TRAVELS

OF

MIRZA ABU TALEB KHAN.

In the Name of the Most-merciful God.

INTRODUCTION.

After Thanksgiving to God, and Praise of Mohammed, the Author details his reasons for publishing the account of his Travels.

GLORY be to God, the Lord of all worlds, who has conferred innumerable blessings on mankind, and accomplished all the laudable desires of his creatures. Praise be also to the Chosen of Mankind, the traveller over the whole expanse of the

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heavens, (Mohammed), and benedictions without end on his descendants and companions.

The wanderer over the face of the earth, Abu Taleb the son of Mohammed of Ispahan, begs leave to inform the curious in biography, that, owing to several adverse circumstances, finding it inconvenient to remain at home, he was compelled to undertake many tedious journeys; during which, he associated with men of all nations, and beheld various wonders, both by sea and by land.

It therefore occurred to him, that if he were to write all the circumstances of his journey through Europe, to describe the curiosities and wonders which he saw, and to give some account of the manners and customs of the various nations he
visited, all of which are little known to Asiatics, it would afford a gratifying banquet to his countrymen.

He was also of opinion, that many of the customs, inventions, sciences, and ordinances of Europe, the good effects of which are apparent in those countries, might with great advantage be imitated by Mohammedans.

Impressed with these ideas, he, on his first setting out on his Travels, commenced a journal, in which he daily inserted every event, and committed to writing such reflections as occurred to him at the moment: and on his return to Calcutta, in the year of the Hejira 1218 (A.D. 1803), having revised and abridged his notes, he arranged them in the present form.
I have named this work *Musier Taleby fy Bulad Affrenji*—"The Travels of Taleb in the Regions of Europe;" but when I reflect on the want of energy and the indolent dispositions of my countrymen, and the many erroneous customs which exist in all Mohammedan countries and among all ranks of Mussulmans, I am fearful that my exertions will be thrown away. The great and the rich, intoxicated with pride and luxury, and puffed up with the vanity of their possessions, consider universal science as comprehended in the circle of their own scanty acquirements and limited knowledge; while the poor and common people, from the want of leisure, and overpowered by the difficulty

A transition from the third to the first person is not uncommon in Persian writers. This *exordium* was not inserted in the First Edition, as not being thought interesting to European readers in general.
of procuring a livelihood, have not time to attend to their personal concerns, much less to form desires for the acquirement of information on new discoveries and inventions; although such a passion has been implanted by nature in every human breast, as an honour and an ornament to the species. I therefore despair of their reaping any fruit from my labours; being convinced that they will consider this book of no greater value than the volumes of Tales and Romances which they peruse merely to pass away their time, or are attracted thereto by the easiness of the style. It may consequently be concluded, that as they will find no pleasure in reading a work which contains a number of foreign names, treats on uncommon subjects, and alludes to other matters which cannot be understood at the first glance, but require a little time for consideration, they will,
under pretence of zeal for their religion, entirely abstain and refrain from perusing it.

I am however sensible, that my work is in many respects deficient, and that my inquiries have not had sufficient profundity, or that I have not been able satisfactorily to explain the result of them. I have also to regret that my poverty, and the want of rich patrons, have prevented my having drawings and plans made of the various machines lately invented, and of the edifices in which the Arts are cultivated in Europe: these would have elucidated my explanations, and rendered them easy to every comprehension; but, according to the Arabian Proverb, "We are not to abandon the whole, because we cannot obtain the whole." I am therefore hopeful that the enlightened reader, taking into con-
sideration these difficulties, will not be deterred by the number of harsh and uncouth names which occur in this book from giving it a deliberate and unprejudiced perusal: and let him be assured, that by reading this account of the state of the Arts and Sciences in Europe, he will considerably add to the stock of his own knowledge*.

