

NARRATIVE No. 2

Of the Reverend Mr. H. CORBYN, relative to the Aborigines of the Andaman Islands,—(Concluded).

I NOW proceed to a brief account of two subsequent visits to the mainland, which afforded further opportunities of improving our acquaintance with the aborigines.

The object of the first was to carry back to their homes some Andamanese children, and to endeavour once more to find a passage to a supposed encampment in the interior.

Some Officers of the *Arracan* accompanied the party, which was composed of the usual Guard of Naval Brigade men and some men of the Sappers under command of Captain Wetherall.

On our arrival at Chief Camp we found only a few Andamanese in the huts; the head quarters of the tribe had been removed to an encampment further to the north, to which, later in the day, we followed them.

Before commencing our journey we cleared a wide space in front of the beach by cutting down a tree which had spread its branches over the sand, and which, while it remained there, formed a covert, under shelter of which the aborigines could aim at us with their bows and arrows without our seeing them, while we were exposed to their attack in our boats or on the beach. On a former occasion, when there appeared some danger of an encounter with them, a number of them rushed behind this tree and took up a position of defence there, as if aware of the advantage which it gave them in the event of a disturbance; and they would, then, probably have shot at some of us if we had not taken one of them a prisoner, and held him before us to cover our retreat.

This done, we pursued the inland route, described in my last Report, along the road already cleared by the Sappers; but afterwards finding marks of a track branching into another direction, we followed it in hope that it might lead to an encampment, in which we were not disappointed; for, after we had proceeded about two miles, we suddenly came upon a party of aborigines grouped together in a cleared enclosure, which was so thickly surrounded with jungle that it was not till we were within a few yards of it that we saw the smoke of their fire; and we might, even at that distance, have passed it by unnoticed had not our course lain across a stream above which the smoke issued.

They remained quite silent till we came close to them, as if, playfully or for some reason, wishing to conceal themselves; they then jumped up and came towards us, seeming much amused that we had found out their hiding place. Jingo and Jacko, who were of the number, but so grotesquely painted that we could not recognize their features, explained to us that they had just returned from hunting, but apparently without success, for there were no pig bones, nor remains of food on the ground; they had taken the precaution to put away their weapons and other property, but, on our promising not to follow them, they fetched us some bows and arrows from some bushes where they had concealed them.

The discovery of this encampment in the densest part of the jungle is of some interest, as shewing the fallacy of the opinion, so long maintained, that the interior of these Islands is not inhabited, and that the aboriginal population is altogether restricted to the coast, both on account of the density of the forest and the want of food any where but near the sea.

The density of the forest is certainly no bar to its occupation, for they have been found in all parts of the forest which have yet been penetrated, and the fact that their chief employment is pig-hunting shows that they are not entirely dependent on the coast fisheries for their subsistence.

The numerous creeks and rivers by which the interior is intersected, and which abound with fish, must yield quite as plentiful and much more certain subsistence than the sea, which for more than half the year is almost unapproachable on account of the surf and stormy weather; and even Native convicts, who have escaped from the Settlement, have contrived to subsist for a length of time on the herbs and berries which are found in the woods.

It is probable, therefore, that the aborigines roam all over the mainland in search of food and in the spirit of adventure, and that their resources are as varied and abundant as their range is extensive.

More recently some of them, apparently of another tribe, have been met with in the very heart of the interior; and an acquaintance with their language and further researches may yet discover to us numerous tribes occupying inland tracks, and living quite as much by the chase and the wild produce of the soil as by fishing.

Our explorations came to an end about a mile further, some of our party being too fatigued to continue the journey; we therefore agreed to return and proceed in our boats further to the north, where the aborigines had fixed their new encampment.

The Andamanese with us directed us to a sandy beach about two miles to the north, and on nearer approach we saw a long row of huts and crowds of men and women in great bustle, running from one hut to another, and carrying away bundles which probably contained property, which they were anxious to conceal from us.

