gree as Arabs of the desert, for it is thought a sign of enmity to stop even at the door-way without a 'stirrup cup' of Eely. Among their chief faults may be reckoned indolence, and dirt. The poorer people are often very filthy, and unless in the warm season, seldom touch water. The lowest classes will not object to devouring bullocks that have died, from disease, out in the fields, even though far advanced in decomposition, and will devour stale eggs, half-putrid fish, &c. &c. But these filthy customs are confined to the very lowest and poorest of the people.

Memoir of Sylhet, Kachar, and the adjacent Districts. By Captain FISHER, *formerly Superintendent of Kachar and Jynta.*

The provinces of Bengal east of the Brahmaputra, though among the earliest acquisitions of the British in India, attracted but little attention for a long time, in consequence of their general tranquillity and secluded position. The vast mountain regions by which they were encompassed on their external frontiers, seemed to secure them against the chance of serious foreign invasion, while the incursions of the wild hill tribes had but slight effects on their internal condition, and were easily curbed by a few local troops retained chiefly for that purpose. If Sylhet excited but little interest, still less was naturally thought of the petty independent states connected with it; and it was only after the Burmans had conquered Assam and Manipur, that a wish seems to have arisen for a more accurate knowledge of their condition; though this was still greatly restrained by fear of giving umbrage to their chiefs. The events arising out of the Burmese war have materially altered the relations of all these countries, on which, however, it is not my purpose here to enlarge, but simply to bring to notice such facts respecting their geography, internal condition, resources, and traditional history, as in the course of a long residence, and the prosecution of various inquiries, I have been able to collect; restricting myself however to the correction of current errors, and the notice of such particulars as have not hitherto obtained general publicity.

Geography.—The survey of Sylhet, though unfinished, has yet been prosecuted far enough to shew, that the area of the district is more

considerable than had been supposed. As the external boundaries towards the Tippera hills, Kachar, and the Kasia mountains have been traced, and the outline is only incomplete on the western side, on which it is not likely any material difference from the old delineation would be discovered, it is likely that the contents (4500 square miles,) now assigned for it, is pretty near the truth. The quarter in which the most considerable error has been found in the old map is the southern, which Rennell does not seem to have visited; and here many of his positions have been found from ten to forty miles too much to the north. The topography too of this part has been amended, the chains of hills, or rather ridges, having been ascertained to consist of several parallel ranges, separated by wide and fertile vallies, and ranging north and south, instead of east and west, as before supposed. Some of these ridges also are found to be partly in Sylhet, and partly in Tippera, and in two or three instances they penetrate deeply into the former district.

On the side of Kachar, the boundary of Sylhet has been traced southward to Chatrchura, a conical peak on the Banka range of hills, the country about which is frequented by the Pytu Kukis, a wild wandering tribe, who migrate from this their north-west limit, eastward to Tunghum, and southward to an unknown extent, their cognate tribes being found in the neighbourhood of Chittagong.

In Lower Kachar a complete survey of the cultivated tracts has been effected, the principal rivers traced, and in particular the course of the Delaseri from the southward, followed through a part which heretofore presented only a blank in the map. This tracing, was, however, executed by one of my native surveyors, after circumstances had put it out of my power to conduct it myself.

Captain Pemberton's surveys in Manipur fix the eastern boundary of Kachar, but points of junction between our surveys occur at Aquee, in the Naga Hills, and on the Bohman range.

In Upper Kachar a line has been traced along the Jatingah river to its source, and thence to a point on the Di-yung, at which it becomes navigable for small boats, beyond which I had no opportunity of proceeding northward, but the remainder of the route into Assam was explored by Captain Jenkins, whose valuable Report illustrates the whole of this country. The survey, however, in this quarter was

carried far enough to fix the courses of the great streams and ridges, and to establish a relation with the route pursued by Captain Pemberton from Manipur into Assam, the great ridge crossed by him being in this survey traced westward to its termination in a number of ramifications on the Modura river. The fact of most interest ascertained by this part of the survey, is the facility with which a road could be formed from the navigable limit of the Jotingah to that of the Di-yung, by which the intercourse with Upper Assam would be greatly extended, and its communication with Calcutta shortened. So gentle is the ascent, and so few are the obstacles, that there seems no reason to doubt, a road for carts might be made with very little trouble.

Returning westward, the survey fixes the boundaries of Jynta, and much of the mountain tract immediately north of Sylhet and Pondua, including the country between Chirra Ponji and Nunklao. It then traces the outline of Sylhet at the foot of the Kasia Hills, and is prolonged to Sowara, on the banks of the Brahmaputra, from which it follows the old channel of this river to Naraingunj and Dacca. The object of this last portion of the work was to connect the survey and a series of astronomical observations made for longitude at the town of Sylhet, with a position which had been well fixed by Mr. Walter Ewer of the Civil Service, and to which the Assam Survey had also been referred. For many of these observations, which were made on the transit of the moon and stars, I was so fortunate as to obtain corresponding passages at Greenwich. Dacca was included also as a well fixed point, but chiefly because the water communication between it and Sylhet, was found to be very erroneously delineated in the old maps, in consequence apparently of changes in the course of the rivers below Azmerigunj. Correct outlines were made of these, though they do not appear in the new printed map, for which it is to be supposed they were too late.

The minute operations carried on in the prosecution of the Revenue Survey have afforded an opportunity for acquiring a more intimate knowledge of the topography, resources, and husbandry of the interior, and these complete the list of the several inquiries pursued.

Aspect and Geology.—The physical aspect of this vast tract, presents great variety, and cannot of course be described under one term.

Even in the plains there is less of uniformity than would be supposed on a casual inspection, and the experienced agriculturist well knows that the lands in the eastern part of Sylhet, and in Lower Kachar, are far more valuable than those to the westward, even up to the banks of the Megna. This is explained by the greater elevation of those parts, and by the number of hill streams passing through them, the banks of which are always higher than the adjacent country. The vegetation, as well as the husbandry of these tracts, is greatly influenced by this particular, of which I shall take more notice hereafter.

The hill regions may be conveniently separated into two divisions, distinguished by great difference of elevation, the point of separation being fixed on the Soormah at Luckipur in Lower Kachar, to the south-west of which, whatever elevations present themselves, are under two thousand feet, while those in the north-west still maintain a much greater altitude, and even tower occasionally above six thousand feet. But the division is more appropriate on account of a decisive difference in structure, the northern mountains forming clearly one system, while those of the south belong to another, having reference to high ground in the central parts of Tippera, the existence of which cannot be doubted, though it has never been unequivocally proved. In support of this opinion, I must first point out that the numerous streams flowing from the southward into the Soorma and Kusiara rivers, and of which the very existence was scarcely known before this Survey was made, are many of them of a force and volume indicating a long course, and shewing them to be the drains of high land, from which alone they would draw the water which they discharge, for the Delaseri, the Sungai, the Munu, the Khwa-hi, and the Cognati streams appear to furnish during the rains on an average a discharge of about 25,000 cubic feet per second; a quantity quite inconsistent with any supposition, but that of long courses and elevated origins, as none of these rivers are more than fifty yards in width.

If a reference be now made to some of the older maps on which the other rivers of Tippera are traced, it will be found that the Gumti, which emerges at Commilla, has an east and west course, and that the Chingri and Kurumphuli, which debouche at Chittagong, run nearly southward, while the Kola-dyng, as delineated on more recent maps, has a south-west course, and the river of the Kungfui Nagas falling

into the Manipur river, flows to the south-east. I may add, that the Tipai river which falls into the Barak near Soor, has like the Sonai and Delaseri a northern course. Thus these considerable streams radiate from land in the unexplored regions of Tippera, somewhere between the 23rd and 24th parallels of north latitude, and 91° and 94° of E. longitude, which is unfortunately still a blank in our maps.

I have enlarged on this subject, because I conceive it is one which when attentively considered, will be found of great interest, involving the condition of a tract of country, our ignorance of which, in some conjunctures we might have occasion to deplore.

Both the hills and vallies of Tippera are thickly wooded, and the latter often contain extensive grass jungles, the resort of wild elephants. The most eastern portion of the northern range of mountains is occupied by Upper Kachar, a wild and thickly wooded tract, the mountains of which sometimes attain an elevation of five thousand feet, but offer considerable diversity in that respect, as they here break into branches of the great ridge running between Manipur and Assam. The river Kupili, flowing into the Brahmaputra, marks the limit of this tract, and the termination of that vast system of hills which stretches westward from the unexplored country to the north-east of Manipur.

