



The Dublin University Magazine
Conquest of Sindh
Vol. XXVI
(1845)



The Dublin University Magazine

**THE DUBLIN
UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE**

A

Literary and Political Journal.

VOL. XXVI.

JULY TO DECEMBER.

1845.

DUBLIN :
WILLIAM CURRY, JUN. AND COMPANY.
W. S. ORR AND COMPANY, LONDON.

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DUBLIN
PRINTED BY FURDON, BROTHERS,
6, Bachelor's-walk.

DUBLIN UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE.

No. CLI.

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W. S. ORR, AND CO., LONDON.
SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

THE CONQUEST OF SCINDE.

WHEN we take up the history of a conquest, particularly when that conquest has occurred in our own times, and has added one of the richest and most fertile countries in the world to our own, we are led to speculate on and inquire into the following topics—inquiries which may be instituted with advantage in the study of all histories, but which, for the reasons just assigned, and for the national honour of our native land, and the character of her soldiers and statesmen, it is absolutely necessary should be fairly and distinctly placed before the public. These are—the right of conquest; the necessity for conquest; the means whereby that conquest is obtained; and the benefit conferred on one or both countries, or on mankind generally by it.

With the first of these propositions we do not in the present instance feel inclined to deal, as it involves the question of the right which the British and the Anglo-Indian government had, or assumed to have, of at all entering, then diplomatically interfering with, or, more properly speaking, invading, (for such is the *modus operandi* of our Eastern politicians,) and afterwards warring with the Scindian nation. Whether the English in Hindostan were wise in ever crossing the Indus, either for commercial or hostile purposes—whether justified by fears of western innovation, or forced to it in order to redress grievances and insults—to assist an ancient ally, or to place an infatuated and imbecile barbarian monarch on the throne of a kingdom, where he possessed neither the fear nor the affection of the people—are all matters of deep moment, intimately mixed up with this question, for which the government of Lord Auckland, and the instigators of the invasion by Lord Keane, have to answer; but which we have neither space nor inclination to

discuss in this review. The disasters in Affghanistan are of too recent a date, and the wound inflicted on our national honour is still too fresh, to require much to be said as to the result of that most calamitous and ill-judged proceeding. The memory of our gallant countrymen who perished at Kabool and in the Kyber, where the snows of the mountains were their winding-sheets, and the wild winds of the desert their only mourners, is still green in our memories; while the effect of the destruction of our armies on the mind of a country where we exist but by the force of moral power, went nigh to shake the very foundations of our empire in the east. That the advance of the British towards the Persian frontier and our attempt to carry war into the centre of Asia, was a rash, unnecessary, and ill-advised step, most men who have thought upon and examined into the history of India for the last ten years, are now thoroughly convinced; but that step once taken, the other, the occupation of Scinde, became absolutely necessary. First, it was necessary to inflict such a just and wholesome chastisement on the authors of our late discomfiture, as would not only retrieve our national honour, but strike terror into the boasting hearts of the barbarian hordes with whom we dealt; then conduct, by a safe retreat, our thinned and scattered bands back to the British provinces; and by a last, but a decisive blow, re-establish our position in the plains of Hindostan. And this was effected in a masterly manner by the heroism, coolness, and unflinching courage of Sale, Pollock, and Nott.

At this juncture, however, another and most important military move was to be made, and precisely at that moment a change took place in the whole management of India, by the recall of Lord Auckland and the appointment

* The Conquest of Scinde, with some Introductory Passages in the Life of Major-General Sir Charles James Napier. Dedicated to the British People. By Major-General W. F. P. Napier. Member of the Swedish Royal Academy of Military Science, Author of "History of the War in the Peninsula and the South of France." London: T. & W. Boone. 1845.

of Lord Ellenborough as governor-general. Here we must, however, digress, to place before our readers the way in which we first gained a footing in Scinde—a footing which, though then (1838) unwarranted, it subsequently became necessary to maintain at all risks.

Scinde, the Egypt of the Indus, in ancient times peopled by a pagan race, the Dhurs or Sindees, was conquered by the Mahomedans of Damascus in the eighth century. Ten centuries later, the Persian Kalloras, a swarm of military fanatics, not unlike the Wahabees of more modern times, overran that country, and retained it in whole or in part till 1770, when a tribe of the Talpoores descended from their mountains in Beloochistan, and settled in the fertile plains of Scinde. These hardy, enterprising soldiers soon possessed such sway in the land, that they disputed for, and finally rescued the command of the country from the Kolloras—treachery and assassination being equally resorted to by both sides. About the year 1800, two brothers of the Talpoore family divided the kingdom, reigning under the titles of Ameers of Upper and Lower Scinde—the former at Kyrpoor, and the latter at Hyderabad; and the turban in both governments descended, not in the direct line of the sons, but to the eldest brother. The third capital of Scinde was Meerpoor. The Ameers once established in the sovereignty, soon called down more Belooches from the hills, making them large grants of land on military tenure.

