

Report of an Expedition into the Mishmee Hills to the north-east of Sudyah. By Lieutenant E. A. ROWLATT, 21st Regt. N. I. In a letter to Major F. JENKINS, Governor General's Agent, N. E. Frontier, dated Saikwah, 1st January 1845. Communicated by the Government of India.

I now do myself the pleasure of forwarding to you an account of the expedition from which I have just returned, and at the same time beg to submit a map of the country through which I passed, to this I have added some portion of the country more to the north than to where I penetrated, and which is therefore merely laid down from descriptions gathered from the Mishmees who have visited those parts.

On Thursday, the 21st of November last, I quitted the port of Saikwah by water, and on the following day being joined by two Sudyah Beekhyahs, Deena Hazaree and Baleah Boca, who were to accompany me during the trip. At the mouth of the Koondil river, where I had remained the night, we took our final departure, myself in a small khail boat, and the rest of my party in the small fishing boats of the country, which, for the sake of ascending the rapids of the Burhampootee, are made particularly light and handy.

As it was our first day, we were not able to start very early; and I found that the evening was drawing to a close before we had long passed the mouth of the Tainga-panee. Up to this point the stream continues pretty tranquil, although a perceptible difference is observable in the rate at which it flows; and as from this point upwards the banks and islands are almost entirely formed of stones* washed down from the mountains, the water from hence is most beautifully clear and transparent.

Nov. 23rd.—In pursuance with the directions I had given the previous evening, the boats moved off by sunrise, and by 9 A.M. we reached the Khamptee village of the Kaptan Gohain at Choonpoora, where I stopped for a short time, and again moving forward, arrived by the evening within a short distance of the mouth of the Dhollee river, which I got to early the next morning. Being anxious to see a copper Tem-

* These pebbles and boulders are all of limestone, and furnish all the lime used in the public works in Upper Assam. The limestone is a grey crystalized rock just exactly the same as the marble used as flags in the Government House. I have never seen it in situ.—F. J.

ple that is situated on a branch of this stream called the Sutrung, I ascended the river in the smaller boats, and finding that the water in the Sutrung was only a few inches deep, I was obliged to wade up this stream; but from the jungle having become excessively dense, and having no person with me who knew exactly the position of the Temple, I was obliged to give up the attempt and return to the mouth of the river, unsuccessful and disappointed.

The erection of this building is ascribed to a demi-god, named Purahoutan, who, falling in love with the goddess Khaiea Kattee, undertook at her commands to build her a temple in the space of one night, which if he succeeded in completing he was to obtain her hand in marriage, but failing in his task was to give himself up to be devoured by her. On these terms, Purahoutan commenced his undertaking, and had completed the Temple with the exception of the doors, when the sun being made to rise before its time he was obliged to fly to the woods; but, being soon after overtaken by his beloved, was then and there devoured as a morning repast.

The Temple* is called the Tama-suree, being partly made of copper; and at so late a period as a little upwards of twenty years ago, two human beings were sacrificed yearly at her shrine to propitiate the good auspices of this sanguinary goddess. Near the mouth of the Dhollee are yet visible the remains of the residence of the Chutteeah Rajas, whose rule is said to have extended over the whole valley of Assam as far as Gawalpara, but which was terminated by the invasion of the Ahoms, who crossed the hills from Moonkong.

Nov. 25th.—As we had now fairly got into the rapids of the Burhampooter, where it was necessary for the boatmen to be constantly in the water, I stopped to cook before setting off, as the weather being cold the men did not like wading, until they had fortified themselves with some food. I managed, however, to get off by 8 o'clock, and before midday had passed the mouths of the Khairam and Degoroo rivers. The banks of the Burhampooter are here principally wooded with the

* A remnant of the priests of this Temple, who call themselves Dolyes, have lately come to Lieut. Dalton's notice at Luckimpoor. They are of Chooteeah origin: they boast of the human sacrifices, and say the discontinuance of them has been the cause of all the misfortunes of Assam. Lieut. Dalton promises some particulars of these Chooteeahs, the last great race who held possession of the north bank of Upper Assam at an early date.—F. J.

Sissoo tree, intermixed with Hallecks which, from the beautiful red flower that blossoms on it at this time of year, imparts quite an autumnal tint to the landscape.

This day the patches of cultivation in the hills became quite apparent, and the landlips on some of the mountains appeared of such magnitude that the fact of a village being occasionally swept away ought not to be wondered at, and I was told that the village of Macrusu was so destroyed last year, and that many of its inhabitants together with the chief of the village were involved in the destruction. By evening we arrived at the mouth of the Sidroo, where we remained the night.

