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Hardwicke

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XXI.—*An Account of the Sheep-Eater of Hindústán.* By Major-General
HARDWICKE, F.R.S., M.R.A.S.

Read 21st of July 1832.

THE communication which Major-General HARDWICKE has the honour to lay before the ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, though not describing an occurrence of recent date, he trusts may yet be found sufficiently interesting to claim a place in the Transactions of the Society. General HARDWICKE has frequently heard the subject mentioned of late, but has found very few persons who were inclined to attach credit to it, owing to its remarkable deviation from the usual course of nature; and having himself not only seen the man designated “the Sheep-eater,” and witnessed an exhibition of his carnivorous habits, but made notes and drawings in elucidation of the facts as displayed in the presence of many officers of the military station of Futtehgurh and the native inhabitants of the surrounding villages, on the 3d of March 1796; he now proceeds to subjoin the substance of his memorandums, in explanation of the accompanying plate.*

Early on the morning of the above date, the Sheep-eater, attended by his *guru* or spiritual father, appeared in front of the assembled crowd. He had with him two living sheep; and after a short harangue to the people, he commenced his attack on the first sheep, by seizing its fleece with his teeth; and having held it thus for about a minute, he then, by a swing of his head, flung it on its back on the ground.† In this position he held the animal down as at No. 2. At No. 3, he is seen in the act of tearing open the abdomen, which he effected with his teeth only, by stripping off the skin from the flank to the breast; he then removed the intestines, and thrust in his head to drink the collected blood, as shewn at No. 4. This employed him a minute or two, when he withdrew his head, and gazing around in expectation of applause, presented a very savage appearance

* See Plate 12.

† See the Plate, Fig. 1.

besmeared with blood, as shown at No. 5. He next proceeded to strip off the rest of the hide; separate the ribs, disjoint the limbs, and detach the head from the neck; and after collecting them together, he rubbed every part with a quantity of dust: by this operation, he said, he dried up the blood, and enabled himself to tear the meat from the bones and sinews with greater ease; he disregarded the quantity of dust which every portion retained, and swallowed one mouthful after another, with all the dirt adhering, without the least hesitation. The concluding part of this performance was the collecting a quantity of the leaves of the plant *Madár*,* of which he chewed a considerable number, but swallowed only the milky juice which flowed from them. While thus employed, which did not continue many minutes, he was seated on the ground, as represented at No. 6; and in No. 7, he is drawn addressing the spectators, holding in his hand a branch of the *Madár*, and offering to eat the second sheep: the tall aged figure with him is a correct delineation of his spiritual father or *guru*, with whom he had been travelling for many years. They were both Hindús, and natives of the province of Rájputána.

The old man was upwards of six feet in height and slender, the muscularity and fulness of his figure being worn down by age, which, according to his own statement, was upwards of one hundred years; he was very dark, considerably more so than his *protégé*: his hair almost white, that of his head he wore coiled into the shape of a turban, while his beard, which was not the least remarkable peculiarity about his person, reached to the ground when flowing loose; but he generally kept it twisted, and carried the lower end in one hand with a rosary of beads, and in the other, a long walking cane.

The notoriety of the "Sheep-eater" having reached the city of Lucnow, an English gentleman, resident at the court of the *Nawáb*, was induced, by the report of his extraordinary feats, to send a servant for him to that part of the country in which he had for some time sojourned; and where, from his savage propensities, he was much dreaded by children and by the timid amongst the natives of the place, who believed that when sheep were

* The *Asclepias gigantea* of botanists. It is used by the natives of India for many medicinal purposes: among the number, it is useful in removing warts and other excrescences. It is the milky juice they apply, which flows plentifully from all parts of the plant when broken or bruised; and on the present occasion, the Sheep-eater said he ate it to assist digestion.

not to be had, he would devour a child, if he could steal one. He obeyed the summons, and was liberally provided for the journey, as well as attended by the gentleman's own servant; and on his arrival at Lucnow, a party of more than fifty ladies and gentlemen assembled to witness an exhibition of his extraordinary powers; amongst whom were the late Mr. Sackville Taylor and Mr. Cherry, Major-General William Palmer, Major-General Claude Martine, Major-General Rawstorne, and many other officers of the Hon. East-India Company's army, the present Right Hon. Sir Gore Ouseley, Bart., and the gentleman above mentioned, at whose delightful villa they partook of a sumptuous *déjeuner*.

