

Notes on the Kasia Hills, and People. By Lieut. H. YULK, Bengal Engineers.

A traveller approaching the Kasia Hills from the south, must in spite of the tameness of their general profile, be struck by the singular feature of a high sandstone precipice, which runs like an artificial scarp for miles along their face, with its upper crest straight, sharp and almost perfectly horizontal. Even when the precipice is interrupted for a space by a jungly acclivity, this sharp crest continues equally defined by the sudden cessation of the forest at its level.

As we enter the first low range of limestone hills, if instead of following the beaten road to Cherra Poonjee, which mounts by bold staircases and zigzags to the table land, we turn aside to track the Wa-lingtia, one of the clear hill streams which so soon are to degenerate into dull Bengallee nullas, we shall be better able to judge of Kasia scenery than those, who keeping the highway are so apt to speak disparagingly of the beauty of these hills. For two or three miles the path lies in a narrow gorge. Rocks or woody steeps rise so directly from the water as to leave but a narrow footing. You see by the constantly recurring rapids, how quickly you are ascending. Sometimes, however, you find a broad reach of deep, still water, swarming with the black backs of large fish. In an angle of the rock is perhaps a Kasia fish-trap. An enclosure of bamboos and matting has its narrow entrance fitted with a trap-door, the fisher scatters his bait within, and sits concealed in a little hut, watching till the fish swarm below. He then slips his cord, the door runs down, and he proceeds to land his victims at leisure. Issuing from the defile the river branches on the left, from which flows the smaller stream, (the Wa-lingdeki,) opens the magnificent valley of Mausmai. It is of a horse-shoe form; two-thirds up its steep sides still runs the clear precipice of some eight hundred feet in height, with its even crest, seeming to bar all access to the upper regions. Over it, side by side, with an unbroken fall leap five or six cascades. Through the great height, the white waters seem to descend with a slow, wavering motion. The path through the valley is shaded by groves of the orange and citron, the jack and the betel-palm, mixed with stately forest trees, many of them entwined with pawn, and here or there a huge India rubber tree or banyan. In their shade the pine-apple grows

in profusion ; all seem like the uncultivated gifts of the Creator ; but here and there water-pipes of hollowed betel trunks, carrying a stream for several hundred yards along the hill side, shew that they are not altogether untended. After many ups and downs, we arrive again at the river which divides the valley. The bridge by which we cross is worthy of description, as I believe no account of any thing similar has yet been published.

On the top of a huge boulder by the river side, grows a large India rubber tree, clasping the stone in its multitude of roots. Two or three of the long fibres, whilst still easily pliable, have been stretched across the stream, and their free ends fastened on the other bank. There they have struck firmly into the earth, and now form a *living bridge* of great, and yearly increasing strength. Two great roots run directly one over the other, and the secondary shoots from the upper have been bound round, and grown into the lower, so that the former affords at once a hand-rail and suspending chain, the latter a footway. Other roots have been laced and twisted into a sort of ladder as an ascent from the bank to the bridge. The greatest thickness of the upper root is a foot, from which it tapers to six or eight inches. The length of the bridge is above eighty feet, and its height about twenty above the water in the dry season.

This bridge was constructed by the people of the village of Ringhot, and forms their communication with Cherra during the rains ; the present generation say, it was made by their grandfathers. This was the first and most remarkable bridge of the kind that I saw in the Kasia Hills, and I supposed it to be unique, perhaps half accidental. But, I afterwards found it to be an instance of a regular practice, and saw such bridges in every stage, from that of two slender fibres hung across the stream, to such as I have tried to describe above, and there are not less than half a dozen within as many miles of Cherra. One* I measured ninety feet in clear span. They were generally composed of the roots of two opposite trees, (apparently planted for the purpose), bound together in the middle.

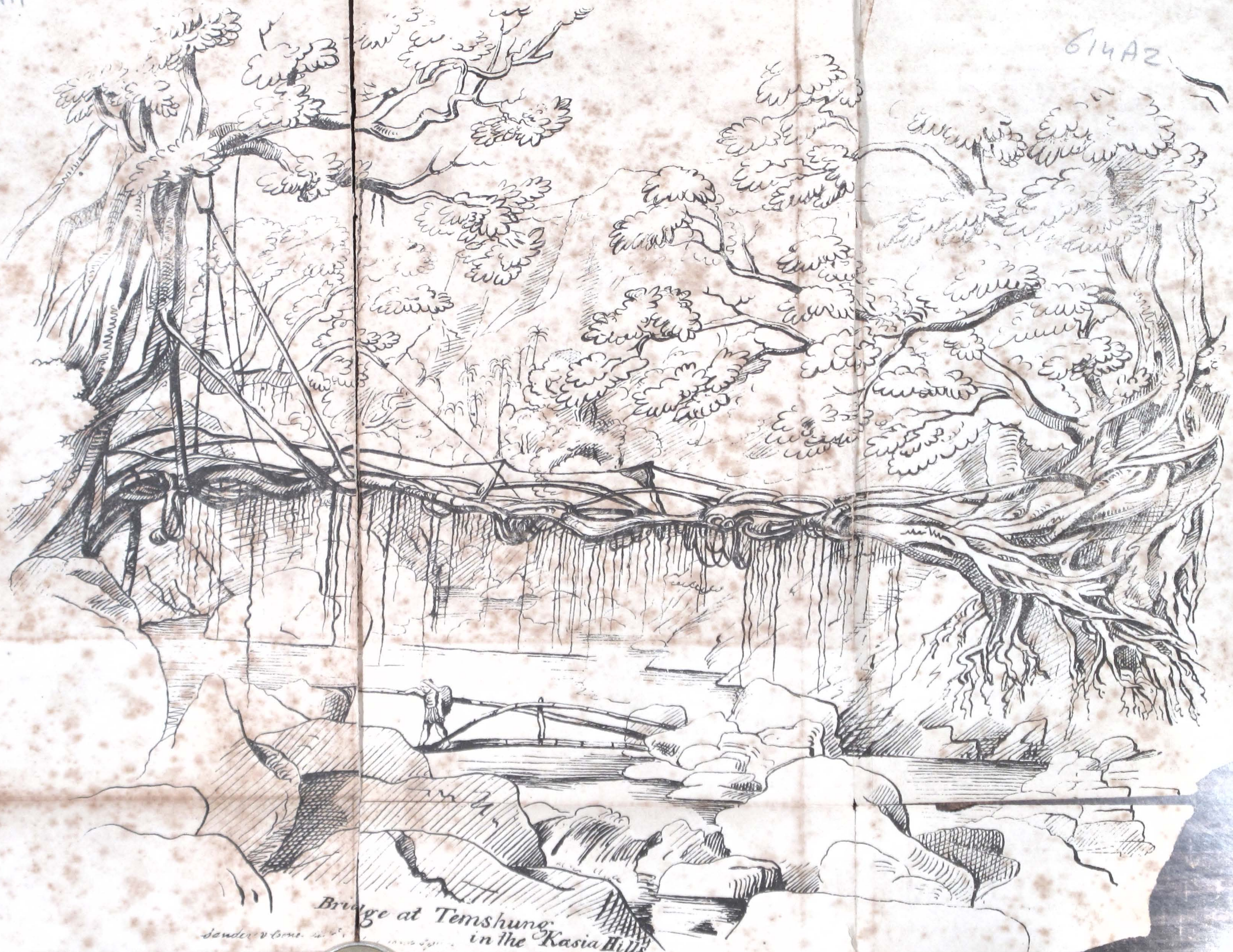
On the Wa-lingtia, or larger branch of the river, whose course we have traced, are several other remarkable bridges. One on the suspension