Nov. 26th.—From this point the river becomes a succession of rapids, so that during the day our progress was but slow. The scenery is, however, very magnificent, and the river abounds with a great variety of the best sorts of fish, amongst which I mention the Silghurreah, Boca, Maikhan, Liun, Sandoees, Advee, &c. &c., which when fresh caught are most delicious eating.

At the foot of one of the hills that approaches the Burhampooter at this part, is observable a high white cliff, which the traditions of the natives affirm to be the remains of the marriage feast of Raja Sisopal with the daughter of a neighbouring king, named Bhismak; but she (Rookmunee) being stolen away by Krishna before the ceremony was completed, the whole of the viands were left uneaten, and have since become consolidated into their present form.

As we had now arrived within a short distance of the Khamptee village inhabited by the sons of the Rannah and Jow Gohains, I sent in some of my people to inform them of my arrival, and in the mean time made as much progress in the boats as the nature of the stream would allow, but found that the current was too rapid to admit of my reaching the mouth of the Dura river; a short distance from which I therefore remained for the night.

November 27th.—About 10 o'clock this morning, the party I had despatched to give information of my arrival made their appearance, bringing with them the sons of the Rannah and Jow Gohains, together with several Mishmee chiefs, and a numerous train of followers both Khamptee and Mishmee, when all were assembled and a conference took place. It was arranged, that I should proceed into the hills guided by these Khamptee chiefs, who appearing to possess a good deal of

influence over these Mishmees, I was glad to accept of their escort. I therefore left my boats, and after passing over three or four miles of pebbly beach that lines the banks of the Burhampooter (or Lohit as it is usually called by the people in this part), I reached the road which, leading through the jungle that intervenes between the river and the hills, ascended up to the village which is situated a short distance up the acclivity on a level piece of ground well adapted for such a purpose. The village of these Khampteas consists of fifteen houses, and is placed on a spot of ground that some years ago was the site occupied by the Mishmees, who then called it Maboling, and is watered by a small hill stream named the Toolooah. Their cultivation, which is rather extensive, is scattered around the village, both on the side of the hill and in the plain beneath. This position has now been occupied by these people for the last three years, and in consequence of the protection they afford to the Mishmee tribes in this quarter from the inroads of the Chullee Cuttia and Myjoo Mishmees, a great many of the more influential chiefs, amongst whom I may more particularly mention Prum Song, the head of the Muroo tribe, have settled in their neighbourhood which, being much more productive than the hills in the interior and nearer to the plains, with which they are anxious to extend their trade, they find it much to their advantage to cultivate the goodwill of these Khamptee chiefs; for, should these Khampteas remove from this place, the whole of the Mishmees who have settled in their vicinity must again flee to the sterile mountains beyond the river Tiding, and forego all the advantages of trade, which from their proximity to Assam they are at present enabled to prosecute with considerable gain to themselves. During my stay in this village I ascertained the height at which the Burhampooter issues from the hills, to be 2049 feet above the level of the sea.

By the 3rd December all arrangements having been completed, and the necessary number of people collected to carry the baggage, I left the Khamptee village, and again passing down the descent entered on the stony beds of the Burhampooter; over these we passed for some miles, and found the passage along them any thing but pleasant walking. On arriving at the mouth of the Damai river we ascended that stream, and by evening had reached the path that leads up the first range of mountains. On producing my store of beads, salt, &c., I found that half a

rupee's worth of these articles was demanded for every day's work, and as I could not have proceeded without the assistance of the Mishmees, I was obliged to agree to their very exorbitant demands.

On the morning of the 4th, after a hasty meal had been despatched, and the several loads adjusted, we quitted the spot we had occupied during the night, and for some time ascended and descended the small hills that line the banks of the Damai. After an hour or two we arrived at the foot of the large range that bounds the view from the plains; the ascent was rather abrupt, and the path but a bare track up the face of the mountain. By midday we reached a small level piece of ground, where a little water was procurable; and as the mountain air seemed to sharpen our appetites, a few eatables that we had with us were devoured with great gusto.