It may be proper to give some idea of the quantity this monster could devour at one of these exhibitions. He commonly ate two of the small-sized sheep of the Doáb, the weight of which, when not stall-fed, did not exceed eight or nine pounds per quarter; on the present occasion, however, the gentleman above alluded to had provided the sheep from his own stock, and one of them was of larger size, being a breed peculiar to the country on the north side of the river Gogra, and weighing from twelve to thirteen pounds per quarter: this he finished with as much ease as he had the first. It was observed that he carefully collected together the ill-picked bones, sinews, and other fragments; and when asked what he intended to do with them, he replied, they were to furnish him and his *guru* with a dinner in the evening; and that he always took his usual daily meals, whether he had had his sheep in the morning or not.

(Signed) THOS. HARDWICKE,
Major-General.

The Lodge, South Lambeth,
July 20, 1832.

N O T E.

THE following is extracted from a work entitled 'Sketches of India.*' It evidently alludes to the same singular person, and is so far of consequence as it affords another testimony to the accuracy of the facts detailed in the paper of Major-General HARDWICKE; although it differs from it in some minor particulars, erroneously calling the Sheep-eater a Musalmán Fakir; while the *guru* is not mentioned in it at all. As it is evidently only the account that *tradition*, after a lapse of twenty years, had preserved of this monster's powers, which were obviously the effect of disease, it will be considered a tolerably faithful corroboration of General HARDWICKE's narration.—G.C.H.

* 8vo. London, 1816.

“ A few years since, there existed in Lucknow, in the person of a Musselman Faquir
 “ an extraordinary instance of voracious appetite, remarkably evincing how near, when
 “ unrestrained by civilization, the human appetite approaches to that of the brute. The
 “ man of whom I speak was a resident in the capital of Oude, and it was his peculiar
 “ custom, by a display of his edacious powers, to solicit at the expense of strangers the
 “ gratification of his appetite. From a particular friend of mine * he requested and
 “ obtained a fine sheep; seizing its two fore-legs, he drew the animal, suspended in the
 “ air, towards him, threw back its legs with all his strength, and laid the creature both
 “ dead and open in an instant. His first care, on the sheep being thus exposed, was to
 “ cast away the entrails and drink the blood. To do this more effectually, he always
 “ buried his head in the animal's body, and which custom, if it preserved any of the
 “ blood from being spilt, rendered his appearance horrible and disgusting, by coagulating
 “ and matting his hair. He then with his hands and teeth (never employed a knife) tore
 “ off the skin, with the same instruments tore and devoured the flesh, and having nicely
 “ picked every bone, loudly petitioned for a second sheep. The disgust excited was
 “ however, too great to admit of a second performance, and the cannibal regretted that
 “ he had not received wherewithal to satisfy the importunate cravings of his maw.

“ Asoph-ud-Dowlah, the predecessor of Saadut Ali, and uncle to the present Nuwaub
 “ of Oude, bestowed a jagheer of the annual value of three thousand rupees, on this
 “ singular character. It was on a day of great festivity in Lucknow, after devouring
 “ three sheep successively, and losing three teeth in the encounter, that he was
 “ blessed with this munificence of his prince, as a reward for his prowess in the *ars edendi*.
 “ A squalid emaciated appearance was the characteristic of this Faquir; and with his
 “ diseased appetite, we may naturally infer, that the quantity of food proved an obstacle
 “ to its nourishing him.”—Page 160.

The writer adds, that some of the descendants of this cannibal were still to be seen (1813-14) in Lucknow.

* “ Claude Russel, Esq., one of the present Judges of the Court of Appeal and Circuit for the division of Benares.”