The Kasia mountains rise immediately from the valley of the Kupili, and range westward to Laour, near which they are bounded by the Patli river, the hills west of that belonging to the Garrows, and being distinguished by an aspect and structure of their own.

Much has been written on the Kasia mountains during the last ten years that they have been visited by Europeans, but I am not aware that any attempt has been made to account for their peculiarities, nor would I now undertake the task, but that I fear it will be left undone by those who could perform it so much better. The physical aspect of these hills excites the strong attention of the observer, as being so greatly at variance with that of the whole country in their neighbourhood. The barrenness of the table land, more especially in its southern portion, where not only does nature yield but little, but where art is found unable to assist her, is perhaps unprecedented in such a climate. This sterility will, I think, be found to be closely connected with the character of the rocks, and the disturbance of the strata, but more especially with the latter, for where these are horizontal, there is an

absence of vegetation, and wherever the strata are inclined to the horizon, symptoms of fertility begin to shew themselves.

The absence of any well marked appearance of the unstratified rocks is remarkable in the Kasia hills, for I am aware only of one instance in which they are said to shew serpentine; having, it is said, been seen near Nungklao, a locality which however I had no opportunity of examining. It is true, granite is found, but except at the Okillon hill, always in boulders on the surface, nor has it ever been seen in peaks or amorphous masses, to the protrusion of which, the dip of the secondary strata is usually referred. Except in the single instance of the limestone which occurs near Musmai, I think it may be said that there is no appearance of a disturbance in the sandstone bed by which the country between that place and the Bogapani is filled, and of which the thickness is unknown; now this part (and others similar to it) is remarkably sterile; but wherever the level of the strata has been disturbed, whether by internal igneous action, or by any force of a more limited range, a disintegration of the rocks, and consequent accumulation of soil at the foot of the slope formed, has taken place, and vegetation to a greater or less extent ensued. Thus the slopes formed at the outcrop of the sandstone with the limestone near Musmai are all well covered with wood, which disappears as the slope subsides into the ordinary level of the table land. And in general throughout the ascent from the plains to Chirra, after the limits of the lower bed of limestone have been passed, it may be observed that vegetation is dense only on the slopes, and that wherever ledges or steps occur, they are comparatively barren.

The total rise between the foot of the mountains and Chirra, seems to be about one in ten feet, but subject to great irregularity, while between Chirra and the south bank of the Bogapani, it amounts only to one in forty, with comparatively little variation.

All the vallies on this side terminate in precipitous heads, exhibiting the horizontal position of the sandstone.

To the northward of the Bogapani, the aspect of the country changes, and though the altitude is greater, the vegetation is also more considerable, and continually increases until between Myrung and Nungklao it becomes abundant, though it does not yet exhibit that excess which prevails further to the north and west. A feature will be here found to

force itself on the attention, to which unquestionably the increase of vegetation in this part is to be traced; I allude to the numerous and large granite boulders which are scattered in such abundance over the country as to be occasionally mistaken for the crust or surface. The granite has however never, as I before observed, been seen in any form but that of boulders, nor is there any well established instance of these having been seen otherwise than on, or partially imbedded in the surface. I should remark, that the mass of granite, well known as the Okillon, near Nungun and west of the Nungklao road, may be considered of a dubious form, for though the dimensions are enormous, the shape of the exposed part is that of a boulder. The disintegration of these boulders has of course largely contributed to the formation of soil, especially when favoured by the configuration of the ground, but wherever the boulders are missing, and the strata preserve their horizontal position, vegetation remains likewise deficient.

As I am more anxious to record facts than to broach theories, I will not indulge in speculations on the variation of the structure of these hills from those around them, but content myself with observing, that there is nothing in what I have pointed out at all inconsistent with the more recent opinions as to the order, classification, and superposition of the different rocks; for though none of the unstratified rocks have been seen in the positions which they might be expected to occupy in the centre of the mountains, there is still no reason why they may not occupy a place under the sandstone, and have thus effected its up-lifting without themselves protruding to the surface. Further inquiries may throw light upon this subject, which is worthy of very great attention, for if there be sufficient ground for the opinion here thrown out, the geology of this country will furnish a strong proof of the igneous origin of the unstratified rocks, and their more recent appearance above the surface.

I have already remarked, that a bed of limestone extends along the foot of the hills near Pundua, having its out-crop about five hundred feet above the plains, where it abuts on the sandstone. The direction of this bed is nearly east and west, and though frequently broken through by rivers, it is continued westward (declining however in elevation as it proceeds) to Bunsikura, where it is found in contact with the plain, from which in other parts it is always separated by clay

and sand hills of alluvial formation. The coal found at Laour rests on this limestone, which abounds in fossil shells, among which the principal are Terebratula and Producta. The cavern of Booban is situated in this limestone, but no measures have been employed to ascertain if it contains any fossil remains.

The few facts which I am able to add on the geology of the whole country under review, may not improperly find their place here, as they can be of value only when taken collectively to illustrate the general formation.

In Upper Kachar the dense woods have materially impeded observation, and I can only say, that the table land is there absent, as well as the granite boulders, and that the formation is of primary sandstone, upon which an alluvial formation is posited. No fossil remains have been procured from this quarter.

The Tippera hills, in the more elevated parts of which we have any knowledge, exhibit primary sandstones underlying an alluvial formation, in which fossil remains are found in sufficient quantity, but no great variety. Those within my own observation have been Madrepires and fossil wood. The alluvial formation over the eastern part of Sylhet and Lower Kachar is of the same nature with that of Tippera, being similar in structure and material. The common feature is a kind of breccia, which is found in masses varying from a mere pebble to enormous blocks of many thousand tons weight, and these are imbedded in the clay or sand hills near the surface (never stratified), often in connexion with a thin stratum of a substance exhibiting a highly metallic appearance, and which seems to be oxide of iron. It is impossible to examine these black blocks, which on fracture display numerous concavities, without entertaining the suspicion of their volcanic origin; but any doubts on this head must cease on looking at the masses of lava by which they are often accompanied, for that the shapeless lumps to which I allude have been in a state of fusion, admits of no question, being proved by their vitrious lustre, close and brittle texture, and by the presence of blisters formed by the air during the process of cooling. I abstain from noticing the localities of the coal beds, salt wells, and Petroleum spring, as they have been heretofore described.

It must be acknowledged that our geological knowledge of this quarter is still lamentably defective, and that the materials for drawing a

section of the rocks in their exact order from Thibet, across Assam, Sylhet, and Tippera, are still to be collected.

The points of interest remaining for examination within this division are:—

1st. The course of the Kupeli river from its source to its confluence with the Di-yung, in the valley between Upper Kachar and Jynte. It is likely to pass through a country the geology of which must deserve attention, as the structure of the opposite sides of the valley must be essentially different, the one upholding a table land, the other running up into peaks and ridges, while the possibility that the river may offer a navigable communication with some point easy of access from the side of Sylhet, is an additional reason for examining it.

2nd. The course of the Patli river near Laour. This river divides the Kasia hills from the Garrows, and its valley must exhibit similar diversity in the structure of its opposite sides with that of the Kupeli.

3rd. I have already pointed out the interest that attaches to the country in the middle parts of Tippera, and I may here add, that the geology of this quarter must be valuable, as it is likely to be connected with the system of mountains which separates Arracan from Pegu, and to contain the extinct craters from which the volcanic remains above noticed have issued.

To conclude this account of the very diversified aspect of the country, the vast semi-basin enclosed on the northern, eastern, and much of the southern side by the mountains above described, may be conveniently divided into two tracts, distinguished from each other by difference of level, and by dissimilarity of vegetable and agricultural produce, as well as by their capacity for commodious habitations and occupations. A line drawn SE. from Chattak passing west of Tajpur, through Nubigunj, and thence under the hills southward to Turruf, will serve very nearly to separate these tracts.

That to the westward, extending nearly to the Brahmaputra, is in most parts always marshy, and the whole is subject to periodical inundations of long duration, being in general under water from April to the middle of November. The towns and villages, which in some parts, more especially to the southward, are numerous, are built on mounds raised with earth dug during the dry season; the houses are in clusters, huts for men, temples, mosques, and sheds for cattle, being

huddled together in a manner that gives to them the appearance rather of the temporary abode of fugitives, than the settled residence of a people. This tract is called Bhatta, apparently from its lowness, and seems to have been conquered by the Mussulmans before the rest of Sylhet.

