foment the diſſenſions which ariſe among them, and fa­vours the ſtrongeſt, merely that he may weaken them all. As the order of ſucceſſion is not determinately fixed, and the ſherriffes may all aſpire alike to the ſo­vereign power, this uncertainty of right, aided by the intrigues of the Turkiſh officers, occasions frequent re­volutions. The grand ſherriffe is ſeldom able to main­tain himſelf on the throne ; and it ſtill ſeldomer happens that his reign is not diſturbed by the revolt of his neareſt relations. There have been inſtances of a nephew ſucceeding his uncle, an uncle ſucceeding his nephew ; and ſometimes of a perſon, from a remote branch, coming in the room of the reigning prince of the ancient houſe.

When Niebuhr was in Arabia, in 1763, the reigning Sherriffe Mesad had ſitten fourteen years on the throne, and, during all that period, had been continually at war with the neighbouring Arabs, and with his own neareſt relations ſometimes. A few years before, the Pacha of Syria had depoſed him, and raiſed his younger brother to the ſovereign dignity in his ſtead. But after the departure of the caravan, Jafar, the new ſherriffe, not being able to maintain himſelf on the throne, was obli­ged to reſign the ſovereignty again to Meſad. Achmet, the second brother of the ſherriffe, who was much belo­ved by the Arabs, threatened to attack Mecca while Nie­buhr was at Jidda. Our traveller was ſoon after informed of the termination of the quarrel, and of Achmet’s re­turn to Mecca, where he continued to live peaceably in a private character.

Theſe examples ſhow that the Muſſulmans obſerve not the law which forbids them to bear arms againſt their holy places. An Egyptian Bey even preſumed, a few years ſince, to plant ſome ſmall cannons within the compaſs of the Kaba, upon a ſmall tower, from which he fired over that ſacred manſion, upon the pa­lace of Sherriffe Meſad, with whom he was at variance.

The dominions of the ſherriffe comprehend the cities of Mecca, Medina, Jambo, Taaiſi Sadie, Ghunfude, Hali, and thirteen others leſs conſiderable, all ſituated in Hedjas. Near Taaif is the lofty mountain of Gazvan, which, according to Arabian authors, is covered with ſnow in the midſt of ſummer. As theſe dominions are neither opulent nor extenſive, the revenue of their ſovereign cannot be conſiderable.

He finds a rich reſource, however, in the impoſts le­vied on pilgrims, and in the gratuities offered him by Muſſulman monarchs. Every pilgrim pays a tax of from ten to an hundred crowns, in proportion to his ability. The Great Mogul remits annually ſixty thouſand roupees to the ſherriffe, by an aſſignment upon the govern­ment of Surat. Indeed, ſince the Engliſh made themſelves maſters of this city, and the territory belonging to it, the Nabob of Surat has no longer been able to pay the ſum. The ſherriffe once demanded it of the

Engliſh, as the poſſessors of Surat ; and, till they ſhould ſatisfy him, forbade their captains to leave the port of Jidda. But the Engliſh diſregarding this prohibition, the ſherriffe complained to the Ottoman Porte, and they communicated his complaints to the Engliſh ambaſſador. He at the ſame time opened a negociation with the nominal Nabob, who reſides in Surat. But theſe ſteps proved all fruitleſs ; and the ſovereign of Mecca ſeems not likely to be ever more benefited by the contribution from India.

The power of the ſherriffe extends not to ſpiritual matters ; theſe are entirely managed by the heads of the clergy, of different ſects, who are reſident at Mecca, Rigid Muſſulmans, ſuch as the Turks, are not very fa­vourable in their ſentiments of the ſherriffes, but ſuſpect their orthodoxy, and look upon them as ſecretly attach­ed to the tolerant ſect of the Zeidi,

SHETLAND, the name of certain iſlands belong­ing to Scotland, and lying to the northward of Orkney. There are many convincing proofs that theſe iſlands were very early inhabited by the Picts, or rather by thoſe nations who were the original poſſeſſors of the Orkneys ; and at the time of the total deſtruction of theſe nations, if any credit be due to tradition, their woods were entirely ruined @@(a). It is highly probable that the people in Shetland, as well as in the Orkneys, flouriſhed under their own princes dependent upon the crown of Norway ; yet this ſeems to have been rather through what they acquired by fiſhing and commerce, than by the cultivation of their lands. It may also be reaſonably preſumed, that they grew thinner of inhabi­tants after they were annexed to the crown of Scotland; and it is likely that they revived again, chiefly by the very great and extenſive improvements which the Dutch made in the herring-fiſhery upon their coaſts, and the trade that the crews of their busses, then very numerous, carried on with the inhabitants, necessarily reſulting from their want of provisions and other conveniences, which in thoſe days could not be very conſiderable.

There are many reaſons which may be aſſigned why theſe iſlands, though part of our dominions, have not hitherto been better known to us. They were com­monly placed two degrees too far to the north in all the old maps, in order to make them agree with Ptolemy’s deſcription of Thule, which he asserted to be in the la­titude of 63 degrees ; which we find urged by Camden as a reaſon why Thule must be one of the Shetland iſles, to which Speed alſo agrees, though from their being thus wrong placed he could not find room for them in his maps. Another, and that no light cauſe, was the many falſe, fabulous, and impertinent relations publiſhed concerning them @@(b), as if they were countries inhoſpitable and uninhabitable ; and laſtly, the indolence, or rather indifference, of the natives, who, contenting

@@@(a) The tradition is, that this was done by the Scots when they deſtroyed the Picts ; but is more probably referred to the Norwegians rooting out the original poſſessors of Shetland.

@@@(b) They repreſented the climate as intenſely cold ; the ſoil as compoſed of crags and quagmire, ſo barren as to be incapable of bearing corn ; to ſupply which, the people, after drying fiſh-bones, powdered them, then kneaded and baked them for bread. The larger fiſh-bones were ſaid to be all the fuel they had. Yet, in ſo dreary a country, and in ſuch miſerable circumſtances, they were acknowledged to be very long-lived, cheerful, and contented.