By 4 P.M. we reached the summit, from which a splendid view of the plains and the surrounding hills is visible: on the right are seen the towering mass of immense mountains that form the country of the Myjoo Mishmees; and in the plain beneath, the prospect is only bounded by the far distant horizon, within whose limits the endless sea of forest that characterises this part of Assam is the only object that meets the eye. From this point we again descended for a couple of hours, and as the evening was drawing to a close, arrived at a small hill rivulet where, as water is the principal requisite to be sought for in a place for encamping, I determined to spend the night, although nothing but the stony bed of the stream was available to rest on. The weather being cold we found our night's repose rather uncomfortable, and were glad when the morning broke to arise and set about procuring some breakfast: this being soon accomplished we again set out, but found the road worse than the previous day, as it led over numerous landslips that in this part are met with on every slope; part was therefore over broken ground, and every now and then we had to pass onward by means of single trees that had accidentally fallen across the chasms that intersected the path. As the greater part of this day's march was descending the mountain we had ascended the day before, and the road improving as we advanced, by 12 o'clock we entered on the scattered cultivation of Saloomgoom, from which the Burhampooter is distinctly visible winding its tortuous way around the foot of the hills beneath. As we approached the village, here and there the houses of the Mishmees became apparent, and as

it is the custom of these people to build separately on the land they cultivate, a village is spread over a large space, although confined to a few habitations. On reaching the house of the Gam Abasong, I found that the whole of his people were employed in making preparations for the reception of myself and party, and doing all they could to make us welcome.

By 10 A.M. of the 6th we left this village, and there being a scarcity of people to carry the baggage, I here deposited every thing that it was possible to dispense with: after passing some cultivation the road led down by a steep descent to the banks of the Tiding river; some distance up this stream a large number of Mishmees, principally of the Malo and Moree clans, are located, who cannot be reckoned at less than a thousand persons. As the river was low, we crossed over by means of the fishing weirs, which extend across the stream; but the usual method adopted by the Mishmees themselves, is by fixing a hoop of cane round the waist, which, passing over a single rope of the same material stretched from bank to bank, enables them to propel themselves forward with their hands and feet, and whatever articles they may have with them are suspended to the bottom of the hoop: in a similar manner both cows and buffaloes are conveyed from bank to bank, being dragged over by other ropes attached to the hoops in which they are carried.

In the bed of this river are to be found a great variety of the different primitive rocks: lime is here met with in immense blocks, and granite, serpentine, &c. with numerous metalliferous stones, are mixed together in the greatest profusion. On leaving the bed of the Tiding, the road leads over the spurs of the mountains that continue down to the banks of the Burhampooter, and for some distance passes under the perpendicular cliffs of primitive limestone, from which are visible the pendulous stalactites that are peculiar to this formation; after passing the limits occupied by this rock the soil becomes micaceous, and in a few places I observed mica slate to cross out from the surface. Arriving on the banks of the Burhampooter, the only path was from block to block, which being of great size and worn to a smooth surface from the action of the water, the passage over them was thereby rendered both arduous and difficult.

The mountains in this neighbourhood are mostly covered with dense tree jungle, of great magnitude, for about two-thirds of their height, above which is grass, and near the summits bare rock; and in the dells

between the mountains, small hill streams, of beautifully clear water, flow along the hollows until lost in the large rivers that intersect the country. By sunset we reached a Mishmee house, and were glad to avail ourselves of the shelter offered.

Dec. 7th.—As rain had continued falling during the night and the greater part of the day, I was unable to proceed further than a few miles; but contrived to reach the house of a chief, named Heasong, to whose residence most of my baggage had been taken on by mistake the previous day.

Dec. 8th.—On leaving this place, and passing through much low jungle where formerly cultivation had been very extensive, we reached the Loolooah rivulet, and crossing which the road lay skirting the banks of the Burhampooter, to the bed of which we occasionally descended; for the most part the road for these hill tracks was tolerably good, except one place that ran along the side of a low rocky mountain where the footing was unsafe and precarious, from which had any one fallen, he would have been precipitated some thousand feet into the boiling stream of the Burhampooter, the noise of whose waters was just audible from the height we were passing. During this day's march we passed by an elevated lake of small extent, as well as many streams of minor size, and by 4 P.M. arrived at the house of Rumling, who is the head chief of the Taen tribe of Mishmees, and has established himself near the Pass leading from the country to the south of the Burhampooter, which being inhabited by the Myjoo Mishmees, with whom the tribes to the north of the river are at war, affords thereby a protection against the inroads of these people. As a large pig had been slain by this chief in honor of our coming, a part of which is usually reserved for the inmates of the house, I was much amused to see the manner in which these people cook and feed themselves. The animal being killed the blood is all carefully collected, and with the grain babosa is made into a kind of black pudding; the meat is boiled in a large chaldron, and being cut up into pieces is distributed in leaves amongst those in the house; these pieces being taken up in the hand are forced as far as possible into the mouth, and the remainder cut off close to the lips: when this is disposed of, the mixture of babosa and blood is stuffed down their throats as fast as they are able to swallow it. In this manner their meals are completed in a few minutes, when they

again take to their pipes, which are seldom out of their mouths from morning to night. Many of the cooking utensils used by these people are made of stone; but they also possess some of copper, which are brought over from the Lama country; in these they boil their water, cook their victuals, and make the liquor of which they consume large quantities; but as it is drunk in an unfermented state, and therefore is of little strength, a great many quarts are necessary to produce the slightest intoxication.