"For the Belooch, it was indeed a conquest, resembling that of the Normans in England when Harold fell; for each chief was lord of the soil, holding it by military tenure, yet in this differing from his Norman prototype, that the Ameers could, and often did, deprive him of his Jagheere or grant from caprice. This precarious tenure stimulated his innate rapacity; and the Belooch is by nature grasping, and habitually an oppressor. He is a fatalist from religion, and therefore without remorse; an overbearing soldier without fear, and a strong-handed robber without shame, because to rob has ever been the custom of his race. Athletic, and skilled in the use of his weapons, for to the sword only, not the plough, his hand clutches, 'he is known,' says his conqueror, 'by his slow rolling gait, his large aspect, his heavy sword and broad

shield, by his dagger and matchlock. Labour he despises, but loves his neighbour's purse.' It was, however, only the Scindee and the Hindoo that he could plunder, for his own race of the hills were like himself in disposition, and somewhat more robust. He was, moreover, a turbulent subject, and often, chief and follower, menaced the Ameers, and always strived to sow dissensions, knowing well that in the time of commotion plunder would be rife and pay high.

"The system of government was one leading inevitably and rapidly to self-destruction; and it would seem as if the Ameers had the instinct of this truth; for they secured their persons by numerous slaves, being in the traffic of human beings, both exporters and importers, chiefly of Abyssinian blacks, whom they attached to their interests by manifold favours; and these men, called *Siddees*, (*Seedeers*,) served them with equal courage and devotion: to all others they were brutal tyrants, cruel and debauched. Their stupid selfish policy was to injure agriculture, to check commerce, to oppress the working man, and to accumulate riches for their own sensual pleasures. 'What are the people to us?' was the foul expression of Noor Mohamed to Lieut. Eastwick. 'Poor or rich! what do we care, if they pay us our revenue;—give us our hunting-grounds and our enjoyments, that is all we require.' The most fertile districts were made a wilderness, to form their '*shikargahs*,' or hunting-grounds. Their Zenanas were filled with young girls torn from their friends, and treated when in the harem with revolting barbarity. In fine, the life of an Ameer was one of gross pleasures, for which the labour and blood of men were remorselessly exacted,—the honour and happiness of women savagely sacrificed!"

With this people, however, we had but little intercourse. In 1775, a British factory was established and maintained for some years at Tatta, and in 1779, Lord Wellesley endeavoured to restore it, but the influence of Tippo Sultan is said to have prevented it. Various treaties, chiefly of a commercial nature, or for the purpose of excluding the French and Americans, were made during the next thirty years; but of Scinde—its capabilities, fertility, and vast resources, no more than of its physical geography, or the facilities of the great highway of nations which passed through it—we knew but by report, till Sir Alexander Burnes, under pretence of carrying presents to Runjeet Singh, entered the

Indus in 1831; when said one of the inhabitants — "*Alas! Scinde is now gone, since the English have seen the river which is the high-road to its conquest.*" The following season, Colonel Pottinger negotiated some commercial treaties, relating, for the most part, to the navigation of the river. From that period, it is manifest that the British, if they did not actually covet this fair kingdom, were at least determined on meddling with its political affairs; and an opportunity was not long in presenting itself; for Runjeet Singh—our ally!—seeking occasion for warring with the Ameers—then also our allies!!—Lord Auckland seized that moment of trepidation and alarm for offering British protection, on condition of the Ameers admitting and paying a British force to occupy Hyderabad, and likewise receiving a political agent, who was to become permanently established in the capital. At this time, although a certain degree of equality was understood to exist among all the princes of Scinde, yet the Ameers of Kyrpoor and Meerpoor acknowledged the Hyderabad family as the elder branch.

