

L A D Á K,

PHYSICAL, STATISTICAL, AND HISTORICAL;

WITH

NOTICES OF THE SURROUNDING COUNTRIES.

BY

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L O N D O N :

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VIII.—PRODUCTIONS.

I.—A N I M A L.

THE animal productions of Ladák are particularly interesting, as they comprise the wild horse, the yák, or long-haired bull, whose tail furnishes the Indian *chaori*, the shawl-wool goat, whose fine under-fleece is woven into the beautiful Kashmirian shawls, and the púrik sheep, of which some twenty specimens have been exhibited in the Zoological Gardens of London.

WILD ANIMALS.

The wild animals of Ladák are both numerous and interesting. "The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies."* The elevated plains of the Indus and the lofty table-lands of Rukchu abound with the wild horse, the marmot, and the hare: while the snowy mountains and rugged glens teem with many varieties of the wild goat, sheep, and deer, some of which are most probably still unknown.

The *Kyang*,† which has been called a horse by some, and an ass by others, is the *Equus hemionus* of Pallas, and the *Equus Kyang* of Moorcroft. The animal when

* Psalm civ. 18.

† The male is called simply *rKyang*, and the female *Mo-rKyang*. See Plate VI. for four views of the *Kyang*'s skull.

Rukchu, and I feel satisfied that they are the same as the *Lepus pallipes* of Mr. Hodgson; and the more so, as several that I shot were fully as large as any English hare. Moorcroft evidently saw only one species, as he refers to the Rukchu hares a second time.*

The smaller species of hare, or *Lagonys*, is extremely common all over Tibet. It is the *Lepus alpinus* of Pallas. I have shot them near the summit of the Lának Pass, 18,750 feet above the sea, and on the very crest of the Pir Panjál Pass at 12,000 feet. The table-lands of Rukchu, and the plains along the Yunam River, are literally honey-combed with their burrows. The Tibetan *Lagonys* is named *Shippi*, or the “whisperer,” and is thus closely allied to the “calling hare” of America.

The marmot of Tibet, according to Mr. Hodgson,† is of two distinct species, the large and the small, which he has distinguished by the names of *Arctomys Tibetensis*, and *Arctomys hemachalanus*. The former obtains a length of two feet, with a tail of six inches. The latter does not reach more than thirteen inches in length. I have seen only the larger animal, which is common on the sandy plains of Rukchu. Moorcroft‡ mentions that he obtained the skin of the squirrel in Ladák; by which I believe that he meant the *Arctomys*.

Of the *Mustelidæ*, or weasel tribe, I am acquainted with only one species,—the *Mustela*, or true weasel. I saw one specimen of it in 1846 near the Polokonka Pass, at an elevation of 16,000 feet; and in 1847 I shot one close to the crest of the Lának Pass, 18,700 feet. The

* Travels, I. p. 312.

† Journal As. Soc. Bengal, XII. p. 409.

‡ Travels, I. p. 312.

river, near the Taskyum bridge,* and on the left branch of the Shigar river, in Balti.

Gold is found by washing the sands of the Indus and of the Shayok river; but the washings are entirely carried on by Mussulmans from Balti, as the Buddhists of Ladák have long been prohibited from the search. The prohibition is said to have originated in the fears of the Gyalpo lest the people should neglect their fields in the tempting pursuit of gold. The crowds that have flocked to the recent "diggings" in California and Australia have fully justified the fears of the Gyalpo. Gold is also found in Chang-thang, but its collection is prevented by a superstitious belief that the lumps of native gold "belong to the genii of the spot, who would severely punish the human appropriation of their treasures."† The sands of the Indus have long been celebrated for the production of gold. Pliny‡ says, "*Fertilissimi sunt auri Dardæ*;" and this is the case even at the present day; for the sands of the Indus, in the Dardu country, are said to be more prolific than those of any other part of the river. But the gold of the Indus was known at a still earlier date; for Megasthenes relates that the Indian ants dug gold out of the earth, not for the sake of metal, but in making burrows for themselves.§ These Indian ants are no doubt the

* Travels, II. p. 392, and map.

† Moorcroft, I. p. 314.