The eastern division is on a higher level, and rises gradually towards the mountains on either side; notwithstanding this, the marshes which occasionally occur, might lead to a different belief; but these are very limited in extent, and occupy distinct hollows, and the fact of general rise is proved by the course of the rivers, which without it could never exhibit those strong currents for which they are remarkable.

The irregularities of the surface are referable to three distinct causes:

1st. Several ranges of the alluvial formation crossing it run up into ridges, from one to three hundred feet in height.

2nd. The vallies formed by these ranges rise from the centre towards either side, where the land being above the level of ordinary inundations, is peculiarly adapted for agricultural purposes, and is called Do-fusilya, or that of two harvests.

3d. The banks of the Surma and all the hill streams are occupied by land cultivable for two yearly crops, which however here owes its origin to a different cause, having been thrown up by the rivers in working their channels through the plain.

I have here much satisfaction in bringing to notice one of those rare instances in which the interests of a portion, however small, of the Indian community have been manifestly benefited by the adoption of conclusions emanating solely from European foresight and observation. A causeway constructed by the Mogul Government along the left bank of the Surma, and intended to restrain its inundations, was kept up at a considerable expence by the British Government, until the mischievous consequences which have followed the maintenance of similar erections on the Po and Adige, in Italy, having been brought to notice, it was, about twenty years ago, abandoned, and the river allowed to take its natural course. Contrary to the expectations of many, no harm followed; the river occasionally rose for a short time above its banks, but the inundation ran off rapidly, and it seldom happened that any injury was done. It was soon, however, observed, that wherever the river overflowed its banks, a sediment was left, which both raised and

improved the land, and in consequence people far from dreading the inundation, soon learnt to turn it to account; and having banked such lands as were fit for the purpose, led the river to them by narrow canals, which they closed after the flow of water was deemed sufficient, and re-opened when the river had fallen sufficiently to allow it to run off. This practice is now quite common, and by it much marshy land has been reclaimed. The low lands in the Eastern parts of the country may all in time be filled up by the sediment left by the inundations of the rivers, but these are in reality so rare, and of such short duration, that more will be effected by art than nature in this way. 'It must be remembered, that the ordinary inundation which fills the marshes does not proceed from the rivers but is furnished by the rains, and yields no sediment, this distinction is, of course, not to be overlooked in the execution of the operation above described.'

Husbandry.—The agricultural processes in the Bhatta are very simple, and may be briefly dismissed. As soon as the inundation begins to subside, or in the beginning of November, such lands as are sufficiently high for the purpose, are ploughed and sown for rice and millet, the crop being cut in April. Gardens and orchards are unknown, and the cultivation derives the smallest possible aid from the labour which in other parts is so productive. There are neither sugarcane patches, plantations of pán, vine, chillies, nor vegetables,—a little sursoo, and hemp, with some gourds and cucumbers about the huts, appear occasionally, but in limited quantity. The marshes are however filled with cattle, from which profits are derived sufficient to make the occupation of these desolate tracts desirable. Ghee and cheese are made from the milk of buffaloes and cows, and the upper lands are furnished with young bullocks for the plough in numbers, being driven to bazars and fairs in the spring of the year, before the return of the inundation in May and June, after which months they are confined to their sheds, and supported on green fodder brought in boats from the jhils. The people here are extensively concerned in the transport of grain, being the carriers between the high lands eastward and the country to the south-west. The husbandry of the eastern quarter is of a far more elaborate description, though it has not yet exhausted the resources of art on the one hand, nor those of nature on the other. A fertile soil, renewed continually by accumulations from

the hills, copious supplies of rain, with immunity from excessive inundation, are among the advantages enjoyed by this favoured tract. The character too of the scenery here becomes peculiar, and is sufficiently marked to call for its separation from that of India generally. Vast sheets of cultivation, extending for miles along the banks of the Surma and other streams, intersected by splendid groves of trees and bamboos, forming shelter for extensive villages, and occasionally by low ranges of wooded hills, and backed always by mountains either near or distant, form an endless succession of gratifying scenes, on which the eye rests with pleasure, and which, whether beheld by the agricultural economist estimating the resources of the land, by the philanthrophist rejoicing in the welfare of his fellow men, or by the lover of the picturesque, must always excite the most pleasurable emotions. But I must not wander from the simple account which I proposed to furnish in this paper.

The ploughing season here begins in the middle of January, when the lower descriptions of land destined for the Aumun crop are first broken up; the higher soon follow, though it is usual to reserve such, on account of the hardness of the soil, until the first showers which fall in February. Before the end of March all the lands are sown, and in July or August the first crop is reaped from the higher lands alone, which are again ploughed and sown for an autumnal crop in November and December. It will readily be understood, that the aumun lands are subject to inundation, though not commonly to the extent which would endanger the crop, and I must here more particularly explain their position, which may else seem not very reconcilable with parts of the foregoing description. I have said that the western division is subject to excessive inundation,—may be marked by a line running southward from the neighbourhood of Chattak; and this is true generally, though a few considerable gulfs cut into the eastern quarter, running up for some miles, more especially between the courses of the great rivers, and form petty jhils of great depth, which are unculturable. The aumun lands are situated on the sides of these and similar jhils, but their cultivation is very different from that of the Bhatta country, the crop in them remaining on the ground throughout the rainy season, and being in consequence very abundant and rich, while that of the Bhatta, grown only in the winter, is both scanty and of

inferior quality. These jhils branching from the Bhatta, I should observe, obstruct the cross communications in the higher country, and render it impassable for travellers from about April or May, until the middle or end of November, but do not affect the cultivation materially.

The ordinary products are dhán, dhal, and kulaie, of all which there are many varieties: the grain is usually divided into two classes, called from the situation in which it has been grown Sayl, and Aumun; among these the subdivisions seem to be infinite, and I should add, that they are not mere fanciful distinctions, but made with reference to well marked peculiarities, either of quality or fruition. Thus among the Sayl, which grows on the high lands, there are grains which come to maturity in the short space of six weeks, while there are others, as the Burwa, which can be raised on the Aumun lands in the winter. It may not readily attract attention, but the careful inquirer will, I think, find it no small advantage, that there are so many grains whose times of coming to perfection are unequal, as they afford, under proper management, a sure resource against the loss of crops of more ample, but more slow growth. All the Sayl grains are raised on seedling land and transplanted, and this practice extends, under favourable circumstances, to the Aumun, the increased productiveness consequent, being well known. As a point of some interest in Indian husbandry, and on which doubts have been entertained, I may state from personal knowledge, that manures are frequently and extensively used. My occupation, as a Revenue Surveyor, gave me frequent opportunities of making this observation in the most unexceptionable manner, and that the practice is not readily avowed, I attribute to the fear on the part of the cultivator that any practice which attracts the notice of a European functionary, will be made the ground for increased assessment.

Irrigation is never found necessary except for the winter crops, but if wheat was cultivated, which experiment has shewn to be perfectly feasible in the cold season, water could be had in abundance for the purpose, and in the same way, barley, oats, and potatoes, have all been raised by me in Kachar on terms which prove their culture would be highly profitable.

In attempting to estimate the profits of agriculture, and the condition of the people employed in it, I should premise, that the minute subdivision of the proprietory right to land which obtains in Sylhet, has

been accompanied by those consequences which have been observed in other countries similarly circumstanced, and that while the industry exhibited in the cultivation of the petty taluks by their proprietors is very admirable, the want of capital, by which their capabilities might be increased, is but too apparent. I am not however sure, that the physical comfort of the people is as yet diminished by this circumstance, for it is certain that the means of subsistence are in abundance, and I have no hesitation in saying, that I have no where seen a population among whom the ordinary wants of nature were so easily and cheaply supplied. But though there is an efficient and permanent demand for produce, the want of capital, or rather its excessive dissemination, effectually prevents the adoption of means by which the cultivator might derive from his land those profits, which it is calculated to yield. I must here meet an old and often urged objection, that it is the Government exactions which check improvement, by observing, that this is one of the lowest taxed districts in India, the average rate of assessment being somewhere about four annas per head, or one rupee one anna on the adult males alone, while the wages of labour are from two and a half to three rupees a month. A rate therefore which exacts on an average the value of ten days labour from each man in the year, cannot be considered excessive, at least when compared with the average for all India, which is above seven times higher. It is therefore to the dissemination of capital that the absence of improvement is entirely attributable, and the state of the land tenures therefore in this district is well worth the attention of the Indian financier, shewing as it does the condition to which, under the existing laws of inheritance, every province in India is tending.

