done in secret, which before the order little precaution had been used to conceal.

On the demise of Shembuan, it does not appear that any effort was made, either by Momein himself, or the nobles attached to his father, to recover a throne from which he was most unjustly debarred. Chenguza ascended without opposition, and assumed the government, at a juncture when the flourishing state of public affairs held out a flattering prospect of an auspicious reign.

But in the succession to sovereignty, it sometimes happens, as in the succession to an estate, that he who comes to the fairest inheritance does not always prove a benefactor to his realm and his subjects, or his tenants and demesnes. Numerous errors will, and ought to be forgiven, in the presumptive heir to an high public trust, or an affluent private property; but a radical want of honest principle, and a

long continued course of base and licentious conduct, never fail in time to alienate the affections of men, whether subjects or tenantry, however inclined they may be to venerate the virtues of the sire in the person of the son. Even the *jus divinum*, so strenuously inculcated by the Birman articles of political faith, did not, in the end, prove sufficiently strong to protect from violence a throne polluted by the lowest profligacy, and disgraced by an open violation of every moral and religious duty.

With all the advantages arising from his father's memory, and with a government thoroughly established in power, Chenguza commenced his reign: but these distinctions he studied by every means in his power to abuse. His first imprudent act was to recal the army from

the southward, which, shortly after the departure of Shembuan, had marched from Martaban under Maha-see-soo-ra, and had commenced operations against the Siamese. This general, Chenguza not only displaced from his military command, but likewise degraded from his high ministerial office of Woongee, or chief counsellor of state; a measure that drew on himself much odium, as Maha-see-soo-ra was a person of conciliatory manners, and an officer of approved integrity and valour.

The other parts of Chenguza's conduct corresponded with this arbitrary outset, and he plunged at once into the most shameless debauchery. Not content with repealing the edicts of his father against the use of spirituous liquors, he exhibited in his own person an example of ebriety

and dissipation: stimulated by jealousy, he caused his younger brother, Chilenza, to be put to death: he submitted the affairs of his empire to be administered by favourites, and accustomed himself to be absent from his capital whole months together, indulging in rural sports and carousals, and preferring his hunting seats, on the borders of deep forests, to the splendid piasath * of the royal palace. In the year 1779, his father's younger brother, Terroug-mee †, incurred the suspicion of the tyrant, and fell a victim to his jealousy: Pagahm-mee, another of his uncles, was kept a close prisoner in the fort of Ava, under a pretext that he was

* Piasath, the regal spire, that distinguishes the dwelling of the monarch and the temples of the divinity: to none other is it allowed.

† Or possessor of Terroug.

plotting against the state: his uncle, Minderagee Praw, the present king, resided sometimes at Chagaing, and sometimes at Monchaboo; and though he affected to live in the most inoffensive obscurity, was nevertheless vigilantly watched by the minions of the palace.

Agreeably to the usage of the Birman court, Chenguza had early been betrothed to a relation* of his own: this marriage proving unfruitful, he espoused, as his second wife, the daughter of one of the Attawoons† of the court, a young woman

* A prince, to be properly qualified to ascend the Birman throne, should be of blood-royal both in the male and female line. In order to guard against plebeian contamination, the Birman law admits of incestuous marriages in the royal family: this licence is restricted to them alone.

† The Attawoon may be called a privy counsellor;

endowed with virtue, beauty, and accomplishments. Although it was generally believed that he was extremely fond of this wife, yet the irritation of an intemperate life, together with a disposition from nature prone to jealousy, caused them to live on terms of unceasing discord. One day, actuated by an impulse of sudden rage, he accused her of infidelity; and without allowing himself time to judge dispassionately, or suffering the unhappy princess to vindicate herself, he pronounced sentence of immediate death. There are wretches in every nation ready to execute the sanguinary mandates of a cruel

there are four who have access to his majesty at all hours, and are consulted by the king on affairs of importance; they have influence enough, sometimes, to counteract the decisions of the Woongees passed in the Lotoo, or high court of judgment, when laid before his majesty for royal approbation.

tyrant; the trembling and innocent victim was dragged from the palace, and inclosed in a sack of scarlet cloth, richly ornamented: thus confined, she was put on board a boat*, when, the sack being suspended between the narrow necks of two earthen jars †, the whole was sunk in the deepest part of the Irrawaddy. The jars filling, carried the body down, and prevented emersion. This diabolical act was perpetrated in open day, before thousands of spectators, amongst whom were many of her friends and relations. Her afflicted father, overwhelmed with anguish and

* It is expressly forbidden by the Birman law to spill the blood of one of the royal family; drowning is esteemed the most honourable death.

† The jars of Pegue are in general estimation throughout India, being remarkable for their size and excellence.

deprived of all his offices, retired in despair to the city of Chagaing.

The universal disgust that a conduct so flagitious could not fail to raise, even in the most depraved society, caused the majority of the nobles, and the great body of the people, anxiously to desire a change. Under such a dominion, no man's life was secure from becoming a sacrifice to the caprice of an intoxicated barbarian, or the personal enmity of some despicable parasite: at such a juncture, the eyes of all were naturally turned to the rightful heir, who had now attained the years of manhood. The retreat chosen for Momien, was the Keoum and Praw of Loga-ther-poo, an inconsiderable distance from the fort of Ava, where, protected by his sacerdotal habit, by the influence of his aunt, and perhaps, above all, by his

own want of capacity and personal insignificance, the tyrant had hitherto considered him as an object too contemptible for notice; little imagining that the simple Phonghi was one day to be, in the hands of others, the instrument of his destruction.

A conspiracy was the result of the discontents of the people and the misconduct of the prince. The principal actors were Shembuan Minderagee Praw*, the Attawoon before-mentioned, and Maha-see-soo-ra, the degraded minister. These personages easily gained the monks over to their side, who, though less willing to meddle in state affairs than is customary with their order in many countries, yet,

* The present monarch, and younger brother of the deceased Shembuan.

being exasperated by the open contempt that Chenguza manifested for religion, its rights and ministers, secretly lent their aid to bring about a change, which, by placing Momien, their illustrious disciple, on the throne, promised to advance the interests of the church. Momien was accordingly tutored for the part he was to act, and nothing remained but to embrace a favourable moment to execute the projected revolution.

During Chenguza's reign, military operations seem to have been wholly suspended; whilst the neighbouring nations, the Chinese, the Siamese, and Cassayers, had so recently experienced the power of the Birman arms, that they felt no inclination to stand forth as aggressors. Repeated defeats and severe penal laws crushed the spirit of revolt among the

Peguers, who appeared to acquiesce in their subjugated state. The Anoupectoumeou, or great western mountains, had not in the present dynasty been crossed by an hostile army; the tranquillity of the empire, therefore, during the six years that Chenguza wore the crown, compensated, in some measure, for the licentiousness that was introduced among the people. Population increased, and tracts of land were cultivated, which under a more warlike prince would probably have continued an unproductive waste.

After matters were in readiness, the first opportunity of acting occurred in the month of November 1781. Chenguza had gone to Keoptaloun, a town on the banks of the river, about thirty miles below Ava, to celebrate an high festival. As he never observed any regular times

of going out, or returning to the fort, it often happened that he presented himself at the gates when least expected, and at hours when entrance is debarred to the multitude. Momien was secretly furnished with the dress and equipments of royalty: thus personating Chenguza, and attended by the customary retinue, he appeared at midnight before the gate called Shoedogaa, and demanded admission: at first the wicket only was opened by the guard on duty; who, suspecting treachery from the unusual earnestness of the foremost persons to enter, attempted to close the door, and called out, Treason! Resistance, however, was too late; the sentinel was cut down, and the gate thrown open by those who had penetrated through the wicket. The conspirators, being reinforced by a number of armed men that lay in ambuscade, proceeded to surround

the palace, which was in itself a fortification, being encompassed by a high wall, defended by a parapet, and flanked by small bastions; each gate was further protected by a piece of ordnance. On the first alarm, the Woongees and principal officers of state took refuge within the inclosure of the palace. During the night, the utmost terror and confusion prevailed throughout the city: at daybreak, the number of conspirators being augmented, an attack was made on one of the palace gates, which was blown open: the guard, commanded by an Armenian named Gabriel, stood their ground, and poured three discharges from their cannon on the assailants. After a smart conflict, the event which usually decides the fate of battle between Eastern armies, terminated this; Gabriel was killed by the stroke of a spear, and his

party fled on the fall of their leader: the ministers of Chenguza were put to death on the spot. As soon as the tumult subsided, Momien was solemnly proclaimed sovereign of the Birman empire; a new council was sworn, officers of state appointed, and dignities conferred on the most active partizans. The next measure adopted to secure possession of the throne, was to proclaim Chenguza an outlaw, in a manifesto declaratory of Momien's prior claim, and expatiating on the unworthiness of his predecessor. An armed force was likewise detached both by land and water to Keoptaloun, to seize his person: but Chenguza, having received timely information, withdrew across the river; and, accompanied by several attendants, effected his escape to Chagaing, where some men of consequence, who were sensible that they had little to hope from the be-

nevolence of the new government, joined his fortunes, and fed him with hopes of being able to recover the sceptre so suddenly wrested from him. These expectations, however, were of short duration; a tyrant dethroned, has no other friends than the companions of his profligacy and the accomplices of his guilt.

The fort of Chagaing was immediately invested by troops in the interest of the new king. Chenguza at first thought of defending himself; but finding that he was deserted by those on whom he placed his chief reliance, after a resistance of four days his resolution failed, and he determined on flying to the Cassay country, there to throw himself on the protection of the Munnipoora Raja. This intention he privately communicated to his mother, the widow of Shembuan Praw, who re-

sided in his palace in the city of Ava. Instead of encouraging her son to persevere in so pusillanimous a resolve, she earnestly dissuaded him from flight; urging, that it was far more glorious to die even by ignoble hands, within the precincts of his own palace, than to preserve life under the ignominious character of a mendicant, fed by strangers, and indebted for a precarious asylum to a petty potentate. Chenguza yielded to his mother's counsel, and, preferring death to disgraceful exile, caused a small boat to be privately prepared, and kept in readiness at the gaut or landing-place: disguising himself in the habit of a private gentleman, and attended only by two menials, he left Chagaing by break of day, and, embarking, rowed towards Ava, on the opposite shore. When the boat approached the principal gaut, at

the foot of the walls, he was challenged by the sentinels on duty: no longer desirous of concealing himself, he called out in a loud voice, that he was "Chenguza Nandoh-yeng Praw;" "Chenguza, lawful lord of the palace." A conduct at once so unexpected and so resolute struck the guards with astonishment, who, either overawed by his presence, or at a loss how to act for want of instructions, suffered him to proceed unmolested; the crowd also, that so extraordinary a circumstance had by this time brought together, respectfully made way for him to pass. Scarcely had he reached the gate of the outer court of the palace, when he was met by the Attawoon, father of the princess whom he had so inhumanly slain: Chenguza, on perceiving him, exclaimed, "Traitor, I am come to take possession "of my right, and wreak vengeance on

" mine enemies." The Attawoon instantly snatched a sabre from an attendant officer, and at one stroke cut the unhappy Chenguza through the bowels, and laid him breathless at his feet. No person was found to prevent or avenge his death; he fell unlamented, as he had lived despised.

Momien, destined to be a wretched tool in the hands of others, was not long suffered to enjoy his unexpected elevation. At the instigation, it is believed, of the partizans of the present king, he caused the Attawoon who had slain Chenguza to be apprehended; and on the accusation of having shed royal blood, contrary to the express letter of the civil and religious law, when it was his duty only to have seized the person of Chenguza, and brought him a prisoner to the king, this ill-fated

nobleman was, without remorse, delivered over to the public executioner.

Shembuan Mia Shean Minderagee Praw, the fourth son of the deceased Alompra, had ever carefully concealed under an humble exterior, and apparent love of retirement, ambition that aspired to the possession of the throne; his influence, though less prominent than that of the other confederates, yet contributed above all to the successful accomplishment of the late revolution. An ideot youth, who had passed his life in monastic retirement, could have but few attached to him from personal affection; and the use he made of his early power, did not encourage a hope that the state would derive much benefit from his future administration. Minderagee, therefore, found no difficulty in forming a party sufficiently powerful

to crush in its first stage the government of the young ecclesiastic. It is, however, surmised, and apparently on good grounds, that the whole chain of events had been preconcerted; and that Momien, when urged to take on him the imperial dignity, after he had fulfilled the views of others, was himself marked for destruction: be this as it may, Minderagee met with little to obstruct the execution of his plans. On the first notice that Chagaing was abandoned by Chenguza, he left Monchaboo, and, at the head of 4000 men, took possession of the evacuated fortress: the partizans of Minderagee profess, that it was not his intention to proceed farther, but to do the duty of a good subject, by preserving the fort for his legal sovereign; and they add, that a deputation from the principal personages in Ava, entreating him to come and assume the reins of go-

vernment, which Momien was found unworthy to hold, alone induced him to take the subsequent steps. In compliance with this real or pretended solicitation, he crossed the Irrawaddy, and seized on the ensigns of imperial authority. Momien was of course made prisoner. Deposition and imprisonment, however, did not satisfy the usurper: without assigning any cause, or granting even the form of trial, the unfortunate nephew was, by his uncle's orders, conveyed to the river, and there plunged into the stream, between two jars, conformably to the Birman mode of executing members of the royal family.