* Besides this work, in which there are Odes on every subject, the Author wrote at the same time a Poetical Description of his Travels, which he named the Mesnevy, consisting of a thousand verses. This circumstance may account for the want of climacterical warmth complained of by some of his reviewers; and by others, that the descriptions are not sufficiently replete with Oriental imagery, or flights of fancy. On this subject it may however be remarked, that the generality of Persian works which have hitherto been translated into the languages of Europe have been either Poems or Romances, in which such imagery is peculiarly appropriate; but that the Orientals can and do write in every kind of style, and on
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on every subject, can only be doubted by those who are ignorant of their language. In proof of this, the reader is referred to the "Descriptive Catalogue of Tippoo Sultan's Library;" and particularly to the Appendix of that work.

I shall here endeavour to sketch the character of the Irish. The greater number of them are Roman-Catholics, or followers of the religion of the Pope; only a small proportion of them being of the religion of the English, whom the former call
Dissenters or Philosophers (i.e. Deists or Atheists).

They are not so intolerant as the English, neither have they the austerity and bigotry of the Scotch. In bravery and determination, hospitality, and prodigality, freedom of speech and open-heartedness, they surpass the English and Scotch, but are deficient in prudence and sound judgment: they are nevertheless witty, and quick of comprehension. Thus my landlady and her children soon comprehended my broken English; and what I could not explain by language, they understood by signs: nay, before I had been a fortnight in their house, they could even understand my disfigured translations of Persian poetry. When I was about to leave them, and proceed on my journey, many of my friends appeared much affected, and said: "With
"your little knowledge of the language, you will suffer much distress in England; for the people there will not give themselves any trouble to comprehend your meaning, or to make themselves useful to you." In fact, after I had resided for a whole year in England, and could speak the language a hundred times better than on my first arrival, I found much more difficulty in obtaining what I wanted, than I did in Ireland.

In Dublin, if I happened to lose my way, and inquired it of any person, he would, immediately on perceiving I was a foreigner, quit his work, and accompany me to the place where I wished to go. One night, as I was going to pay a visit at a considerable distance, I asked a man, which was the road. He instantly accompanied me; and when we arrived at a particular spot, I knew where we were, and, having thanked him
for the trouble he had taken, said I was now perfectly acquainted with the remainder of the road, and begged he would return home. He would not consent; but, after we had gone some distance further, I insisted upon his leaving me, otherwise I should relinquish my visit. He apparently complied; but I could perceive, that, from his great care of me, he still followed. Being arrived at the door of my friend's house, I waited for some time, that I might again have an opportunity of thanking him; but as soon as he saw that I had reached a place of security, he turned round, and went towards home.

The Irish, by reason of their liberality and prodigality, seldom have it in their power to assist their friends in pecuniary matters: they are generally in straitened circumstances themselves, and therefore
cannot, or do not aim at the comforts and
elegance of the English: neither do they
take pains to acquire riches and honours
like the Scotch, by limiting their expences
when in the receipt of good incomes, and
paying attention to the Great. In conse-
quence of this want of prudence, they
seldom attain to high dignities, and but few
of them, comparatively, make much progress
in science.

Their great national defect, however, is
excess in drinking. The rich expend a vast
deal in wine; and the common people
consume immense quantities of a fiery
spirit, called whiskey, which is the peculiar
manufacture of this country and part of
Scotland.

One evening that I dined in a large
company we sat down to table at six
o'clock: the master of the house immediately commenced asking us to drink wine, and, under various pretences, replenished our glasses; but perceiving that I was backward in emptying mine, he called for two water glasses, and, having filled them with claret, insisted upon my taking one of them. After the table-cloth was removed, he first drank the health of the King, then of the Queen; after which he toasted a number of beautiful young ladies with whom I was acquainted, none of which I dared to refuse. Thus the time passed till two o'clock in the morning; and we had been sitting for eight hours: he then called to his servants to bring a fresh supply of wine. Although I was so much intoxicated that I could scarcely walk, yet on hearing this order, I was so frightened, that I arose, and requested permission to retire. He said he was sorry I should
think of going away so soon; that he wished I would stay till the wine was finished, after which he would call for tea and coffee. I had heard from Englishmen, that the Irish, after they get drunk at table, quarrel, and kill each other in duels; but I must declare, that I never saw them guilty of any rudeness, or of the smallest impropriety.