In 1838, the invasion of Afghanistan was decided on, ostensibly for the purpose of reinstating Shah Shoojah on the throne of that kingdom, and now Scinde became an object of vast importance to the proposers of that ill-fated politico-military speculation, so fraught with disaster and misfortune. Originally a province of the Mogul empire, Scinde became tributary to Kabool about the middle of the last century. This, however, from the instability and internal weakness of that government, had for a long time become a mere nominal dependency; yet a large arrear of tribute, and certain other rights, being claimed by the deposed sovereign of Khorasan,* and in order to insure a passage for the British army across the country of the Indus, it was necessary to enter into other and closer diplomatic relations with the Ameers than had heretofore existed. For this purpose, a tripartite treaty was first concluded between the Maharajah Runjeet Singh, the Anglo-Indian government, and Shah

Shoojah. In the following paragraph, which we quote from a work written by some anonymous special pleader, for the purpose of decrying the government of Lord Ellenborough, and advocating the propriety of his recall, by the East India Directors, the condition of affairs, as they stood in February, 1842, is thus briefly laid before us:—

"The conclusion of this treaty, and the mode in which their interests were affected by it, were communicated to the Ameers by the British minister at Hyderabad, who was instructed, also, to announce the approach of the army intended to reseat Shah Shoojah on the throne of Kabool. A long course of diplomatic proceedings, varied by sundry hostile acts on the part of the British government, too well known to require detail, here followed. These ended in the conclusion of new treaties, the effect of which was to add the Ameers to the number of princes over whom the British government held control, by the tenure of a subsidiary alliance."[†]

We cannot now pause to discuss either the honesty or policy of these measures, nor inquire why the circuitous route through Scinde was chosen, instead of that through the Punjaub, the country of an ally, the Maharajah; neither can we debate the question relative to certain treaties said to have been broken by the English, concerning the transit of arms up the Indus; nor their interference with the Shikargahs, or hunting grounds of the Lords of Scinde. We have read a great deal, and in society we still hear many laments on this latter subject, and many warm invectives launched against the British, for their cruelty in depriving these poor princes of their game preserves. These expressions of sympathy show, however, but little knowledge of the true nature of the subject. Several of these Shikargahs bordered the Indus, and the cutting of fuel from these forests was expressly stipulated for, and, therefore, the British had as just a right to do so, as a railroad company to pass a "Great Western," or a "Great Southern," through an English gentleman's demesne. We are not prepared to dis-

* The native name for Afghanistan, which it is still called.

† "India and Lord Ellenborough," &c. &c. &c., 8vo. London, 1844.

pote the right which the Ameers had of laying waste some of the most fertile and thickly-populated districts of their dominions, for the purpose of creating these preserves, and turning, if they pleased, or their subjects submitted to it, the abodes of man into the haunts of savage beasts, even though (as in one instance we hear that it was) it was done for a child, then but eight years old!! They had just as good a right to have their hunting grounds, as the English nobleman has to his deer park, or the Irish gentleman to his snipe-bog. The question of their preserves was mooted much more at home and in the Indian press, than it ever was on the scene of action. The truth is—and this can be proved from the published parliamentary reports—these Shikargahs had little to do in the matter; the war with Scinde was, as it has been graphically described by its conqueror, but “the tail of the Affghan storm.” Lord Auckland is recalled, and in the beginning of 1842, the new governor-general arrives in Calcutta. Here it is necessary to advert to the condition in which he found the country over which he was appointed to rule, and this condition has scarcely ever been attempted to be disproved. We shall quote two authorities on this subject, and first that to which we have already referred because written in avowed hostility to the measures of the late governor-general, its testimony is here of increased value:—

“In ordinary candour,” says the writer of ‘India and Lord Ellenborough,’ “it must be admitted, that on the arrival of Lord Ellenborough in India, his situation was neither enviable nor easy. He found the long triumphant flag of England humbled by disaster and defeat. A vast army had been sacrificed without any countervailing advantage; isolated bodies of British troops still remained exposed to danger, while a number of unhappy captives were in the hands of a ruffian chief, on whose probable disposal of them no one could guess; the power of the British name had received a fearful diminution; the spirit of the army was shaken by the disasters which had overtaken their comrades, and the past and the future seemed alike involved in gloom.”

“In the interior of India,” writes General William Napier, in the work which

forms the basis of this article, and which we are now about to analyse, “universal despondency prevailed; and such a terror of the Affghans pervaded the population, that it was scarcely possible to find resources for succouring the generals: of three hundred and fifty camels, sent in one convoy to General Pollock, three hundred and twenty were carried off in a single night by their drivers, who deserted, in fear, a day’s march from Peshawar. The governor-general’s secret plans were given to the newspapers by men in office; and a mischievous, ignoble spirit, the natural consequence of making editors and money-seekers the directors of statesmen and generals, degraded the public mind, and shed its baneful influence over the army. In Scinde, deep-laid plans of hostility were on the point of execution. At Madras, several Sepoy regiments, smarting under a sordid economy, were discontented, if not in absolute mutiny. Actual insurrection existed at Saugur, and was spreading on one side to Bundelcund; on the other, along the Nerbudda, to Boorampoor. The ancient fear of England’s power—that confidence in her strength which upholds her sway, was nearly extinguished; the Indian population, whether subjects of England, or of her allies and feudatories, especially the Mahomedan portion, desired and expected the downfall of her empire.”

