



CSL

EARLY HISTORY OF RUNJEET SING.

Punjaub a battle field for two foreign armies. He, however, hastened to Lahore and there received Jeswant Rao the chief of the Mahrattas, but gave him so little encouragement to hope for aid, that instead of continuing his flight through the country the fugitive chief was content to make terms with his pursuers, and thus the evil which Runjeet dreaded was averted.

In 1808, the British Indian Government desiring to engage Runjeet Sing, now one of the acknowledged princes of India, in a grand combination against the ambitious designs of Napoleon who meditated an invasion of the country, sent one of its servants, Mr. (afterwards Lord) Metcalfe on a mission to the Seik Chief. The British envoy found Runjeet engaged in the subjugation of the various independent states betwixt the Sutlej and the Jumna. As the British claimed the sovereignty of all the territory up to the Sutlej they protested against these proceedings of the Seik Chief; and being ready to back their protest with an armed force, Runjeet deemed it prudent to listen to their remonstrance. Negotiations ensued, and the result was that he was allowed to retain possession of the states he had already won, while those which had not yet submitted to him were taken under British protection. He was by the treaty now executed, confined in a great measure to the right bank of the Sutlej, not being allowed to maintain more troops to the south of that river than were absolutely necessary for the internal duties of the small states then belonging to him. The Sutlej thus became the proper boundary of his dominions to the south and east, and so it continued until his dying day.

It was while Mr. Metcalfe was at Umritsir carrying on negotiations with the Maharajh of the Seiks, as Runjeet now called himself, that an event occurred which, though trivial in itself not only inspired the latter with a profound respect for the power of his British neighbours, but made him anxious to possess himself of similar means of securing respect.