The painters of these countries sometimes draw ridiculous figures, called Caricatures, which it is impossible to behold without laughing. They, in general, are intended to exhibit the defects or follies of the Ministers or other great men, and sometimes to turn into ridicule the prevailing passion or vice of the people at large. These pictures are sold in sets, and consist of several pieces. One of them which was shewn to me contained a caricature of each of these nations. The first
exhibited a Scotchman, quitting his country to seek his fortune; and the itch being a very common complaint in Scotland, this poor fellow is drawn, rubbing his back against a mile-stone, on the road to London. In the next page he is shewn in the habit of a postman, carrying a bag of letters from one village to another. In the third page, he becomes a gentleman's steward: in this situation, by his industry, and attention to the wishes of his master, he acquires some money, which he lends out at interest to his master, and thus becomes rich. In the fourth page, he gets acquainted with an opulent English widow, whom he marries, and thereby acquires some degree of importance. In the fifth page, he is represented as an attendant on the minister, with whom, by his assiduity and flattery, he becomes a favourite, and obtains a post under Government. In the last page, he is seated in
the chair of the Vizier, having, by industry and perseverance, thus raised himself, from the most abject state of poverty, to the highest situation which can be held by a subject.

The Irishman's career is not so long, nor so varied. He enlists as a soldier, and, having distinguished himself by his bravery, is promoted by degrees to the rank of General. He then quarrels at table with another officer; they fight, and he is killed in the duel.

The Englishman is represented as a fat bull (therefore named *John Bull*); and as that animal is remarkable for eating a great deal, and for excessive courage and obstinacy, so the English seem to consider eating and drinking as their chief happiness, are frequently blunt and uncouth in their man-
ners, and often run blindly into danger and unnecessary expense.

The Irish women have not such elegance of manners, nor the handsome eyes and hair of the English; neither are they as tall nor so good figures as the Scotch; but they have much finer complexions, are warm in their affections, lively, and agreeable.

For some time after my arrival in Dublin, I was greatly incommode by the common people crowding round me, whenever I went out. They were all very curious to see me, but had no intention of offending me. Some said I must be the Russian General, who had been for some time expected; others affirmed I was either a German or Spanish nobleman; but the greater part agreed that I was a Persian
Prince. One day, a great crowd having assembled about me, a shopkeeper advised me to walk into his house, and to sit down till they should disperse. I accepted his kind invitation, and went into the shop, where I amused myself by looking at some penknives, scissors, &c. The people however thronged so about his windows, that several of the panes were broken; and the crowd being very great, it was in vain to ask who had done it.

About a fortnight after my arrival, there fell a very heavy shower of snow. As I had never before seen anything of the kind, I was much delighted by it. The roofs of the houses and tops of the walls were soon covered with it, and in two or three days the fields and mountains, as far as the eye could reach, became a white surface. During the time it continued to snow, the
cold was not very great; but when it ceased, notwithstanding I had all my doors and windows shut, and had three blankets on my bed, I felt the frost pierce through me like an arrow. The fire had scarcely any effect on me; for while I warmed one side, I was frozen on the other; and I frequently burned my fingers before I was aware of the heat. At length I discovered, that the best remedy was walking; and during the continuation of the frost, I walked every day seven or eight miles. I was apprehensive that my health would have suffered from the severity of the climate; but, on the contrary, I had a keen appetite, and found myself every day get stronger and more active.

I recollect that in India, when I only wore a single vest of Dacca muslin, if I walked a mile I was completely tired; but
here, when my clothes would have been a heavy load for an ass, I could have run for miles without feeling the smallest fatigue. In India, I slept daily seven or eight hours, at different times, without feeling refreshed; but during the two months I remained in Ireland, I never slept more than four hours any night, and yet I never felt an inclination to lie down in the day time.

