

of the year, the months of June, July, and August being considered the best. They are accompanied by fresh breezes and frequent rains, and Mr. Birch describes the weather he experienced as delightful. September, October, and November are very dry; winds are very variable, and beri-beri and diarrhoea are feared during these months. December, January, and February are looked upon as the cyclone months; they are very stormy and treacherous (especially December), fine days being followed by ugly weather, and *vice versâ*. The weather experienced in March, April, and May is said to be much the same as that of September, October, and November.

The Keeling-born men are fine specimens of Malays, being muscular and hardy. The women are a remarkably nice-looking lot, dressing well and carrying themselves very upright. Many of the natives eat with knife, fork, and spoon. They have mattresses and curtained beds spotlessly clean; they spread white table-cloths on their tables, use a brush and comb, have little ornaments for their tables, and decorate the insides of their homes with cuttings from illustrated papers, and cartoons from *Vanity Fair*. The houses are much better built than Malay houses in the Straits. The language spoken in the islands differs in many words from the Malay in the Straits, though it is easy for one who knows Malay to make himself understood. The curious custom prevails here, which, we believe, is found among other semi-civilised and uncivilised people. When a man becomes the father of a son, he is no longer called by his own name, but by that of his eldest son, with the prefix *Pa* to it. Poultry is plentiful in the islands; in Horsburgh Island are 30 or 40 deer, originally brought from Java and Sumatra, and about 30 sheep in Settlement Island. Rabbits have also been introduced into Horsburgh Island, and a pretty grey and brown speckled species of landrail abounds. Jungle fowl are found in most of the larger islands. Many varieties of vegetables and fruit trees found in the Straits flourish in the islands. There is one species of banana which, according to the Rosses, is peculiar to the islands. Mr. Birch gives the native names of twelve useful woods. He visited many of the smaller islands, which, according to his statement, are gradually becoming connected. Captain Adams took some twenty photographic views and groups. In the Report and appendix, Mr. Birch gives much information on the administration of the islands by the Ross family, and several documents bearing on this subject and the annexation of the islands by Great Britain.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

Mr. J. F. Needham's Journey to the Zayul Chu.—The following account of Mr. Needham's recent journey, so important from its disproving the imagined connection between the Sanpo and the Irawadi, is contained in a letter addressed by Mr. Needham to Colonel Haig of the Indian Survey and communicated to us by General J. T. Walker:—"Having read A—k's journal and subsequently an article in the *Pioneer* of the 16th May, 1885, headed 'The Rival Rivers,' where mention is made of a paper read by Mr. R. Gordon before the Geographical Society, in which, after discrediting A—k's theory that the Sanpo breaks away south at Gya-la-Sindong and eventually falls into the Brahmaputra under the name of the Dihong, he sub-

stitutes one of his own, viz. that instead of its turning south where A—k alleges it does, it runs for many miles further to the eastward and then breaking away south (somewhere west of Rima) joins the Irawadi, I solicited permission to endeavour to reach Rima. This having been given, I left Sadiya on the 12th December, 1885, in company with an influential Khampṭi chief who speaks Digaru fluently, and who some ten years ago endeavoured to make the trip, but was compelled to return when within a few miles of Rima. I took no escort, but ten Frontier Police (unarmed) were allowed to accompany me as orderlies, and Captain Molesworth (the Frontier Police Commandant) joined as my guest.—I got safely through the Digaru and Miju Mishmi countries, and on the 4th January was in sight of Rima, when the Governor ordered me to be stopped, and as I was refused supplies and was otherwise treated uncivilly, I was compelled to retrace my steps. It was a grievous disappointment to me to be refused admittance to Rima, but having succeeded in getting in sight of it, the disappointment was not so keen as it might have been, for I was in the proud position of being able to refute Mr. Gordon's theory (which I had all along considered to be erroneous), as also to very materially corroborate A—k.—I marched up alongside of the Brahmaputra the whole way from Sadiya to within sight of Rima, and I can consequently positively assert that no river as large or anything like as large as the Sanpo flows to the southward anywhere on this side of that place. When in sight of Rima I saw a river coming down from the north-east and flowing into the Brahmaputra below Rima, which I have no doubt whatever is the Zayul Chu and that it is correctly shown in A—k's map,* and I was informed by trustworthy Miju chiefs (who visit Rima constantly) that the Brahmaputra (known to them as the Lōpani) flows down from some mountains fifteen days or so distant from Rima, and I saw it flowing from the north-west just below Rima, exactly as marked in A—k's map.—From the evidence I got on the spot, I have no doubt whatever that the Brahmaputra takes its rise in the mountains to the south of the Nagong Chu river (*vide* A—k's map), and that it is known to the Tibetans under the name of the Kongthod Chu, as marked in the same map. I was twenty-four days reaching the spot near Rima, but did the return journey in sixteen days. On my way there I was delayed somewhat in interviewing the several chiefs through whose country I had to pass. I took no observations, but carefully noted the bearings of the road or path daily, and made as careful a calculation of the distance as was possible. I made the distance to Rima to be 184 miles. The Tibetan village of Samê is on the right bank of the Brahmaputra, about three miles or so west of Rima. Prun (which is the name of a Miju clan), the furthest point reached by Mr. T. T. Cooper, is about 55 miles west of Rima."

* *Vide* 'Proceedings,' 1885, p. 136.