As I was informed by this chief that some people of the Lama country were at a village some distance further on, I determined to proceed to the place they were remaining at, and sent forward a messenger to inform them of my intention. It was therefore the morning of the 11th December before I quitted this chief's house, and after proceeding some distance we arrived at the Dillee river, which is a stream of considerable size, having its rise in the snowy range bordering the Lama country, along whose banks a path to that country exists. After crossing this river we proceeded along the verge of the Burhampooter, and by 4 P. M. reached the mouth of the Doo river, which, although a stream of some magnitude, is yet much inferior in size to the Dillee, and rises also in the same range of mountains as that river, a little more to the eastward, and is one of the routes by which the trade with the Lama people is carried on. From this point the Burhampooter has a south-easterly direction, and, winding between the mountains, passes through the snowy range beyond which the valley of Lama is situated. By the route of the Dillee river the road leads out at the village of Glee, and by the Doo at that of Lamai in whose vicinity are also many other villages of the Lama people, all of which are described as situated on the Burhampooter. The village highest up this river is named Lisko, where the Burhampooter is said to be but a mountain rivulet, and on the west side of the same mountain from which this issues likewise proceeds the Dehong river.

Dec. 12th.—After quitting our halting place we proceeded up the bed of the Doo river, over large boulders of granite and serpentine, and where from the river passing between perpendicular scarps of rock we were unable to continue along the bed; it was found necessary to ascend the banks of the river, which, as they were very precipitous, was found to be difficult to be accomplished, and in many cases extremely dangerous to

pass. By 3 o'clock our party reached a flat piece of ground overlooking the river, where it was considered advisable to remain during the night.

The several clans in the neighbourhood of this stream consist of the Manneah, Tshee, Dhah, Tummaih, and Mlee, who altogether are a numerous people, but in appearance most indigent and ill provided both in food and clothing, and are as wild a set of unwashed savages as may perhaps be met with in any part of the world.

The water of the Doo is by no means good, having a disagreeable taste, and has the property of giving goitre to all those who drink it.

Dec. 13th.—On leaving the bed of this river, the ascent up the Dagoom range of mountains is very steep, and in many places where the rain had cut the side of the mountain into deep chasms, the path could only be passed by means of trees thrown from point to point, beneath which a perpendicular scarp of rock was all the resting place that would have been found had an unlucky step or a rotten bough caused any one to fall at any of these places.

On arriving at the village of Tuppang, I and my party put up at the house of the Gam, and as the Lama people were staying at a house not far distant, during the afternoon I had an interview with them. It appeared they had come across the snowy range for the sake of trading with the Mishmees for *teeta*;* but from the snow having fallen unexpectedly, had not been able to return to their own country.

In appearance these people much resemble the Chinese, and are dressed in a loose robe that falls in folds around the waist, and are a fair and tall race of men; some wear the hair plaited in the Chinese manner down the back, while others have the head shaved; and from their description of themselves, it appears that those who trade with the Mishmees are likewise a hill tribe, and in their manner of life differ very little from the Mishmees themselves. I should however imagine, that the country they inhabit is not very rugged, as on all the cattle brought from thence I observed the marks of the plough distinctly visible on the neck†.

* *Captis teeta*, Wall.

† This agrees with a report current in Upper Assam, that during an excessive inundation of the Burhampooter, a great number of ploughs and other agricultural implements were brought down by the floods.

The Assamese suppose the country they come from to be inhabited by Kotas; of which are the Assamese themselves, as the great body of the Assamese population.—F. J.

After conversing with them for some time, I found they were prohibited by their own Government from visiting the plains of Assam, and not having been to Lassa the capital, were unable to give me any precise information regarding the Tsampoo; but said that, according to all they had heard, the river flowed into the valley of Assam after quitting the country to the north of the mountains, and is therefore in all probability identical with the Dehong.

The view from this village is very grand, as the distance from the snowy range, which was immediately opposite, was only two days' journey to the summit, and from this point (Tuppang,) I was told by the Mishmees that they were able to reach the village of Lamai in the Lama country in three days.

As no further population is to be met with on this side of the snowy mountains, I determined to retrace my steps from this point, as no advantage could, I conceive, take place by my proceeding any further in this direction; I therefore on the following morning again left this village, and, varying my route so as to allow of my getting a sufficient set of sights to complete my survey, I arrived again at the Khamptee village on the 22nd of December.

