CHAPTER XIV.

Affairs of Sindh—Geography—Political position—Mission to the Mirs—Difficulties attending its reception—It arrives at Tattah—Stay at that city—Negotiations—Departure—Captain Christie and Sir Henry Pottinger proceed in disguise through Sindh—Dr. James Burnes invited to Sindh—His testimony—Extracts from Sir John Malcolm—Mission of Sir Alexander Burnes—Various treaties—Further negotiations with the Mirs—Their harsh treatment by the British Government—Sir Charles Napier sent to Sindh—Continued oppression exercised towards the Mirs—the Biloquis revolt—Battle of Miani—The Mir of Mirpur is defeated—Capture of Omerote—Battle of Pir Asse—Victory gained by Col. Jacob—Conclusion of the history of Sindh.

The country of Sindh is irrigated by the river Indus or Sindh, from which it takes its common appellation. On the north it is bounded by Kach Gandava,
2 FIRST MISSION TO THE MIRS.

the Panjab, and the Daudpotra districts; and on the south side by the ocean. It has Rajvara on the east and Bilochistan on the west, making the area of the country about 100,000 square miles.* The revenue derived by the ex-Mirs of Sindh was from 3,500,000 rupees (35,000£) to 4,000,000 rupees (40,000£); and the expense in maintaining possession of that country is 8,000,000 rupees (80,000£).†

When the successful career of Bonaparte had subverted the independence of many kingdoms in Europe, his thirst for the conquest of India, and the arrival of his mission on a large scale under General Gardanne at Tehran, excited great alarm in British India, and the Supreme Government deputed various missions in various directions to frustrate the designs of Napoleon. The Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone, as already mentioned, went to the Durrani Court, Sir John Malcolm to the capital of Persia, and Nicholas Hankey Smith, Esq., of the Bombay Civil Service, was appointed as an envoy by the Governor-General of India to negotiate for and to secure the alliance of the Mirs of Sindh. Both the

* Visit to the Court of Sindh, by Dr. Burnes, K.H.
† Also in 1845 the expense has much exceeded the income. See Captain Postans's Observations on Sindh.
former kingdoms still retain their independence, but the latter dominion has fallen into our possession; and its rulers, who once possessed independence, and were soothed and courted by English ambassadors, and feared, flattered, and adored by European travellers, who explored their country in disguise, are now the prisoners of our Indian government!

In the number of the European gentlemen who composed the mission of Mr. Smith to the court of Sindh, I will only mention the name of Sir Henry Pottinger (then Lieut.), whose knowledge of that country became a guide to the ambition of others, and whose talents and judgment in all his diplomatic career, whether in Kach, in Sindh, or in China, have merited an extraordinary and yet just degree of estimation, and which are rewarded with the unanimous applause of all parties of the English nation at large. The departure of this officer brought the misfortune and sealed the fate of the Mirs of Sindh; and knowing as I do his just and noble principles, no one feels so bitterly distressed at the fall of the Mirs as he feels.

On the 27th of April, 1809, the mission, consisting of Mr. Smith and Sir Henry Pottinger, the former being the chief, embarked on board their ships to
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THE MISSION ARRIVES

sail from Bombay, and on the 9th of May, at noon, they approached the harbour of Karachi, the Governor of which place was requested to supply pilots. Here I shall quote the Right Honourable Baronet himself,* and, in short, follow his steps until the valuable publication of “Napier’s Conquest of Sindh.”

“The Governor made some demur regarding the admission of the ships into the harbour, but his objections were overruled. About an hour after they had anchored, the Governor came on board to visit Mr. Smith, attended by several matchlockmen, and brought some sheep and vegetables as a present. The two succeeding days were lost in discussions respecting the disembarkation of the mission, which the Governor was anxious to delay until he should receive instructions from the Mirs. On the 12th he visited Mr. Smith a second time, when the latter took occasion to reprehend some improper assumptions in the correspondence that had taken place relative to the titles and rank of the Governor-General and the Mirs: at which he professed his regret, and said it arose from his ignorance of the

AND DISEMBARKS AT KARACHI.

Persian language; but that he was willing either to put the person who had written them to death, or to blind him, as the envoy chose. He was of course requested not to proceed to such violent measures, but to give orders for greater circumspection in future. The Governor seemed under great alarm throughout this visit, and, after his boat was alongside, hesitated whether he would come on board or not. On the 13th and 14th of May the tents and public stores of the mission were landed, and the former pitched on a spot pointed out by the Governor. Several of the gentlemen had gone on shore and learned that great consternation had been excited by our arrival; that orders had been issued not to let any of our people enter the fort of Karachi, and that a large body of troops, under one of their most distinguished Sardars, had encamped within eight miles of the place, with the evident intention of watching our motions; indeed, the whole of the Governor’s conduct had evinced a medley of terror and dissimulation, and a jealousy of our acquiring the slightest information which could not have been exceeded had we come with declared hostile intentions. On the 16th of May the Envoy disembarked under salutes of fifteen guns from the two ships, and
6 DIFFICULTIES AS TO ITS RECEPTION.