The reign of Momien, from the date of his accession to that of his death, included only eleven days. These events happened in the Birman year 1144 *. The present

* Anno Domini 1782.

King was then forty-three years of age; he had two sons already grown up to man's estate, and a third by a different mother, yet an infant. Minderagee Praw, having now passed the impetuous season of youth, ascended the throne with all the advantages derivable from experience and example.

The intoxication that so frequently attends on sudden prosperity seems not to have affected the new monarch: he did not forget or prove ungrateful to those whose fidelity screened him in his days of danger, and afterwards raised him to the summit of his wishes. Although he obtained the sceptre by an act of aggravated murder, yet, after he became securely seated, he punished with moderation, and rewarded with liberality; wisely extending clemency to the servants of his pre-

decessors. Maha-see-soo-ra, who had been dismissed and exiled by Chenguza, was recalled, and placed at the head of the King's private council. The chief Woongee*, who possessed power in the reign of Alompra, and had proved under every change a faithful servant to the crown, was continued in office. The person who arrested Momien, and superintended his execution, became principal Maywoon† of the city. The present

* *Woon ving Miazo.* This nobleman still presides in the assembly of Woons; and although, from years, become incapable of close attention to business, is held in high respect for his long tried probity and private worth.

† There are four Maywoons, each of whom superintends the jurisdiction of a quarter of the city; they represent the King in their respective courts; their decisions, in capital cases, are revised by the Woons in the Lotoo, and afterwards finally determined by the King himself.

Viceroy* of Pegue, then a very young man, had the district and town of Meedee conferred on him by a royal grant, as a return for the attachment his father had manifested towards the King, when suffering under the jealousy of Chenguza; deriving also an additional claim from the circumstance of the King's eldest son having been fostered by his mother, which procured him the honorary title of Tee-kein, or prince. Many others likewise tasted of the imperial bounty; and whilst obnoxious persons received the benefit of an act of oblivion, denunciations of rigour were proclaimed against such as should in future act contumaciously, or dare to disturb the public repose.

Kings, however, have other enemies to

* This personage is commonly called Meedee Tee-kein, or Prince of Meedee; spelt by Mr. Wood, Meeayday.

guard against, than avowed foes or rival competitors: the wild maniac, or fanatical enthusiast, often under the influence of frenzy, directs the poignard to the breasts of monarchs. The Birman king had but a short time enjoyed the crown, when he had nearly been deprived both of his life and diadem by a person of this description. Magoung, a low born man, unconnected with, and it is said, without the privacy of any person of condition, who had always been remarkable for the regularity of his actions and a gloomy cast of thought, had influence enough to form a confederacy of 100 men as visionary and desperate as himself. This troop bound themselves in secrecy and fidelity to each other by an oath: their object was to take away the life of the King; but to answer what end, or whom they designed to elevate, is not ascertained. These despe-

radoes, headed by Magoung, at daybreak in the morning made an attack on the palace. The customary guard over the king's dwelling consists of 700 men, who are well appointed, and kept alert on duty. Notwithstanding this, the attempt had nearly succeeded: bearing down the sentinels, they penetrated into the interior court, and the king escaped, from the casual circumstance of being in the range of apartments belonging to the women, which he was least accustomed to frequent. His guards, who at first shrunk from the fury of the onset, quickly rallied; their courage and numbers overpowered the assassins; and Magoung was slain, with all his associates, within the precincts of the palace.

Minderagee Praw, whilst he led a recluse and private life, had imbibed much of

the superstition that so strongly tinctures every form of religion in the East. The gloomy Islamite* and tranquil Hindoo are alike bigoted to their faith, and susceptible of the prejudices which ignorance and priestcraft inculcate in minds uninstructed in the benign and enlightened doctrines of Christianity. During his days of leisure, the king had directed much of his attention to astronomical studies, and became a thorough believer in judicial astrology. Bramins, who, though inferior

* The Mussulman and Hindoo, though equally bigoted, yet in their doctrinal tenets are curiously contrasted. The Koran enjoins the disciples of Mahommed to make proselytes of the whole world by the edge of the sword; the Shaster proscribes the whole world, and denies the cord of Hindooism to all mankind. The Mussulmen, 700 years ago, cut the throats of the Hindoos because they refused to be circumcised: the Indians never invite any man to abjure his faith.

in sanctity to the Rhahaans, are nevertheless held in high respect by the Birmans, had for ages been accustomed to migrate from Cassay and Arracan to Ava, where they always met with a favourable reception, and, on account of their superior knowledge, were appointed professors of science. A college was established, and certain lands appropriated for its support: these doctors composed almanacs, calculated eclipses, and pronounced, from their intercourse with the planets, the propitious or adverse season to attempt any momentous undertaking. Minderagee Praw had early habituated himself to reverence this sect; he received from them instructions in his favourite study, and listened to their predictions with implicit credulity. Long before his elevation they had foretold the fortune that awaited him, and the accomplishment of their prophecy

confirmed the Braminical influence: he appointed a certain number to be his private chaplains, who, on court days, arrayed in white robes, and standing round the throne, chaunt a solemn benediction in melodious recitative. This ceremony is performed as soon as the king ascends the imperial seat, and before the commencement of public business. Prompted partly by the persuasions of his inspired counsellors, and partly by that desire of change which Birman monarchs superstitiously entertain, Minderagee resolved to withdraw the seat of government from Awa Haung*, and found a new city. The site fixed on for the projected settlement was judicious: about four miles north-east of Ava, there is a deep and extensive lake called Tounzemaun, formed by the influx of the river during the mon-

* Ancient Ava.

soon, through a narrow channel, which afterwards expands and displays a body of water a mile and a half broad, and seven or eight miles long. This lake first takes a northerly direction, nearly parallel with the river; it afterwards curves to the south-east, in a lessening sheet, and diminishes to a morass, favourable to the culture of rice. When filled by the periodical rains, the lake, with the river on one side, incloses a dry and healthy peninsula, on which Ummerapoora, the name given to the new city, now stands. Buildings in the Birman country are composed for the most part of wood, and, water carriage being here convenient, the old town was speedily demolished, and the present capital rose from its materials; whilst such was the assiduity used in removal, that Ummerapoora became in a short time one of the most flourishing and

well built cities of the east; the fort, likewise, which is spacious and regular, is completely fortified after the Asiatic manner. A lofty rampart, protected by a parapet, and strengthened by bastions composed of excellent masonry, is further secured by a deep and broad ditch, faced with brick, and filled with water: the gateways are guarded by cannon, and retrenchments defend the passes of the ditch.

The first year of the reign of Minderagee was distinguished by the attempt of another petty insurgent, who meditated nothing less than the overthrow of the Birman, and the re-establishment of the Talien monarchy. A fanatic fisherman of Rangoon, named Natchien, a man of mean extraction, availed himself of a prophecy circulated among the vulgar, that a person of his profession was to prove the instru-

ment of deliverance to the Pegue people; and on the faith of this prediction, he induced several Peguers who lived in the district of Dalla to enter into his designs, and engage in his support. These desperadoes made an attack upon the municipal officers when assembled in the Rhoom, or public hall of justice, several of whom they put to the sword; but by the spirited exertions of the Maywoon, the rebellion was crushed before it reached to a height that could endanger the state. Tranquillity and order were speedily restored. On this occasion, upwards of 500 Peguers suffered death by the executioner; which impressed such a lasting terror on the minds of others, that no attempt has since been made by the Peguers to cast off the Birman yoke.

The new monarch, more ambitious than

his nephew, not content with the widely-extended dominions which he possessed, meditated still further acquisitions, in a quarter hitherto untried by any descendant of Alompra. Conquest had already been stretched southward as far as Mergui, on the coast of Tenasserem, comprehending Tavoy, and the several ports on the western shore of the peninsula. Complete subjugation of the Cassayers was scarcely to be expected, as from their hills and fastnesses they could incessantly harass the invaders, and render the country an unproductive waste. Zemee, Sandapoora, and many districts of the Yoodra Shaan to the eastward, were tributary and governed by Chobwas, who annually paid homage to the Birman king. The province of Bamoo, the fort of Quantong, and several places of less note, had been taken from the Chinese, as far as the

woody mountains that divide the south-west of Manchegee, or Yunan, from the kingdom of Ava. West of Anoupec-toumiou lay a country, the fertility of whose soil and its aptitude for commerce attracted the avarice of the Birman monarch, whilst the imbecility of its government invited to an easy conquest. The distance from the town of Sembeu-Ghewn, on the west bank of the river Irrawaddy, to Merong Chickien, at the eastern foot of the hills, does not exceed forty-five miles; thence the distance over the mountains to Tellakee, on the opposite side, is fifty-six miles; but the road* is so difficult, from natural impediments, that an enterprizing people might, with a small force,

* Since the final conquest of Arracan, the road from Sembeu-Ghewn to Tellakee has been considerably improved; it is nevertheless still a laborious journey, owing to the ruggedness of the way, and the steep mountains over which the traveller must pass.

defend the passes against any numbers. The Birman King, however, was too well acquainted with the supineness of Mahasumda*, Raja of Arracan, and the unwarlike disposition of his subjects, to dread any vigorous opposition; he determined to invade the country, with a view to wrest it from its ancient rulers, and render it an appendage to the Birman crown.

The ancient government of Arracan, according to the most authentic writers, had never been so completely conquered as to acknowledge implicit vassalage to a foreign power: it experienced, in the two last centuries, the usual convulsions to which all states, and those of the eastern

* Mahasumda is the Shanscrit title given to a long line of Kings of Arracan. Eastern kings, whilst living, are usually denominated by their titles, of which they have many.

world in particular, are liable. The Moguls on the west*, and the Peguers on the east, had, at different periods, carried their arms into the heart of the country. The Portugueze†, sometimes as allies, at others as open enemies, gained an establishment in Arracan, which decayed only with the general ruin of their interests in Asia. Arracan, however, though often exhausted, was never wholly con-

* The unfortunate Sultan Sujah, brother to Aurungzebe, was, by the king of this country, basely betrayed and put to death for the sake of his treasure. *See Dow's Hindostan.*

† Faria de Souza, on the Portugueze conquests in Asia.

One Sebastian Gonzales, owing to a combination of successful events, made himself master of the island of Cheduba, or Sandiva, which he maintained for some time as an independent principality: his rise was owing to a series of heinous crimes, and his rapid fall is to be ascribed to the same source. *Faria.*

sumed; it always rose from its own ashes, a free and independent nation.

The natives of Arracan Proper call their country Yee-Kein; the Hindoos of Bengal, Rossaun; the latter, who have settled in great numbers in Arracan, are denominated, by the original inhabitants, Kulaw Yee-Kein, or unnaturalized Arracaners; the Moguls know it by the Persian name of Rechan. Mogo is a term of religious import and high sanctity, applied to the priesthood and the king; whence the inhabitants are often called by Europeans, Mughs: such a number of epithets, used indiscriminately, must prove embarrassing to the reader of the few sketches that have been given of this country. Arracan, or Yee-Kein, stretches south south-east from the river Naff, the boundary that divides it from the territo-

ries of the India Company, as far as Cape Negrais, where the ancient Pegue empire commenced. The range of lofty mountains already mentioned, under the name of Anoupectoumiou, nearly encircles it. From the quarter of Bassien and Negrais, Arracan can be invaded only by water, through the many rivers that intersect the country adjacent to the sea. From the side of Chittagong, entrance into Arracan must be effected by a march along the sea beach, which is interrupted by several channels that chiefly owe their waters to the action of the tide. Arracan thus displays a great space of coast, very disproportionate to its internal extension. A few miles below Tellakee, at the western foot, the river, till then a streamlet that rises in the hills, becomes navigable from the influx of the sea; in two tides a boat reaches the fort of Arracan. From the

fort to the sea, the river expands into a noble sheet of water, well adapted for trade and the reception of shipping. Cheduba and Ramree, called by the Birmans Magou Kioun and Yamgee Kioun*, are extensive and highly cultivated islands, which, with Arracan and Sandowy, form four distinct provinces, and comprehend the whole of the Arracan empire.