We had much difficulty in landing; the surf rose so high that few of us escaped a drenching, and the Sailors were obliged to leave their fire-arms in the boats, which, however, were sufficiently near to render assistance if it had been needed.

The rice and biscuits which we had brought as our usual peace-offering to the aborigines were completely saturated with salt water, but to their taste they were no worse for their wetting. They carried them to the camp where there was a great scramble,—all of them crowding round with leaves and shells and baskets to catch the contents of the bags as they were distributed; it was amusing to observe their cunning artifices to attract my attention as I served out the rice to them,—those whom I knew thrust themselves most prominently before me, reminding me of our acquaintance by pointing to themselves, and repeating the names which we had given them; the woman Emma put her baby forward to intercede for her and wished to force him into my arms, and the sly little creature aided her diplomacy by holding out his tiny hands towards me, and looking at me most appealingly, and when I gave him some rice he ate it raw, as did also his mother and the other aborigines.

There were great lamentations in the camp over one of the boys who had returned with us, he had been absent some weeks, and his apprehensive relations had probably been distressing their minds with misgivings of his safety, or fears that he might not be allowed to return to them again. I never knew people more eccentric in their affection. They will sometimes, when they meet again after only a night's separation, fall on each other's necks and weep most affectingly, though they have been at the same time on the same Island and separated only by the distance between my house and the Andaman Home.

We had an opportunity this time of seeing them manufacture hemp for bow-strings. It was obtained from the under-bark of a light coloured tree, peculiar to the Andaman jungles; they peeled off long strips, and wove it together with their hands and feet; it is strong and durable, but not so flexible as some thinner twine which they use for fishing lines, and which seems to be made of a softer fibre.

They shewed themselves much more friendly disposed towards us now than they had been in the morning. At the other camp they held aloof from us at first, and seemed rather morose and suspicious, which I attributed to the presence of so many armed natives whom they seem to fear, or rather distrust much more than Europeans, perhaps because they have learnt that we never use weapons against them except in defence or under great provocation, or in cases of extreme necessity; while experience has taught them that the former are not always so scrupulous and forbearing. I have heard that at one time some of the South tribe used frequently to visit the Settlement at Viper Island, and were on very friendly terms with the Native Fishermen, whom they assisted in mending their nets and never molested or interfered with their fisheries,—when all at once for trifling offence of some petty thefts of fruit and vegetables, in which they had been indulged till they thought it allowable, the Natives attacked them with sticks and stones, and because they resisted, as it was natural they should do, they were hunted down and shot, and several of them were wounded, and one or more killed. The consequence has been that, though often seen in their canoes, they never again approached the Island, and always fled from boats which followed them, and no advances could induce them to hold any communication with us till very recently. These were probably the same people whom I described in my last Report as being so cruel and implacable in their hatred towards Native convicts, as having resisted my friendly overtures to them, notwithstanding the mediation of the Andamanese with me, who no doubt gave them a favorable representation of the treatment they have met with. I was not surprised to hear, when I returned with Captain Wetherall to the other camp where we had left the Sappers, that the Andamanese occupying that camp had all taken their departure simultaneously with us, some of them having followed us, and the rest retreated into the woods carrying away every thing but the bare huts with them.

This trip ended, we soon afterwards (13th June) formed a party to visit the south coast, where we expected to meet with the tribe who were known to frequent the woods about Aberdeen, and who distinguished themselves some years ago by the part which they took in a ludicrous skirmish known in the chronicles of the Settlement as the "Battle of Aberdeen." We started in large force; the Officers of the *Arracan* and *Tubal Cain* lent two boats, and most of them accompanied us; Lieutenant Gill, who had come in the *Arracan* in command of a detachment of soldiers in charge of prisoners, brought with him twelve of his men, and Colonel Tytler furnished a guard of an equal number of armed Natives. The Andamanese woman Topsy acted as our guide, but was with great difficulty persuaded to go with us,—she screamed and cried, and clung to her husband Jumboo, and appealed with tears to Colonel Tytler not to allow them to be separated, and when we pulled away from the Island she kept her eyes fixed on the beach,

