

Names of villages in Dower Cheannee Garrow Mehaults.

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Rabungiri. | 14. Maudaparah. |
| 2. Markhagiri. | 15. Tangreeparrah. |
| 3. Lengparah. | 16. Juchaparah. |
| 4. Kolaparah. | 17. Bichdokparah. |
| 5. Rakhoparah. | 18. Khorchangparah. |
| 6. Khosurparah. | 19. Malugiri. |
| 7. Sindaparah. | 20. Sangbuck. |
| 8. Bindangiri. | 21. Boreeparrah. |
| 9. Runggoogiri. | 22. Romogiri. |
| 10. Boreeparrah 1st. | 23. Domreegiri. |
| 11. Chomreekparah. | 24. Ramrunggiri. |
| 12. Dangrungparah. | 25. Mansangiri. |
| 13. Dingsaparah. | |

Visit to Dewangari.—By Lieut. E. T. DALTON, 9th N. I.

I yesterday carried out my project of paying Dewangari a visit, and I must give you an account of my excursion.

On the 14th January, I halted at Soonbunkotta, from which I had been informed, I might go to Dewangari and return the same day, but when I declared my intention of proceeding next morning I was told it could not be done. The days being now so short, however I was determined on making the attempt, and sent up to tell the Rajah I was coming. We started at 8 A. M., and though on the preceding evening all were expatiating on the difficulties of the road, endeavouring to dissuade me from going, I now found all the villages and pergunnah authorities anxious to accompany me, and I had not less than a hundred followers, consisting of the Wuzeers of the Dooar Borkot and Sella, their Patwares and Takooriahs, and a body of Cachari volunteers.

For the first two miles our route lay over a grassy plain partially cultivated by the Soonbunkotta villagers, which the Dia river in its various wanderings had strewn with large stones. A table-land rises from this, shewing a bold cliff towards the plain, and giving a breadth of from one to two miles of flat surface to the foot of the hills. At the

gorge of the hills through which the Dia, now a small stream, but a large and very mischievous one in the rains, emerges on the plains, we found the Bootia Chokey. This consisted of two or three huts only, but nearly as many hundreds of people, men, women and children, were here awaiting a favorable phase of the moon to proceed on their journey to the plains. There were besides these a considerable number of Boots and Bootnis, who make this their dwelling place whilst the intercourse with the plains is open, attending upon an official styling himself in parlance with me, the Deka Rajah, who sits here at the receipt of customs, levying tolls on the merchants, and assess from our ryots for cutting wood in, taking potter's earth from, fishing, or cultivating cotton in the Bootia territory. The Deka Raja was respectably dressed and very polite. He invited me to come up and sit in his office, which is a snug little boarded apartment looking out on the river. I had no time to spare, but I sat with him a few minutes to recompense him for the trouble he had taken in preparing a seat for me, a little platform covered with red cloth. He looked like a Chinaman without a tail, his head being close shaven. The road now lay up the rocky bed of the Dia, in crossing which I made use of an Assamese dola or trugon, which on the shoulders of Cachari bearers I found a very convenient vehicle for hill travelling, though I only mounted it when I should otherwise have been obliged to wait, as I could proceed more rapidly on foot. The river flows through a very narrow ravine, sometimes a mere chasm in the rocks, which rise precipitously on both sides. The descent is rapid, bringing down large boulders which considerably obstruct the road, but for a north bank hill highway I did not consider it a difficult one. The hills in the vicinity of the river are nearly destitute of fine timber trees, being mostly covered with grass, bamboos, and low shrubs. The pine apple tree (I forget the proper name of it) which I found in such luxuriance in the valley of the Soobunskeri is also here a leading feature in the landscape, and there are other palms. Leaving the main stream of the Dia to our left, we continued our march up the bed of its most easterly affluent. Its passage between the rocks was in some places only two or three feet in width, and the hills now rising high above us on both sides, keep this little dell in almost perpetual shade. About half the march was up this stream, and it is the worst part of the road. For the remainder, though the ascent is severer, the path

over the hill is wider, and free from slipping stones, and the country is more open. About noon we reached the first Bootia house, and shortly afterwards the temple, which, at least the interior of it, is worth more than the cursory inspection I had time to give it. It is a square stone building with gable ends and thatched projecting roof. The gable fronting the north has a verandah, or rather a projecting balcony of timber, behind which a well constructed frame work with several doors admits light into the temple. I was ushered in, and found in front of the window a highly ornamented altar, on which various utensils and offerings were placed in front of a recess, containing three large Buddhist images, all seated in the usual cross-legged attitude absorbed in heavenly contemplation. They appeared to be formed of clay, were exceedingly well executed and resplendent with gilding. The apartment before the altar, about 20 feet square, is boarded, and the walls are entirely covered with paintings of figures in similar penitential or devotional attitudes as those in the recess, but differently dressed. They resemble Chinese paintings, but I was assured they were the work of a village artist. If so, they are surprisingly well executed, the colours very brilliant and well chosen, and drawing tolerably correct; gilding was introduced to heighten the effect. My guides pointed out to me two sockets in front of the altar from which a pair of very handsome elephant's tusks that formed an ivory arch in front of the images have lately been stolen by some of our rascals, I make no doubt; I hope I shall be able to trace them.* The Bootias hold this temple in too great veneration ever to have thought of committing such a (to them) sacrilegious theft. Being on the high road to Dewangari, it is well known to all our people, who come up here to trade; there is no house very close to it, and no one lives in it, consequently there was no difficulty in removing unseen any thing it contained; besides the tusks, some of the altar vessels were removed, "and the gods looked on all the time without doing anything to punish the marauders," innocently remarked my Bootia Cicerone, as if he considered that by far the most extraordinary part of the story.