The trade of Arracan was never very considerable; it is confined to salt, bees' wax, elephants' teeth, and rice. This latter article is produced in such abundance, that it might be improved, by proper policy, into a lucrative branch of commerce; the soil is luxuriant and well-watered, and the contiguous islands are uncommonly fruitful. Possession of Ar-

* These are the vulgar names: they have also Shanscrit appellations.

racan and these islands became a still more desirable acquisition to the Birmans, as affording protection to their boats, which, navigating in the north-west monsoon through the channel and along the coast, make an annual voyage from Bassien, Rangoon, and Martaban, to Chittagong and Calcutta, where they dispose of the produce of their countries, and in return bring back cloth, and commodities of India.

The invasion of Arracan being finally determined on, the Engy Teekien, or prince royal, with his brothers, the princes of Prome, Tongho, and Pagahm, in the Birman year 1145* (corresponding to 1783 of the Christian era), in the month

* The Birman solar year, ending at the vernal equinox, may create an apparent confusion in stating the two eras.

Touzelien, left the imperial city, and crossed to Chagaing, now become a place of religious resort, from the number of Praws or temples erected in its neighbourhood; as well as for being the principal manufactory of idols, which, hewn out of an adjacent quarry* of fine alabaster, are sculptured here, and afterwards transported to the remotest corners of the empire. At this city they passed three days in the performance of religious ceremonies; proceeding thence to Pagahm†, in past ages the residence of

* The quarry is at Meengoung, about twelve miles distant.

† Pagahm was once a city of no ordinary magnificence and extent. The writer of this memoir, accompanied by the Viceroy of Pegue, ascended one of the pagodas or praws, by a decayed and dangerous flight of steps on the outside; they had from the summit a view of ruins, thickly scattered over the face of the country, as far as the eye could reach. The Vice-

a long dynasty of kings, and still famed for its numerous temples, they renewed the pious rites; after which they pursued their journey to Kama, whence 5000 men, under the Princes of Tongho and Pagahm, were detached with orders to debark at Maoung (formerly Loonzay), and invade Arracan, by penetrating through the passes of the mountains. When the Engy Teekien and the Prince of Prome reached the city of Prome, the Seere of Shegoo was ordered to fall down the Irrawaddy with a strong fleet of boats, and enter Arracan by the creeks and channels of the Bassien river. The elder princes remained at Prome five days, and then crossed to Podang on the opposite bank, three miles lower down; here they

roy remarked, that to count the number of decayed temples on the plain before us, was among the proverbial impossibilities of the Birmans.

halted fifteen days, in order to give the other detachments, whose routes were more circuitous, time to advance.

At the expiration of the period that was judged necessary for the co-operation of the different detachments, the Engy Teekien ordered the Prince of Prome, at the head of 7000 men, to advance, and attempt the defiles of the hills leading from Podang, whilst he conducted in person the main army, keeping three days' march in the rear of the front division. Two generals of reputation accompanied the Engy Teekien, Kioumee Matoung, and Nunda Siekyan: the detachment sent by water, under the Seree, reached its destination before those that went by land could arrive. This officer met with no obstacle until he reached the frontiers of Arracan, where, hearing that the prince

of the country was preparing to attack him, he judged it most prudent to halt, and wait the approach of his friends, in order to prevent the Arracaners from concentrating their force against his party.

The way pursued by the junior princes* was yet more difficult and distant than that by which the prince royal proceeded; probably they were sent only to make a diversion and distract the attention of the enemy. After a troublesome march of three weeks, the Prince of Prome, with the advanced guard of the main army, reached Loungyat†, two days' journey

* The Princes of Tongho and Pagahm were infants at this time; the direction of the armies was intrusted to others. It is a customary thing for Eastern princes to send their sons into the field, at a very tender age.

† The distance is estimated at one hundred and twenty miles.

from the fort of Arracan, where, learning the situation of the Seree, he sent a body of 1000 men, under an Ackawoon, to his assistance.

Impatient of delay, and probably desirous of seizing the present opportunity to distinguish himself, the Prince of Prome resolved to assault the fort before his brother should arrive; with this intent he wrote to the Seree, ordering him to advance next day with the fleet, promising to co-operate and support him. In compliance with the Prince's commands, the Seree put his armament in motion; the King of Arracan had by this time collected a fleet of boats, which surpassed, in size, those of the Birmans, although they were inferior in point of numbers. An action took place about two miles from the fort, which terminated decidedly in

favour of the Birmans. The Arracan vessels were for the most part destroyed; those that escaped, spread consternation around; while the approach of the Prince of Prome's army completed the terror of the frighted inhabitants. Mahasumda, in despair, collected his most valuable effects, which he put on board boats, and then embarked himself, accompanied by twenty females of his palace, and thirty attendants, chiefly relations. This party directed their course to an island called Kiounchoppa; but the Prince of Prome, receiving early intelligence of their flight, ordered a detachment of 500 men, in light boats, to pursue the fugitives. The Birmans overtook them within one mile of the island, where Mahasumda being made prisoner, together with all his retinue, was conducted back a captive to his own capital.

When the Engy Teekien reached Loungyat, he was apprized of the success of his brother. The town and fort of Arracan fell after a faint resistance; the booty found is said to have been very considerable; but on nothing was a higher value placed than on an image of Gaudma (the Goutema* of the Hindoos), made of brass, and highly burnished. The figure is about ten feet high, in the customary sitting posture, with the legs crossed and inverted; the left hand resting on the lap, and the right pendant. This image is believed to be the original resemblance of the Reshee, taken from life, and is so highly venerated, that pilgrims have for centuries been accustomed to come from the remotest countries, where the supremacy of Gaudma is acknowledged, to pay their devotions at the feet of his bra-

* Goutema is a name for Boodh, or Budhoo.

zen representative. There were also five images of Rakuss, the demon of the Hindoos, of the same metal and of gigantic stature; these were accounted of value, being guardians to the sanctuary of the idol. A singular piece* of ordnance was also found, of enormous dimensions, composed of huge bars of iron beaten into form: this ponderous cannon measured thirty feet in length, two feet and a half in diameter at the mouth, and ten inches in the calibre; it was transported to Ummerapoora by water, and deposited in the yard of the royal palace, where it is now preserved as a military trophy; it is mounted on a low carriage supported by six wheels, and is covered from the wea-

* The writer of this memoir, after his first audience, was indulged with a sight of this extraordinary piece of ordnance, and honoured with an introduction to the Arracan Gaudma.

ther by a wooden pent-house. Gaudma and his infernal guards were, in like manner, conveyed by water to the capital, with much pomp and superstitious parade.

The surrender of Cheduba, Ramree, and the Broken Isles, followed the conquest of Arracan: many of the Mughs*, or subjects of the Great Mogo, preferred flight to servitude, taking refuge in the Dumbuck hills, on the borders of the province of Chittagong, and in the deep forests and jungles that skirt the frontier: where they formed themselves into independent tribes of robbers, that have since created infinite vexation to the Birmans, and to this day commit merciless depredations on the persons and property of

* The ancient inhabitants of Arracan are so called, from being subjects of the great Mogo.

their conquerors; many have settled in the districts of Dacca and Chittagong, under the protection of the British flag, whilst others accepted the oath of allegiance, and bowed their necks to slavery, rather than abandon their country, and their household gods*.

The Princes of Tongho and Pagahm did not reach Arracan until the business was decided: although they bore no share in the conquest, they secured a proportion of the booty†; the followers of the

* The sectaries of Budhoo are much attached to their Lares, or domestic gods. A Birman family is never without an idol in some corner of the house, made of wood, alabaster, or silver.

† The inhabitants of Tongho are famous for their ferocity and licentiousness; a character well preserved by the numerous followers of the Prince of Tongho, when the writer of this memoir was at the Birman capital.

Tongho prince, in particular, are said to have committed the most wanton excesses on the unhappy natives of the country through which they passed.

The arrangements attending their conquest occupied the princes for some time. Arracan, with its dependencies, was constituted a province of the Birman empire, and a Maywoon, or Viceroy, appointed to govern it. A man named Sholamboo was first invested with that office, and one thousand Birman soldiers were left to garrison the fort; small parties were likewise distributed in the different towns, and many Birmans, who had obtained grants of lands, came with their families and settled in the country, thereby increasing the security of the state. These matters being adjusted, the princes returned to the Irrawaddy by the same route as they had

advanced, and embarked at Podang, carrying with them Mahasumda and all his family. This unfortunate monarch was treated at Ummerapoora with much respect; he was allotted a suitable dwelling and establishment, which he did not long enjoy; before the first year of his captivity had elapsed, he died a natural death; after his decease his relations were suffered to sink into obscurity and want. The reduction of Arracan was completed in the short space of a few months.

The more recent actions of the reign of the present emperor* may with greater propriety be circumstantially recounted at some future period; a brief recital of the principal events, and a concise view of

* *Boa*, or emperor, is a title which the present king of the Birmans has assumed; the sovereign of China is called *Oudee Boa*, or Emperor of Oude, or China.

the existing state of the empire, with the reflections which such a view naturally suggests, will enable the reader to form an adequate opinion of the political importance of the nation that has been treated of, and will close the subject of the present chapter.

The valuable acquisition of Arracan did not satisfy the lust of conquest that inflamed the emperor; he turned his eyes towards the eastern peninsula, where the rival state of Siam was recovering its former vigour, after enjoying a long respite from hostility.

The success of the Birman arms over the Siamese, conducted by King Shembuan, has already been recounted. Although the Birmans could not retain possession of the inland parts of Siam, they

nevertheless preserved dominion over the sea coast; all the ports on the western shore of the peninsula, as far as Mergui, in north lat. 12° 20′, continued subject to them. The island or Junkseylon was the only addition wanting to give them the entire dominion of the western coast, as far as the territories of the Malay Prince of Queedah; by obtaining this island, the Birmans would monopolize the commerce of the peninsula, and prevent the Siamese from communication with India by any other channel than that of the Gulf of Siam. The trade of Junkseylon is considerable in ivory and tin: it stretches nearly north and south, about fifty or sixty miles: the centre of the island is situated in eight degrees north; it is likewise said to be desirable, from the blessings of a luxuriant soil and a mild climate. To effect this object, eleven ships

of burthen were fitted out at Rangoon, destined to convey troops and warlike stores; the Birmans, though expert shipwrights, are indifferent seamen, and altogether ignorant of the science of navigation: the present Shawbunder of Rangoon, descended of a Portugueze family, was appointed to conduct the fleet. The different vessels were commanded by persons of a like description, who had been bred up under the Birman government, and held petty offices in the maritime ports; they, however, were considered in a light little superior to pilots, being under the check and control of the commander of the land forces on board; this fleet reached Mergui in the month of January 1785.

In support of the troops and squadron sent by sea, a detachment of 8000 men

marched in the month of November from Rangoon; this body did not reach Mergui until the 18th of February: on the 7th of March following, the fleet weighed anchor, and the forces by land made a correspondent movement. The arm of the sea that divides Junkseylon from the main is in some places very narrow; the Birmans immediately on their arrival attacked the fort, which is situated on the east side of the island, and were successful, notwithstanding a spirited resistance made by Prawselong, the Siamese governor, who afterwards withdrew from the fort into the interior of the island. The Birmans found here a valuable booty, which they embarked on board a vessel captured in the harbour, belonging to a Mussulman merchant of Masulipatam; but the ship never reached her destined port: meeting with a gale of wind in the Bay of Marta-

ban, she foundered at sea, and every soul perished. The triumph of the Birmans was of short duration; the Siamese governor rallied his forces, and, having procured an addition to his strength, became in his turn the assailant, with so good effect that the Birmans thought fit to retreat to their shipping, which they did not accomplish without a heavy loss: apprehensive of yet greater disasters, they returned to Mergui, whence the fleet sailed for Rangoon, and the troops marched to Martaban, with intent to canton during the rainy season.

The Birman monarch, whose pride was deeply mortified at the ill fortune of his arms at Junkseylon, resolved to repair the disgrace, and invade Siam with such a force as he conceived would be irresistible; and further, to insure success, announced

his intention to lead the troops in person. He accordingly left Ummerapoora at the head of 30,000 men, with a train of twenty field pieces, and, taking the route of Tongho, reached Martaban in the spring of the year 1786: a detachment was likewise sent to invade North Siam, and another ordered to penetrate on the southern quarter from Tavoy. A fleet was also equipped, consisting of sixteen ships, mostly belonging to traders, which were either hired of the owners, or impressed for the occasion: this armament blocked up the harbour of Junkseylon. Such vigorous preparations inspired the Birmans with sanguine hopes: too much confidence, however, often betrays into error. The Emperor, already anticipating victory, marched from Martaban, and had scarcely entered the Siamese territories, when he was opposed by Pieticksing, the

king of Siam, with a powerful army; a furious engagement ensued, in which the Birmans were completely routed, and their useless cannon* taken by the enemy. The Emperor himself, who narrowly escaped being made prisoner, returned to his capital with precipitation: the fugitives found protection in Martaban; and the other detachments hearing of the misfortune of the main body, likewise retreated. The season for field operations being far advanced, hostilities were for some time suspended on both sides.