* Shewn in Plate I.

principle, across a precipitous gorge on the road between Cherra and Tringhai, is composed of long rattans stretched between two trees, at a height of forty feet above the river in the dry season. Yet this bridge, when I visited it, was impassable from damage done by the last year's floods. The footway was a bundle of small canes lashed together, and connected with two larger rattans forming hand-rails, but these so low and so far apart, that it must be difficult to grasp both together. I could not estimate the length of this bridge much under two hundred feet between the points of suspension. The Hill Kasias are afraid to trust themselves on it, but the Wārs, or men of the vallies, cross it drunk or sober, light or laden, with indifference and security. Still further up the river, and near the little village of Nongpriang, immediately under Cherra, is another specimen of Kasia engineering and ingenuity,—a bridge of about eighty feet span, composed entirely of strong bamboos bent into a semicircular arch, affording a sound footing, and firm rails for the hand.

But to return to our tour of the valley of Mausmai. Quitting the river we commence ascending, by a steep and rugged path, one of the narrow spurs that descend from the foot of the precipice which girds the valley, at a point where it is much diminished in elevation. Soon leaving behind us the region of pine-apples and betel nuts, two hours hard climbing brings us to the foot of the cliff, here broken in four steps of twenty to thirty feet each in height, which we ascend by many bamboo ladders. These are somewhat rickety, and at times exhibit a woful hiatus among the rungs. From the summit of the ladders a half hour brings us to the table land within two miles of Cherra Poonjee. This table land, covered with naked undulating hills, and at intervals of a few miles interrupted by deep and sudden vallies, is the general characteristic of the country as far north as the Barapani a distance of fifty miles. Beyond this, the region towards Assam sinks into a tract of low hills covered with dense jungle, and abounding in elephants and malaria. On the east the Jaintia country presents great tracts of pasturage, dotted with clumps of fir, and in parts a park-like forest scenery of stately oaks and firs form a noble foreground to the distant view of the snowy mountains seen rising behind the black Bootan hills, far beyond the valley of Assam. To the westward of Cherra the Kasia country may be considered to extend between forty and fifty





Bridge at Temshung
in the Kasia Hills

Sander & Co. 1881

miles, being separated, according to common report, from the Garrows by a dense and unpeopled jungle.

A traveller from the south first meets the fir tree in the ravine of the Boga Pani, eighteen miles north of Cherra, but there weak and stunted. The greater part of the country north of this is sprinkled with firs in natural clumps, and sometimes (in the vicinity of iron works) in artificial plantations. In the descent to the Bara Pani the tree attains its utmost height, but in the woodlands of Jaintia, it is found in greatest girth and beauty; not as a tall mast, but gnarled like the oak, and spreading like the cedar, as we have seen some of the Patriarchs of the Highland forests. On the route from Cherra to Assam the oak is poor and scrubby, scarcely recognizable save by its fruit; but to the eastward, though a near inspection shews a difference in the leaf, it has in character, colour and outline, perfectly the aspect of the English oak.

In the deep vallies of the south the vegetation is most abundant and various. Among the most conspicuous species are, the great India rubber tree scattered here and there in the stony bottoms; the rattan winding from trunk to trunk and shooting his pointed head above all his neighbours; higher up the stately sago palm with its branching arms; and in some shady damp nook, shut out from sun and wind, the tree fern with its graceful coronet. Of bamboos there are whole forests, and a difficult matter it is to force a path through their thick basket-work. Of this most useful plant the Kasias discriminate seven species by name. The cowslip, polyanthus, honeysuckle and ivy, with many other plants near akin to old familiar friends, abound in different parts of the higher hills, and the common English rag-weed (or ben-weed of Scotland,) not the least fertile in home associations, is plentiful at Cherra.

The most remarkable phenomenon of any kind in the country is undoubtedly the quantity of rain which falls at Cherra. On a certain occasion thirty inches of rain is said to have fallen at Genoa in 24 hours, and the statement has been doubted; but no one who has measured the amount of rain in the Kasia Hills, can doubt the possibility at least of such a quantity. It is with some hesitation that I write it, but the unexceptionable mode of measurement, and the many times that I have seen my friend (still resident at Cherra,) who registered the fall, take

these remarkable gauges, leave me no room to doubt. In the month of August 1841, during five successive days, thirty inches of rain in the 24 hours fell at Cherra; and the total fall in the month of August was 264 inches; or, that there may be no mistake, *twenty-two feet* of rain. The gauge was simply a large glass jar, having a funnel fitted with projecting eaves; and the water was measured morning and evening with a cylinder three inches in depth, of equal diameter with the funnel.