No cultivator, whether proprietor or ryot, ever follows agriculture here as a speculation, or ventures to till a larger quantity of land than can be conveniently managed by himself and the members of his family, and if he raises grain sufficient for his annual expenditure, and a surplus equal to the payment of the Government revenue, his operations are considered successful. He employs the spare time, of which he has abundance, in other pursuits which do not require a capital, or only a very small one in money. Thus the more considerable proprietors after letting the portion of their taluks which they do not find it convenient to cultivate themselves, often engage in the conduct of

adventurers to the woods for timber, bamboos, grass, &c., or they clear land on the hills for cotton, build boats, and convey grain to the markets in the south, &c.; while the Ryots act as boatmen, coolies, and the like, in all which employments little or no cash outlay is required; but they subsist on grain raised in their own fields, while their wives and children maintain themselves by making cloths, &c., for home consumption, or sale, carrying the produce of their gardens and orchards to market, and tending cattle.

There is nothing very remarkable in all this perhaps, except that it exhibits a society among which the first steps in economical improvement have hardly been taken, the advantages of the division of labour not having yet been appreciated, or rather the introduction of that principle having been prevented, by the want of accumulated capital, to meet the expense and delay that must precede the more ample returns which it ensures. I will not enter into any estimate of the expenses attending the cultivation of land, and its return, as a farming speculation, although I have by me details on the point; but conclude this subject with observing, that at the existing rates of rent and labour agriculture would return the former (independent of any improvements he might effect) about thirty per cent., on his capital. The common opinion, confirmed by the current price of estates, is, that money invested in land yields the proprietor from 12 to 15 per cent.

Hill Agriculture.—Among the hill tribes, cultivation is very imperfectly practised, and many therefore depend wholly on their intercourse with the plains; nor can it be said that any of them are at all times wholly secured from want by their own resources. The nature of the country in the south part of the Kasia mountains precludes agriculture, but in the central and northern parts rice is raised in considerable quantity, particularly in the little glens, and on the sides of the vallies, irrigation being practised, and the water brought to the field through narrow canals, and conveyed over hollows, or up heights, for short distances by hollow trunks of trees or bamboos, experience having taught the cultivator that water can be made to rise in tubes to the level of its source. The labouring season is in the spring, and the crop is cut in August and September.

In the wooded parts of the mountains, by whomsoever occupied, whether Kacharies, Nagas, or Kukies, the cultivation is of a mixed

description, consisting of cotton, rice, and sundry vetches, grown indiscriminately together in one large clearing. The ground for the crop is first prepared by the dao (or bill), the jungle when dried is burnt, and the ashes worked into the soil, which is then broken up by the hoe, and the seed planted or sown in March or April for a crop in September. The hills on the Sylhet and Tippera frontier are cultivated in a similar manner by the natives of the plains, who form themselves into associations periodically for the purpose of a trip into the hills, on a joint account, to cultivate cotton and cut wood and bamboos. The cotton thus obtained is not exported, indeed the quantity raised is barely sufficient for local consumption. It is short in the staple, but the cloths made from it being found to combine warmth with lightness, are in great esteem among the people.

I proceed briefly to notice whatever appears peculiar among plants, vegetables, and fruits.

Indigo is not cultivated in Sylhet, but though one or two trials have been unsuccessful, I think (with men of some experience) that with greater attention it would succeed. The climate cannot, as it has been supposed, be wholly unfavourable, seeing that the plant grows wild on the hills, and that a very excellent dye is obtained from it by the simple processes there in use. The certainty of having rain for the spring sowings, and the possibility of choosing the ground above the chance of inundation, are among the advantages which I anticipate for the cultivation of indigo in these tracts.

Poppy, sugarcane, safflower, sursoo, and other plants yielding oil, flax and hemp, call for no particular notice, they are all cultivated with success in Kachar, Jynta, and (except the poppy) in the Eastern division of Sylhet.

Oranges, together with the arica and pān vines, for which this country is famous, are all the produce of the lower parts of the Kasia hills, growing only on the limestone strata. Arica of an inferior quality is indeed found all over Sylhet, but deteriorates in quality to the eastward, until in Kachar it wholly disappears. Among other fruits, the plaintain is peculiarly fine, but the mangoe is inferior, and is not found to improve to the eastward; the lemon is found wild in the Kasia hills, and the apricot and lichi in those of Kachar; and in general the vegetation exhibits so much variety, and there are so many

new plants offering themselves, as we advance eastward, that this, with the similarity of climate to that of the southern parts of China, led to the inquiries originally commenced by the late Mr. Scott for the tea plant, which if it has not yet been discovered in a wild state so far to the westward, would probably succeed on some of the soils in the alluvial formations of Kachar or Tippera. Several cognate plants have been found, and genuine tea plants were raised in my garden from seeds in 1835.

China root (Rhubarb?) and lignum aloes are mentioned as the produce of Sylhet in the "Ayin Akhbari," but I never heard that either engaged the attention of the trader.

Land Tenures and Revenue.—The tenures in Sylhet being derived mostly from the Mahomedan government, are similar to those of Bengal generally; but the condition of the land, which is subdivided to an extent elsewhere unknown, excites the attention of every intelligent inquirer. The permanent settlement included Sylhet, and about that time there were I think 27,000 proprietors enrolled in the Collector's books, since when, in consequence of subdivisions which have been facilitated rather than checked by the law, the number has more than trebled, and a revenue of three and a half lacs is now collected from a hundred thousand proprietors. The only species of holding which seems unknown in Sylhet, is that of the village community, or Bhya chara, and this is the more remarkable, as something very like it still exists in Kachar and Assam, and there seems so much reason to believe that it attained over the whole of Sylhet, as a part of the ancient Kamrup; indeed I think it will be found that it is to the breaking up of these communities, by admitting the individual holders to engagements with the State direct, that we must attribute the origin of the extraordinary number of petty holdings in this district. Notwithstanding the existence of some tenures of a different character in Assam, the most ancient form in that country, apparently, by which land was held, was under a grant from the prince addressed to a body of proprietors, who by it were erected into a corporation, called a Raj, and who possessed the land on terms by which they were bound each for the other, and for the revenue of the whole estate. In Kachar this is unquestionable, and indeed up to a recent period no other form of tenure was known or acknowledged. The pecuniary wants of the late

Rajahs led to the introduction among the Raj of titles borrowed from the Musalmans, such as Chrowdries, &c., but the ancient grants were directed only to the Bur Bhuyiah and Bhuyiah's, names which clearly refer to the soil (भूई) though they are not current beyond these countries. In every Raj were certain classifications of the proprietors, made however without reference to the local positions of their estates, but according as they were charged with the payment of revenue to the prince direct, or to some one in whose favour he had made an assignment. These were called Khels, and the principal among them was the Khilmah, which paid to the Rajah, while all the others, as the Sang-jurai, Dekha-jurai, &c. after paying a fixed proportion only to the prince, accounted for the balance to the Ranni, to the Jub Raj, or other holder of the assignment. The local administration and execution of the prince's orders were anciently intrusted to the Raj, subject only to an appeal to the Raja, and they had the power to settle land on terms similar to those by which they themselves held, transacting business in periodical meetings.

I cannot detail the steps by which the power, consequence, and very nature of these corporations were destroyed; but content myself with observing, that there is unquestionable evidence of the state of things I have described still extant in the country, while it is certain that the late Raja completed their subversion, and left to the Rajes nothing valuable but the name, by assessing each landholder according to the full extent of his cultivation, abolishing all local jurisdiction and authority, whether in judicial or fiscal matters, and reducing all the proprietors to a footing of equality; though he still most inconsistently held them responsible collectively for the revenue of their Khels, making over the estates of defaulters to their management after they had in effect ceased to be a corporate body.