In the commencement of the ensuing year, the Siamese, in considerable force, laid siege to Tavoy; but after a long struggle were compelled to retreat and

* Many well informed men among the Birmans ascribe their defeat to the incumbrance of their cannon, which were old ship guns mounted on low carriages.

abandon the enterprize. The place was defended by Maha-see soo-ra, who in the month of April 1788 was promoted to the Maywoonship, or Viceroyalty of Martaban, which comprehends within its jurisdiction, Tavoy, Mergui, and all the Birman possessions to the southward. Tavoy, being a place of great importance, was left with a strong garrison, to the care of an officer named Numeapeou, by some called Miapeou, a man of low extraction, whose father had originally been a merchant of small ware between China and Ava, and, having amassed money, obtained influence by a judicious application of his wealth. For some time Miapeou conducted himself with fidelity in his command; but on the decease of Maha-see-soo-ra, in the year 1790, being disappointed of the Viceroyalty of Martaban, which was given to an officer named

Meen-la-ze-zo, he entered into an intrigue with the Siamese, and agreed to deliver up the fort to them, on certain stipulations for himself and his adherents; the compact being concluded, possession was given to the enemy, who stationed a strong garrison in it, and, as a further protection, encamped a body of troops in its neighbourhood.

Early in the year 1791, Sombee Meengee and Attawoon Mien, officers of high distinction, were ordered to proceed from Ummerapoora by land against the rebel; a fleet of sixty boats sailed about the same time from Rangoon, which were speedily to be followed by three ships, then fitting out at the same port. The boats, having arrived before the ships could reach their destination, injudiciously entered the river of Tavoy, and began an attack on the

suburbs bordering on the banks. Miapeou, with a party of rebel Birmans and a detachment of Siamese, opposed them, and in light war-boats soon got the better of the unwieldy junks that had crossed the bay. Many of the Birman vessels were destroyed, and those that escaped took refuge in Mergui, where, soon after this disaster, the ships also arrived.

The army from Ummerapoora, having reached Martaban, halted there during the rainy monsoon. Early in the season for action, the Engy Praw, or prince royal, left the capital and came down to Rangoon, bringing with him a considerable accession to the southern force; the Assay Woongee, and several officers of distinguished rank, attended in his suite. By the time he had reached Rangoon, the first division, under Sombee Meengee and

Attawoon Mein, had proceeded against Tavoy; the prince halted at Rangoon, but sent forward the greatest part of his troops to support the advanced army: the ships also that had put into Mergui, again sailed for Tavoy. On the arrival of the army and shipping, an engagement took place between the Siamese and Birmans, partly on land, and partly at the mouth of the river, the Siamese disputing the entrance in their war-boats; in this contest the Siamese were worsted, and driven with great slaughter into the fort, which the Birmans immediately invested, and, having entrenched and stockaded themselves, commenced a formal blockade. No supplies could now reach the besieged, whilst the Birmans, though the adjacent country was unproductive, being masters of the sea, procured subsistence from Arracan and Rangoon, which

the provincial officers of those countries transported to the army in whatever ships they could lay their hands on, pressing indiscriminately the vessels* of all nations that happened to be in their ports. The siege was thus protracted for some months, and the place at last fell by treachery. The Birmans, who under Miapeou had originally been instrumental to putting the fort in possession of the Siamese, became discontented, probably through want: a clandestine correspondence commenced between them and the leaders of the besieging army: a proper

* Among these were several ships belonging to English traders, the commanders of which forwarded a remonstrance to Lord Cornwallis and the Supreme Council, complaining of the outrage. It is generally supposed, that the Birman king ordered liberal remuneration to be made to those whose ships were pressed, but that the provincial officers fraudulently withheld his bounty.

understanding being established, at a concerted hour of the night, the enemy advanced to storm the outworks of the fort; when the Siamese rose to repel the assault, the Birmans within, whose fidelity was not suspected, fell upon the garrison, which, consisting of 3000 gallant soldiers, were cut to pieces, either by their pretended allies or avowed foes, who soon gained admission through the means of their perfidious countrymen. Miapeou was not found; he had withdrawn from the fort some time before, and escaped into the country of the Siamese. The Birmans thus again became masters of the important fortress of Tavoy.

In the mean while affairs at Mergui seemed likely to exhibit a different scene from that which was passing at Tavoy: here, the Birmans acted on the defensive,

and the Siamese were the assailants. A brother of the King of Siam had invested the garrison with a strong force, and pressed the siege so closely, that the Birmans were reduced to the utmost extremity, and must have surrendered, but for the opportune arrival of six ships and 5000 men, detached to their aid from Tavoy; the besiegers, disheartened by the appearance of these succours, relinquished the enterprize, and retired into the interior of the country.

Subsequent to these events, no action of importance appears to have taken place between the contending powers; the year 1793 opened with overtures for peace on the part of the Siamese; a negociation commenced, which speedily terminated in the ratification of a treaty highly favourable to the Birman interests.

By this compact, the Siamese ceded to the Birmans the western maritime towns as far south as Mergui, thus yielding to them entire possession of the coast of Tenasserem, and the two important ports of Mergui and Tavoy; acquisitions of great moment, when considered either in a political or commercial light.

Indisputably pre-eminent among the nations inhabiting the vast peninsula that separates the gulf of Bengal from the Chinese sea; possessed of a territory equal in extent to the German empire; blessed with a salubrious climate, and a soil capable of producing almost every article of luxury, convenience, and commerce, that the East can supply, Miamma, or Birmah, thus happily circumstanced, enjoyed the pleasing prospect of a long exemption from the miseries of war; but

unbending pride, and resentment unjustifiably prosecuted, nearly embroiled them in fresh troubles, before they had time to profit by the advantages of peace, and threatened to raise them up a foe far more formidable than the Chinese, Arracaners, Peguers, Siamese, and Cassayers.

The trade of Arracan, which is chiefly carried on with the eastern ports through an inland navigation, when the rivers are swollen by the rains, had suffered repeated interruptions from piratical banditti, who, infesting the Broken Islands, among which the channels wind, that are the usual course of boats, not only committed depredations on private merchants, but had even the hardiness to attack fleets, laden with the royal customs*. These robbers,

* Customs are usually received in kind, viz. one-tenth of the commodity.

when the season of the year did not admit of their plundering on the water, sought adventures by land; and, as the Birmans allege, conveyed their booty of goods and cattle across the river Naaf, into the Chittagong province, where, secure from pursuit, being then under protection of the British flag, they disposed of their spoils to advantage, and lived at ease, until returning want impelled them to renew their predatory inroads.

The river Naaf, which bounds the British and Birman territories, is situated at a considerable distance from the town of Chittagong, the seat of provincial government, and residence of the English magistrate. The banks of this river are covered with deep jungles, interspersed with scanty spots of cultivation, and a few wretched villages, where dwell the poorest

class of herdsmen, and the families of roving hunters, whose occupation it is to catch and tame the wild elephants, with which these forests abound. The asylum that such unfrequented places offered to persons concerned in a lawless traffic, rendered it easy to be carried on without the knowledge of the English officers of justice; nor could it possibly reach the notice of the Supreme Board, unless a proper representation was made, either by the individuals that were aggrieved, or by the government of their country. This, however, was a condescension, to which the mighty Emperor of the Birmans, who conceives himself superior to every potentate on earth, would never stoop. To ask redress was beneath his dignity; he proceeded by a more summary course to do himself justice. On its being ascertained that three distinguished leaders of

the robbers had sought refuge in the British districts, his Birman Majesty, without communicating his intention, or in any form demanding the fugitives, thought fit to order a body of 5000 men, under an officer of rank, to enter the Company's territories, with positive injunctions to the commander not to return, unless he brought with him the delinquents, dead or alive; further, to support this detachment, an army of 20,000 men were held in readiness at Arracan.

So unexpected an aggression, offered without any previous remonstrance, or the assignment of any plea, left no room for discussing the merits of the case. The Birmans having taken upon themselves to redress their own grievances, it became necessary to convince them that they had mistaken the mode; and what they might

readily procure from English justice, they could never extort through fear: to accomplish this purpose, a strong detachment was formed at the presidency, the conduct of which was intrusted to Major General Erskine; the troops proceeded from Calcutta to Chittagong, a battalion of Europeans and artillery by water, and the native sepoys by land.

Seree Nunda Kiozo, the Birman chief, to whom the arduous task of reclaiming the fugitives was assigned, acted with more circumspection and prudence than the government from which he had received his instructions. After his army had crossed the river, and encamped on the western bank, he dictated a letter to the British judge and magistrate of Chittagong, acquainting him of the reasons for the inroad; that the caption of the

delinquents was his sole object, without harbouring any design of hostilities against the English. At the same time he declared, in a style of peremptory demand, that until they were given up, he would not depart from the Company's territories: in confirmation of this menace, he fortified his camp in the Birman manner, with a stockade, and seemed determined to resist any attempt to oblige him to retire. These matters being reported to government, the Governor General was pleased to order the magistrate of Chittagong to apprehend the refugees, and keep them in safe custody until further directions.

On the approach of General Erskine, Seree Nunda Kiozo sent a flag of truce, to propose terms of accommodation, stipulating for the surrender of the fugitives, as the basis of the agreement. The Ge-

neral replied, that no proposals could be listened to whilst the Birmans continued on English ground; but as soon as they should withdraw from their fortified camp, and retire within their own frontiers, he would enter upon the subject of their complaints; notifying also, that unless they evacuated the Company's possessions in a limited time, force would be used to compel them. The Birman chief, in a manly confidence of the English character, personally waited on General Erskine, and disclosed to him the nature of his instructions, the enormity of the offenders, and the outrages they had committed. General Erskine, whose moderation and judgment on this occasion cannot be too highly commended, assured him, that it was far from the intention of the British government to screen delinquents, or sanction in their country an asylum for

robbers; but as the manner in which the Birman troops had entered the Company's district was so repugnant to the principles that ought to regulate the conduct of civilized nations, it was impossible for him to recede from his first determination. He gave hopes, notwithstanding, that if the Birmans peaceably retired, the Governor General would institute a regular inquiry into the charges preferred against the prisoners: adding, that instant compliance with the conditions prescribed, was the only ground on which they could expect so great an indulgence. The Birman General, either contented with this intimation, or convinced that opposition would be fruitless, professed his reliance on General Erskine, and agreed to withdraw his troops: the retreat was conducted in the most orderly manner; and so strict was the subordination observed in the Bir-

man army, that not one act of violence was committed either on the person or property of British subjects during the time their troops continued within the Company's districts. General Erskine was afterwards empowered, by the Governor General, to investigate the charges against the refugees, when, after a formal and deliberate hearing, their guilt being established on the clearest evidence, they were delivered over to their own laws, by whose sentence, two out of the three underwent capital punishment.

The amicable termination of this difference afforded favourable opportunity to acquire a more accurate knowledge than had hitherto been obtained, of a people whose situation, extent of territory, and commercial connections with British India, rendered a liberal intercourse with

them highly desirable. The trade between Calcutta, Madras, and Rangoon, had of late years so rapidly increased, as to become an object of national importance, more particularly on account of teak timber, the produce of Ava and Pegue, whence Calcutta and Madras* draw all their supplies of wood for ship-building, and for various other purposes. A commerce in one article so essential to us, and, on a general scale, so extensive as to require an annual return of Indian commodities to the amount of 200,000l.

* Teak cannot be conveyed from the Malabar to the Coromandel coast, or to Calcutta, but at an expence so great as to preclude the attempt. It is said, that this incomparable wood grows in perfection on the banks of the river Godavery; but the impediments of procuring it from that quarter have hitherto been found insurmountable. Several excellent ships, built in the river of Bengal, of Pegue teak, have delivered and received cargoes in the river Thames.

sterling, was an object well worth cultivating. Representations had, at different times, been made to the Supreme Board by private merchants, and mariners, complaining of injustice and oppression at the port of Rangoon; the recent inroad of the Birmans, which originated partly in pride, and partly in ignorance, would probably not have occurred, had there existed an authorized channel of intercourse between the respective governments. To prevent the recurrence of a like misunderstanding; to form a commercial connexion on equitable and fixed principles, and to establish a confidential and authentic correspondence, such as ought to subsist between two great and contiguous nations; Sir John Shore (now Lord Teignmouth) thought proper to send a formal deputation to the Birman court. Nor were these the only ends to be an-

swered by the embassy; the influence which the natural enemies of Great Britain had acquired in that quarter was to be combated, and, if possible, overcome; whilst the natives were to be impressed with an adequate sense of the power, the resources, and, above all, the equity of the British character, in such a manner as to convince them that their real interests were connected with a state that neither meditated, nor would suffer encroachment; and sought for nothing beyond an interchange of merchandize, on terms mutually beneficial. The result of this mission, through the various stages of its progress and completion, will be detailed in the subsequent pages: thus far it has realised the expectations of the British government, and gives a flattering promise of national advantage, except it should hereafter be obstructed by impedi-

ments, which no penetration can foresee, and against which no human compact can provide.