During the heavy rains above-mentioned, the proportion of the fall by night to that by day, was generally about 18 to 12.

The formation of the limestone rocks near Cherra gives rise to a curious phenomenon in the disappearance of streams in their hollows. Sometimes a river vanishes in a cleft beneath a high cliff, sometimes falls headlong into a deep circular hollow and is lost to view, reminding one of the gardens of Cambalu,

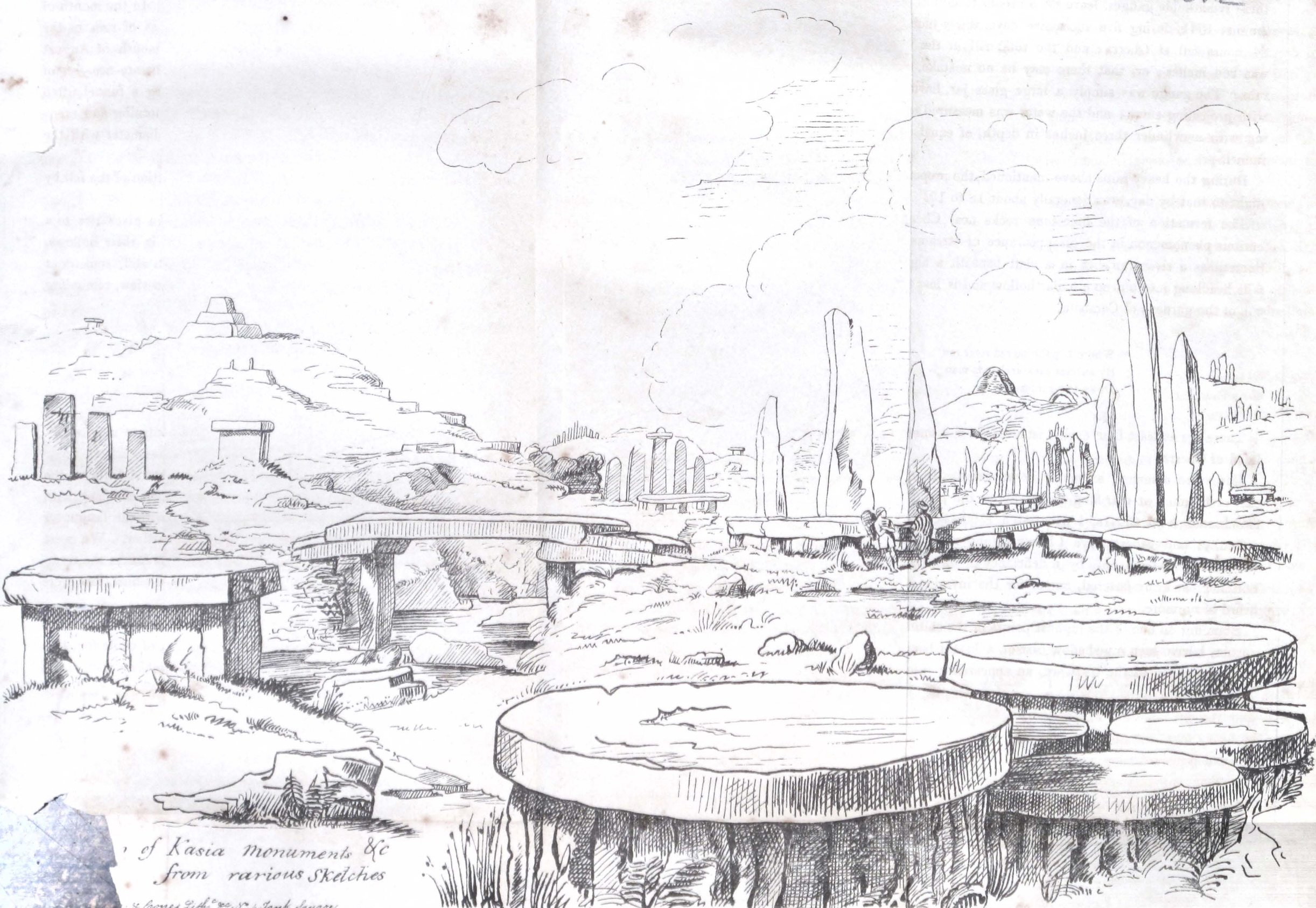
“ Where Alp the sacred river ran
By caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.”

There are at least four such instances in the immediate neighbourhood of Cherra.

Caves are common, as might be expected. In that a little to the east of Pundua, at a trifling height above the plains, in company with two friends from Cherra, I penetrated 1300 paces, without fatigue or difficulty, and others have I believe gone much further. We were compelled to retreat only by a deficiency of oil. Here, says the tradition, a great army entered, bound for the invasion of China, and were heard of no more.

Standing on one of the highest points in the station at Cherra, about sunset, I have seen my shadow cast on a distant bank of white fog, that filled the valley to the eastward, an appearance resembling that of the celebrated giants of the Hartz, and the Stockhorn. The figure was surrounded by a circular iris. The heavy fogs that fill the large valley to the east of Cherra, render this a common phenomenon at sunset. It has since been pointed out to me that any one may witness this on a small scale, in going through the grass at sunrise on a dewy





of Kasia monuments &c
from various sketches

by G. L. ... & ...

morning.* Each will see a faint halo surrounding the shadow of his own head.

Another curious appearance at evening, I first observed at Cherra, though I have often since seen it, during the present rainy season, in the Upper Provinces; namely, the distinct imitation of a sunset in the *East*, so far as shewn in long white rays diverging apparently from a point exactly opposite to the setting sun's position.