The coldness of the climate in these islands is, I am convinced, very beneficial, and attended with many advantages to the inhabitants. In the first place, it renders the men vigorous both in mind and body, and the women fair and handsome. Secondly, it obliges them to take exercise, which hardens and invigorates the constitution, and inspires them with that valour, by which they are enabled to encounter the greatest hardships, and to
acquire immortal fame. During my residence in Ireland and England, I have frequently received contusions without being sensible of them at the time, the tenth part of which would in India have laid me upon the bed of sickness. Thirdly, it renders them open-hearted and sincere, steady in the pursuit of knowledge, and not led away by the flights of fancy or sallies of imagination. I have frequently seen both men and women of twenty years of age, who possessed not an idea that could interfere with their acquirement of science or the useful arts. The excessive cold prevents their sitting idle; and the mind being therefore engaged, is prevented from wandering to, or dwelling on things that are improper. Boys and girls of fifteen years of age are, here, as innocent as the children of India of five or six, and have no wish beyond the amusement of playthings, or the produce
of a pastry-cook's shop. I have even seen grown-up persons, who had acquired reputation in their own line of business, and many of them had accumulated fortunes, but who were as ignorant of the world as boys in the East. Another great advantage of the coldness of the atmosphere, is their being accustomed to wear a number of tight-made clothes, which are troublesome to take off, and are very inconvenient for lying down: thus they are prevented from indulging in indolent habits during the day; and their nights are passed in harmless sleep, contrary to the custom of India, where the day is frequently devoted to sensuality and repose, and the night to business or conviviality.

What I am now about to relate will, I fear, not be credited (by my countrymen), but is, nevertheless, an absolute fact. In
these countries it frequently happens that the ponds and rivers are frozen over; and the ice, being of sufficient strength to bear a great weight, numbers of people assemble thereon, and amuse themselves in skating. For this purpose it is requisite to be provided with a kind of wooden shoes, having pieces of iron fixed to the soles. At first this appears a very difficult operation, and many get severe falls; but, after some months' practice, they can slide along the ice with the rapidity of a horse on a fine road, and turn, in all directions, quicker than the best-trained charger. I have even seen them engrave the name of a lady on the ice with the heel of their skate. In England and Ireland this art is only practised for amusement; but in Holland, I have been informed, the women will carry a basket of eggs or butter, in this manner, twenty miles to market, and return home to dinner.
I remained forty-four days in Dublin; and, in the course of my whole life, never spent my time so agreeably. Were I to mention the name of every person from whom I experienced hospitality and civility, I should tire my readers. I shall therefore only enumerate a few of my particular friends. The principal of these were Sir George and Lady Shee. He had resided for many years in India, and was for some time paymaster at Ferrokhabad. He was at this time employed by the Government of Ireland, was a great favourite with Lord Cornwallis, and did me the honour of being my interpreter with his Lordship. Lady Shee was remarkable for mildness of disposition, elegance of manners, skill in music, and sweetness of voice.

From Lord and Lady Carleton I experienced much attention and politeness; their
house was a repository of every thing that was grand or curious. Many of the articles attracted my wonder and astonishment; but they were so numerous and extraordinary as to exceed the powers of description. His lordship held the honourable office of Chief Justice of Ireland.

The Duke of Leinster, the first of the nobles of this kingdom, honoured me with an invitation: his house is the most superb of any in Dublin, and contains a very numerous and valuable collection of statues and paintings. His grace is distinguished for the dignity of his manners, and the urbanity of his disposition. He is blessed with several angelic daughters.

I here had the good fortune to meet with Colonel Wombell, a gentleman I had long known in India, from whom I experi-
enced many acts of friendship, and with whom I daily spent some happy hours. This gentleman was much attached to the natives of India, and spoke their language fluently. He was, at this period, Colonel of the Norfolk Volunteer Militia, and asked me several times to dine at the regimental mess, where he introduced me to some of the finest-looking young men I ever saw in my life. Norfolk is celebrated above all the countries in England for fine poultry, abundance of game, and handsome women.