Under every change the proprietors still retained their hereditary right in the soil, and the locality of each holding was ascertained from time to time by measurement, as the shares and boundaries of individuals varied continually under the influence of the laws of inheritance, though the boundaries of the Raj remained unchanged, unless by a special grant made by the authority of the prince to a new corporation out of the unoccupied waste. Much of the cultivation, at least since the decline of the kingdom from its former consequence, was performed on

the smaller Taluks by the holders themselves, assisted by their families, but the larger proprietors leased their lands to Packhastyuts, retained some portion to be cultivated by their slaves, and assigned another to their hereditary Ryots, a class of people whose position was analogous to the Khudkhast Ryot on the one hand, and to that of agricultural slaves on the other; for while they had a right to cultivate at fixed rates, and could not be removed, they were at the same time not only answerable for the rent, but not at liberty to throw up their lands, or quit the property.

I have been thus prolix in describing the Kachar tenures, because I think that an interest attaches to them on account of their antiquity, and because to them I think the existing tenures in Assam and Sylhet may with truth be traced. I conclude that the land in the latter district while it formed a part of Kamrup, were held by Raj corporations precisely similar to those of Kachar; as the Mahomedan conquerors advanced, they altered the old state of things by admitting the members of the Raj to engage individually for the revenue; or still more frequently by making grants to Musalman chiefs and colonists, who soon found it their interest to compound with the ancient proprietors, and accept a portion only of the Raj land, in preference to having the whole thrown on their hands denuded of cultivators, who rather than remain on their hereditary estates in the reduced condition of Ryots, would emigrate to the eastward. The portions given up by the old occupants would consist of shares of each Taluk, not of a parcel under continuous boundaries; and hence probably arose the strange intermixture of the lands composing the estates of the leading proprietors in Sylhet, which are commonly found in numerous small parcels, at great distances from each other. Acquisitions made subsequently by purchase or inheritance, with the practice of allowing all lands belonging to one proprietor to be recorded in the Revenue Offices under one number, without reference to their locality, would of course in time swell the number of these isolations.

It had always been the custom to regulate all revenue demands on the land where the separate holdings were so very small, by a measurement made with more or less accuracy; and accordingly at the formation of the perpetual settlement in Sylhet a departure from the general rule by which such measurements were at the time prohibited, was sanctioned in

that particular district. By the records of that survey, and consequent arrangements, it appears that only that portion of the district which was known to be occupied, and to which proprietory right distinctly attached, came under settlement, and though much of the land measured was recorded as *junglah;* recent surveys shew that there must have been vast tracts of waste, which were not included in the operations of that time. The cultivation of these wastes has given rise to a legal question, which has employed the talents, and engaged the attention of some of the ablest civilians of our day. It is well known that by the provisions of the permanent settlement, the right of government to derive an increase of revenue from an extention of cultivation on the estates then settled, was declared to be given up for ever, and it was even added, that the advantage of this declaration should be conceded to those whose lands had been withheld from assessment by fraud, collusion, or mistake. But wastes which at the time of the settlement were not included within the known boundaries of any estate, could not by any possibility be contemplated in this arrangement; and as it was known by general inquiries, which have since been confirmed by actual measurement, that the quantity of land under cultivation in Sylhet far exceeded the total on which the settlement had been concluded, it was quite clear that an acquisition had been made from the waste to which the government right for revenue would apply. Such lands have been called *Halabadee*, and have formed the subject of a most voluminous and intricate correspondence among the revenue officers for many years.

The right of government to revenue from lands which have been reclaimed from the waste, and not included under the settlement, is admitted by all who have made themselves acquainted with the subject, but the difficulty is, to distinguish such lands; and its possibility is by some authorities wholly denied. On the part of the government it is urged, that documents founded on the old survey are still in existence shewing the superficial contents of each estate at the time of settlement, and that if on a measurement a Taluk is now found to contain more land than the gross amount *(abadee* and *junglah)* for which it was assessed, there can be no doubt that the excess has been derived from the waste, and indeed it does not appear, primâ facie, that it could well be derived from any other source.

On the other side it is answered, that the documents alluded to cannot be relied on, and that even if they were worthy of more credit than can be conceded to them, still it would seem a good argument against a demand for increase of "jumma," if the Talukdar were to urge that the total quantity of land in his estate was put down originally too small, either in consequence of "fraud, collusion, or mistake." To this it has been rejoined, that there is of course no intention to deny the validity of such an objection in every case when it shall be satisfactorily established by evidence; and the parties seem thus to be at issue on the point, whether the revenue officers having shown that there is an excess of land, it rests with the Talukdar to prove that this excess was within his original boundary, or with the government to go one step further, and shew by additional proof that it was acquired from the waste.

In the course of this inquiry some documentary evidence was brought to light, calculated to facilitate the latter course of proceeding very much. This was contained in certain records prepared soon after the settlement, and shewing the boundaries, locality, and estimated extent of the waste lands which had been reserved from the settlement. These papers were very incomplete, and did not include the whole of the wastes; but on a measurement of the lands indicated by them, a very considerable quantity of cultivation was elicited, upon which the claim for revenue was admitted, and a much larger quantity on which it was nearly certain it could be established. I have had no opportunity of learning the result of these inquiries, having been removed from the district before they were completed.

The revenue of Kachar was derived, at the time of its acquisition by us, from a land tax levied at a rate much higher than that of Sylhet, from customs levied on all the frontiers at most extravagant rates, from a sort of excise taken at all Bazars, from monopolies of every thing valuable in trade, as ivory, timber, &c. and from a house tax on the inhabitants of the mountains. The first steps taken for the reform of this department were, the abolition of all monopolies, the removal of all prohibition on exports and imports, the abolition of the excise, and the reduction of duties in the external trade. The immediate results were, an increase of trade, the customs on which, though levied at very reduced rates, yielded a far larger amount than

under the old system was obtained from the whole of the Sayer Mahal, and I think this branch of revenue quadrupled itself in five years, thus affording another verification of the principle in finance,—that low duties by encouraging consumption, will be found more productive than high ones, which on the contrary check it.

The sources of revenue in Jynta were very dissimilar to those of Kachar, as the Raja of that country having acquired the plains by conquest, appears to have abrogated the hereditary rights of the land-holders, and to have allowed none to hold except on terms annually granted or renewed at his pleasure, and which were very various. The plains of Jynta were probably conquered from Sylhet since the days of Akbar, one of the Mahus in the "Ayin Akhbari" being called Chyntar, which may well be a mistranscription, the Persian letter ت having been mistaken for ج.

History and people.—My notices of the history and people of these countries will necessarily be brief, as I do not propose to record the story of their petty dissensions and change of governors, but rather to collect and point attention to such facts whether derived from tradition or otherwise, as may throw light on the origin and migrations of the races which inhabit them, and this the more especially, as I am not aware that in so doing, I shall suppress any thing of real interest.

Kacharis.—According to records preserved among the family of the last princes of Kachar (which however are but traditions reduced to writing) the Kacharis conquered the kingdom of Kamrūp, and gave to it a succession of Rajas from whom the late royal family of Kachar, of the line of Ha-tsung-tsa, derive their descent. The term Kachari is of modern date, the proper name by which that people call themselves being Rangtsa, and the country from which they trace their origin being situated in the north-east of Assam.

It is known that Kamrup extended anciently to the southward as far as the confluence of the Megna with the Brahmaputra; and the Kacharis appear to have established themselves in the countries east of that line, including Assam, Sylhet, Tippera, and modern Kachar, or Hirumbha, in all of which, except Sylhet, they are found as a distinct people differing in appearance, religion, and customs from the other inhabitants.

The Ha-tsung-tsa family was expelled from Kamrup by the Rajas of Kooch Behar, and being driven* into Hirumbha maintained themselves in a reduced but independent form until the time of Raja Gobindchundra, who after many vicissitudes of fortune, became in 1824 a British tributary, and being murdered in 1830, and leaving no blood relations, terminated the line.

The people of Tippera are said to have the same origin with the Kacharis, and the similarity of religion, customs, and appearance, makes this probable. It may be added, that the Rajas of both countries have formerly acknowledged the connexion; the Tippera family being described as a younger branch of the ancient royal family, which in their expulsion from Kamrup established itself independently in the country which it formerly held as an appendage.

The dates of these transactions cannot be traced, but the Assam Baranjis state, that at the commencement of the Ahom dynasty in upper Assam, in the 12th century, the Kooch Behar princes had possession of Kamrup, from which, as well as from the date of the first Mahomedan expedition into Kamrup (in 1204) it may be concluded that the subversion of the Kachar dynasty considerably preceded that era, and that the assertion made by the Kachar chiefs, that their ancestors conquered Assam about one thousand years ago, is tolerably correct.

