

NEPAL

(Continued)

— Sylvain Levi

In Benares, Rana Bahadur did not take long to become enamoured of a new beauty, and to satisfy the exigencies of his passion he began by removing all the queen's jewels then he contracted loans with the company. The Darbar was frightened that Rana Bahadur would place the English to serve his ends or that the Company under the cloak, was seeking to meddle into Nepalese affairs; the Darbar offered to renew the commercial agreement interrupted since its conclusion and to receive in Nepal a British resident. Captain Knox was entrusted to fill the post, and he arrived at Kathmandu in April 1802. But tired of the incessant shufflings of the Darbar, which never yielded without retracting soon afterwards, Captain Knox accompanied with his assistant Buchanan Hamilton (I, 136 sq.), definitely returned to India in March 1803.

In the interval, important events had taken place. Queen Tripura Sundari, tired of the ill-treatment of her husband had left Benares and watched on the frontier for a propitious hour to re-enter into Nepal; she feared thither the hostility of her an-

cient rival. When the rainy season made the Terai uninhabitable (April 1802), she decided to venture on a bold stroke, encouraged perhaps by having dependent on her, Damodar Panre who had accepted with reluctance an ancient slave for regent. An escort of soldiers sent against her dared not act; the chief of the fort of Sisagarhi shut himself up with his men behind the walls in order not to arrest her. A final detachment was sent against her. She drew a dagger and struck a blow at the officer who fell back ashamed of his task and the soldiers disbanded. No sooner did she reach Nepal, than Damodar Panre came before her and bowed to her; the multitude welcomed her and led her to the palace whilst the regent who was a slave fled into a temple with her son, the young king, the treasures and jewels of the crown.

The queen handed the power to Damodar Panre, but she hastened to end back to Palpa, the king Prithivi Pala who had remained in Kathmandu since the accession of Girvana Yuddha Vikrama and whom they suspected of aspiring to the throne of Nepal. Rana Bahadur, who knew it to

be lawful to reckon on his wife's devotion, left Benares at the first news of events. Informed of his arrival, Damodar Panre led his troops to receive him and also to watch him should it be needed. But Bim sen (Bhima sena) Thapa who had been on intimate terms with Rana Bahadur at Benares and whom an old family hatred excited as much as personal ambition, against the chief of the Panre clan, counselled the king to decide at once. With his customary decision Rana Bahadur advanced towards the soldiers and shouted to them : Well, my brave Gurkas, who is for Sah, who is for Panre ? The soldiers replied by acclamations and Rana Bahadur entered Kathmandu triumphantly, followed by Damodar Panre and his sons, all in chains. A short while afterwards, the ancient courageously without appealing to partisans through fear of provoking the complete ruin of his house.

Bhim sen Thapa then became minister. He was destined to preserve the power for thirty three years under a series of kings. He hastened to give his master the essential prestige, by new conquests. Prithivi Pala at first paid his suspicious manoeuvres; attracted in spite of himself, to Kathmandu under pretext of a marriage project between his sister and Rana Bahadur, he was massacred together with his officers. Then Amara Simha Thapa, the father of the minister Bhim sen was entrusted, with the English title of "general" to reduce Palpa. He only had to take possession of

town (August 1804). The last of the independent states had live; Nepal in her entirety belonged to the Ghurkhas. Amara Simha continued his march towards the west and threatened Kangara; but he was compelled to stop in front of another, conqueror, who was working to shape himself an empire in the Western Himalaya, like Prithi Narayan had done in the Central Himalaya; the famous Ranjit Simha (Rana Jit Simha) had grouped Sikh clans, led them to way by a secular struggle against the Muhammedans and had thrown them onwards to the conquest of the Punjab and the Kashmere. Kangara only escaped the Gurkhas to fall into the hands of the Sikhs.

Rana Bahadur did not fear to attack more dangerous enemies, the Brahmins. Becoming master of Palpa he declared that the country had forfeited to the laws of their caste by the unworthiness of their conduct and the abomination of their practices; in consequence all their domains were to be confiscated by the crown. The Brahmins were horrified at this audacity. They came to Kathmandu for justice and recited the known verses : "O king, the poison is not poison, the properties of the Brahman that is the poison; the poison kills the person but the goods of the Brahmins kill the sons and grand sons".

na visam visam ity ahur brahmasvam
visam ucyate

visam ekakino hanti brahmasvam
putrapantrakam.

(To be continued)