I here had the pleasure of forming an acquaintance with General Vallancy, an officer of artillery, who, although of a remarkable short stature, had a most expanded heart: he was a great adept in acquiring languages, and was much delighted with the Hebrew, Arabic, and Persian dialects: he informed me, that there was a consi-
derable analogy between the Hindoostany and Irish languages. To Lords Shannon and Newcomen, Mr. White, Mr. Irving, and Mrs. Humphries, I feel grateful for their attention and hospitality.

The various acts of kindness and hospitality I received from Mrs. Fleming are innumerable. This lady having been informed that I had become acquainted with her husband at the house of our mutual friend, Mr. W. A. Brooke, in Calcutta, immediately sent a gentleman to request I would call on her. She afterwards gave me many invitations to her house, and introduced me to a numerous circle of her acquaintance. This lady one day asked me, if her husband spent his time pleasantly in Calcutta. I replied, "How is it possible he can be happy while separated from so charming a companion as you." She smiled, and said she believed I only flattered her.
Two of her daughters had accompanied their father to India, but there still remained at home three girls, beautiful as the *Houries* of Paradise.

Having hitherto omitted giving any description of the mode of living of the Irish, I shall here state, that the breakfast is generally confined to the family. At dinner, they meet at each other's houses, in large parties: this meal is divided into three parts, at the end of each of which, a table-cloth is removed. After dinner the gentlemen continue to drink wine for one or two hours: they then join the ladies, and drink tea or coffee: and at night they again sit down to what is called *supper*. This last meal I enjoyed more than any other, as there is less ceremony observed at it than at dinner: the servants are soon dismissed, and the guests help themselves.
The mode of paying complimentary visits here is very easy; they merely knock at each other’s doors, and give their names, written on a square piece of pasteboard, called a card, to the servant; but if they wish to see the master of the house, they go in, and sit with him half an hour*.

Nothing pleased me more in Europe than the attendance of servants being dispensed with. In India, they remain constantly in the room; but here they retire as soon as dinner is over, and remain till summoned by the bell.

I was also much pleased to observe, that in European society, when a person is speaking, the others never interrupt him, and the conversation is carried on in a

* The natives of India always send a message before, to ask whether the visit will be convenient.
gentle tone of voice. One evening, while I was engaged in conversation with the lady of the house, the servant entered with a large tray of costly china; and his foot catching the edge of the carpet, he fell, and broke the whole to pieces: the lady, however, never noticed the circumstance, but continued her conversation with me in the most undisturbed manner.

It affords me much satisfaction thus to record the amiable qualities of the Irish; as, previous to my landing, I had conceived strong prejudices against them, in consequence of the misrepresentation of some of the passengers on board our ship, who had described them as rude, irascible, and savage.

Captain Williamson, one of the passengers on board the Christiana, (who was of a sarcastic disposition) used constantly to
frighten me, with accounts of the uncivil treatment I should meet with in England: thus one day at dinner, when, for want of employment, I had laid a piece of bread on the table-cloth, and was cutting it with great caution, he called out to me, “If in England you cut your bread in that manner, the ladies, alarmed for their table-cloths, will never invite you to their houses a second time; nor will you ever find any person there who will assist you to carve your meat as we do here.” If ever I chanced to spill the gravy or soup on the cloth, or my own garments, he used to look at me with aversion, and say, “If you do so in London, nobody will sit at table with you.” Notwithstanding this, both in Dublin and in London, wherever I was invited, the master and mistress of the house not only excused my awkwardness, but pressed me to eat in my own country manner; and when I refused,
always cut the meat for me. Another time he told me, that in London no person would assist another with sixpence; and that without a bribe they would not even let me pass along the street, much less point out the road. In contradiction to this, often under pretence of inviting me to take a walk, my acquaintances have carried me to see various places, which cost them at least four or five shillings. Numberless also were the presents forced upon me, of books, pen-knives, spectacles, watches, and other English curiosities; and I was even frequently solicited to accept the loan of 1000 or 2000 guineas. I have been induced to relate these anecdotes, that the difference between the dispositions of the English in India, and the genuine unsophisticated English, may be known.