From hence I set out to visit the celebrated Teeruth of the Hindoos, called the Brahma Kund, which I reached, and returned from, in two days. This place I found to be merely a bay or inlet of the Burhampooter, into which falls a small stream, that issues from the side of the hill immediately above it; this is considered the holy water in which all the devotees who visit the place bathe themselves; and is reported to have the virtue of washing out all the sins that the person may have previously committed. During the time of the Ahoms, it was necessary for the king on his ascension to the throne to be washed in water brought from this place, and until this ceremony was completed he was not considered fit to take upon himself the reins of government: to insure the benefits of absolution, it is considered necessary, that the person should ever after forego the use of some kind of food; but as this is left entirely to the person's own choice, such articles are commonly selected as are either not particularly liked by them, or such as are not often procurable. At the point where the water first shows itself, the large stone that covers the orifice as well as those on either side of the stream, were formerly gilt by a Khamptee Raja,

a portion of which gold is yet visible. The water of this streamlet is warmer than that of the Burhampooter, but is of a disagreeable taste. I was told by my guides, that the rains of 1843 considerably altered and damaged the place.

On my arrival at the Khamptee village I left by boat, and again reached the post of Laikwah, on the 30th December.

Religion.—The Mishnees seem to have but a very faint idea of any religion: they, however, worship a numerous set of Deos or gods, a great many of whom do not appear to have a name; the most to be feared amongst them, is the god of destruction, named Mujeedagrah, who in his attributes much resembles the Hindoo Sheo or Maha-déo. Sacrifices are also offered to Damipaon, who is the god of instruction and the chase; to Tibla, as the god of health and disease; and these two last named together with a god called Prepang, are supposed to wander about in company from place to place. When any disease appears in any of their houses, a priest of these people is sent for to drive away the evil spirit. This ceremony is performed in the following manner: The time fixed on for commencing is sunset, when the inmates of the house and the relatives of the person concerned are assembled within the house; and the priest having placed himself in the centre, he commences chaunting a dismal kind of dirge in a most monotonous strain. After this has continued some time, the priest rises with a fan in one hand, and a box containing pebbles in the other; with these he dances about on a mat, flourishing his fan and rattling his box: after this has lasted some time, he leaves his mat and begins moving up and down the house, continually singing the same tune; and arriving at the door, he pretends to drive the spirit out of the house: this is repeated several times, after which the intended sacrifice is led forth, and after much unnecessary cruelty, is killed by the priest and offered to the supposed spirit.

These people do not appear to have any very distinct conception of a future state, but suppose that all, whether good or bad, will go to the same place as their fathers and mothers have before them; and that, if the friends and relations of the deceased offer up sufficient sacrifices in their name, they will be permitted to return again to the earth, but failing in which, the spirit of the dead becomes an avenging demon, empowered to work all sorts of evil on the heads of the relatives who have omitted to perform the necessary rites.

Burials.—On the death of any person of consequence, the body is buried, and, according to the wealth of the family, a greater or less number of animals are slain, and the heads deposited around the grave on a frame-work of wood, in the centre of which a circular house is built over the grave itself, in which is placed flesh, both raw and cooked, together with grain, spirits, &c. and all the arms, clothes, and implements necessary for a person whilst living. Should the person be poor, the body is either burnt or thrown into a river if near at hand.

Births.—When the time of a woman's confinement is near at hand, a small shed is erected for her reception in the jungle near the house, in which she remains until the time of her purification is completed. If the child proves a male, this lasts for ten days; but if a female, for only eight from the day of its birth: during this time the mother is fed from the house, and none but her female relations are allowed to visit her.

Marriages.—Marriage amongst the Mishmees is perhaps the most singular custom that prevails regarding this ceremony. Alliances are usually contracted by the parents for their sons and daughters; and on the part of the man, presents to a large amount are required to be given to the father as the price demanded for his daughter, and which are usually proportioned to the rank and beauty of the woman: these presents consist of buffaloes, cows, gongs, salt, &c. &c. with a large quantity of dried field mice and fish. The wives allowed to one man are not limited to any number, but do not often exceed four or five. When a man dies or becomes old, it is the custom of these people for the wives to be distributed amongst his sons, who take them to wife; but the mother of any of the sons is always transferred to one of her husband's sons by another wife, so that a man is not actually obliged to marry his mother, but merely his father's wife.

Dress and Arms.—The dress worn by the Mishmees consists of a cloth bound round the loins, which passes between the legs, and is fastened in front, and a coat without sleeves that reaches from the neck down to the knees; two pouches made of fur are used, in which to carry their pipe, tobacco, flint, steel, &c., and on the back is carried a flat shaped basket, which is covered with the long fibres of the Sinwa tree, and ornamented with the tail of a Lama cow; below the knee is bound a quantity of finely split cane. The dress of the women is made of exactly the same material as that of the men, and consists of a bodice which barely

serves to cover the breasts, and a skirt that reaches from the waist as far as the knee; on the head is worn a tiara of silver, and a profusion of beads are suspended around the neck.