During the rains of 1842, when the whole Sylhet country below us had the appearance of a sea, several of the dwellers at Cherra were much struck by the appearance of innumerable lights on the surface of the distant plains; far too many to be accounted for by any theory of villages, and fishing boats. The natives said at once that it was "Shaitan," nor were any of the numerous suggestions on the subject, more plausible.

The thunder-storms, in the months of March and April, last for many hours, and are tremendous indeed, but I do not know that they are more so in the hills than below. Several of the houses in the little stations have been struck by lightning, and during a residence of 18 months there was one fatal accident. In a still afternoon, whilst black clouds were sailing up, and for several minutes before the storm reached us, I have heard, as the prophet did on Carmel, "the sound of abundance of rain," a peculiar rustling noise from the rain quarter. It might possibly have been the fall of the heavy drops on the leaves of the jungle, but I once again in a still cloudy day heard the same rustling sound, somewhat like the flight of many birds, directly over my tent, and the Kasias said immediately that rain was coming, but no rain fell.

A most peculiar and striking aspect is thrown over almost every scene in the upper parts of the country, by the various remarkable monumental stones† which are scattered on every wayside. These are of several kinds, but almost all of them recall strongly those mysterious, solitary or clustered monuments of unknown origin, so long the puzzle and delight of antiquaries, which abound in our native country, and are seen here and there in all parts of Europe and Western Asia. The

* Most observable in riding across a field of green wheat soon after sunrise.—Eds.

† See Plate II. The illustration is an imaginary group of details from various sketches. It shows a greater variety; but by no means so great a number of monuments as many real scenes exhibit.

most common kind in the Kasia country is composed of erect, oblong pillars, sometimes almost quite unhewn, in other instances carefully squared and planted a few feet apart. The number composing one monument is never under three, and runs as high as thirteen; generally it is *odd*, but not always so. The highest pillar is in the middle (sometimes crowned with a circular disk), and to right and left they gradually diminish. In front of these is what English antiquaries call a *cromlech*, a large flat stone resting on short rough pillars. These form the ordinary roadside resting place of the weary traveller. The blocks are sometimes of great size. The tallest of a thick cluster of pillars in the market place of Murteng in the Jaintia country, rising through the branches of a huge old tree, measured 27 feet in height above the ground. A flat table stone, or *cromlech* near the village of Sailankot, elevated five feet from the earth, measured thirty-two feet by fifteen, and two feet in thickness.

In other instances the monument is a square sarcophagus, composed of four large slabs, resting on their edges and well fitted together, and roofed in by a fifth placed horizontally. In Bell's *Circassia*, may be seen a drawing of an ancient monument existing in that country, which is an exact representation of a thousand such in the Kasia Hills; and nearly as exact a description of them, though referring to relics on the eastern bank of Jordan, may be read in Irby and Mangles's *Syrian Travels*. The sarcophagus is often found in the form of a large slab accurately circular, resting on the heads of many little rough pillars, closely planted together, through whose chinks you may descry certain earthen pots containing the ashes of the family. Belonging to the village of Ringhot, in the valley of Mausmai, deep in the forest, is a great collection of such circular cineraries, so close that one may step from slab to slab for many yards. Rarely, you may see a simple *cairn*, or a pyramid some twenty feet in height, and sometimes one formed in diminishing stories like the common notion of the Tower of Babel, or like the Pyramid of Saccara in Egypt. But the last is probably rather a burning place, than a monument, or at least a combination of the two.

The upright pillars are merely cenotaphs, and if the Kasias are asked why their fathers went to such expense in erecting them, the universal answer is, "To preserve their name." Yet to few indeed among the

thousands can they attach any name. Many of the villages however seem to derive their appellations from such erections, as may be seen from the number commencing with *mau*, which signifies a stone; e. g. *mausmai*, the stone of the oath, *mau-inlu*, the stone of salt, *mau-fiong*, the grassy stone, *maumlú*, the upturned stone, and a score more; *mausmai*, the oath stone, suggests that these pillars were also erected in memory of notable compacts. On asking Umang, a faithful and intelligent servant, the origin of the name, his answer was a striking illustration of many passages in the Old Testament. "There was war," said he, "between Cherra and *mausmai*, and when they made peace and swore to it, they erected a stone as a witness;" (*Sákhi ke wáste*, was his expression). Genesis XXXI. 45, "and Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar." Genesis XXXI. 47, "and Laban called it *Jegar-sahadutha* : but Jacob called it *Galeed* [both signifying the *heap of witness*]. Genesis XXXI. 51, "and Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar which I have cast betwixt me and thee. This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar to me to do me harm, &c."

See also Joshua XXIV. 26. The name of *maumlú*, the *salt-stone*, is probably of kindred meaning, as the act of eating salt from a sword point is said to be the *Kasia* form of adjuration.

These large stones are also frequently formed into bridges for the passage of brooks, and most picturesque they often are; there is at *Nurteng* a bridge of this kind, consisting of one stone thirty feet in length.

It is stated by Pemberton, that *Kai* is the real name of the people, and *Kasia* the title bestowed on them by the Bengallees. But the truth is the reverse of this. 'Kasi' is the only name which they acknowledge as that of their country and race. The same language, with no substantial difference, appears to prevail in all their villages, though there are considerable differences of accent, &c. especially between the hill and valley-men. It abounds in nasal sounds, and is spoken with a peculiar jerking tone, which has a singular effect to a stranger. In the Coptic language, it is said (*Edin. Cabinet Library, Egypt, page 377*) "genders and cases are expressed by prefixed syllables, and not by terminations like the languages of Greece and Rome." This is exactly

true ; of the Kasia tongue, genders, cases, numbers, tenses and all grammatical changes, are made by prefixing certain syllables. The masculine prefix is *u*, the feminine *ka*, and the plural *ki*. Thus *u-myau*, a tom-cat, has his feminine *ka-myau*, a tabby, and the plural *ki-mayw*, cats of both genders. This prefix cannot I think be considered an article, as it is attached to adjectives and pronouns as well as nouns, e. g. "*u-ti u-kokaróng ;*" *u-bakhráo usím*, that Hornbill (is) a large bird, where the demonstrative, the adjective, and both nouns have the prefix. It is rather the representative of the *terminations* of Latin, German, &c. most of which wear and tear have rubbed from our English tongue.