On the 16th of January, 1800, having
taken leave of all my friends, I embarked on board one of the vessels called *Packets*, which convey the letters and passengers from one island to another. About the middle of the night we quitted the Irish shore; and the wind being very favourable, we cast anchor early next morning at Holyhead. We were soon after landed, and went to the best inn in the town, kept by a person named Jackson. This man, seeing that I was a foreigner, thought that he could reap some advantage by detaining me at his house: he therefore endeavoured to persuade me to remain a short time at Holyhead; but two Irish gentlemen, who, accompanied by a beautiful young woman, were then at the inn, perceiving his intention, abused him for it; invited me to dine with them, and in the evening put me into the mail coach, which was setting out for Chester.
Holyhead is a small and dirty town, and only known as being the port opposite Dublin: it is situated in a small island, separated from Wales by an arm of the sea almost as broad as the river Ganges at Calcutta. Wales is one of the three divisions which, with England and Scotland, constitute Great Britain. The Heir Apparent, or eldest son of the King, takes his title from this province, and is calledPrince of Wales.

After travelling twenty-five miles, we arrived at the arm of the sea above mentioned, and in a short time were ferried to the opposite side, where there is a town called Bangor Ferry. Here we were refreshed by an excellent breakfast, and immediately after proceeded on our journey. Our next stage was to Aber-Conway, a very ancient city, situated between lofty mountains, on the banks of a fine river, which
joins the sea a little below the town. This place was formerly fortified, and several of the walls are still standing, which much resemble those of Allahabad. After dinner we again entered the coach, and at midnight arrived, without any accident, at Chester. Our route during this journey was over lofty hills, so that we were frequently obliged to alight from the coach, and walk up the steepest of them. Although Wales is a very mountainous country, it nevertheless contains a great quantity of arable land and excellent pastures for cattle.

Chester, being the principal town of the county, where all the public business is transacted, is large and populous, and is said to be more ancient than London. In several particulars it differs from any other place I have seen. Some of the streets have colonnades, running from one end to
the other of them, under which the foot passengers can walk perfectly dry, at all seasons of the year. The middle of the streets is paved, and contains ample space for the carriages and horsemen. Many of the houses have handsome porticoes in front, supported by stone pillars, which give them a magnificent appearance. These islands produce great abundance of fine stone, and even the common walls of the gardens and yards are built of this material.

As several of my Irish friends had recommended me to gentlemen in Chester, the latter had been for some time in expectation of my arrival. I was in consequence, early next morning, waited upon by a Mr. Fleming, and three or four other persons, who loaded me with invitations, and accompanied me to look at the city. At the hour for dinner, a large party,
consisting of some of the principal inhabitants of the town, assembled; and in the evening we were most agreeably entertained with music and dancing. When we broke up, many of these hospitable people requested that I would stop for some time at Chester, and favour them with my company: but, as I was very anxious to get to London, I declined their polite invitations.

By the advice of my friends, I agreed with the owner of the stage coach, that, instead of continuing the journey to London without intermission, I should sleep one night on the road. It was between one and two in the morning when we quitted Chester; and after a journey of forty-nine miles we breakfasted at Stafford. It was midnight before we reached Northampton, where I stopped for the remainder of the night, and felt truly grateful to my friends
for their good advice, as I thereby enjoyed a comfortable supper, and a refreshing sleep, after the fatigue of a long day's journey. On the following morning I again set out in the coach; and on the 25th of Shaban, corresponding to the 21st of January 1800, arrived safe in London, being five days short of a Lunar year from the period of my leaving Calcutta.