A priest's house also of stone stands near the temple; it is two-storied, and with its projecting roof and balconies has rather a picturesque appearance. Of the other houses seen, some were of stone, some

* The thieves have subsequently been caught and punished.

partly of stone and partly of timber, some all of timber. They had most of them rather a delapidated appearance, and several were wholly deserted. The temple is about a mile and a half from the residence of the Rajah. The path between appears to have been at one time lined with houses, but their sites are now overgrown with jungle, the former occupants having settled in our territories. The path from the temple winds along the northern face of a mountain, overlooking a valley, in which there is some appearance of cultivation. About half a mile from the temple we came suddenly on a stone obelisk built on a projecting spur of the hill, rounding which, a fine view was obtained of the Rajah's house and village. Several similar obelisks standing boldly out on the most prominent eminences formed a peculiar feature in the landscape. They are all of the same form—a square pedestal with projecting base, and cornice gradually diminishing from a height of six or eight feet, by steps, to the base of a globe, which is surmounted by a spire. I was informed that they were constructed entirely for ornament; this appears a degree of refinement to which we could scarce have supposed the Bootias had attained, yet their varied but always effective situations supported this motive for their erection. They had each a tablet with inscriptions, most probably in laudation of the person who built them. I had unfortunately no one with me who could read the Bootia character. The Rajah's house is situated on the ridge of a lofty hill commanding an extensive view of the plains of Assam to the south, and having a fine open valley with cultivation to the north. The village appeared to consist of but few houses, and these scattered and dilapidated, as if the proprietors cared little for preserving them. Whilst making a hasty sketch of the view from the obelisk, some of the Rajah's people, with caparisoned ponies and a mule came up, and one of these they insisted on my mounting. They also mounted my chaprassies and thus we proceeded to the Rajah's dwelling, and surrounded by a dozen wild Bootias, who held me on the poney's back, some by the legs, others by the tails of my coat, whilst they kept up an incessant exhortation to the animal in their own language, all of which they assured me he perfectly understood, to be careful how he stopped and proceeded. The vice-regal lodge is a large upper-roomed square stone building, with gable ends, a very low and wide doorway, and five large windows in a row in the upper story, four of which have projecting covered balconies

of timber. It gave me the idea of an old-fashioned farm-house, which after having been long deserted and neglected had suddenly been adopted as a place of shelter and placed in a state of temporary repair. The lower story, with exception of the great yawning entrance, is nearly destitute of apertures for the admission of light or air—in this respect resembling a block-house. I expected the Rajah would have come out to meet me, but this he did not do, and I for some time debated in my own mind whether, under such circumstances I should go to him. However as I had come to his village an unexpected and an uninvited guest, I decided that it would not be derogatory to my dignity to be conducted to his presence by the messenger he deputed for the purpose, and I accordingly entered the gloomy mansion. The ascent from the lower to the upper story is accomplished by means of something between a staircase and a ladder, which I had to grope my way up. The lower apartments, with exception to the hall are, I understood, only used as cells for prisoners, consequently the admission of light and air is a secondary consideration; at the top of the ladder however, I found myself in a well ventilated and roomy anti-chamber without furniture of any description, but in which the numerous attendants of the Rajah were demurely seated all round with their backs to the walls.

In the next room I found the Rajah seated on a small square platform covered with red cloth, very grave and grand, but very dirty, with legs crossed and arms folded, looking as like one of the figures of the immortals I had just been examining in the temple, as it was possible for a mere erring mortal to do. In a recess to his right there was a repetition of the gilded figures of the temple, which he said was a representation of the Dhurma Rajah. Before these the people, who were with me, connected with Dooars who knew the customs of this little court, made humble obeisances and one or two in the back ground, whom from having been formerly under him, the Rajah knew by name, he directed to do so, but he paid no attention to the nonconformity of myself and followers with the usage. For me an arm chair was placed, in which I seated myself without any ceremony.

The Rajah had before him a little low table on which oranges and other things fancifully arranged in the style of the offerings before the altars, were deposited, and on it several joss sticks were burning, which emitted an aromatic odour; before this table, as before the altar, a pan

of burning charcoal was placed, all I suppose emblematic of his being the representative of the Dhurma Rajah.

I forgot to mention that on my road up I met a messenger with a letter from the Rajah in reply to my missive of the preceding day, announcing my intention of visiting his village, in which he stated that if I halted at the boundary he would come down and see me the following day and arrange about my going up. I told his messenger I could not wait so long. He said there was no objection to my proceeding at once if I pleased; so on I went.