The Birmans, under their present monarch, are certainly rising fast in the scale of Oriental nations; and it is to be hoped, that a long respite from foreign wars will give them leisure to improve their natural advantages. Knowledge increases with commerce; and as they are not shackled by any prejudices of casts, restricted to hereditary occupations, or forbidden from participating with strangers in every social bond, their advancement will, in all probability, be rapid. At present, so far from being in a state of intellectual darkness, although they have not explored the depths of science, nor reached to excellence in the finer arts, they yet have an undeniable claim to the character of a ci-

vilized and well instructed people. Their laws are wise, and pregnant with sound morality; their police is better regulated than in most European countries; their natural disposition is friendly, and hospitable to strangers; and their manners rather expressive of manly candour, than courteous dissimulation: the gradations of rank, and the respect due to station, are maintained with a scrupulosity which never relaxes. A knowledge of letters is so widely diffused, that there are no mechanics, few of the peasantry, or even the common watermen (usually the most illiterate class), who cannot read and write in the vulgar tongue. Few, however, are versed in the more erudite volumes of science, which, containing many Shanscrit terms, and often written in the Pali text, are (like the Hindoo Shasters) above the comprehension of the

multitude; but the feudal system, which cherishes ignorance, and renders man the property of man, still operates as a check to civilization and improvement. This is a bar which gradually weakens, as their acquaintance with the customs and manners of other nations extends; and unless the rage of civil discord be again excited, or some foreign power impose an alien yoke, the Birmans bid fair to be a prosperous, wealthy, and enlightened people.

CHAPTER I.

Embark on board the Sea-Horse—sail from Calcutta—make the Cocoa Islands—touch at Port Cornwallis, in the Great Andaman. —Hospitably received by Captains Ramsay and Stokoe.—Some Account of the Island—imperfectly known to the Ancients—Barbarism and wretched State of the Natives.—Singular Account of two young Women.—Frequent Scarcity of Food.—Brutal Behaviour of some Bengal Fishermen.—Natural Products of the Island.—Rains excessive.—Colony sickly—Causes.—Prepare to depart.

HAVING received my commissions from the Governor General, one appointing me Agent Plenipotentiary, with powers to treat, in the name of the Supreme Government of India, with the Emperor of

Ava; the other, vesting in me authority to take cognizance of the conduct of the British subjects trading to, or residing in, the countries that I was destined to visit; on the 21st of February 1795, I embarked at Calcutta, on board the Sea-Horse, an armed cruizer belonging to the East India Company, Captain Thomas Commander, attended by Mr. Wood, Assistant and Secretary, and Dr. Buchanan, Surgeon to the mission. A Havildar *, Naick †, and 14 Sepoys, selected from a battalion at the military station of Barracpore, formed an attendant guard; these, with an Hindoo Pundit ‡, for whose company I was indebted to the goodness of Sir Robert Chambers, a Moonshee §, and inferior domestics of various descriptions, increased

* Native serjeant. † Native corporal.

‡ Professor of Hindoo learning.

§ A Mussulman professor of language.

our numbers to more than seventy persons. Light and unfavourable breezes retarded our progress down the river, and, before we had got clear, an accident happened that created much concern. An hospital assistant, in the employment of Dr. Buchanan, who had never before been in a ship, arose in the middle of the night, walked leisurely to the gangway, and, insensible to his situation, stepped overboard into a rapid tide, and was heard of no more: this early loss of a good and useful man impressed upon the whole crew a general sentiment of regret.

On the evening of the 26th, our pilot left us in seven fathom water, having then passed all the dangers of the channel. The wind continuing foul, we anchored for the night; next morning weighed and stood to the south-east with a favouring

breeze, which blew without intermission till the 4th of March, when we made the Great and Little Cocoa Islands, so called from being clothed with cocoa-nut trees of unusual luxuriance. These islands are flat, small, and swampy; they are uninhabited, and destitute of good water. We perceived the ruins of a hut on the sea shore, which had been erected by an adventurer, who came thither from Madras to express oil from the cocoa-nut: the scheme did not succeed; some of the party died, and the rest relinquished the project. Steering between the southern Cocoa, and the north end of the Island of Andaman, we opened Port Cornwallis on the east side of the latter. At eleven o'clock on the 5th, we hauled our wind and stood in; at one, our ship came to anchor, a quarter of a mile from the shore. On landing, we were received by Captains

Ramsay and Stokoe (Colonel Kyd, the Governor, being absent) with the kindest hospitality, which was equally extended to the captain and officers of the ship, and continued to every individual belonging to the mission, during the time that we remained their guests.

The settlement in Port Cornwallis is not situated on the principal island, but on a smaller one within the harbour, named by the English Chatham Island; the utmost length of which does not exceed two miles, and the breadth little more than half a mile: the southern extremity terminates in a narrow neck of land, fordable at low water to the main.

The Andaman Islands are a continuation of the Archipelago that extends from Cape Negrais to Atchein Head, stretching

from 10° 32′ to 13° 40′ north latitude, and from 90° 6′ to 92° 59′ east longitude. What has been considered as the Great Andaman, is the most northern, about one hundred and forty miles in length, and not exceeding twenty broad. A separation, or strait, however, has lately, owing to a fatal accident*, been discovered in this island, which, in fact, divides it

* In the month of February 1792, a vessel was freighted from Madras to carry stores to his Majesty's fleet at Andaman. The master, being unacquainted with the harbour, sent a small boat, in the afternoon, to explore an opening in the land, that appeared like the entrance; the boat stood in, it fell dark, and she was swept, by a rapid current, through a channel that divided the main island, and opened into the Bay of Bengal. The north-east monsoon prevailed with great violence: unable to work against stream and wind, the boat was borne to leeward, and driven irresistibly into the Indian ocean. Eighteen days afterwards she was picked up by a French ship, near the equinoctial line. The crew consisted of two Europeans and six Lascars;

into two, and opens a clear passage into the Bay of Bengal. The first settlement of the English was made in the year 1791, near the southern extremity of the island, in a bay on the east side; but it was afterwards removed in 1793, by advice of Admiral Cornwallis, to the place where it is now established. The original object of the undertaking was to procure a commodious harbour on the east side of the bay, to receive and shelter his Majesty's ships of war during the continuance of the north-east monsoon; it was also used as a place of reception for convicts sentenced for transportation from Bengal.

No writer of antiquity has transmitted a distinct account of the Andamans; they

and, shocking to relate, when relieved by the French ship, three of the Lascars had been killed and eaten by their companions.

were included by Ptolemy, together with the Nicobars and lesser islands, in the general appellation of *insulæ bonæ fortunæ*, and supposed by him to be inhabited by a race of Anthropophagi*. The mild inoffensive Nicobarians have long since been acquitted of the horrid imputation; but the different form, disposition, and habits of the few wretched savages who wander on the shores of the Andamans, may have given ground for a supposition that human flesh has been eaten by them; if so, it probably arose

* Eusebius Renaudo, in his translation of the account given by two Mahommedan travellers, who journeyed eastward in the ninth century, says, "Beyond "these two islands (probably the Nicobars) lies the sea "of Andaman. The people on this coast eat human "flesh quite raw; their complexion is black, their "hair frizzled, their countenance and eyes frightful, "their feet are very large, almost a cubit, and they "go quite naked."

more from the impulse of excessive hunger, than from voluntary choice; a conclusion, that well authenticated instances of the distress they at times endure, appear to authorize.

In the evening we walked round the grounds that had been cleared, making a circuit of little more than a quarter of a mile, partly along the beach, and partly by a path leading through heaps of brushwood, and the trunks of huge trees that had recently been felled. A small garden, diligently tilled, produced but a scanty crop of Indian vegetables. A shallow soil, impregnated with leaves and decayed brushwood, washed down by the mountain streams, proved at first unfavourable to cultivation; the pains, however, which had been bestowed, seemed likely in the end to overcome this discouragement.

The situation of the settlement on the side of a hill, rising abruptly from the verge of the sea, although calculated to avoid the unwholesome effects of stagnant waters, was yet at times attended with great inconvenience, owing to the impetuosity of the torrents.

Notwithstanding the colony had been established on its present site little more than sixteen months, the habitations of the commandant and officers, and the huts of the inferior classes, were rendered extremely comfortable: the first constructed of stone and planks, the latter of mats and clay, thatched with leaves of the rattan, or covered with boards. The surgeon had a separate dwelling assigned him, and there was likewise a commodious mess-room. The number of inhabitants all together was about 700, includ-

ing a company of sepoys as a guard over the convicts, and a defence to the settlement.

A situation more picturesque, or a view more romantic, than that which Chatham island and Cornwallis harbour present, can scarcely be imagined: land-locked on all sides, nothing is to be seen but an extensive sheet of water, resembling a vast lake, interspersed with small islands, and environed by lofty mountains clothed with impenetrable forests. The scenery of nature, in this sequestered spot, is uncommonly striking and grand.

All that voyagers have related of uncivilized life, seems to fall short of the barbarism of the people of Andaman. The ferocious natives of New Zealand, or the shivering half-animated savages of Terra

del Fuego, are in a relative state of refinement, compared to these islanders*. The population of the Great Andaman, and all its dependencies, does not, according to Captain Stokoe, exceed 2,000 or 2,500 souls; these are dispersed in small societies along the coasts, or on the lesser islands within the harbour, never penetrating deeper than the skirts of the forests, which hold out little inducement for them to enter, as they contain no animals to supply them with food. Their sole oc-

* Mr. Marsden, in his excellent history of the Island of Sumatra, is of opinion, that the inhabitants of the Batta country, in the northern part of that island, eat human flesh; and the authorities on which he grounds his belief, seem to authenticate the fact: it does not, however, appear, that human flesh was substituted by them in place of ordinary food, but eaten rather as a barbarous ceremony, to indicate revenge on their enemies, or abhorrence of crimes, the only victims being prisoners taken in war, or capital convicts.

cupation seems to be that of climbing rocks, or roving along the margin of the sea in quest of a precarious meal of fish, which during the tempestuous season they often seek for in vain.

The Andamaners are not more favoured in the conformation of their bodies, than in the endowments of their mind. In stature, they seldom exceed five feet; their limbs are disproportionably slender, their bellies protuberant, with high shoulders and large heads; and, strange to find in this part of the world, they are a degenerate race of Negroes with woolly*

* It is a matter of much curiosity to discover the origin of a race of people, so widely differing not only from all the inhabitants of that vast continent in the bosom of which the Island of Andaman is embayed, but also from the natives of the Nicobar Islands, which are immediately contiguous to it. Hitherto, the inquiries of travellers seem to have produced no satisfactory

hair, flat noses, and thick lips; their eyes are small and red, their skin of a deep sooty black, whilst their countenances exhibit the extreme of wretchedness: a horrid mixture of famine and ferocity. They

conclusion: some have supposed that a Portugueze ship, early in the 16th century, laden with slaves from Mosambique, had been cast on these shores, and that the present Andamaners are the descendants of such as escaped drowning. This conjecture is proved to be grossly erroneous, from the account given by the two Mahommedan travellers, long anterior to the navigation of those seas by Europeans. The Arabians, however, who sailed on the Indian Ocean so early as the 7th century, and who not only explored the continent of India as far as the Chinese sea, but likewise gained a knowledge of most of the eastern islands, might, by an accident similar to that which has been ascribed to the Portugueze vessel, have peopled Andaman with its present Negro race. It deserves remark, that on the continent of India extra Gangem, figures of Boodh, or Budhoo, the Gaudma of the Birmans and Siamese, are often seen with the characteristic hair and features of the Negro.