We should be diverted from the object of this critique were we to be led into the discussion of the question at issue between the late governor-general on the one hand, and the East India directors and the Anglo-Indian press on the other. When Lord Ellenborough undertook the government of India, it would appear that he either anticipated the co-operation and support of the Ameers of Scinde, or meditated their subjection to British rule; the first he solicited in the form of treaty, conferring mutual benefits; this they obstinately refused, even though subsequently presented on the point of the bayonet—the latter, the conquest of Scinde, became from that moment a stern necessity.

For years past an under current of jealousy has been winding its way between the standing army and the army of diplomats. Heretofore we have ruled India chiefly by the latter—“smart young men who speak Persian,” as they have lately been termed; and grieved we are that we should ever have had recourse to the

valour of the former. By war, however, we lost cast in the Orient, and by war and conquest was that cast to be regained and peace restored—

“The Afghan war once kindled, that invasion once perpetrated, the safety of the troops engaged in it imperatively required that Scinde should continue to be occupied; that the treaties concluded with Lord Auckland should be loyally adhered to by the Ameers. To have abandoned Afghanistan ere victory had redeemed the character of British strength, would have been the signal for universal commotion if not of insurrection throughout India. The having abandoned it at all led to the Scindian war, which was an inevitable consequence of the flagitious folly of the first enterprise.”

Lord Ellenborough proved the Ameers treacherous—guilty of hourly breaking existing compacts—stopping and robbing our *dawks* or mails—raising and organising an immense force for the purpose of falling on the army retreating from Afghanistan—intriguing with foreign princes hostile to the Farenghcees—entering into local compacts with one another to thrust the English out of Scinde, and taking advantage of the general panic then abroad, to regain those positions at Kurrachee and elsewhere which had long before been ceded to, and were then occupied by the British; and in the words of one of their own manifestos, “*to Kabul the British.*”

In this state of affairs we turn to our original assertion, that *then* the subjugation of Scinde either by strong and faithfully observed treaties, or the harsh alternative of conquest became indispensably necessary. Let us now then examine into the *means* by which that conquest was achieved by our gallant countryman General Sir Charles Napier, to defend whom, and the policy of Lord Ellenborough, as well as to transmit to later ages a faithful record of this great enterprise, the work which heads this article has been written by the graphic, impartial, and accurate historian of the Peninsular war.

This work consists of two parts—the first treats of the political proceedings—the second, of the military operations in Scinde; and making all due allowance for a brother's zeal and affectionate prepossessions, and taking

into consideration the circumstance of the book being written, as its author expressly tells us in his preface, for the purpose “of rebutting the factious accusations made against a successful general, in the hope of wounding, through him, the nobleman under whose auspices he conquered a great and rich kingdom, and relieved a numerous people from a miserable state of slavery,” which at times changes the tone of calm historical detail into that of personal invective, this able work is, we believe, a most faithful record, compiled from the most authentic sources.

As a literary production, it will be perused by all who admire the nervous, energetic style peculiar to this author, for the same vigour and graphic powers of description—the same force and aptitude of language—the sound logical reasoning—noble philanthropic sentiment—eloquence in expression, and poetry in thought, which characterised the “History of the War in the Peninsula and the South of France,” will be found in the pages of “The Conquest of Scinde.”

With the first part, which has been published some months, we do not now intend to deal, further than the information derived from the previously quoted extracts requires. It commences with a brief historical memoir of the hero of Meeanee, which our countrymen will feel pride in reading; but this we shall also pass over, as we trust ere long to be able to present our readers with a more finished portrait of that illustrious Irishman.

In reading the brilliant military exploits of Sir Charles Napier in Scinde, we can scarcely believe that we are not turning over the pages of some Eastern romance, where genius, chivalry, and personal prowess almost supernatural, so blend with barbaric splendour, and so interweave with oriental habits, manners, and customs, that it reminds us more of the tale of some genii in a fairy land, than a novel of real life. But neither personal courage nor individual daring would have availed against intrigue, subtlety, deceit, and numbers far outnumbering those which history has recorded as having been engaged in similar positions, were there not coolness, wisdom, judgment, and long foresight, to guide that intrepid conquering army. But

for the indomitable energy, the quickness of perception, the masterly skill, and the unceasing reliance on his own resources, of their veteran commander, neither the superior discipline, confidence, nor valour of that small, but resolute band, would have availed before the scorching fiery sun—the devastating pestilence, and the sharp swords of the Belooch warriors, the bravest soldiers of Asia, “inured to toil, and seasoned to the sun.”