The principal weapons used are the spear, and a straight sword of Lama manufacture, to which is occasionally added a matchlock or crossbow, from which are projected poisoned arrows. When proceeding on any expedition of danger, a strong coat of sufficient thickness to ward off the force of an arrow is added to their costume, as well as a cap of fur, or split bamboo.

In person both male and female are disgustingly dirty, and, with the exception of a few of the chiefs, are seldom washed from one year's end to another.

Manufactures.—The clothes worn by these people are for the most part made by themselves, and consist of cotton which is cultivated by them for the purpose, and a few woollen articles made from the fleece of the Lama sheep, and in appearance seem to possess great durability both as to color and material. The hills, however, beyond the first range of mountains bordering Assam not being capable of producing cotton, the people beyond these limits are therefore entirely dependent for dress on the Mishmees bordering Assam, and the Lama people on the north side of the snowy range. In all other branches of manufacture, these people seem to be very deficient, and with the exception of spear heads and a few articles of this description, are capable of producing no kind of utensils that might prove of use to them in ordinary life.

Trade.—Trade is carried on by the Mishmees almost entirely by barter, and the tribes to the north of the Burhampooter may be divided into two classes, namely, those who trade with Assam and those who trade with the Lama people; the first usually bring down to Assam, swords, spears, gongs, copper vessels, with small quantities of Mishmee *teeta* and poison, which they exchange for cattle, salt, and various kinds of cloth, beads, &c.; but most of these articles not being produced by themselves, they are obliged to procure them from the Mishmees who trade with Lama, and for which they give cloths made by themselves, and those they take back from Assam. The second division having nothing to offer in barter but the Mishmee *teeta* and poison, which is only to be found on the mountains near the limit of perpetual snow; being in great request by the people of Tibet, they are enabled to exchange it for cattle, gongs,

swords, and copper vessels : they also barter a great deal among themselves, but the difficulty of passing through the country must always in a great degree tend to hinder the advancement of trade, as from the nature of the country it can scarcely be expected that any other mode of conveyance can be adopted, than that of carrying all goods in the baskets at present in use amongst them, which are placed on the back and supported by a band which passes round the head.

Houses and mode of Living.—The habitations of the Mishmees are generally, as much as possible, hid from the view by being placed in patches of jungle left for the purpose of concealment ; they are usually built apart from each other, and unlike most other people, these Mishmees never congregate in villages. Their houses are all constructed with raised platforms, and vary from 12 to 15 feet in breadth, and 120 and 180 in length : a passage down one side communicates with the rooms, which are divided off into lengths of from ten to thirty feet long ; down the whole length of this passage two bamboos are placed, on which are ranged the heads of all the animals that the owner of the house has killed during his lifetime, and which being constantly exposed to the smoke from the fires, and plastered with blood on the occasion of any animal being slain, turn to a perfectly black color with a fine polish. Above the fires, one or two of which are placed in every compartment, are hung crates of bamboo, which are used for drying and smoking whatever articles are required ; and about these compartments blocks of wood are strewed, which serve the inmates for pillows. The under part of the house is appropriated to the pigs and fowls, in which they are confined by a paling of wood. The staple commodity of food cultivated by these Mishmees is a grain called babosa ; it is used both for food, and to prepare an unfermented liquor, which is drunk in a hot state as soon as made. Rice is grown, but in small quantities, and merely by those tribes in the vicinity of Assam, and is not capable of being cultivated on the mountains in the interior : they however possess other kinds of grain, such as buck-wheat, Indian-corn, baitnah, &c. ; but should all these fail them, they are capable of existing on the interior part of the Sinwah and Dhainkeeah trees, which afford sufficient nutriment to preserve them from starving, and affords excellent food for their pigs, on which they are commonly fed.

Flesh of all kinds is in great request, and all animals, from a mouse to an elephant, are eagerly devoured by these people, merely with the exception of crows, the black ape, and muster* found in rivers: that of the women is much more limited, being confined to fish, wild birds; and field mice; but, however fond they may be of animal food, they have not yet paid any attention to the breeding of cattle, but kill and eat whatever they may be able to purchase immediately on arrival at their villages.