The Rajah opened the conversation by remarking that when *one great* man came to visit *another* due notice should be given in order that preparations worthy of the event might be made. However, as I had come to Dewangari in this off-hand manner, he hoped I intended to remain a few days, in which case he would be happy to entertain me. He evidently did not understand the visit, and hardly knew whether he should receive it as a compliment or otherwise. I believe I explained all to his satisfaction, for he ended by repeating his invitation to me to remain in a more cordial and pressing manner, offering to provide every thing for the whole party, and promising if the Dhurma Rajah permitted him, to come and see us at Gowhatty. We discussed other matters, but I found on political subjects he would give no opinion without receiving particular instructions from the Dhurma Rajah. The day was now waning and I rose to depart, promising to repeat the visit, if circumstances admitted of my doing so. I have no doubt I committed what was in their eyes a breach of etiquette in going up to Dewangari without having previously a long correspondence on the subject, but had I entered into this the Rajah would in all probability have, in selecting a lucky day for the event, have so put off the period of my visit that I should have been unable to go at all. Descending into the village I found the news of my arrival had collected together all the inhabitants, and a very little encouragement converted them all into most importunate beggars. Throwing a few small coin to some of the women, I was instantly surrounded and half-smothered by a mass of blooming Bootia beauties, pressing upon me for similar favours.

I use the word "blooming" advisedly, and not as a mere alliterative redundancy. The women have broad flat Tartar faces, small eyes, large mouths, noses short and low, not on the whole the most pleasing com-

bination of features, but many of them have fine plump rosy cheeks, healthy and pleasant to look upon, though the complexions, a light olive, have nothing in common with lillies. Their figures are concealed by the amplitude of their robes. They appear to take less care in adorning themselves than any Hill lasses I have met with. Their clothes are dirty, clumsily made, and awkwardly put on. Their tresses are generally left to float as nature pleases, though some few of the more tidy and respectable matrons had their's bound with a handsome bandeau of flat silver chains with a large ornament in front. Some damsels appear with shorn heads, and these I understand have all taken vows of celibacy. They are mostly widows, whose pretensions to virginity could not under any circumstances be supported, but some old women amongst them, with shorn heads, asserted their claim to the title.

I saw little cultivation, and excepting a few women weaving, no one appeared employed in any useful occupation. In weaving the women are seated on the ground. The web passes round three rollers of wood forming a triangle. One of these, attached by a leather belt to the woman, one supported on two posts in front of her, and the third pinned to the ground farther off. The woman by her position keeps the web stretched to the necessary tightness. The shuttle is a small hollow bamboo containing a roller for the thread. This she passes through the inclined web before her working upwards, and passing the woven part round below, until the whole piece completed thus comes round. The fine woollen cloths which the Bootias export are not made here, being brought from the interior. They are of very superior manufacture, resembling in pattern, material and softness of texture the Scotch tartans. The affection of all Hill tribes for plaids is singular; we have them all round the valley.

The cloths manufactured at Dewangari are of cotton or of erie. The latter brought from the plains.

The greater portion of the population of Dewangari consists of the Rajah's followers, or of traders, who make this their temporary residence for more convenient barter with the plains; the rajah himself is not above making money in this way;* whilst he keeps back other

* Every officer of the Bootan government is allowed a certain sum of money from the public treasury to trade upon, and which at stated periods he returns with interest.

traders on the pretence that the moon is not sufficiently old for their periodical migration, his own agents are allowed egress with Bootia cloths, which they dispose of before the market becomes swamped. Of "giris" or permanent householders, I was informed there are not now more than twenty about Dewangari, great numbers having deserted and settled in the Dooars. And as those who remain are subjected in consequence of the desertions to more than their former share of annoyance, they too are likely ere long to desert. I saw at Soobunkottah upwards of 60 Boots and Bootnis who had there settled; at Gooroo-gong, there are as many more; and they are settling in other places besides these two. They have not as yet taken up any land; and told me they had no intention of doing so, as they find they can push a very comfortable livelihood by trading. I told them I should tax them whether they cultivated or not. They were quite willing they said to pay whatever I imposed.

It was 2 P. M. before I got clear of the Dewangari village; we had the use of the rajah's ponies a part of the way; I believe he ordered that they should go with us the whole way, but his people made some demur and I sent them back, as I could get on just as fast on foot. We returned by the same road, and some of us got to the foot of the hills shortly after sunset, and I got back to camp at 7 P. M. Some of the party were not up till 9 P. M. It was a hard day's work.

The Pine tree of the Tenasserim Provinces. By the Rev. F. MASON.

Some twenty years ago the residents of Moulmain were not a little surprised to find, among the drift wood of the Salwen, a log of some coniferous tree. This was the first intimation that any tree of the Pine tribe grew on the borders of these Provinces; but whether it were of the genus *Pinus*, or *Abies*, or *Larix*; a pine, a fir, or a larch, did not appear. It was several years after this occurrence, that one of our former commissioners told the writer he had offered a hundred rupees to any of the foresters who would bring down a spar of this tree. Spars have been, subsequently, brought down, but it is believed that Capt. Latter, the Superintendent of Forests in these provinces, is the first Euro-