Lord Ellenborough seems to have at once grasped the position of the Chancery suit bequeathed him by his predecessor; he chose Sir C. Napier as the executor of his plans, and despatches him from Bombay to Scinde, to command an army altogether not amounting at any time to three thousand men, including British and sepoys, infantry, cavalry, and artillery. In September, 1842, Sir Charles arrived in the vicinity of Hyderabad, and resolved on paying a visit to the Ameers, an account of which contained in the first part we would especially recommend to the perusal of our readers. We have already said, that he was sent to negotiate, or, if necessary, enforce a treaty, and also preserve existing treaties, Major Outram was the political agent employed on this occasion, and it must be acknowledged that he certainly used more forbearance in his endeavours to induce the Ameers to sign it; and delayed even beyond the prudence which safety warranted, more than any person similarly situated (not excepting Chinese Commissioner Elliot) ever did before, or ever will, we hope, again. The Ameers refused to fulfil the treaty, they fought, and fell.

By three great military manoeuvres, alike distinguished for science, judgment, and courage, Napier conquered Scinde. The first of these was the capture of Emaum Ghur; the second, the battle of Meeanee; and the third, that of Hyderabad. At this time it was ascertained that the Ameers had upwards of sixty thousand fighting men in the field.

Emaum Ghur was a fortress of immense strength—indeed, supposed to be impregnable—situated in the very heart of the desert, eight days' march from the cultivated land. It was encompassed with walls of unburned brick, forty feet in height, and contained a citadel and eight other towers.

A second wall, fifteen feet high, had been recently erected; and it is remarkable that the materials of which this fort was composed possess peculiar strength against artillery, for the shot easily penetrates, but brings down nothing. It was always provisioned for a year, and was at this time garrisoned with two thousand chosen Belooch warriors, besides containing an immense magazine and several thousand stand of arms. In a political point of view it was also of great importance, for there the Ameers, or a beaten army, could always retreat in case of difficulty or emergency; and it was believed by the rulers of Scinde to be impregnable, as they themselves thus expressed in one of their Dhurbars:—

“No European has ever seen Emaum Ghur; it is built in the heart of the wilderness, it is only to be approached by vague uncertain tracks, not known to strangers, and in some places without water for several marches. He cannot reach us there.”

The British force having arrived at the edge of the fertile land, the general resolved to strike into the wilderness. “Similar it was in design, but more dangerous and more daring with respect to the chances of a battle, than that of Marius when he surprised the city of Capsa in the Jugurthine war.” His first notion was to march upon Emaum Ghur with his whole force; but

“A native agent sent by the general, to explore the route and note the state of the wells, came back with such a tale of arid sands and dried up pits, that he resigned all hope of being able to effect his march with the whole army. With surpassing hardihood he then selected two hundred irregular cavalry, put three hundred and fifty of the twenty-second Queen's regiment on camels, loaded ten more of those animals with provisions, eighty with water, and resolved with these five hundred men to essay that enterprise for which only the day before he had allotted three thousand, thinking it even then most hazardous, as in truth it was.

“The guide might be false and lead him astray; Ali Moorad might prove a traitor; the wells might be poisoned or filled up, or the water-skins might be cut in the night by a prowling emissary. The skirts of the waste were swarming with thousands of Belooch horsemen, who might surround him on the march,

and the Ameers had many more and better camels than he had upon which to mount his infantry. Emaum Ghur, the object to be obtained, was strong, well provided, and the garrison alone four times his number! To look at these dangers with a steady eye, to neglect no precautions, but, discarding fear, to brave them and the privations of the unknown desert, was the work of a master spirit in war, or the men of ancient days have been falsely and idly called great.

"He forced Ali Moorad and the native to go with him, warning them in his quaint mode, that foul play would cost them dear; that such was his anxiety for their subsistence, they should only eat and drink at the wells with his soldiers, for thus only could he be sure they were not suffering. Then having organized a body of camel-drivers to maintain his communications with his army, he started. The weight of nearly fifty years' service had not bent his head, the drain of many wounds had not chilled the fiery current of his blood. Refusing no labour, enduring every privation equally with the youngest and most robust of his troops, he led his small determined band into the heart of the trackless desert; not in mere pride and disdainful arrogance of daring, but for an object worth the risk. It was to strike at the vital parts of the Ameers' strength, and the basis of their confidence, and to find peace, he hoped, where they had prepared only war.