go quite naked, and are insensible of any shame from exposure. Two young women, allured by the temptation of fish, were secured, and brought on board a ship at anchor in the harbonr; the captain treated them with great humanity; they soon got rid of all fear of violence, except what might be offered to their chastity, which they guarded with unremitting vigilance; although they had a small apartment allotted to themselves, and had no real cause for apprehension, one always watched whilst the other slept: they suffered clothes to be put on, but took them off again as soon as opportunity offered, and threw them away as useless incumbrances. When their fears were over, they became cheerful, chattered with freedom, and were inexpressibly diverted at the sight of their own persons in a mirror; they were fond of singing, sometimes in

melancholy recitative, at others in a lively key; and often danced about the deck with great agility, slapping their posteriors with the back of their heel. Wine and spirituous liquors were disagreeable to them: no food seemed so palatable as fish, rice, and sugar. In a few weeks, having recovered strength and become fat, from the more than half-famished state in which they were brought on board, they began to think confinement irksome, and longed to regain their native freedom. In the middle of the night, when all but the watchman were asleep, they passed in silence through the captain's cabin, jumped out of the stern windows into the sea, and swam to an island half a mile distant, where it was in vain to pursue them, had there been any such intention; but the object was to retain them by kindness, not by compulsion, an

attempt that has failed on every trial. Hunger may (and these instances are rare) induce them to put themselves in the power of strangers; but the moment that want is satisfied, nothing short of coercion can prevent them from returning to a way of life more congenial to their savage nature. The few implements they use are of the rudest texture; a bow from four to five feet long, the string made of the fibre of a tree, or a slip of bamboo, with arrows of reed, headed with fish bone, or wood hardened in the fire, is their principal weapon. Besides this, they carry a spear of heavy wood sharply pointed, and a shield made of bark to defend themselves from the assaults of their enemies; for even these poor wretches have rights to assert, and dignities to maintain; necessity has taught them an expert management of their arms, on which they rely

for subsistence: happily for them, their numerous bays and creeks abound with fish, which they shoot and spear with surprising dexterity. They are said also to use a small hand net, made of the filaments of bark; the fish when caught is put into a wicker basket, which they carry on their backs. Having kindled a fire, they throw the food on the coals, and devour it half broiled. A few diminutive swine are to be found in the skirts of the forests, and among the mangrove thickets in the low grounds; but these are very scarce, and are probably the progeny of a stock left by former navigators. When a native has the good fortune to slay one, he carefully preserves the skull and teeth to ornament his hut. They cross the bays, and go to fish either in canoes formed of a hollow tree, or on rafts of bamboo, which they direct by paddles. Their habi-

tations display little more ingenuity than the dens of wild beasts; four sticks stuck in the ground, are bound together at the top, and fastened transversely by others, to which branches of trees are suspended; an opening is left on one side, just large enough to admit of entrance: leaves compose their bed. Being much incommoded by insects, their first occupation in a morning is to plaster their bodies all over with mud, which, hardening in the sun, forms an impenetrable armour; they paint their woolly heads with red ochre and water: when thus completely dressed, a more hideous appearance is not to be found in human form.

Their religion is the simple but genuine homage of nature to the incomprehensible Ruler of the universe, expressed in adoration to the sun as the primary and

most obvious source of good; to the moon as the secondary power; and to the genii of the woods, the waters, and the mountains, as inferior agents. In the spirit of the storms, they confess the influence of a malignant being; and, during the south-west monsoon, when tempests prevail with unusual violence, they deprecate his wrath by wild chorusses, which they chant in small congregations assembled on the beach, or on some rock that overhangs the ocean. Of a future state it is not known that they have any idea, which possibly arises from our imperfect means of discovering their opinions; it affords, however, satisfactory reflection, to find, among the most ignorant and barbarous of mankind, a confirmation of the great and pleasing truth, that all reasoning existence acknowledges a God. The half humanized Andamaner invokes the luminaries

that lend him light; and in that simple and spontaneous praise, he offers up the purest devotion of an unenlightened mind.

Although the principal food of the Andamaners consists of fish, yet they eagerly seize on whatever else presents itself; lizards, guanas, rats, and snakes supply a change of repast. Birds are not numerous, and seldom come within reach; doves, parroquets, and the Indian crow, are the most common: hawks are sometimes seen hovering over the tops of the trees; but they are only temporary visitors from the neighbouring continent: a few aquatic birds frequent the shores; among these are the kingfisher, a sort of curlew, and the small sea gull. Within the caverns and recesses of the rocks is found the salangane, or *hirundo nidis edulibus*, described by Monsieur Poivre:

this bird, whose nest produces a high price in China, is perfectly black, and resembles a small martin; its nest is thickly glazed with a mucilaginous substance, which the bird collects from the sea blubber, and is said to swallow, and afterwards emit from the stomach; it is prized by the Chinese for its supposed medicinal and restorative qualities.

The vegetable diet of the Andamaners consists of the natural produce of the woods, in which the researches of Europeans find little that is palatable or nutritious; the fruit of the mangrove is principally used, having often been found in their deserted habitations, steeping in an embanked puddle of water. As they have no pot* or vessel that can bear the

* The fragments of earthen vessels mentioned by Mr. Colebrooke were probably brought from the Ni-

action of fire, they cannot derive much advantage from such esculent herbs as the forests may contain; indeed their extenuated and diseased figures too plainly indicate the want of wholesome nourishment: unhappily for them, the cocoa nut, which thrives in the utmost luxuriance in the neighbouring isles, is not to be found here; but they are extremely fond of it; and whenever a nut was left in their way by the settlers, it was immediately carried off with much apparent satisfaction. Captain Stokoe, who constantly resided on the island, disappointed in his attempts to establish a social intercourse, endeavoured to alleviate their wants, by sending, as often as circumstances would admit, small supplies of

cobars, or from the continent, by the boats that often visit the Andamans for the purpose of taking the nests before mentioned.

victuals to their huts, which were always abandoned on the approach of his people, but resorted to again when they had withdrawn. A party of fishers belonging to the settlement enticed a woman, by the allurement of food, to come so close that she was made prisoner; instead of relieving her hunger, they proceeded to offer violence; the cries of the poor creature brought a numerous troop of savage friends to her assistance, who, rushing out of the thickets, attacked and killed two of the yet more savage aggressors. Their bodies* were afterwards found disfigured in a shocking manner. A coasting party one day discovered a man and a

* This circumstance rather seems to indicate that they are not cannibals; the bodies of the Bengal fishermen were pierced by sharp weapons, and pounded by stones until every bone was broken; but the flesh was not cut off, nor any limb severed.

boy stretched on the beach, apparently in the last stage of famine; they were conveyed to the settlement: unfortunately every effort of humanity failed to save the man; but the boy recovered, and is now in the service of Colonel Kyd at Calcutta, where he is much noticed for the striking singularity of his appearance.

The language of the Andamaners* has not been discovered to possess the slightest

* Specimen of the language of Andaman, from the 4th Vol. of the Asiatic Researches.

Andaman island or native country	*Mincopie*	Bow	*tongie*
Arrow	*buttohie*	Bone	*geetongay*
Arm	*pilie*	Cold	*choma*
Black	*cheegheoogo*	Door	*tang*
Blood	*cochengohee*	To drink	*meengohee*
To beat	*ingotaheya*	Ear	*quaka*
Belly	*napoy*	Earth	*totongnangee*
Bird	*lohay*	To eat	*ingelholiah*
Boat	*loccay*	Eye	*tabay*
		Finger	*momay*
		Fire	*mona*

affinity to any that is spoken in India, either continental or islandic. Captain Stokoe informed me, that what he heard was not at all harsh or disagreeable to the ear; their songs are wildly melodious, and their gesticulation, whilst singing, is extremely impassioned. This is one among the many evidences to prove that poetry is coeval with the language of man.

The only quadrupeds seen on the island are hogs, rats, and the ichneumon; the guana also, of the lizard tribe, may be

Fish	*nabohee*	Rain	*oye*
Foot	*gookee*	To sing	*gokobay*
Head	*tabay*	To sleep	*comoha*
Hot	*hooloo*	Sky	*madama*
Knee	*ingolay*	Star	*chelobay*
To laugh	*onkeomai*	Sun	*ahay*
Leg	*chigie*	Teeth	*mahoy*
Man	*camolan*	Water	*migway*
Moon	*tabie*	Wind	*tomjamay*
Neck	*tohie*	Wood	*tanghee*
Nose	*mellee*		

reckoned in this class; and these proved very destructive to poultry: there are also several species of snakes and scorpions. Labourers, whilst clearing away the underwood, were frequently bitten; but in no instance did the bite prove mortal, although the patients commonly fell into violent convulsions; eau de luce and opium were the remedies in most cases administered.

During the prevalence of the north-east monsoon, fish is caught in great abundance, but in the tempestuous season it is difficult to be procured; grey mullet, rock cod, skate, and soles, are among the best; oysters have been found, but in no great quantity. The shores abound in a variety of beautiful shells, gorgonias, madreporas, murex, and cowries, with many other kinds, of which Captain Sto-

koe had made a curious and valuable collection.

There are several sorts of trees on the island; among which are, the *ficus religiosa*, or banyan tree, the almond tree, and the oil tree, which latter grows to a great height, and from it a very useful oil is thus produced: A horizontal incision being made in the trunk, six or eight inches deep, a chip fourteen or fifteen inches long is cut at right angles, and the surface of the incision being hollowed and filled with live coals, the turpentine, or wood oil, exudes copiously from the top of the wound. The penaigre tree also is found, and is well adapted for the knees of ships; and the iron tree of stupendous size, whose timber almost bids defiance to the axe of the wood-cutter; the red-wood, which makes beautiful furniture,

little inferior to fine mahogany. Beside these, there are numberless creepers and rattans which surround the stems of the larger trees, and, interwoven with each other, form so thick a hedge, that it is impossible to penetrate far into the forests, but by the slow and laborious process of cutting a road.

The first settlers in an uninhabited land have not only to contend against natural obstacles, and the want of several necessary comforts of life, but must likewise encounter the effects of an unwholesome atmosphere; for no country thoroughly agrees with the human constitution, until it is cleared and cultivated. The new colonists, notwithstanding every possible attention was paid to the preservation of their health, became sickly; they were

afflicted, during the four dry months, December, January, February, and March, with the scurvy. This complaint, however, was owing to a change of food, and a want of vegetable diet: as soon as the rains commenced, it mitigated and quickly disappeared; but it gave way to a dreadful successor, the intermittent fever and ague, which baffled all power of medicine. An induration and enlargement of the spleen, a disease well known in India by the name of Boss, was generally its concomitant. The cause of these fevers, being local, could not be remedied. Situated in the full sweep of the south-west monsoon, and the clouds being obstructed by high mountains, the island is, for eight months in the year, washed by incessant torrents. According to a meteorological table kept by

Captain Stokoe, there appears to have fallen in seven months, ninety-eight inches of water, a quantity far exceeding what I had ever heard of in any other country.

CHAPTER II.

Sail from the Andamans—make the Island of Narcondam.—Arrive at the Mouth of the Rangoon River—delayed for a Pilot—proceed—Precaution of a Custom-house Officer.—A Deputation from Rangoon meets the Sea-Horse——singular Appearance of the Deputies.—Arrive at Rangoon, extraordinary Conduct of the Government.—Uncomfortable Building allotted for our Residence—Restriction imposed on our People.—Commanders and Crews of the Ships in the River prohibited from holding any Intercourse with the Sea-Horse.—Situation unpleasant, and degrading—remonstrate—declare my Intention to withdraw.—Concession on the Part of the Rangoon Government.

HAVING passed five days in this wild sequestered abode, where the novelty of

the scene, and the friendly attention of our entertainers, Captains Ramsay and Stokoe, would have rendered a longer stay agreeable, we prepared to depart. The Hindoos, whose religion forbids them to drink water drawn by impure hands, had filled their own casks; and the stock of our numerous company was replenished. On the 10th we reimbarked, and stood to sea: next morning at day-light made the island of Narcondam, about twenty leagues east of the Andamans; a barren rock, rising abruptly out of the ocean, uninhabited, and seemingly destitute of vegetation. The wind being foul, we were obliged to tack; and on the following day we had advanced so little to the northward, that Narcondam was still in sight. About noon, we discovered two ships and a schooner standing to the south-east: they hoisted English colours, and

we kept our course. On the 13th the wind veered to the southward, and became fair: on the 16th we found ourselves, by a meridian observation, nearly in the latitude of the roads of Rangoon, but by our reckoning and time-piece too far to the eastward: after steering west some hours, we anchored for the night in five fathoms, and plainly perceived lights on the beach. Next morning we discovered low land, about six miles to the north-west. Here we remained till the 18th, waiting for a pilot, standing off and on with short tacks in the day time, and at anchor during the night. Finding that our signals, by firing guns and hoisting colours in the usual manner, were not answered, Mr. Palmer, the second officer, was sent in the pinnace, with instructions to proceed up the river as far as Rangoon, in case he did not find a pilot sooner. On

the ensuing day, the wind being moderate and fair, Captain Thomas ventured to stand in; and steering by land-marks, and sending a boat a-head, crossed the bar without a pilot, at half-flood, in four fathoms. At twelve o'clock we entered the Rangoon river; the land on each side appeared low and swampy, and the banks skirted with high reeds and brushwood. Four miles within the extremes we came abreast of a small village, whence a boat rowed towards us: it proved to be a watch-boat, stationed at the mouth of the river, to send intelligence of the arrival of vessels to the nearest guard, whence it is forwarded to the Governor of Rangoon. The Birman officer that came on board was a mean-looking man, dressed in a shabby cotton jacket, and a piece of faded silk, which, after twice encircling his waist, was passed loosely between his

legs and fastened behind, covering the thighs about half-way to the knees. This personage, in his own opinion of no small consequence, sat down on a chair * without the smallest ceremony, and called in an authoritative tone for his implements of writing, which were produced by one of three attendants that accompanied him. These, when their master was seated, squatted upon their heels on the deck before his chair, attentive only to his commands, in an attitude and manner very much resembling baboons, although they were well-proportioned strong men. The officer inquired, in broken Portugueze, the name of the ship, whence she came, what arms and ammunition were on board,

* We were not yet aware that a sitting posture is the most respectful among the Birmans; and on this occasion were inclined to attribute to insolence, what, if it had any meaning, was in fact a mark of deference.

and the name of the commander: being satisfied in these points, he carefully committed them to writing. Hearing that we were not provided with a pilot, he desired the captain to come to an anchor till one could be procured; as, in case of any accident happening, he would be held responsible for permitting us to proceed. Just then, Mr. Palmer in the ship's boat made his appearance. He had been to Rangoon, and brought down a pilot with him: our cautious visitor offered no farther objections, but took his leave with as little ceremony as he had entered.