‡ Lib. VI. c. 19. The conclusion of the passage is curious and suggestive, *Setæ vero argenti*, that is, "the country of the Dardæ produced most gold, but that of the *Setæ* the most silver." As we know that silver is not found in India, the *Setæ* can be no other than the *Seths*, or "bankers," in whose hands the wealth of India has been for ages. It seems probable that many of the Indian nations, enumerated by ancient authors, may have been only different trades and professions.

§ Arrian, Indica, XV.

marmots (*Arctomys*) and rat-hares (*Lagonys*) of Tibet, which in making burrows “throw up the earth wherein the ore is contained, from which the Indians extract gold.” On the plains along the banks of the Indus and Shayok, the marmots still throw up the earth mixed with gold-dust, from which the Indians of Balti occasionally extract a few grains of gold. Megasthenes confesses that he had not seen the animals themselves, but only their skins, which had been brought by the Macedonian soldiers into Alexander’s camp. The skin of the marmot is the commonest of all the furs now brought to India.* Its Tibetan name is *Phyi-pa* or *Chipa* (or *Chupa*), which was probably confounded by Alexander’s soldiers with the Indian *Chíntá*, the name of the large ant; or *Phyi-pa* may have been confounded by the Indians themselves with *Pippilaka*, the Sanscrit and Bengali name of the large ant.†

The same story of the ants as big as foxes is told by Herodotus; and Professor H. H. Wilson‡ has aptly illustrated it by a passage from the Mahábhárata, which relates that “the people who dwell under the pleasant shade of the *Kichaka-venus* (a kind of willow) and along the Sailodá river, between the Meru and Mandara mountains, the Khasas, Prádaras, Páradas, Ekásanas, Arkas, Kulindas, Tanganas, and Paratanganas, brought to Yudhishthira lumps of gold, a *drona* (64 lb.) in weight, of the sort called *paippílika*, “or ant gold,” which was so called because it was exfodiated by the

* The same holds good to the eastward, for Mr. Hodgson says, “In the extensive peltry trade carried on between Nepál and Tibet, no skin is more commonly met with than that of the marmot.”—Journal As. Soc. Bengal, X. p. 777.

† *Phyi-pa*, commonly pronounced *Chi-pa*.

‡ Journal Roy. As. Soc. VII. p. 143.

pipplaka, or common large ant." This belief, however erroneous, as the learned professor observes, was neither extravagant nor irrational. A yet earlier mention of the gold of Alpine India is that of Ctesias; but he distinctly states that it was not obtained by washing, as in the river Pactolus.* Gold is called *Ser*, gold-dust *Ser-dul*, and the gold-washer *Ser-pa*. This name I believe to have been the origin of the classical *Seres*. In Tibetan *Serki-yul* means the "gold country;" and as the affix *yul* can be omitted at pleasure, the names of *Serki* and *Serika* are almost identical.†

Copper.—According to Moorcroft, "some copper-mines are said to have been discovered towards Kashmir."‡ This statement is probably correct, as Jacquemont found copper ore in the Lidar valley, on the south-west side of the range which divides Kashmir from the Ladáki district of Suru. If any trust can be put in a name, I should suppose that copper (*zangs*) had been found in *Zangskar*, but I could not learn that it had been discovered there.

Lead and *Iron* are, according to Moorcroft, found in pits in the mountain districts remote from Lé.

Plumbago is found in Balti; but the specimens which I procured are of an inferior description. They are gritty, and will not mark paper without scratching; but as they were most probably taken from the long-exposed surface, good black lead may still perhaps be found in the same place.

Sulphur, called *Muzi*, is obtained only at Puga, in

* Fragments of Ctesias by Lion. Indica, XII. "Ἔστι δὲ καὶ χρυσὸς ἐν τῇ Ἰνδικῇ χώρα, οὐκ ἐν τοῖς ποταμοῖς εὕρισκόμενος καὶ πλυνόμενος, ὥσπερ ἐν τῷ Πακτωλῷ ποταμῷ.

† *gSer*, gold; *gSer-rDul*, gold dust.

‡ Travels, I. p. 313.