"On the evening of the 5th he began this march. The night was dark, the sand deep, the guide lost the track; yet the troops made nearly twenty-five miles before they halted. The second day's march was somewhat less, but forage failed, water became scanty, and he sent back three-fourths of his cavalry, retaining only fifty of the best, and hoping, rather than expecting, that he should be able to retain even those beyond another day. Yet he was resolute to proceed while he could keep a hundred men together.

"Roostum and his armed followers, ten times the number of the British, and having seven guns, were now discovered on the flank; the general treating that Ameer as one who could not but be submissive, sent Major Outram to bring him to reason, still pushing on himself with his fifty wild horsemen, his two howitzers, and his three hundred Irish infantry, whose Guebre blood, bounding in their veins, seemed to recognize the divinity of that Eastern sun which their forefathers had worshipped two thousand years before.

"It was a wild and singular country the wilderness through which they were

passing. The sand-hills stretched north and south for hundreds of miles, in parallel ridges, rounded at top, and most symmetrically plaited like the ripple on the seashore after a placid tide. Varying in their heights, their breadth, and steepness, they presented one uniform surface, but while some were only a mile broad, others were more than ten miles across; some were of gentle slopes and low, others lofty, and so steep that the howitzers could only be dragged up by men. The sand was mingled with shells, and run in great streams resembling numerous rivers, skirted on each side by parallel streaks of soil, which nourished jungle, yet thinly and scattered. The tracks of the hyena and wild boar, and the prints of small deer's footsteps, were sometimes seen at first, but they soon disappeared, and then the solitude of the waste was unbroken.

"For eight days these intrepid soldiers traversed this gloomy region, living from hand to mouth; uncertain each morning if water could be found in the evening, and many times it was not found. They were not even sure of their right course; yet with fiery valour and untiring strength they continued their dreary, dangerous way. The camels found very little food, and got weak, but the stout infantry helped to drag the heavy howitzers up the sandy steep; and all the troops, despising the danger of an attack from the Beloochees, worked with a power and will that overcame every obstacle. On the eighth day they reached Emaum Ghur, eager to strike and storm, and then was seen how truly laid down is Napoleon's great maxim, that moral force is in war to physical force, as four to one. Mohamed Khan, with a strong fortress, well provided, and having a garrison six times as numerous as the band coming to assail him, had fled with his treasure two days before; taking a southerly direction, he regained the Indus by tracks with which his people were well acquainted, leaving all his stores of grain and powder behind!"

The place was then blown up with the gunpowder, which loaded twenty-four mines!!

"The first three days of his return through the desert were very trying, but on the fourth he found water and forage. On the eighth day, that is to say the 23rd of January, he reached Peer-Abu-Bekr, where he re-united his whole army, and halted on account of new political combinations, new diplomacy, and new difficulties of a nature to

put his firmness and sagacity to the severest tests. Eighteen days he had been wandering in the waste, opposed by obstacles demanding the utmost bodily exertions from all under him to overcome; suffering privations and risking dangers, requiring the greatest mental energy to face unappalled. Yet he came back triumphant, without a check, without the loss of a man, without even a sick soldier, having attained his object, dispersed the Ameer's army, and baffled their plan of campaign."

We now turn to the battle of Meeanee, fought in February, 1843, one of the most terrific conflicts over which the banner of England ever waved. We have not space to enter into a description of the campaign previous to this engagement; for this we must refer to the work itself. It is merely necessary to describe briefly the strength and position of the two armies immediately before the fight, and make such extracts from General William Napier's account, as may afford our readers some idea of the nature and importance of the action, and the bravery and consummate skill with which it was won. Further than this, without the aid of plans and lengthened military details, it would not be possible to effect.

Sir Charles Napier was in the field with scarce two thousand eight hundred men by him, and of these but five hundred of the twenty-second, led by the gallant Pennefather, were British. The Belooch army in his vicinity was at that moment upwards of fifty thousand strong. Of these, thirty thousand were within ten miles of him, and twenty thousand more were fast approaching the former. Major Outram, the political agent, was at Hyderabad, negotiating with the Ameers, who, playing the usual game of deceit and procrastination, absolutely persuaded him that their intentions were amicable, and that their forces had been dispersed; and so infatuated was the diplomat by their specious promises and lies, that he actually wrote to the general on the 12th instant, to come *alone* to Hyderabad, "as it would remove all doubt." "Unquestionably," exclaimed the veteran commander, in his dry, caustic style, "it would remove all doubts, and my head from my shoulders." The very same day, Hyat Khan, a Murree chief, was taken prisoner, and letters were found on his person from *Mohamet Khan*, giving him

notice that the Beloochees would assemble on the plain of Meeanee, and enjoining him to bring every fighting man of his tribe to that spot. On the 14th, the residency at Hyderabad was attacked, and Major Outram, after a most gallant defence, narrowly escaped with his life. Had Sir C. Napier joined him, and sent the army, as he wished, up to Meerpore, the disasters of Afghanistan would undoubtedly have been repeated on the plains of Scinde, and the "*British Kabooled*."