The existence in Kachar, even in these days, of many poor and proud families who disdain to labour for their subsistence, and look to official employment alone as a becoming source of livelihood, the number of offices, and their nature, so inconsistent with the poverty and insignificance of the late petty Court, are among the circumstances which attest the credibility of the story of former power, and taken with traditions current in these countries, entitle the pretensions of the Kacharis to a degree of credit, which they would not otherwise deserve.

The Kachari language is unwritten, having been superseded for all purposes of business by the Bengali for many centuries, and this circumstance greatly increases the difficulty of all attempts to trace the

* The tradition is, that the invaders from Kooch Behar were preceded by Brahmans mounted on cows, against whom the Kacharis either could not, or dare not, oppose themselves; but this is obviously a Hindu fiction.

origin of the people through that medium. Greater probability of success offers through a careful examination of their religion and customs, on which points my inquiries will, I think, be found not to be without use. Although Brahmanism professes to receive no converts, yet great efforts have been made to bring within the pale of Hinduism both the Kacharis, the Munipories, and most of the tribes to the eastward. It is matter of history that Brahmanism had no root in Assam earlier than the middle of the 16th century, though it has since attained to such power as to shake the throne of that country. In Munipore its progress has been still more recent, but in Kachar Proper, or Hirumbha, the process of conversion has been going on before our eyes, and actually commenced within the last fifty years. The father and uncle of the two last Rajas professed the old religion, and did not conform to Brahmanism; but Krishna and Gobindchundra, about the year 1790 A. D., were both placed, with certain ceremonies, in the body of a large copper image of a cow, and thence produced by Bengali Brahmins as reclaimed Hindus to an admiring people. Place was assigned them as Chhettry of the Suraj Bungsi tribe, and numbers of their followers, after their example, were admitted to caste, and are called Hindus; but still greater numbers were infinitely disgusted at the whole procedure, and there can be little doubt that the divisions to which it gave rise, and the injudicious persecutions by which it was followed, were at the root of all the misfortunes by which the country was soon visited.

The ancient religion of Kachar is not clearly referable to any of the forms existing in Eastern Asia, and certainly not to any of the Hindu systems, as will appear by the following account. The Kacharis acknowledge a Supreme Being, or first principle, from which the world and all that it contains is derived. They worship the manifest powers of nature, or rather spirits having authority over them, and the influences of the seasons.

No superstitious regard is paid to animal life, and even the cow was not anciently held sacred.

There is no class set apart for the priesthood, neither do any take upon themselves exclusively sacerdotal functions; but these are performed by the elders in families, and by the ministers of state, and high public functionaries, on great public occasions. There was how-

ever one officer who had charge of the series of ceremonies performed in the spring of the year, but his duty was abolished by the jealousy or bigotry of the late Rajas. Among their superstitions, it is the practice to perform sacrifice before a bamboo planted in the ground, and into which it is maintained the Power worshipped enters, on being duly propitiated, and causes the boughs to bend in token of his approbation. This custom is common also to the Tipperas.

The indifference shown for animal life, and the absence of an established and hereditary priesthood, mark sufficiently the disconnexion with Hinduism, and the disregard for caste may be taken as an additional proof of this; for though the people are divided into forty Sympongs, these are only so many social distinctions, or tribes, and they are not prohibited from intermarrying or eating together, which they accordingly frequently do. All these circumstances considered, it will be found that this superstition more resembles the system of Confucius than any thing Indian.

The law of inheritance appears to be, that all property descends in equal shares among the male children, and afterwards, in the natural order of succession, to the brothers and brothers issue; but as the leading men formerly made no acquisitions in land (for the Kachari cultivation is carried on by the inferior classes in a species of co-parcenary) the subject has not given rise to much investigation. Marriages seem to have been contracted spontaneously, without the direct intervention of friends, but polygamy was allowed, and by the richer classes indulged in to a great extent. The marriage of widows was sanctioned, though not encouraged, and in order to escape the scandal of such connexions, it seems to have been usual for widows, at least among the higher ranks, to reside in the families of their deceased husband's brother, by which it has after happened that more scandal was created than it was intended to avoid.

Among peculiar customs, for which no reason appears, it seems to have been a rule that the Rajah should never reside in a building of masonry, but in bungalows surrounded by a stockaded enclosure, perhaps to remind him of his origin among the woods of upper Assam.

The worship of irascible female spirits, and the practice of the Tantra magic ascribed by the Hindus to the people of Kamrup, are imputations which derive some countenance from the existing worship of

Ramchundi, the Thakoorain of Kachar, who is adored under the symbol of a sword, religiously preserved in the Rajbarri, and to the possession of which the most inexpressible importance is attached. It is worthy of remark, that no image of any thing having life is worshipped in Kachar, nor are there either in that country or Sylhet any remains of antique buildings, and especially of Hindu buildings, to attest the existence at an early date of a Hindu population. There is a footstep cut in the rock on the ridge east of Aquee, said by the people of both Kachar and Munipur to have been made by the gods as a boundary mark between the two states: this may be one of the numerous footsteps of Gautama, but there is obviously no certainty about its antiquity.

Kasias.—Among the aboriginal tribes, the Kasias, or more correctly (as they style themselves) the Khyee, attract the most attention, standing as much distinguished from their neighbours in personal appearance, and social and religious customs, as their country is different from others in geological structure and physical aspect. The Khyee are an athletic race of mountaineers, fond still of a martial appearance, and their reputation as warriors is hardly extinct, as their extensive feudatory inroads are still remembered in Sylhet and Assam, the plains of which countries they formerly laid under contribution very frequently. The religion of the Kasias does not assimilate with any of the known Indian systems, but is limited to certain superstitious practices (among which the augury seems to be in greatest esteem) and to the reverence for, and sacrifice to, the presiding deities of villages, hills, and similar localities, but does not comprehend the knowledge of a universal, all-pervading Intelligence, such as is acknowledged by the Kacharis, or the immortality of the soul. Brahmanism has made some progress among the Kasias, especially of Jynta, and some of the higher classes there have adopted Hindu practices, and obtained admission among the Sudra castes, but this has not led to the entire abandonment of their national superstitions, connected with which was the cruel abomination of human sacrifice, for being accessory to which the last Raja lost his throne and country.

The great peculiarity among the Khyee, and that by which perhaps their remote connexion with other tribes will be established, is the

custom which prevails in regard to the descent of both personal and real property, and which holds equally of regal authority. By this all property and right passes to the eldest son of the nearest female relative in the descending line, or generally, to the son of the eldest sister of the holder. Whatever laxity may be observed in regard to other practices, and however some of the upper ranks may conform to the rules of caste, and desire admission among the Hindus, this custom is by all most tenaciously adhered to. They are further charged with the practice of polyandry, but however it may in reality be tolerated, the upper classes in general disclaim it, and it can be said to prevail only among the poorer sort, with whom too it would often seem to mean rather facility of divorce than the simultaneous admission of a plurality of husbands. It is possible, however, that unqualified polyandry existed formerly, and that it has fallen into disrepute since a more intimate connexion with the plains has sprung up.

The Khyee language is unwritten, and moreover exhibits no affinity with any of the languages of the neighbourhood, some of which, (numerous and diversified as they are), often offer indications of a common origin, but the point is of less importance, as among the rude mountain tribes great dissimilarity of language has been observed to exist, even where a common origin was nearly certain. There are no antique remains, or works of art, on which to build conjectures as to the condition of the people by whom the country was anciently occupied, for though there are several considerable rude stone columnar erections, yet there is nothing peculiar or artificial in their construction, and they are exceeded in magnitude and vastness of design by Stonehenge, and by the Masses seen in Mexico. No mechanical contrivances were employed in raising either these columns, or the circular slabs which are often met, but they were constructed by manual labor, some of them being of recent times. There is however a stone bridge of considerable dimensions in the Jynta mountains, the style of which is Saracenic, but it is quite possible the work may have been constructed by a Mussulman in the employment of the Raja at no very distant period. No great respect is paid by the Khyee to hereditary chiefs, though their rank is readily admitted, but their influence depends more on their personal character, and their power to guide the public

assemblies, without which nothing is decided either among the community collectively, or the villages separately.

Destruction of human life, whether by accident or design, in open war or in secret, is always the cause of feud among the relations of the parties, which are terminated only by reprisals, or a compensation in money.