It is a curious fact, that the people in the broken Hindustani in which they converse with us, *universally* use the future instead of the past tense. Thus to take a very common case, where the ambiguous word "Kal" adds to the puzzle ; "Kal ham jaiga," from a Kasia signifies, not 'I will go to-morrow,' but, 'I went yesterday.' I never could break my servants of this blunder.

A great proportion of the proper names of men are quaint monosyllables, as Tess, Bep, Mang, Sor, Mir, Bi, reminding one irresistibly of Sir Walter's Saxon Hig, the son of Snel. But these are generally euphonized by the prefix into Utes, Ubeh, Usor, &c. They also address each other by the names of their children, as Pabobon, father of Bobon ! Pahaimon, father of Haimon ! The salutation at meeting is singular, "Kublé ! oh God." It has been supposed that this is a profane deification of the person addressed. But this scarcely seems agreeable to the blunt character of the people, and I never could ascertain what they meant by it. It is probably an elliptical expression, the literal signification of which is forgotten, corresponding to *adieu*, or like *good bye*, the derivation of which (God be with you) no one thinks of in using it. They have regular numerals on a decimal scale up to hundreds, but their word for a thousand (*chi-hajár*) seems clearly borrowed from 'hazár.'

In the people perhaps the first thing that strikes a stranger, is their extreme addiction to chewing pawn, and their utter disregard of the traces which its use leaves on their teeth and lips. Indeed they pride themselves on this, saying that "Dogs and Bengalees have white teeth." Every man wears round his neck a thick woollen cord which suspends a fine net of pineapple fibre, a clasp knife, and a pawn-box

with sometimes a comb; a little globular silver-box containing lime to smear the pawn, lies in the net which serves as a pocket, and contains as rare a medley as any school-boy's. A traveller arriving at Cherra has asked what were those numerous stains of blood on the road; the innocent traces of Kasia expectoration. Distances are often estimated by the number of pawns that will be consumed on the road. But an answer to the question, "How far?" once given me by a Kasia with a load on his back, left far behind this and all other vague estimates, except perhaps a Bengallee "Bānk pāni." He said it was "*arsin leih*," or *two goings*; perhaps as far as he could carry his burden with one rest.

The characteristic dress of the people is a short sleeveless shirt of thick cotton cloth, either of the natural colour (unbleached), or striped gaily with blue and red, and always excessively dirty. It has a deep fringe below, and is ornamented on the breast and back with lines of a sort of diamond pattern embroidery, from the edges of which hang certain mystic threads, to the length of which they attach some superstitious importance in purchasing the garment. The shirt closely resembles one figured in Wilkinson's ancient Egyptians, vol. III. p. 345. Over this a few wear a short coatee of cotton or broad cloth, and many wrap a large mantle striped or chequed with broad reddish lines. The latter is their most picturesque costume. Some have a strong penchant for articles of European dress, and their potato merchants generally bring a small invoice of these from Calcutta on their return voyage. I was once entertained by the prime minister of a Raja to the westward, whose sole habiliment, save a cloth round his loins, was a new olive green frock coat (with a velvet collar, if I mistake not). As he threw back the flaps, thrust his thumbs in the armholes, and strutted about, it was not easy to preserve politeness to my host. A very large turban covers the head of the better class; others wear a greasy cap with flaps over the ears, or go bareheaded. The fore part of the head is shaven, and the back hair gathered in a clump on the crown. Chiefs, or the heads of villages generally have a neck-lace of large gilt beads, like our native officers. The women are generally wrapt in a shapeless mantle of striped cotton cloth, with its upper corners tied in a knot across the breast.

The men are seldom tall, generally well made, and shew great strength of limb; of leg in particular. Such doric columns as support

a good fourth-part of the Kasia peasantry, are rarely seen in England. By help of these good props many of the coal porters will carry two maunds from the mine to Seria ghât, a distance of 11 miles. In this muscular development, they exhibit a remarkable contrast to some other hill tribes of India. Their features can rarely be called handsome, yet there is often a strong attraction in the frank and manly good humour of their broad Tartar faces, flat noses, thick lips and angular eyes. The children are sometimes very good looking, but beauty in women seldom rises beyond a buxom comeliness, and the open mouth discloses a den of horrors. The females have a full or preponderant share, in out-of-door labour of all sorts. It is a lively scene every morning, when numbers of men, women and children hie to the jungle to cut wood, or forage for a part of the household, almost as important here as in Ireland,—the pigs. Nothing is here of the phlegm or dull loquacity of the natives of the plains. All are full of life and spirits, *whistling*, *singing*, *screaming*, *chasing* one another, and in short, *skylarking* in all ways. They dialike early hours, and it is difficult to get them abroad betimes even on extraordinary occasions. They have great powers of industry, but are somewhat capricious in exerting it. Frank and independent in manner, and in spirit too, they have much more manifestly a conscience to distinguish between right and wrong, than any of their neighbours below. Whether they always act up to it is another question, but there were those among my Kasia servants, of whose right feeling, truthfulness, attachment, and strict uprightness according to their light, I shall ever have a pleasing remembrance. They are fond of money, and of trading, and are neither wanting in courage, nor given to quarrelling. They are apt scholars, and of late have shewn a considerable desire for instruction. The heads of a large village near Cherra invited my good friend, Mr. Jones, Missionary at the station, to reside with them, offering to build him a house, if he would do so. During a tour of part of the hills, in which I had the pleasure of accompanying him in 1842, the people listened to his discourse with decorum, and apparently with attention and interest.