In a Fullailee, or dry bed of a river, on the plain of Meeanee, fifteen thousand Beloochees were entrenched, and several large armies were on the point of crossing the Indus to join them, both on the flanks and rear of the British. Had these been allowed time to join the main body at Meeanee, were they even an armed mob, instead of the surer swordsmen of Asia, it would have been impossible for the handful of British, (then not quite two thousand six hundred, including officers,) to have opposed them. Not a moment was to be lost. Twenty thousand Beloochees suddenly crossed the Indus on the 14th and 15th, and in a few hours more the whole army of the Ameers would have been in his front and rear.

On the night of the 16th, at eight o'clock, the British army marched, and next morning the advanced-guard discovered the Ameers camp. The Beloochees were then in position 30,000 strong, with five guns, occupying the Fullailee for about 1,200 yards in length, their wings resting on large Shikargahs or woods, and having the dry bed of the river in front. On the margin of the wood, on the enemies left, they had erected a wall which, when the English would form, would consequently face their right wing. In this wall there was one small opening, and in the Shikargah or wood behind it 7,000 chosen men were concealed for the purpose of rushing out through the narrow aperture, and turning the flank and rear of the British as they advanced to the attack. From the nature of the ground and the peculiarity of the Beloochee position, defended on each side by a thick wood in addition to this wall, it would be a fruitless undertaking to endeavour to turn their wings, so that it became a fair stand-up fight in the front line—

"There was no village with walls near in which to place the baggage; but with a happy adaptation of the ancient German method, the general cast this enormous mass into a circle, close behind his line of battle; then surrounding it with the camels, who were made to lie down having their heads inwards, he placed the bales between them as ramparts for the armed followers to fire over; thus forming a species of fortress not easily stormed if bravely defended."

The battalion of the 22nd "was composed entirely of Irishmen, strong of body, high-blooded, fierce, impetuous soldiers, who saw nothing but victory before them, and counted not the number of their enemies."

The plain between the two armies was about 1,000 yards across, but except their artillery, scarcely a vestige of the enemy was to be seen. The Beloochees always ensconce themselves in holes and nullahs, such as the ground then presented, waiting the approach of the foe. Thus they remain, with "matchlocks resting on the edge of their cover, and never fire until the mark is close; then throwing down the discharged weapon, they leap out with sword and shield, and strong and courageous must the man be who stands before them and lives."

Led on by their intrepid commander, the British advanced against their concealed foe till they approached the wall skirting the wood on their right. The single opening in this was then unoccupied, it being the design of the Beloochees to rush out, 7,000 strong, after the English had taken up their position, and turn (as inevitably they would) our right wing—

"The general rode near this wall, and found it was nine or ten feet high; he rode nearer and marked it had no loop holes for the enemy to shoot through; he rode into the opening under a play of matchlocks, and looking behind the wall saw there was no scaffolding to enable the Beloochs to fire over the top. Then the inspiration of genius came to the aid of heroism. Taking the grenadiers of the 22nd, he thrust them at once into the opening, telling their brave captain, 'Tell that he was to block up that entrance—to die there if it must be, never to give way! And well did the gallant fellow obey his orders; he died there, but the opening was defended. The great dis-

parity of numbers was thus abated, and the action of six thousand men paralyzed by the more skilful action of only eighty! It was, on a smaller scale as to numbers, a stroke of generalship like that which won Blenheim for the Duke of Marlborough."

It was the Thermopyæ of Meeanee. The formation of the British line was still incomplete, when the voice of the general, shrill and clear, was heard along our line commanding the charge.