The equipment of a Khyee chief is martial and striking in appearance; a tunic of strong cloth, bordered by party colors, without sleeves, well adapted to muscular exertions, sits close to his body above the waist; an ample shield of buffaloe hide or brass is slung at his back, and leaves him at liberty to employ both his hands either with the bow, the javelin, or a powerful two-handed sword which hangs by his side. This sword is unique in kind, and more like the German or Swiss weapon than any thing Indian. The bow is of bamboo, and is fitted with a slip of the same substance in place of twine, as it never softens in rain, and is equally useful in all weathers. It is to the credit of the Khyee that though acquainted with the use of poisoned arrows they never employ them against their fellow men in war, but only in the chase against wild beasts. A series of destructive defeats during a protracted contest with the Government troops has not entirely destroyed the martial disposition of this people, who probably still retain the remembrance of those days in which their fathers pillaged both Sylhet and Assam.

Conjecture is lost in assigning a probable origin to the Khyees. Segregated strictly in a tract of country as different from the neighbourhood as they themselves are from the other tribes, they seem to owe the retention of their independence entirely to their personal qualities, as their mountains are by no means difficult of access. I am quite sensible that verbal analogy affords but a slight foundation on which to build an hypothesis, but I may nevertheless mention, that a people resembling the Khyee in some particulars formerly occupied a position on the south bank of the Brahmaputra at Measpara, where they were called Mek; they were known to have come originally from the frontiers of Butan and Nipal; the Khyee are called Mike by the Kacharis, and their customs in regard to marriage assimilate to those of Butan. The theory which would assign a western origin to the Khyee is countenanced by their appearance, and especially by the absence in them of

those peculiarities about the eye which stamp the tribes of Indo-Chinese origin.

Nagas.—The Nagas are found in all the tracts east of the Kupili River, as far as the country of the Khamtis, much of which is unexplored. This generic name seems to have been applied to them by the Hindus of the plain, with reference either to their scanty clothing, or more probably to their residence in the mountains, but is not acknowledged among themselves or the other hill tribes, among whom they call themselves "Kwaphee." They are associated commonly with the Kukis or Koonjye, from whom however they are essentially distinct in customs, and personal appearance. The Nagas though often powerful men, yet do not commonly display those marks from which great strength may be inferred. Their limbs have not the massive configuration of the Kukis and other hill men. It is a distinguishing particular of the Naga tribes that they are not a migratory or wandering people, and while the hill Kacharis and Kukis continually change their locations, seldom keeping their villages more than three years in one spot, the Nagas remain fixed, and their insignificant villages, which appear in one of Rennell's early Maps, are to be found still as they stood in 1764. Again, the Nagas are remarkable as using no weapons but the javelin and dao, a sort of bill common to the Birmas, Shans, and most of the hill tribes except the Kasias; and they have no prejudices on the score of food, eating every thing indiscriminately, as well that flesh which has been slain for food as that which has not. In common with the Kukis and Garrows however they abstain strictly from milk, butter, or ghee, looking on the use of them with great aversion. The religion of both tribes is limited to a few superstitious practices, differing among themselves, but presenting nothing from which their origin or connexion with other tribes is to be inferred.

Kukis.—The Kukis have long been notorious for their attacks on the peaceable inhabitants of the plains, to whom along the Sylhet and Kachar frontier they have at times been very troublesome. In addition to the javelin they employ bows and poisoned arrows, a practice perhaps suggested by their contests with the larger animals, as elephants and tigers, with which their forests abound. The object of their inroads on the plains is not plunder, for which they have never

been known to shew any desire, but they kill and carry away the heads of as many human beings as they can seize, and have been known in one night to carry off fifty. These are used in certain ceremonies performed at the funerals of the chiefs, and it is always after the death of one of their Rajas that their incursions occur.

The proper limits of the Kukis are undefined, but they never seem to have stretched northward of Chattrchura peak, and Kukitunga on the frontier of Sylhet, nor above Soor and Tungtching in Kachar. The villages at Abong in Upper Kachar are exceptions, but they are well known to have been settled by Raja Krishnachundra with Kukis from the southward, who had sought his protection. The Kukis have been accused of cannibalism, and I am aware of an instance in which the charge seemed substantiated, but they disclaim the imputation with much vehemence, and I have seen no reason to think that the practice is frequent among them.

People of Sylhet.—The inhabitants of Sylhet are Bengalis, and not distinguishable from that race in the districts to the westward. On a closer examination, however, it will be observed that the lower classes, especially the inferior castes of Hindu cultivators, bear marks of their indigenous origin, and a striking difference may be remarked between their features and those of the Musulman descendants of the colonists by whom the country was gradually conquered. The few families of any consideration in the district are known to be of Hindustani or Persian origin, and these are the most respected, though they have been superseded of late years by one or two considerable Hindu houses, which have acquired fortune and consequence in our service. There are also some Musulman families, descendants of chiefs or Rajas under the Kamrup dynasty, who were forced to conform to Mahomedanism on the change of masters; of these the principal is that of the Baniachuny Raja, whose ancestor was probably the party conquered by Esau Afghan, in the reign of Akhbar, when "the kutbeh was read, and the coin struck in the Bhatta country," according to Abul Fuzil. It must have been a Raja of the same family also who was attacked in 1254 A. D. by Mulic Yuzbeg, the Governor of Bengal, who afterwards lost his life in Southern Assam, or rather in the mountains between Assam and Sylhet. The family though converted to Mahomedanism has always retained the title

of Raja: it is fast going to ruin under the joint influence of the laws of inheritance and improvident habits.

It is impossible (and if possible would be tedious) to trace the steps by which the progressive conquest of this part of Kamrup was effected, but some of the principal may, I think, be satisfactorily established, and will be found worthy of attention. The earliest Mahomedan invasion is that of Mahomed Bukhtiyar, who is said to have penetrated through Kamrup into Thibet in A. D. 1205-6; and as I think his expedition, though unsuccessful, called forth a display of energy and talent calculated to excite our admiration of these early adventurers, I shall offer no apology for attempting to elucidate it.

Mahomed Bukhtiyar was the Governor of Behar, and in 1203 A. D. entered Bengal, and having rapidly overcome that country, he immediately turned his forces against Kamrup, which appears to have been then a powerful kingdom, and worthy of his arms. The accounts of his expedition, left us by Mahomedan writers, state that he proceeded from Dacca, opening for himself a road along the banks of the Luckia; that he marched under the guidance of a hill chief, of the tribe called Koonch, whom he had converted to Islamism; that they reached a mighty river "three times as wide as the Ganges" called the Bangmuttee, on which stood a city called Burdehund, which he captured; that after marching ten days along the banks of this river, they entered the defiles of the mountains, having passed which, they crossed the river (Brahmaputra ?) by a stone bridge of twenty-two arches, after which the Raja of Kamrup submitted. He then moved into the Butan mountains, and reached the plains of Thibet, where his army was so roughly handled in a battle with the people of the country, and alarmed by an expected attack from the chief of a city called Kerrimpatan, which was governed by a Christian, having under him a Bhutia population with Brahman officers, that they retreated, and finding the bridge broken down by the Kamrup Raja, who now harassed them in every way, they returned, utterly discomforted with the loss of the greater part of their number, to Bengal, where Mahomed Bukhtiyar died of grief and vexation. I must own the latter part of this narrative is quite inexplicable on any hypothesis, except that of the fancy of the writers, or their desire to account for a defeat which was most likely the consequence of disease and privation. But the

first part admits of some explanations, calculated to remove apparent inconsistencies, and to render the story up to the passage of the bridge sufficiently credible. The points which demand elucidation are, the locality of the Bangmuttee and its extraordinary size; the stone bridge of twenty-two arches; and the name of the river over which it was thrown. In the narrative three hill tribes are mentioned, the Koonch, the Mikah, and the Nadera; the Koonch it has been supposed are the people of Kooch Bahar, but however this may be, there is no difficulty about the Mikah, that being the name by which the Kasias at this day are known among the Kacharis; and *Mikedeetah* being the title of an officer who had charge of the frontier with that people, and such of them as occasionally took up their residence within the Kachar jurisdiction; and as it is expressly stated that the Mahomedan army *crossed the mountains, before* they reached the bridge, and before the Raja submitted, I conclude, that they entered Lower Assam, not by Goalpara, but by the Kasia or Kachar mountains. The river, three times as wide as the Ganges, could not have been the Brahmaputra, both because Mahomedan writers shew themselves acquainted with that river, and because no one who had seen the rivers about Dacca, could ever fancy the Brahmaputra above the Luckia to be even wider than the Ganges; but to reach the Kasia Hills, they must have marched along the edge of the inundation in the Bhatta country, most likely before the waters had much abated, and they mistook that for a river.