The common food of the people in the vicinity of the plains is rice : in the interior rice, millet, maize, with kuchu, and some other roots and grains peculiar to themselves. Dried fish is a universal article of diet, and is brought from below in vast quantities. Those in the

neighbourhood of the British settlement are by no means gross feeders. But I once saw labourers who were at work in the garden, carry off a dead leopard to feast on, with great glee; and in some of the northern villages, a species of caterpillar is eaten, and sold in the markets. They all enjoy flesh occasionally, especially pork; there is always hot roast pork for sale in some corner of the bazar on market day. Some individuals and families have a superstitious objection to different kinds of food, and will not allow such to be brought into their houses. This has a remarkable parallel among a race of Negroes of South Eastern Africa, as the following passage (quoted in the Edinburgh Review for January 1837) from Captain Owen's Narrative, will shew. "It is prohibited in many families to eat certain animals' flesh, such as in some beef, in others elephants, others hippopotamus. It is said that if any family transgress this rule, and eat of the forbidden flesh their teeth will drop out," &c. From millet, they make large quantities of spirits, of which I am sorry to say there is a great consumption at all the bazars; and on the evening of Cherra market-day, one may see many riotous parties staggering to the verge of the valley, where in that state they descend the ladders before described, without fear or accident; for the people of the vallies are more addicted to drunkenness than those of the table land. This millet forms the principal grain cultivation in the vallies near Cherra Poonjee. In the end of the cold weather large tracts of the jungle are burnt, and the seed scattered on the stony slopes. The ground gives one or two crops, and then a new tract is prepared in like manner. Under this process the woods in the neighbourhood of Cherra are becoming rapidly thinned.

The Kasias are utterly unacquainted with any art of weaving, nearly all the usual articles of their dress, peculiar as they are, are made for them by other tribes bordering on the Assam valley. They manufacture a small quantity of caoutchouc, which they use principally for smearing baskets in which to keep honey, &c. By the way, the caoutchouc tree answers better than the Banyan to the well known description in Milton (or rather in his authority, Pliny) of the Indian fig. The former can much more reasonably lay claim, to leaves "broad as Amazonian targe" than any which

"To Indian known
In Malabar or Deccan spreads her arms."

The honey is abundant and of unequalled flavour. A hollowed block of wood forms the hive.

As is the case with some European nations, the houses of the people are by no means so dirty as their persons. Generally they are dry, substantial thatched cottages, built of a double wall of broad planks placed vertically in the ground, and with a good boarded floor raised three feet or more from the earth. As they have rarely anything like a window, one sees nothing at first entering, and rarely escapes a bruised head from a collision with one of the massive low beams. The fire is always burning on an earthen hearth in the centre. There is no chimney, but one soon gets accustomed to wood smoke. On a swinging frame over the fire is piled the firewood to dry; the veranda, or space between the two walls, is partly stored with lumber, and partly affords shelter to the fowls, calves and pigs, which last are carefully tended, and attain enormous obesity. The people are unacquainted with the saw, and the large planks (in some of the chief houses more than two feet in breadth) of which their dwellings are built, are tediously and wastefully cut from the tree with an adge.

They use milk in no shape, and it is an article which a traveller making long marches in the country, must learn to do without. Nor are their cattle, whether goats or oxen, though numerous, applied to any useful purpose in their life time, being kept only for slaughter, and especially for sacrifice. Man is the only bearer of burdens. Their husbandry is confined to the hoe, and their grain is thrashed with the flail. All loads the people carry on the back, supported by a belt across the forehead, and in the rains they and their burdens are protected by umbrellas, in the shape of a large hooded shell of matting, which covers the head and the whole of the back. Dogs they are fond of, and always crop the ears and tail. Wild dogs hunting in packs, are commonly reported to exist in some of the vallies; and from the descriptions given me of wild oxen called "U-blé massi," or the cattle of God, existing in the neighbourhood of the Bara Pani, I have little doubt that the Gour will be found in those jungles. The worst feature in the manners of the people, and one likely to be a serious obstacle to the missionary, is the laxity of their marriages; indeed divorce is so frequent that their unions can hardly be honoured with the name of marriage. The husband does not take his bride to his own home, but enters her household, or visits

it occasionally ; he seems merely entertained to continue the family to which his wife belongs. Separation is signified by the exchange of five cowries, and the children abide with the mother. There are, however, instances of more honourable and lasting unions. In consequence of this loose system, we find that generally there is little or no attachment between a grown-up son and his father, as probably the latter has long left his first family, and perhaps others in the interval ; whilst the affection between mother and son is very strong, and all the child's attachment rests with his mother's kin. A Kasia if asked after his father will often tell you that he is dead, meaning only that all connection between them has ceased. I remember once in walking with U-mung above mentioned, he exchanged salutations with a comely lass, younger than himself. On my asking, he said she was his ' Chota ma,' his father's present wife.

Immediately connected with this system, and we may suppose originating in it, is their strange (though not unique) law of succession. The son has no claim to succeed his father, whether it be in the chiefship or in private property. The sister's son has the inheritance. And the Raja's neglected offspring may be a common peasant or labourer, whilst he sees his cousin cherished, as the heir of his father's authority and wealth.