About two o'clock a small boat from Rangoon met the ship: a man in it hailed our pilot, in the language of Hindostan, and desired him to cast anchor, as it was the intention of the Governor of Rangoon to come down and receive the British de-

putation in person. We immediately complied with his desire.

The place where we brought-to, is twelve miles below Rangoon. The entrance of the river, and the banks on each side, bore a near resemblance to those of the Ganges; but the navigation is much more commodious. The channel is bold and deep, from six and a half to eight fathoms, uninterrupted by shoals or inequality of soundings. Mr. Wood judged the river at this place to be from three-quarters to a mile in breadth. We continued at anchor till next day, in expectation of the promised visit. About noon the fleet came in sight: it consisted of from twenty to thirty boats; on a nearer approach, only four out of the number seemed to belong to persons of superior condition; these were not unlike, in form,

to the drawings of the state canoes of some of the South-Sea Islands: they were long and narrow, with an elevated stern, ornamented with peacocks' feathers, and the tails of Thibet cows; each boat bore a different flag, and had a long, flexible, painted pole, with a gilded ball at the extremity, protruding horizontally from the stern. Three persons, apparently of higher rank, came on board; they meant to be civil, but were perfectly free from restraint, and took possession of chairs without waiting for any invitation, or paying the smallest regard to those who were not seated; whilst their attendants, seemingly as much at ease as their masters, formed a semicircle around them on the deck, in like manner as the servants of our former visitor. Being as yet unapprized of the external forms of respect among them, such conduct surprized us a good deal.

The chief of the three, a good-looking young man, of short stature, I understood to be a person of consideration. He was Governor of the province of Dalla, on the opposite side of the river to Rangoon, which he held on the part of the mother of the Queen, whose jaghire or estate it is. The second, an elderly plain man, said he was Nak-haan-gee; literally, the royal ear. I was afterwards informed he was transmitter of intelligence, or reporter, to the imperial court; an office of much confidence. The third, a Seree, an inferior secretary, was a man of little relative importance compared with the other two. We conversed for an hour, through the medium of an interpreter who spoke the language of Hindostan: they were extremely inquisitive, and asked a number of questions concerning the objects of the mission, which were answered in friendly

but general terms. Having paid their compliments, they arose to depart, and returned to their boats, making lavish professions of friendship; and whilst the ship sailed before a gentle breeze, they rowed with great velocity round her, performing a variety of evolutions, and exhibiting considerable skill in the management of their vessels, which were of unequal dimensions, from twenty-eight to forty oars: we judged the longest to be between sixty and seventy feet, and from six to eight in breadth. In this manner we proceeded until the town and shipping were in view. The Princess Royal East Indiaman, that had come from Madras for a cargo of timber, fired a salute to the Company's colours; and the Sea-Horse paid a compliment to the battery on shore, of eleven guns, which were returned by an equal number: the pilot came-to, be-

low the town, apart from the other ships about half a mile. As soon as the Sea-Horse dropped anchor, all the boats withdrew without further notice or explanation.

Being desirous of sending some of our attendants on shore to refresh themselves, particularly the Hindoos, whose religion enjoins them not to eat victuals dressed on board, and who were on that account put to great inconvenience, being obliged at sea to subsist on dried fruits, sweetmeats, and parched pulse: I sent one of the attendants to the Governor of Dalla, to acquaint him with my wish. He, in reply, desired that I would defer landing till the following day, when a habitation that was preparing for our reception would be in readiness: with this request I acquiesced, and communicated the same to Captain

Thomas, and the gentlemen of the deputation, who forbade their servants to leave the ship without express permission.

About five o'clock in the afternoon the interpreter returned on board, and informed me, that the Raywoon, or Governor of the town, meant to wait on me next day at the dwelling assigned to us; intimating also, that he was ordered to remain on board to receive my commands. This plea of attention was probably only a cloak to cover another motive: his business seemed to be rather to watch our motions, and learn our views, than to obviate inconveniences, or manifest respect. He spoke the Hindoo language fluently; and I desired the Moonshee, a discreet and sensible man, to entertain him. The night passed without any communication

with the shore, or with the other ships in the river.

Next morning, the 21st, at ten o'clock, the Seree, or under-secretary, came on board, accompanied by a man of Portugueze extraction, who spoke very imperfect English. The Seree told me he was about to depart for Pegue, charged with dispatches for the Maywoon, or Viceroy; and requested to know whether we had any commands: I replied in the affirmative; adding, that it was my wish to send a confidential person to his Excellency, to deliver to him a letter from the Governor General of India, and another from myself. The Seree, finding I would not intrust my dispatches to him, promised to call at noon, and convey my messenger to Pegue (about ninety miles distant) in

his own boat; a promise which he omitted to perform.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, Mr. Wood, Dr. Buchanan, and myself, landed, and were conducted to a spacious temporary building which had been prepared for our reception; it was situated on the verge of the river, about 500 yards below the town, opposite to where the Sea-Horse was moored; it consisted of only one story, raised three feet from the ground, supported on posts driven into the earth; an elevation very necessary to the comfort of its inhabitants, as the high spring tides washed the foundation pillars, and almost insulated the building, by filling a channel which the rains had excavated. This edifice, about ninety feet in length, was entirely composed of bamboos and strong cane mats, and divided into several com-

partments; the roof was lofty, and covered with the same materials, which were laid in such a manner as to afford protection from rain, and shade from the sun: the floor, a bamboo grating, was likewise spread with mats; and in one apartment small carpets were laid, doubtless designed as a mark of distinction. On landing, we were received by the Seree, who made a frivolous excuse for not having called according to his promise, saying, that another person had been sent in his stead. On entering the virando, or balcony, we were saluted by the sounds of very discordant music, issuing from the instruments of a band of musicians that had been sent by the Governor to welcome us; to these he had obligingly added a set of dancing girls, and tumbling boys, who exhibited a variety of movements in attitudes some of which were not ungrace-

ful. Having dismissed this noisy assemblage, and taken a cursory view of our habitation, we were unanimous in opinion, that for the present it would be more advisable, and more commodious, to sleep on board, at least for that night, as we had brought no conveniences on shore with us. Leaving therefore part of the guard and a few of our attendants to occupy the house, we returned at dusk, and passed the night on board the Sea-Horse, better lodged, and much more comfortably, than if we had continued in our new dwelling.

Surprize and disappointment were a good deal excited, to find, that during all this time, not a boat of any description came to our ship, either from the English merchantmen in the river, or from shore; a circumstance that bore the appearance

of distrust and prohibition on the part of the government. Captain Thomas therefore ordered his pinnace to be launched, and rowed to the nearest vessel: being informed that the commander was on shore, he directed his boat to the town quay, and, landing without ceremony, proceeded to the residence of a gentleman, with whom he was acquainted, where he met several masters of merchant ships, who informed him, that they had received an order from the Rhoom, or public court in which the council of government assembled, enjoining them not to go on board the Sea-Horse themselves, or suffer any intercourse with their ships, as matters of etiquette had not yet been adjusted; but added, sailor like, that they had agreed to ask permission next morning to pay their respects to the representative of their nation, and, if refused, to go without

permission; a resolution from which Captain Thomas prudently dissuaded them, saying, that they could not more oblige the person they meant to honour, than by an implicit compliance with the wishes of the Birman government.

On the following morning, Captain Thomas and the gentlemen of the deputation accompanied me on shore to our habitation. We found no person of distinguished consequence there; but crowds of the lower class, both men and women, were collected from curiosity. In a short time several baskets were brought, with the Raywoon's, or Governor's compliments, containing venison, ducks, chickens, bread, and roots: the same company of musicians that had performed on the preceding day, attended to amuse us. At twelve o'clock the approach of a person

of condition was announced, when a tall elderly man, of a graceful appearance, followed by several attendants, was ushered in, under the title of Baba-Sheen, whose manners were easy and respectful. After informing me, through the medium of a Portugueze interpreter, that he was second in authority at Rangoon, and held the office of Ackawoon, he apologized for the absence of the Raywoon, or Governor of the town, who, he said, was prevented from waiting on me by indisposition; and added, that he would be happy to shew me every attention in his power. I expressed my sense of his politeness; remarking, that my wants were confined to permission to purchase a few necessaries, and the means of sending a messenger to the Viceroy of Pegue, with a letter from the Governor General of India, and one from myself, which I was desi-

rous should be delivered as speedily as possible. To this he replied, that he would forward by express any commands I might have; observing, that it was an useless trouble to send a servant of my own. His meaning was obvious; and as this was his first visit, which might be considered rather as ceremonious, than as intended to discuss business, I did not press the matter farther: being, however, determined not to protract the purposes of the mission longer than was necessary, I acquainted him, that Mr. Wood would return his visit the same evening; after which, I would converse with him further on the objects of the deputation. He endeavoured to wave the visit, by saying it might put Mr. Wood to an inconvenience; but that it was his duty to wait on me, which he would do at any time, on the shortest notice, either on board the ship,

or at our habitation, In the course of conversation he informed me, that, though a native of the Birman country, he was of Armenian extraction, and professed belief in our Saviour. We parted about two o'clock; and at his desire, my Moonshee wrote a list of such articles as we stood in need of, and tendered payment beforehand; an offer that was declined. As our baggage and necessaries had not yet been disembarked, we returned to dine on board. Early in the afternoon the Ackawoon's boat was perceived rowing towards the house, with design, as we imagined, to prevent by anticipation the promised visit. Captain Thomas ordered his barge to be manned, and accompanied me on shore. To this interview Baba-Sheen brought with him, as interpreter, a Mussulman merchant, who spoke Persian tolerably well, through

whom I was enabled to convey my sentiments with more ease than at our former meeting.

After an interchange of compliments, I told him, that the friendly inclinations which had long subsisted between the British Government in India and his Birman Majesty, had been a source of so much satisfaction to the Governor General of India, that, with a view to perpetuate an union mutually advantageous to both countries, he had deputed me, in the character of public minister, and a confidential person, to strengthen the bonds of amity, by the delivery of friendly letters; and to offer, in his name, assurances of a perfect regard. In proof of this, I had brought certain products of our country, which, together with the letters, I was charged to present in person to his Majesty

at Ava, and to the Viceroy of Pegue; that, coming in such a capacity, I felt much chagrined at finding, on the part of the Rangoon government, an apparent want of confidence, for which I could assign no cause; and experiencing a degree of restraint, imposed on myself and my people, very inconsistent with what I expected: that I could no otherwise account for such conduct, than by attributing it either to their misunderstanding my intentions, or my own want of knowledge of their customs; that I wished exceedingly to ascribe it to the latter, but found it difficult to persuade myself that such obvious marks of distrust could be altogether matter of form, without any other meaning.

To this the interpreter replied on the part of his superior, in a very verbose and

affected style, that nothing was farther from the intention of Baba-Sheen and the council of Rangoon, than to give umbrage or offer disrespect; that it was the custom of their nation; and that the restraint which was now so irksome to me, would, he had no doubt, speedily be removed. I replied, that it was my earnest desire to manifest my regard for the Birman government, by acquiescing in every ceremonial that their customs prescribed for persons in the capacity I held, provided such ceremonials were not derogatory from the dignity of the state I represented: but there was one point in which the conduct of the council of Rangoon could not be justified, under any plea of form or custom; this was, the interdiction laid on the captains of the English ships in the river against going on board the Sea-Horse, to pay me that mark of respect to which he

well knew I was entitled as agent from the English government, and which those gentlemen were solicitous to offer me in that character; that this prohibition, contrary to the usage of all civilized states, was too disrespectful to be passed over in silence, and could only arise from unworthy suspicions, or from an intention to give offence: I desired that he would favour me with an explanation of such extraordinary and unexpected treatment.