"Then rose the British shout, the English guns were run forward into position, the infantry closed upon the Fullailee with a run, and rushed up the sloping bank. The Beloochs, having their matchlocks laid ready in rest along the summit, waited until the assailants were within fifteen yards ere their volley was delivered; the rapid pace of the British, and the steepness of the slope on the inside deceived their aim, and the execution was not great: the next moment the 22nd were on the top of the bank, thinking to bear down all before them, but they staggered back in amazement at the forest of swords waving in their front! Thick as standing corn, and gorgeous as a field of flowers, stood the Beloochs in their many-coloured garments and turbans; they filled the broad deep bed of the Fullailee, they clustered on both banks, and covered the plain beyond. Guarding their heads with their large dark shields, they shook their sharp swords, beaming in the sun, their shouts rolled like a peal of thunder, as with frantic gestures they rushed forwards, and full against the front of the 22nd dashed with demoniac strength and ferocity. But with shouts as loud, and shrieks as wild and fierce as theirs, and hearts as big, and arms as strong, the Irish soldiers met them with that queen of weapons the musket, and sent their foremost masses rolling back in blood."

"Now the Beloochs closed their dense masses, and again the shouts and the rolling fire of musketry and the dreadful rush of the swordsmen were heard and seen along the whole line, and such a fight ensued as has seldom been known or told of in the records of war. For ever those wild warriors came close up, sword and shield in advance, striving in all the fierceness of their valour to break into the opposing ranks; no fire of small arms, no push of bayonets, no sweeping discharges of grape from the guns, which were planted in one mass on the right, could drive the gallant fellows back; they gave their breasts

to the shot, they leaped upon the guns, and were blown away by twenties at a time; their dead went down the steep slope by hundreds; but the gaps in their masses were continually filled up from the rear, the survivors of the front rank still pressed forwards with unabated fury, and the bayonet and the sword clashed in full and frequent conflict."

At last, after a terrific fight of three hours, "that inevitable crisis belonging to every battle which offers victory to the commander who most promptly and strongly seizes the occasion, arrived at Meeanee." Napier saw that it was the precise moment, and bringing his small band of cavalry to bear on the enemy's wings, and sustaining their full force in the centre, the Beloochs began to waver, and being hard pushed by the British, slowly retreated, fighting hand to hand and foot to foot every inch of ground. And how fiercely the brave barbarians still fought may be gathered from this:—

"A soldier of the 22nd regiment bounding forward, drove his bayonet into the breast of a Belooch: instead of falling, the rugged warrior cast away his shield, and seizing the musket with his left hand, writhed his body forward on the bayonet, until he could with one sweep of his sword—for the Belooch needs no second blow—avenge himself. Both fell dead together."

We think we remember reading of a similar instance of heroism occurring between an English soldier and a Scottish broadswordman, at the battle of Culloden, and the last file of Indian newspapers recounts another such in the recent conflict between the British troops and the mountain robbers, whom Sir C. Napier is now reducing to order and obedience.

Such is a very brief outline of the battle of Meeanee:—

"It was in its general arrangements, in all that depended on the commander, a model of skill and intrepidity combined; and in its details fell nothing short of any recorded deeds of arms. The front of battle was a chain of single combats, where no quarter was given—none called for—none expected: Sepoys and Europeans, and Beloochs, were

alike bloody and remorseless, taking life for life—giving death for death. The ferocity on both sides was unbounded—the carnage horrible. The general, seeing a 22nd soldier going to kill an exhausted Belooch chief, called to him to spare; the man drove his bayonet deep, and then turning, justified the act with a homely expression, terrible in its truthfulness accompanying such a deed—" *This day, general, the shambles have it all to themselves.*"

"Twenty European gentlemen, including four field-officers, went down in this battle—six killed; and with them two hundred and fifty sergeants and privates, of whom nearly sixty were slain outright; and it is to be observed, that the Sepoy grenadiers having been but slightly engaged, this loss was nearly a sixth part of the fighting force. The loss of the Beloochs was enormous, almost exceeding belief. A careful computation gave six thousand, and most of those died, for no quarter was given; only those whose wounds did not disable them could have escaped: a thousand bodies were heaped in the bed of the Fullailee! Thus, in four hours, two thousand men struck down six thousand! three to each man! At Salamanca, one hundred thousand men, with a hundred and thirty pieces of artillery, were engaged for seven or eight hours, and the loss of the British scarcely exceeded five thousand! Such and so terrible was the battle of Meeanee.

"That night the English general formed his camp on the plain beyond the Fullailee; but ere he went to rest himself, he rode to the scene of carnage, and alone, in the midst of the dead, raised his hands to heaven, and thus questioned himself aloud—

"'Am I guilty of this slaughter?' His conscience answered, 'No.'"

And from a careful perusal of the entire evidence on this subject, we fully exonerate him from the foul charges of provoking hostility that have been made against him.

We cannot fight the battle of Hyderabad, our space forbids it. For it, we must refer our readers to the work itself, warning, however, our professional readers not to take it up till they have full leisure to go through with it, or briefs and patients may be lost by the fascinations which this glorious recital of the Conquest of Scinde presents.