No river called Bangmuttee (burster of earth) is now known in the north-east parts of Bengal, but there is a place called Bangha, which derives its name, without question, from its position at the fork of the Soorma and Kusiara rivers, where the latter *bursts* from the former and rushes towards the Bhatta country. It should here too be remarked, that Bhangh (ভাঙ্গ) means to walk through water or mud, as well as to burst or break, and the expression therefore is applicable to the inundation. As the guide was called Ali Mikah, I conclude that he was a Kasia, and led the army over his native mountains to some point on the Burrampootah, where a temporary bridge, composed of timber, supported on pieces of rough stone, might be erected, and where the breadth would not be so great, but that in the dry season twenty-two arches might suffice for the passage over the actual stream.

If any doubt should still be entertained, that the first Mahomedan expeditions into Kamrup and Assam passed through the mountains north of Sylhet, I may mention, that in 1256 A. D. Malec Yusbeg, who had invaded Kamrup from Bengal, was killed while retreating "across the mountains;" and that between 1489 and 1499 Ala-Udin, having "*first overrun Assam*," proceeded westward to the conquest of Kamrup, which course is impossible on any other supposition, than that he entered Assam by the way either of Hirumbah or Sylhet, most likely the former.

Mahomed Bukhtiyar's army consisted of ten thousand men, chiefly Tartar cavalry, and that he was able to subsist them, proves that the countries through which he passed must have been well cultivated; but when we reflect that this expedition was made before the invention of fire-arms, and that the invaders had therefore no advantage over the people of the country in regard to their weapons, while the country is in no part favourable for cavalry, we cannot but feel our respect for the skill, energy, and enterprize of the early Mahomedan conquerors of India considerably elevated.

The condition of Sylhet, as noticed in the Ayin Akhbari, with the fact formerly noticed, that the Bhatta country was only recently conquered, proves that in the time of Akhbar, the district had not acquired above one half of its present dimensions, and this supposition is confirmed by Sunnuds bearing date in the 15th and 16th centuries, shewing that adventurers were encouraged to make war upon "the infidels" on the frontier, and that lands were granted, of which they were to obtain possession by force. The town of Sylhet existed in the time of Akhbar, and as this is known to date from the Mosque built over the tomb of Sha Gelaal, its patron saint, who conquered it from a native Raja, we may assume, that the current tradition, which assigns its erection to the middle of the 13th century, is correct.

The first appearance of the English power occurs in 1762, when a detachment of five companies of Sipahis under the direction of Mr. H. Verelst marched from Chittagong under the Tippera Hills through the southern part of Sylhet into Kachar, where they remained nearly a year, encamping at Kaspur, then the capital and residence of Raja Hurrishchunder. After a lapse of seventy years the object of this

march had been forgotten, except by a few old persons, who stated that it was for the conquest of Manipur, and this statement has proved to be correct, the researches of Captain Pemberton having elicited the original treaty concluded with the chief of Chittagong, under which it was agreed that the Raja Jy Sinh of Manipur, who had been expelled by the Burmans, should be restored by us on certain conditions, chiefly of a commercial nature. The expedition was prevented by the difficulty of the country from proceeding beyond Kaspur, and was recalled to assist in the war against Kasim Ali Khan.

In 1774 a detachment under Major Henniker was employed against the Raja of Jynta, whose country was conquered, but restored on payment of a fine. The cause of this collision is supposed to have been connected with the marauding habits to which the Kasias were then addicted, and which had not yet been suppressed.

There is but one point of general interest untouched, upon which I wish to offer a few words before concluding this very long paper. Slavery has always existed in these countries, and the number of persons in that unhappy condition is very large. In former days there is no doubt great atrocities were committed in regard to this matter, whole families of hill people being sometimes carried off openly, sometimes kidnapped, and sometimes brought under the pressure of famine, an evil of frequent occurrence among the hills. Even in our days a regular traffic was carried on in slaves, numbers being annually exported from Kachar to Aracan through the British territories. This was brought to the notice of the Civil authorities some years ago, and effectually checked for the future; but the law still permits domestic or local slavery, though it prohibits exportation, and while the hill people continue to make war on each other, and to sell their children in times of scarcity, perhaps it is only a wise discretion, which allows the existence of this great moral blot on society. But apart from legislative provisions, there is a course by which the evil might be gradually eradicated, while prodigious benefit in another shape, would at the same time be conferred on all the countries in which it exists. This is the formation of an establishment for the purchase and manumission of slaves, more especially of children, which are often sold at very low prices. These well brought up, and instructed in the useful arts as husbandmen and artizans, would in a few years become

the means of operating a great improvement in the social condition of the people among whom they would spread, and to whom they would offer the sort of information which is required to elevate them in the scale of civilization, by the example of superior morality, intelligence, and well directed industry, which they might be expected to exhibit.

The number of people in all these districts is on the increase, in a country where every thing tends to encourage increase, and where the checks, both positive and moral, are as entirely absent as they appear to be in China. The census* taken in 1820, shewed the inhabitants of Sylhet had more than doubled since 1801, and if little dependance can be placed on the accuracy of these returns, enough is known from other sources to warrant the belief of an enormous increase. The quantity of land brought into cultivation, and the creation of new estates by the subdivision of the old ones, are among the most unquestionable proofs of this assertion.

Whatever doubts may be entertained, reasonably or otherwise, of the advantages resulting to India from the rule of Britain, I cannot omit to record my humble testimony to its value in this quarter, or to state my belief that as in no other parts which I have visited, has that rule been more manifestly exerted for the good of the people, so in no other has it called forth more unequivocal marks of loyalty, attachment, and confidence; and far off may the day be, when these shall abate. In proof of this, I may notice the behaviour of the people during the invasion of Kachar in 1824, by the Burmans, when they advanced to the very frontier of Sylhet without in any way affecting its tranquillity. But in a more trying emergency, when the British troops were withdrawn for the protection of Dacca, the people of Sylhet not only remained loyal, but an offer was actually made by some influential men to raise a levy *en masse* with which to oppose the enemy, and a small force was actually embodied, the men of which, by their local knowledge and endurance of climate, proved of considerable use. The readiness with which these took service at such a time, must be laid to the account of some deeper feeling than ordinary (for their homes were on the very frontier),

* In 1801 number of persons, 492,945. In 1820, number of persons 1,083,720.

and that unquestionably was the dread of the devastation which accompanied the Burmese advance; but if the existing Government had been unpopular, all would have been at least indifferent at a change of masters, and some certainly would have intrigued with the enemy. But nothing of the kind occurred, and I even succeeded in inducing some who had been released, after falling into the enemy's hands, to return and act as spies on our behalf, at the risk of every thing which a Hindu (and these were Brahmuns) values more than life.

On the other hand, many of the inhabitants of Kachar disgusted and worn out by the oppressions of their native chiefs, did coalesce with the Burmans, thereby proving that their dread of that sanguinary people could be overcome by their sense of the intolerable character of the Government under which they were groaning, and that they had reached a point in endurance, at which any change appeared for the better.

Memorandum on the Silk Trade between Shikarpore and Khorassan, and on the produce of Indigo in Sinde. By Lieut. J. POSTANS, *Assistant Political Agent, Upper Sinde.*

The importation of raw silk from the north-west to Shikarpore is one of the most important branches of the import trade from that direction; the article appears to be of a superior description, and as I am not aware of its being known in the Bombay market, I have collected the following particulars to accompany samples.

The following are the descriptions of the raw silk, with the prices of each in the Shikarpore Bazar, import duty paid (at one rupee six annas per maund).

No. 1. "*Kokanee*," from Bokhara (produced in Toorkistan) price 10* Shikarpore rupees per *assar*.

No. 2. "*Toonee*," from Kerat (produced in Toorkistan) 13 Rs. 12 annas per *assar*.

* Silk raw and in thread, prepared, is weighed at the rate of 90½ Shikarpore rupees, or 1 assar, or 88 Company's rupees last coinage. The Shikarpore rupee at present is worth 94½ Company's per 100 Shikarpore, or 5¼ per cent in favour of the former.