

H. Falconer to his Father
Camp near ~~Muzaffargarh~~ ^{Muzaffargarh} between ~~Kashmir~~ ^{Cashmeer} and the Indus.

Sept. 17 1837

My dear Father,- I have had the happiness of receiving your letter of the 20th. March. It reached me a couple of days ago, and delighted me much by the good intelligence it gave me of all that is dear to me at home. ... To hear that you and my mother and aunt are still spared to us, and comfortable and happy, is delightful, and it is happiness to me to think that it is in my power to be the means of contributing to your being so. I am at present a far way ~~from~~ both from my Forres home, and from my Indian home of Saharunpore. You will have heard from Sandy that I was about to start for ~~Kashmir~~ ^{Cashmeer}, a delightful journey for me so far as mere enjoyment was concerned, and most desirable for me in my professional pursuits. It is now about two and a half months since I started, and I am within a few days journey of ~~Kashmir~~ ^{Cashmeer}. I have travelled long distances and it may please you to hear where I have been. On leaving our own possessions in India, I first went to the court of Maharajah Runjeet Sing the King of the Punjab and the greatest power in India next to the English. British officers are here treated with much consideration, and I was received with ~~the usual state~~ the usual state. A guard of horsemen with an officer of the Maharajah's were sent to escort me to the capital Lahore, and 100 Rupees presented every morning. On the 3d. day of my arrival I was summoned to an audience. At the palace gate the Secretary for Foreign affairs was waiting to conduct me to the presence. Imagine a detached hall about 80ft. square in an open area, built of marble and open on all sides the roof being supported on arches built over marble pillars. At the further end of this hall, an old insignificant looking ~~little~~ little man between 60 and 70 years of age was seated bare legged on a shabby chair which would not fetch 3 ~~shillings~~ shillings in England, and his whole dress not worth £1. sterling, with one eye and a long white beard reaching to his waist. On either side close to him was seated a person of rank, and an empty

chair in front of him about a yard or two distant. On entering the hall I made a bow, walked up to the Maharajah who rose to receive me, shook hands, and seated me in the empty chair in front of him. Princes and potentates were standing or seated on the ground around. Such are the consideration and distinction with which British officers are received at Lahore, and such is the appearance of a prince who can bring an army of sixty thousand horse and forty thousand foot into the field. We talked for an hour without the least ceremony through the medium of an interpreter—a stroke of palsy has created a defect in his speech, and then I got my leave in the same fashion. Next day I was taken out to a ride with him side by side, chatting about everything with as little ceremony as if the parties had both been princes, or doctors of the same standing. On the third day I got my leave from court with presents of cashmere shawls, gold armlets, pearl necklaces, a horse &c. &c. This was no especial distinction shown to me, but the way every British officer is received. Runjeet Sing is a Bonaparte in talent, and with all his personal shabbiness he is so rich that he might pave the streets of his capital with gold. I started from Lahore with a guard of horse and foot for Attock on the Indus, marching—and reached it in 20 days and joined a mission of Capt. Burnes the traveller into Bokhara now en route to Cabul. I crossed the Indus and left India altogether, going on to Peshawar... From that I made an excursion into the Afghan country, a wild tract where people go to the plough and about the ordinary business of life, armed to the teeth with sword and gun, so disturbed is the country. Blood shedding and life taking are reckoned as nothing, and whoever would protect his own life or property must be prepared to fight for them with his own hands. After 15 days I parted from Capt. Burnes, and recrossed the Indus in company with Lt. Mackeson who is my fellow traveller. The Indus at Attock, in the rains rushes with a velocity of 7 or 8 miles an hour, like the Windhorn in a 'spate,' and in crossing, our boat struck twice on a rock, split and was nearly going to pieces but we all got safe ashore. A servant of mine was dashed overboard, and in falling caught hold of a rope and was miraculously saved. To give you an idea of the state of society near the Indus