To this requisition Baba-Sheen replied in vague and unsatisfactory language; assuring me, that what had been done was only in conformity to long established usage, which he begged I would not take amiss, or consider in a mistaken point of view; that if I would entrust my letters for the Viceroy to him, he would forward them by a safe messenger, who would re-

turn in two or three days, and probably bring with him an invitation from his Excellency to pay him a visit at Pegue, whither he should have the honour to attend me.

Being furnished with duplicates of all my official papers, and apprised that the letter from the Governor General to the Viceroy was merely complimentary, I thought it a fit opportunity to manifest a confidence in him, in the hope that it might produce a liberal return. I therefore told him, that although it was contrary to our practice to entrust official papers to other than a confidential servant, yet, to manifest the reliance I had on his good will, I would take upon me, in the present case, to wave all form, and with pleasure commit to him the delivery of the letter from the Governor General, to-

gether with one from myself. During this conference I discovered that Baba-Sheen understood my meaning in Persian, although he could not himself speak it; he, however, spoke the language of Hindostan in an imperfect manner, but sufficient to express intelligibly what he wished to convey, and we soon understood each other so well as no longer to stand in need of an interpreter. It was now late, and he took his leave, with lavish professions of respect and good inclination.

The delicacy of my present situation caused me to consider seriously on what were the most eligible steps to pursue. The vigilant suspicion with which I was guarded, and the restriction, little short of imprisonment, imposed on myself and my attendants, aggravated by the humi

liating prohibition against holding any intercourse with my own countrymen, seemed to augur an unfavourable issue to the mission, and were sufficient to warrant my availing myself of a clause in my instructions, that gave me a discretionary power to return, without further explanation, in case I judged it expedient. Reflecting, however, that to withdraw in disgust, before I had further communication with higher authority, would, in the present stage of the business, only serve to confirm their suspicions, and substantiate that jealousy which it was the primary object of the mission to remove; —adverting also to the probability, that the persons who ruled at Rangoon were inimical to the deputation, as inconsistent with their own interests, and perhaps were ignorant and at a loss how to act; and weighing these considerations, toge-

ther with the ceremonious and respectful manner in which the deputation had been received on its first arrival, I judged it most prudent to submit, for some time longer, to the irksomeness of my situation, rather than take a step so decided as to exclude every avenue of future communication.

This morning I went on shore to our habitation, accompanied by Captain Thomas and Dr. Buchanan; we remained till noon, and returned to the ship without seeing any person of note: wherever we directed our steps, three or four Birman sentinels followed us closely. Whilst we were at the house, a present of milk, venison, fowls, and vegetables, came from the Governor; and eleven baskets of rice, with a large tub of gee *, were sent

* Clarified butter.

on board the Sea-Horse for the use of the people. Payment was offered, but positively refused; the messenger saying he was instructed to receive my commands for whatever necessaries we might require. Not any person belonging to the mission was yet allowed to enter the town, or purchase articles at the market, nor could a servant go to a well a few yards from our dwelling to fetch water, without the attendance of a Birman sentinel; no country boat was suffered to approach us, nor did any intercourse pass between the Sea-Horse and the vessels in the river.

In this state of unpleasant restraint we passed the 24th and 25th; our excursions from the ship extended no farther than the insulated habitation. Every morning the usual present for our table was regularly brought, to which was sometimes

added fish of a good quality, that which is called in Bengal the sable fish. On the morning of the 26th I went on shore at an early hour, accompanied by Doctor Buchanan; the spring tides, which prevailed since the time of our arrival, had now subsided, and left a dry foot-path in the rear of the house, across the water-course that surrounded it, thereby opening a free communication with the country. Doctor Buchanan and myself took the liberty to pass the boundary for the first time. When the Birman sentinels perceived our intention, they consulted together, as we imagined, whether or not they should interpose and prevent us; they however contented themselves with following us, and vigilantly observing all our actions. Passing over some dry rice grounds, we reached the place where the ceremony of burning the dead is usually

performed: whilst we were examining the ruins of a decayed temple, a messenger came to inform me that Baba-Sheen had arrived at the house: we immediately went back, and found him waiting for us. After the usual salutation, I asked him if the courier he had dispatched to Pegue was returned? He answered in the affirmative; and added, that as the letters contained nothing more than a notification of my arrival, and customary compliments, the Viceroy had sent a verbal reply, to signify that he would be glad to see me and the rest of the English gentlemen at Pegue; at the same time commanding him to provide suitable boats, and every requisite for our journey, which Baba-Sheen said would be in readiness in two or three days; and that it was his intention to precede us, in order to make the necessary arrangements for our re-

ception. This intimation was answered on my part with a cool acknowledgment of the Viceroy's civility: after expressing my surprize that he had not written either to notify having received the Governor General's letter, or to desire our company, I added, that my paying a visit to his Excellency was a matter which could not at that time be determined. Baba-Sheen hoped that no impediment might arise to prevent it, and begged to be favoured with a sight of the presents intended for the Viceroy: I promised to gratify his wish, provided he would come on board the Sea-Horse; he appointed the following morning, and took his leave: in this visit he was accompanied by the Nakhaan, or news writer, before mentioned.

At nine o'clock in the morning Baba-

Sheen came on board; we were likewise honoured by the visit of an unexpected personage. The Raywoon, or governor, who had before excused himself on account of indisposition, found his health sufficiently mended to venture to the ship, and by his looks plainly evinced that he had not been long an invalid: his appearance bespoke him sixty years of age; his dress was military; he carried a sword, and wore a tight coat of European broad cloth, with gold buttons of a conical form; a fillet of muslin surrounded his head; a piece of checquered Pegue silk was wrapped round his waist, and half concealed his thighs; on his feet he wore the sandals of Pegue, which resemble those used by the Sepoys of India; he was attended by seven or eight servants armed with sabres, one of whom carried a painted box containing beetle leaf and areca nut,

another his writing materials, and a third a flaggon of water, on the neck of which was suspended a large gold cup, that served as a cover to the flaggon, and a vessel to drink out of: all these, I afterwards understood, were appendages of his dignity, as well as articles of convenience. After a slight obeisance, (for the Birmans are not ceremonious in their salutations,) he sat down on a chair placed on the quarter deck, and in his conversation displayed more knowledge than I had as yet discovered in any of his countrymen: he informed me, that his name was Seree Nunda Kiouza; that he had commanded the troops which first entered the British territories, and met General Erskine on the borders of Chittagong, mentioning circumstances that left no room to doubt his veracity. He seemed exceedingly pleased to hear that the fugitive delinquents

had been given up to the justice of their country; and expressed himself in handsome terms of General Erskine, whose moderation and good sense, he observed, prevented the effusion of much blood; intimating also great doubt as to what might have been the issue of the contest, had matters been pushed to extremity. Of this little ebullition of vanity I took no notice, and, at the request of Baba-Sheen, ordered the presents designed for the Viceroy to be displayed: they consisted of several pieces of gold, silver, and plain muslin, three pieces of broad cloth, a piece of velvet, and one of flowered satin, a high finished fowling-piece, a corabah of Persian rose-water, specimens of cut glass, and some smaller articles. Our visitants examined them with close attention; one of their attendants wrote an inventory on the spot, and, I afterwards understood,

calculated the value of each distinct article*. The Raywoon expressing approbation of the cloth, particularly that of a blue colour, I requested permission to send a piece to his house: he returned a civil answer, in general terms, without either declining or accepting my offer. After some unimportant conversation, they withdrew; and at my desire, Captain Thomas saluted the Raywoon with seven guns: shortly afterwards I sent a servant to him, with compliments, and the piece of cloth I had promised, which, to my no small surprise, he declined, and returned by the same messenger, apologizing for his refusal, by saying, that cer-

* Similar curiosity was expressed by the mandarines at Canton, to learn, from the India Company's Commissioners, the particulars and value of the presents that were brought by Lord Macartney, for the Emperor of China. *Sir George Staunton's Embassy, Vol. I. chap. 9th.*

tain reasons prevented him at that time from receiving my present. For this ambiguous conduct I could no otherwise account, than by ascribing it to that suspicious distrust which was so plainly indicated in all the actions of this singular people.

The circumstances that I have related, together with many other petty marks of authorised disrespect from different quarters, determined me to come to a full and satisfactory eclaircissement with the government of Rangoon, before I would consent to visit the Viceroy at Pegue. In pursuance of this resolution, I sent early in the morning to Baba-Sheen, desiring to see him as soon as convenient. He came to the house about ten o'clock. After recapitulating the various causes of umbrage which had been given me, I

added, that all these reasons combined, which were still further strengthened by the Viceroy's having returned a vague and verbal reply to the Governor-General's letter, contrary to their known usage, rendered it impossible for me to proceed to Pegue, until he should explain the motives of such mysterious conduct; and I desired, that if any doubts were entertained respecting the objects of my mission, or the nature of my designs, he would express himself freely, and give me an opportunity, by removing them, to undeceive their government. He replied, as usual, in equivocal terms, and by an assurance that it was no more than what was conformable to custom. I said, that I was sorry for it, as our customs were so incompatible with theirs: that I could not, consistent with what I owed to the dignity of my own government, longer

submit to my present situation; that as their forms and ours differed so widely, and, from what he said, were not likely to correspond, without a derogatory concession on one part or the other, there was no help for it; we could not apply the remedy, and should part as we had met, on terms of mutual good will and friendship. As I had thus far acquiesced, Baba-Sheen did not expect that matters would take such a turn: intelligence of my arrival had been forwarded to the court, and the authors of my departure would be subject to its displeasure: he appeared alarmed, and earnestly asked,—"What is it you desire?" I replied, immediate release from all personal restraint; that the spies which were stationed on board the Sea-Horse, and the sentinels that accompanied every boat that left or came to the ship should be removed;

that my servants should have the same liberty that the servants of other strangers enjoyed, with leave to purchase what they wanted; that boats from the shipping in the river should have free access, and the commanders permission to visit me; that Mr. Wood should have safe conduct to the Viceroy of Pegue, to receive in person either a verbal acknowledgment of the Governor-General's letter, and an invitation to me to visit Pegue, or bring with him a written reply: that unless these reasonable requisitions were acceded to, I must beg leave to depart, which I should do on the most amicable terms; and only regret that the public character I had the honour to fill, did not admit of concessions on my part which would be considered as humiliating by my countrymen. To this Baba-Sheen answered in his former strain, endeavour-

ing to amuse me by a story quite impertinent to the subject. I told him it was very well; the English and Birman nations, I hoped, would long continue to maintain a friendly intercourse: at the same time begged to be favoured with his commands to Calcutta. He then entreated of me to lay aside my intention, and assigned as a reason for the Viceroy's not writing, that he had no person with him who understood either Persian or English: this was not true; for I knew, that the Mussulman merchant, who interpreted on the 22d, carried the letters * to him, in order to explain them. Finding that I was determined, he said he would consult the Raywoon, and give me a re-

* The letters of the Governor-General to the Emperor and the Viceroy, were written in Birman, Persian, and English. I always wrote in Persian, and in English.

ply in the afternoon: he then took his leave.

At four o'clock, Mr. Wood and myself met the Raywoon and Baba-Sheen at our habitation; they came accompanied by a numerous train of followers; among others, the Nak-haan attended, to listen to, and note the conversation. At this interview every persuasive art was used to prevail on me to forego my intention of departure, without their assenting to my propositions; they even condescended to ask it as a favour. I, however, continued inflexible; at their desire, I recapitulated the terms on which alone I would consent to remain. After talking for three hours to no purpose, and offering to yield in some things, they at length agreed to give up every point. Mr. Wood was to accompany Baba-Sheen to Pegue; the

captains of the English ships were to
have free access; our attendants liberty
o purchase what they wanted, and to go
here they pleased; the spies stationed
board the Sea-Horse were to be re-
ed, and boats suffered to pass from
hip to shore without a Birman
l. these matters being stipulated,
ual performance solemnly
relinquished my design of
or the present, and we parted
contentment and good hu-
sides.

f the 29th produced a
ent of every point in
nqualified acquies-
Rangoon govern-
sitions. At ten
the principal Eng-
visited me at the

house, accompanied by Baba-Sheen; the spies were withdrawn from the ship, and our people permitted to go to the Baza or market, without molestation.

A

END OF THE FIRST VO

PRINTED BY WILSON
INN FI