Customs, Manners, &c. &c.—The domestic economy of the Mishmees does not appear to be burthened with many customs or observances such as are met with in civilized life; but, nevertheless, some of their habits appear but little adapted to a savage state, amongst which I may mention the practice of not eating flesh, or any thing but plain boiled grain in the houses of their superior relations by marriage, but which does not apply if the case is reversed, as the superior relations are not prohibited from eating whatever may be offered to them in the houses of their inferior relations; but as marriages and intermarriages are very common, it is but very seldom that a married man is capable of partaking of the rights of hospitality amongst his own or the neighbouring clans, although there may at the time be enough or even more than enough to satisfy all.

The whole of the tribes to the north of the Burhampooter as far west as the Degaroo and the source of the Tiding rivers, and to the east as far as the Doo river, may in a political sense be treated as one people, although the divisions amongst themselves into clans are numerous, among which the Taen and Maroo hold the two first places; but, being so intimately connected with the other clans both by the ties of marriage and interest, cannot be regarded as a separate people or distinct from each other in any way except in name: every clan has, however, a nominal head; but the power of their chiefs is extremely limited, and may be set at naught by any person who considers himself sufficiently powerful to assert his independence. Laws and punishments seem scarcely to exist, and with the exception of murder and abduction, no other crimes against each other appear of common occurrence; this last is, however, a fruitful source of dissension and quarrel, and when any case of the kind takes place, the person from whom the woman has been taken, demands the amount he

* Sic in MS.—EDS.

paid to her parents for her from the man who has taken her away, which if he gives, the affair is generally ended, as they never take back a woman who has misbehaved in this way; but should the man refuse, or be unable to pay the demand, the man who has lost his wife, lies in wait to slay the seducer, and if successful, it then becomes the duty of his relatives to avenge his death.

Agriculture appears to be conducted in the most rude and simple manner, and the use of the plough is unknown. When the time of sowing approaches, the surface of the ground is merely scratched with a small kind of hoe, which penetrates but a few inches into the earth; and domestic animals, with the exception of pigs and fowls, are not reared.

Slavery does not exist to any very great extent amongst them, and is chiefly confined to such individuals as they are enabled to purchase from other tribes, although some few instances of persons being sold of their own tribe amongst themselves are to be met with. It is, however, carried to a far greater extent by the people on the other side of the snowy range, and I am given to understand that whole villages of Assamese are in great numbers in the Lama country.

Geography.—The geographical features of this part of the Himalayah range, do not in any very essential particulars differ from those of other mountainous countries: in every direction it is intersected by small streams, which either fall into the Burhampooter or the larger tributaries to this river, the Tiding, Dillee or Doo. The height of the mountains is somewhat less than those more to the west, and with the exception of the snowy range itself, no mountains on the side of Assam are covered with perpetual snow, although during the winter months the peaks of all of them become more or less covered; but even at these heights the fir, which is usually indigenous to mountain tracks, does not exist, being entirely confined to the Lama country, and the part of these hills marked in the map as the Myjoo country.

Geology.—As the formation of these mountains is entirely confined to primitive description of rocks, it does not perhaps afford so fruitful a field of investigation into the science as may be found in other parts of the world. It nevertheless must possess some interest to the geologist, as almost every variety of these rocks is to be met with in the greatest profusion; a considerable part of the first range passed over by myself is composed of dolomite or gypsum, in which also is to be found a great

quantity of alabaster. On the left bank of the Tiding, primary limestone prevails; beyond which micaceous formations are numerous, which in the vicinity of the Toolooah river become mica slate. Serpentine abounds in the bed of the Burhampooter, and granite would appear to occupy the higher elevations of the mountains, as I did not perceive any in situ, although boulders were plentiful in all the streams. I however beg to submit these observations with diffidence, and trust that the few specimens forwarded herewith may throw some light on this subject when submitted to more competent judges than myself.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have the pleasure to forward two heads of the animal which, in some of your communications you informed me, were supposed to belong to an animal somewhat resembling the African Gnoo.* It however appears, from the descriptions given of it by the Mishmees, to be of the deer [antelope] kind, and is called by them *Takang*, and by the Khamptees, *Khing*. In size the animal is but a little smaller than a buffalo, having an immense chest and shoulder, but small hind quarters; the fore-legs are large and powerful, but taper off below the knee; the under part of the neck is furnished with a dewlap that reaches nearly to the ground, and is covered with long hair; the skin is speckled, and on the top of the back and neck is almost black; the tail resembles that of the deer, being only two or three inches long, and is turned up when the animal is in action. It is only to be found near the snow, and is said to be very fierce and dangerous to approach.

The fur cap that accompanies the heads is made of this animal's skin: the larger head is of a male, and the smaller of a female; but the — † of both have been as much as possible cut away to enable the hunters to bring them in. I am happy to say, that I have been promised by the Rannah Gohain's son a complete set of all the bones, together with the skin of the beast, which I hope he may shortly succeed in procuring. The other head is that of a Lama cow.‡

* This animal is supposed to be as yet undescribed. I will forward the specimens by the first opportunity.—F. J.

