

THE MISSION TO RUNJEET SINGH.

[1808-9.]

[The despatches written by Mr. Metcalfe, during his mission to the Punjab, in 1808-9, are so numerous, that the extracts made from them can but faintly illustrate the extent and importance of the collection. Two of the most comprehensive letters in the series have, however, been selected—the first expounding the young envoy's views of the policy to be pursued towards Runjeet Singh, and the other entering into a detailed account of the resources of the Sikh ruler. And when it is considered that they were written at the age of three-and-twenty, they will, I think, be regarded as very remarkable State-papers. A sketch of the circumstances under which the mission was sent, and the objects to be attained by it, written some years afterwards* by Metcalfe himself, is prefixed to the letters.]

The objects of the mission to Runjeet Singh were to negotiate a defensive alliance, and concert measures for the protection of the Punjab and the British possessions in India against the apprehended invasion of Napoleon Bonaparte. This mis-

* In answer, I believe, to the following questions put to him by the Chief Secretary, in 1814, at the request of Lord Hastings, when Metcalfe was in the Governor-General's camp:

“What led to the mission to Runjeet Singh?”

“What were the demands made by us on Runjeet Singh, and what the grounds of those demands?”

“How were those demands met by Runjeet Singh? Were they disputed, and on what grounds?”

“What was the final settlement, and the grounds upon which it was concluded?”

“Did that settlement expressly, or by implication, restrain the British Government from extending its power beyond the Sutlej?”

“Did any of Mr. Metcalfe's despatches comprehend a general view of the negotiation and settlement?”

“What were considered the advantages of having the Sutlej, instead of the Jumna, for our boundary in that direction?”