was received on the beach by the escort and gentle-
men of the mission, amidst the acclamations of a vast
concourse of natives, to whom money was distributed
according to the Oriental custom. In the afternoon
the Navab sent a man to intimate his intention of
paying his respects to the Envoy; but as the order
for debarring our servants from ingress to the fort
was still in force, he was informed he would not be
received. Mr. Ellis went to the Governor to explain
the cause of this refusal, and had an interview with
him at a house outside the walls. The Navab
wished us to believe that a similar prohibition ex-
tended to all strangers: he said that he was very
sorry it should give such offence; but whether Mr.
Smith saw him or not, he would daily attend at his
campment; that he had his orders from the Mirs,
his masters, and must obey them; and that when a
Mihmandar* was sent from Haidarabad to conduct
the mission to court, we should be convinced of the
necessity of his non-compliance. A few days after a
letter was received from the Mirs, acquainting the
Envoy with their determination to depute two offi-

* Mihmandar, from Mihman, a guest and dar-a-keeper. He is
a person appointed to conduct envoys, and see that they are sup-
plied with the productions of the country. Usually his powers
are very much abused, by making them a cloak for extortion.
APPREHENSIONS OF THE MIRS.

The officers of Government to treat with him at Karachi, and that he was to accept all they said as strictly official; but as the style of their language was in that strain of arrogance and superiority which it was so much the object of the mission* to check in its infancy, the letter was returned, accompanied by a light communication, acquainting the Mirs that, as it contained not merely an unwarrantable assumption of rank on their behalf, but a want of due acknowledgment of that of the exalted government of which the Envoy was the representative, it was impossible its contents could be attended to in any form. Reports of various natures now daily reached us. At one hour it was confidently affirmed that the mission was to advance to the capital, escorted by a large body of Sindhian horse, and to be treated with every mark of attention; at another, that the Envoy would be called upon to negotiate with officers that were to be dispatched to him for that purpose; and, at a

* An envoy on the part of the Government of Bombay had been deputed to Sindh the preceding year, and treated in a manner that was not deemed at all warranted by the relative rank of the two nations. The envoy from the Governor-General had therefore the most pointed instructions to repress every attempt at a similar impropriety, and to be scrupulously exact in resenting any omission of that respect due to the British power in India, as well as any superiority claimed by the rulers of Sindh.
FRIENDLY MESSAGE.

third, that we were to be forced by a body of troops, then reported to be on its march to Karachi, to re-embark on board the ships and sail for India. All of them corresponded in one great feature, which was, that the Mirs entertained the utmost apprehensions of our designs on their territories; and, in fact, the hourly arrival of reinforcements for the garrison and defence of Karachi would have afforded sufficient evidence of this dread.

"Some days subsequent to the transmission of the letter to the Mirs, a friendly note reached the Envoy from Akhund Mohammed Baqa Khan, who had been at Bombay a few months before as an agent on behalf of the Sindhian government, announcing his being deputed to Mr. Smith, and his intention of making all possible haste to join him. The same messenger who brought this letter confirmed intelligence that we had obtained some time before of an army of three thousand men having been collected in the neighbourhood of the city of Tattah, and the probability of its moving towards us, in order, as we presumed, to enforce the Akhund’s terms, which officer arrived at Karachi on the 23rd of May; and the following morning came to the British encampment, where he had a very long con-
FRESH DIFFICULTIES.

ference with the Envoy. He dwelt much on the fears that had been engendered in the minds of the Mirs by the presence of two armed ships in the harbour of Karachi; and concluded by avowing that their being dispatched to Bombay, or at least out of the Sindhian dominions, was a sine qua non previous to the mission being allowed to move towards Haidarabad.

“Other subjects were also discussed of a political nature, and the consultation ended by a positive declaration of the envoy, that in preference to proceeding to the capital under the most trifling stipulation, he would go on board; and however great the risk might be of venturing to sea at that advanced season of the year,* sail for Calcutta, to lay the business before the Governor-General; that with regard to that part of the communication made by the Akhund, which relates to his powers to treat with the envoy, it was entirely out of the question, as the latter could only do so with the rulers of Sindh, to whom he was accredited. On the 26th May, the Governor sent a verbal message to the envoy, desiring he would issue orders for the ships

* The south-west monsoon had set in with great violence, and it was then blowing a tremendous gale.
to quit the harbour immediately; but he, as well as the Akhund, evaded, in the most artful manner, giving any written document to this effect. At length the former proposed to show any gentleman of the mission the official instructions he had received from the Mirs to enforce this demand; however, when Mr. Ellis and Captain Christie proceeded to the usual place of meeting, he declined to fulfil his proposal, on the grounds of not being authorised to do so by his masters. Under these perplexing circumstances, Mr. Smith came to the determination not to have any further official intercourse either with the Navab or the Akhund, but to write a letter to the Mirs, and to regulate his future measures in conformity with their answer. At the same time he announced his resolution to those officers, and requested that the latter of them would attend at the British encampment, in order that he might hear the proposed letter read, ere it was sent off to Haidarabad. He accordingly came, and, while it was preparing, a very long conversation took place, in which he laboured to convince the envoy that the mission had been received in the most friendly way; that the simple act of its being permitted to land, and to hoist the British flag, was decisive evidence