† Illegible in MS.—ED.

‡ Most of the specimens here mentioned have arrived at the Society's Museum, including a skin of the *Takang*, and a frontlet and horns; also the head of the "Lama cow," which would appear to be of the hybrid Yak race, termed *Yho* and *Yho-mo*, was according to the sex. The *Takang*, however, cannot well be described until its bones or at least the entire skull, with the skin of the face and the extremities, come to hand.—*Cur. As. Soc.*

Soon after my return from the Mishmee hills I again left Saikwah, and proceeded by elephant up the Koondil-panee, and after passing the mouth of the Depho-panee, followed up the course of that stream, until I arrived at the foot of the hills; and as the fort I was in search of was said by my Khamptée guide to be between the Depho and Jameesa, I took a direction through the jungle about east, and without much difficulty arrived at the fort five days after quitting Saikwah.

This fort* is said to have been built by Raja Sisopal, and is situated on an elevated plain at the foot of the hills; the extent of it is considerable, as it took me about four hours to walk along one side of its faces: the defence is double, consisting of a rampart of stiff red clay, which, as the surrounding soil appears of a different nature, must have been brought from some distance. Below this rampart is a terrace of about 20 yards in breadth, beyond which the side of the hill is perpendicularly scarped, and varies from 10 to 30 feet high; the principal entrance, and the defences for some distance on either side, are built of brick, and on many spots in the interior I observed remains of the same materials, so that in all probability the houses occupied by the inhabitants must have been built of masonry. As I was unable from scarcity of provisions to remain more than one day at this place, I could not examine it so minutely as I could have wished. It seemed however to be composed of only three sides, the steepness of the hill at its north face precluding the necessity of any other works. At present the whole of the northern part of it is thickly covered with tea, which extends, according to the Khampteas who know the locality well, in a belt of more than a mile in depth all along the foot of the hill within the fort, and not as marked in my map, which was drawn before I visited the place. More to the west between the Dihing and Dehong is a much larger fort, and, as I believe, entirely composed of brick, as well as a tank of similar construction, surrounding which are numerous hill forts of small dimensions erected by a Raja named Bhishmuk, and the popular tradition amongst the people of this part of the country is, that on the destruction of the empire of these kings by the Hindoo god Krishno, the people who

* Of these forts we had very imperfect information before, and I believe Lieutenant K. is the first officer who ever visited them. They refer to a time of which we have no history or even tradition, further than frequent traces of the dynasty of the Pals throughout Assam.—F. J.

were able to make their escape fled to the hills, and have in the course of time become converted into the present tribes of Abors*. Near these forts a great number of wild Methuns† are to be met with, and the whole of the country, from the mouth of Koondil to the base of the hills, presents many indications of former cultivation. On this expedition I was absent nine days.

Dibrooghur, 6th February, 1845.‡

Note on a curious Sandstone formation at Sasseram, zillah Shahabad.

By Lieut. W. S. SHEEWILL, 66th, B. N. I. With a Plate.

At the foot of a hill at Sasseram, zillah Shahabad, which forms the termination of a spur thrown off from the Northern face of the lofty range of the Kymoor Sandstone Mountains, I observed a curious apparent horizontal columnar formation in the sandstone, as shown in Plate 1. The disposition of the sandstone at this spot has all the appearance of a quantity of horizontal columns, of several feet diameter each, and overlying each other to the height of twelve feet, the lower ones much flattened by pressure. At this spot also they have suddenly ceased, terminating in a steep bank, from which they protrude in great numbers, resembling a series of rudely-pointed horizontal obelisks, weather-stained to a very dark hue, with a strong cobalt tinge. Their exposed situation at this spot has tempted the Sasseram stone-cutters, who, with wedges, have cloven blocks from off these columns for building purposes; but by so doing, have made it evident that they are not solid columns, but a series of spheres; each sphere composed of a great variety of differently colored and exceedingly hard concentric strata of siliceous sandstones, concentric upon a nucleus, but the strata exceedingly difficult to exfoliate, the rock being purely siliceous, throwing back the hammer with great force. These spheres are packed closely together, and so inti-

* If the Pals were Buddhists, this tradition may allude to their overthrow by the Rajas of the Brahminical faith; but all authentic records of those times appear to be lost, at least in this province.—F. J.

† *Bos. frontalis*, or an allied species.—*Cur. As. Soc.*

‡ I enclose a copy of this letter as a part of Lieut. Rowlatt's Journal.—F. J.