The greatest festivities of the people are funeral ; either at the burning of the dead, or when a Khasia collects the ashes of his family, and erects a monument in their honor. On great occasions of this kind they hold a public dance for several successive days. The numerous performers are recompensed by an ample feast of pork and whisky. The dance is performed either with fans or swords. In the former, the men dance round and round a circle in the market place, or other open space, somewhat monotonously, attitudinizing and brandishing fans. They are all clad in the most brilliant finery that they possess, or can hire ; richly embroidered outer shirts of broadcloth, silken turbans and dhoties, large bangles, heavy silver chains, and gold necklaces with plumes of down or peacock's feathers, and ornamental quivers. In the centre are the village maidens, they form in twos and threes, and set to one another with a comical *pas* of exceeding simplicity, which seems to be performed by raising the heels, and twisting from side to side, on the fore part of both feet, which never leave the ground. Their eyes are

demurely cast to the earth, or on their own finery, and never raised for a moment. They too are loaded with silver chains, tassels, and armlets, and all wear on the head a peculiar circlet of silver, having a tall spear head ornament rising behind. They are swaddled in a long petticoat, as tight as the clothing of a mummy, with an upper garment like a handkerchief passing tight under the right arm, and tied in a knot on the left shoulder. Waist they exhibit none, the figure being a perfect parallelogram. In the sword dance, the men accompanied by music and musquetry, dance and bound, clashing sword and shield, and uttering in chorus a chaunt, at first seemingly distant and sepulchral, but gradually becoming louder and louder, till it bursts into a tremendous unearthly howl; then sinking to a doleful chaunt, again and again rising to wake the echoes. The sword, a strange weapon, is composed of one piece of the coarsest iron, about four feet long, of which one third is handle, the rest blade. The latter has its edge slightly convex, and the back drawn to a peak like the old Turkish scymitar. The handle has two guards, and is grasped at the lower, the hilt passing between the two middle fingers. Yet with this uncouth weapon, so uncouthly held, I have seen a goat in sacrifice cleanly beheaded at a blow.

The village children have a curious gymnastic amusement. The trunk of a young tree, by a cut in the centre is fixed on a pivot at the top of a post about four feet high. Two urchins seizing opposite ends of the pole, run round in the same direction till they have got a proper impetus, and then whirl rapidly, in turn leaping and descending in a very light and graceful manner. The children also spin a regular peg-top, and it is *indigenous*, not an importation. Another of their recreations is an old acquaintance also, which we are surprised to meet with in the far East. A very tall thick bamboo is planted in the ground and well oiled. A silver ornament, or a few rupees, placed at the top, reward the successful climber.

But their favourite amusement in the cold weather is archery. In the trial of skill each village has from time immemorial its established competitor, and with this alone is the contest carried on. The Toxophilite meeting is held at each village on alternate market days. The target is pitched at about sixty yards. It is made of an oblong piece of bark, about three feet and a half high by one broad. Four or five

persons generally shoot at once, they draw the arrow to the ear, and the attitudes are often very striking, though to say the truth, they are no Robin Hoods. The bow, the bowstring, the arrow, and the quiver are all made from various species of the all-useful bamboo. When all have shot, the arrows in the target are taken out, and the villagers crowd round the umpire as he distributes them. As each arrow is recognized, the party to which its owner belongs dance and leap about, feencing with their bows, spinning them high in air, and shouting together in a wild cadence. The villager whose arrows are in a minority pays a trifling forfeit of a few cowries.

They shew no very particular courtesy of bearing towards their Rajas. Indeed the latter do not seem to have much power. They have the right of calling on all to bear arms, or send a contribution in case of war; what public revenue they have is derived from fines, and in some cases from trifling dues paid in kind by frequenters of the markets. The chief is the judge, and when he calls for the attendance of any party as criminal, defendant, or witness, he sends as a summons a piece of pork; the pig being probably charged in the loser's bill of costs. Fining is almost universal as a punishment. Occasionally however a man's whole goods are confiscated, whilst he and his family become the slaves of the Raja; and in some rare cases of murder, the criminal is given over to the friends of the slain, for them to wreak their vengeance. The water ordeal used to be a common mode of decision. The opponents with much ceremony plunged their heads under water on opposite sides of a consecrated pool, and he had the right who remained longest under water. I have been told that it was lawful to use the services of practised attorneys in this mode of trial; so that long-winded lawyers have as decided a preference in these regions as they may have elsewhere. The last case of this ordeal, between parties belonging to Cherra Poonjee, occurred five or six years ago, and was fatal to both plaintiff and defendant.

The Kasias have a name for a Supreme, or at least for a chief god, but as usual they principally regard inferior spirits. These are supposed to reside on the tops of certain hills, or in rocky dells, and in groves on the high land, to which they are believed to descend at night. Temples and idols they have none, except in certain villages of Jaintia, where Kāli and her Brahmins have unfortunately effected a lodgment,

probably under the patronage of the Ex-Raja, whose devotion to the bloody goddess cost him his kingdom.

The people are much addicted to consulting auspices of different kinds, but especially by the breaking of eggs. Indeed this latter superstition is so prominent, and has got such a fast hold of the people's minds, that it would seem to be the principal part of their religious practice. On all occasions of doubt it is resorted to, and they will spend whole days in dashing eggs upon a board, with much wild chaunting and wilder gestures, in search of a decisive or a favourable augury. They also constantly sacrifice goats, pigs and oxen to propitiate the spirits. A Kasia from a distant western village, at whose house I had once been a guest, having come on business to Cherra and paid me a visit, he was regaled with a glass of brandy; before drinking it, he dipped his finger four times in the glass, flipping a drop successively over each shoulder, and down by his right and left side; on being asked his meaning, he said it was "for the name of God."

A very curious superstition regards the boa, or some other large snake. It is believed, that, if he takes up his abode with any man, great wealth will accrue to the household; and that there are evil minded men who go about in search of whom they may slay, and cutting off the nose, lips, ears and hair of their victims, with these propitiate the serpent, and prevail on him to be their guest. And it is difficult to persuade a Kasia to go into the jungle alone, generally for fear of meeting with one of those villains, who are supposed to hide in all solitary spots looking out for prey. The way in which the serpent is believed to bring wealth to his votary, is after the manner of the prophet's blessing on the widow. Whatever he may sell from "basket or store, kail or potatoes," his stock diminishes not. One would hope to find his ill-gotten treasure turning to "slate stones," as wizard's gold was wont, but we hear nothing of this.

Their astronomical notions are the rudest of the rude. The changes of the moon are thus accounted for. The moon (who is male, and the sun female, as they were in England in Saxon times) every month falls in love with his wife's mother, and she repelling his addresses, throws ashes in his face. For the stars generally, in days of old there was a great tree; up this climbed a great multitude, and when they were fairly among the branches, another multitude came and hewed the tree.

Wherefore (said the narrator) all the multitude remained above, where they form a great bazar, and are the stars we see. The group of the Pleiads is the only one they name, and it is called "the Henman." Is it not called "the chickens" in Italy? They have names for twelve months, as follows, but their application seems somewhat vague.

Naiwien,	Ujiliú,
Ukla-lankót,	U-naitung,
Urampáng,	U-nailar,
Ulabér,	U-nailúr,
Uyaiyóng,	U-risau,
Ujamáng,	Nauprá,

Smaller intervals are reckoned by village market days, which are held every fourth day, a greater and a less alternately. They have no weeks.

Some of the local traditions are interesting. The following is a parallel to the banquet of Atreus. One of the finest water falls near Cherra, in the deep valley of Maumlû, is called Kano Likai, or Likai's leap. The origin of the name was thus related to me. Once on a time a man of foreign race came to the hills, married a woman named Likai, and settled with his wife in a village north of Maumlû. They had two children, a boy and a girl. One day the woman betook herself to the forest as usual to cut fire-wood, in her absence the father killed his two little children, and cooked them; on his wife's return, he invited her to feast on what he had prepared, and she did so; he then disclosed what she had eaten. Then said Likai, "It is no longer good to remain in this world," and hurrying to the adjoining precipice leapt over.

Another rock in the same neighbourhood, has its name from a crime which occurred during a severe famine. Two brothers sat upon its verge conversing. One had just procured a supply of rice, the other was destitute. The latter thought within himself, "here is abundant food, my wife and children are perishing for want," and pushing his brother from his seat, seized his plunder, and hurried home.

On the road from Cherra to Jaintia is a singular ravine, some 600 yards in length, and 80 feet in depth, with sides remarkably even, and regularly parallel. The far end is closed by a round knoll. This, it is said, was the archery ground of three heroes of old, Ramha, Nonorrop,

and Pangnorrop. I asked if there were giants then in old times? The good man answered, that he could not speak as to their height, but they were "Bara mota wala," exceeding stout.

The Kasias have also their maid of Arc, or black Agnes. She was the wife of Ula. Ula was a great warrior at the court of the Raja of Linkardiem, and the Raja married his sister.

Now in those days there were but twelve households in Cherra, and the Raja of Linkardiem, making war on the Raja of Cherra, drove him with his people to the woods, where they eat leather, and the rind of certain fruits. But the Raja of Linkardiem was a savage, and abused his wife, the sister of the brave Ula. For he placed her on a frame of bamboos, and lighted a fire beneath; and so, being roasted, she died. So Ula was wroth, and he went to the Raja of Cherra, and said, "Make me a great man, and I will avenge thee on thine enemy." So he of Cherra agreed; and Ula having cut off the head of the Raja of Linkardiem, brought it to him of Cherra, and so became first counsellor of the Raja. One day as Ula was going forth on his avocations, with others of the village, he said to his wife "Clothe thyself with my arms, and garments." Meantime the new Rajah of Linkardiem came against Cherra with a mighty host of four thousand men. Now the village of Cherra was well girt with palisades and ditches, and the wife of Ula went forth to the barriers in her husband's arms and clothing, and the other women doing likewise went with her, and when the army of Linkardiem beheld the arms and the shield, they shouted in terror 'Ula! Ula!' and turned their backs in flight; for great was their fear of Ula. And the wives of Cherra, and the men who remained, went forth with the wife of Ula, and chased the Linkardiemians, and smote them sorely.

From these twelve households come the twelve tribes which now exist in Cherra. My informant was of the house of Ula. I tell these tales as they were told.

About forty miles west of Cherra, not far from Laour in the Silhet district, a river debouches from the mountains, marked in Capt. Fisher's map as the Jadukotta river. It is a wide shallow stream in the plains, but from where you enter the hills in ascending, it is naturally dammed back so as to present for nearly ten miles a splendid river of the first class, with still, deep, and clear waters. Under one of the bold preci-

pices which spring right from the water, to a height of many hundred feet, is a curiously arched cavity strongly resembling an upturned boat, and which the people name *Basbanya's ship*. Who *Basbanya* might have been, I could not learn, except that he was one of the "*Deota Log*." Resting under this vault, we witnessed the mode of fishing in the river. About thirty skiffs forming a circle dropped their large net, and each holding a cord from it, diverged in all directions. When they had reached the end of their tether, they again began to converge, smiting the water with their oars, beating with sticks on the gunnels, and howling like a hundred jackalls. Gradually they came on, making the hills ring, and hauling on their lines till they were formed round the net again. Then the result began to appear; as the net gradually contracted, the whole circle became alive with fish, and at least one boat was heavily laden with the spoil. The river must be inexhaustible in its supplies, for this operation is repeated many times a day by several similar companies, besides smaller parties. Passing on, we reached about 6 or 7 miles above the plains, the largest boulder I have ever seen, standing into, and overhanging the water. It bears the name of *Raoul*, and at a height of ten or twelve feet above the water level is an old and worn Persian inscription in large letters. I was then unacquainted with the Persian character, and the copy taken was rough and probably incorrect, for none of my acquaintance could decypher more than a word or two. It was lent to one of them for the purpose, and has never been returned. Perchance it was the record of some Mussulman adventurer, during the early days of their Indian history, seeking an *El Dorado* in these wildernesses.

On a little sandy beach where a tributary joined the main stream, were a few huts, the scene of a bustling bazar of exchange between the *Bengallees* and the *Hill people*. In the river's course above this all was impenetrable and uninhabited thicket. Far beyond, said the *Kasias*, dwell a strange race, who eat men and snakes:—an obscure rumour, probably of the *Garrows*, whose territory could not be far distant.

KURNAUL,

September 4th, 1844.