and shouted to Jumboo who ran along the shore and responded to her cries till we were out of hearing. We assured her that we should return that evening, but the sight of our large party, and of so many boats steering not towards her own camp but in an opposite direction, seemed to alarm her, and she may have supposed that we were bent on a hostile expedition against the South Tribe, and feared the consequences if she fell into their hands; as it is evident, from their frequent repudiation of any connection with them, that there is no friendly feeling between the aborigines of the north and those who occupy the mainland to the southward. As we passed by the coast near "Aberdeen" we waved bunches of plantains and called to the aborigines, some of whom were seen on the trees skipping from branch to branch with the nibbleness of monkeys; but from the height from which they were watching us, they could see the muskets in our boats, which probably frightened them, for they neither replied nor approached any nearer. Instead, therefore, of landing, as we had intended, to breakfast on the beach before commencing our explorations, we changed our course towards "Snake Island," a small barren Islet about two miles from the mainland, supposed to have been called "Snake Island" from the circumstance of a snake having been found there, though it is hardly probable that a snake or any other reptile could find its way to a sea-girt mound so far from other land; and we certainly saw no indications of snakes or reptiles of any kind, though we could hardly have failed to discover them within so small an area. There would have been more reason in calling it "Bird Island" or "Fish Island," for it swarms with sea-fowl, which are attracted to it by the shoals of fish which are more plentiful there than on any other fishing grounds about the Settlement. Some of our party greatly contributed to the increase of the latter by destroying the embryo progeny of the sea-birds which prey upon them; for the eggs which were collected from the rocks would, under successful incubation, have expanded into flocks which would daily have consumed a multitude of fishes. There was a great abundance of rare shells on the beach; and Topsy seemed to be sensible of their value to us; for, as soon as we landed, she went, of her own accord, and collected a large number of them for me, and made such a good selection that I was glad to accept them; and the more grateful to her because she resolutely refused to part with them to any one but me, and caused much amusement by the indignation which she showed when any one tried playfully to wrest them from her, uttering vehement exclamations that they were for "Myjola" (the name which the aborigines have given me signifying "Protector"), and making plaintive appeals to me to assist her; but as soon as I made signs to her to give them to one of my servants who would take care of them for me, she readily gave them up to him without another word of murmur or remonstrance, and seemed satisfied and pleased that I had owned and secured them.

Having breakfasted and finished our inspection of the Island, we next steered to a large sandy beach on the mainland directly opposite. As soon as we landed, the soldiers commenced to clear the jungles, and to form a strong position to protect our boats and party in the event of our being attacked. To the south of this beach is a fresh water creek; near which, on the bank, were the remains of a fire which was still warm and not quite extinguished, and scattered about the ground green leaves with grains of boiled rice and pineapple peels and cockle shells, and the soil was marked with foot-prints much larger than those of the aborigines, from which we inferred that some escaped convicts, of whom there are many dwelling in the woods, had just been cooking their food there, and had fled into the jungles when they saw us approaching.

Lieutenant Gill directed the soldiers to remain on the beach while we explored the creek, which was so deep and wide at its mouth that we were curious to see how far it penetrated; and we also hoped to find an encampment of the tribe, though Topsy, who seemed to be acquainted with their movements, assured us that there were none of them encamped in that direction "Boodee Yarbudda," and urged us to go to the north, where her own tribe were stationed. The creek ran mainly in a westerly direction, but we had not time to trace it to its source; it was deep and navigable for about seven miles, after which it became too shallow to float our boat, and two miles further it abruptly turned again towards the coast, and probably merged into another stream or creek which ran into the sea. About six miles from the coast we found a large encampment containing about fifteen huts, very prettily situated on the right bank of the creek in the middle of a large and well shaded bamboo grove. Topsy's information proved to be correct, for it was quite deserted and had apparently not been inhabited for many months. We searched the bushes for bows and arrows, but could find no relics of the tribe except cockle shells strewed over the ground. The creek abounds with cockles and shrimps, the latter are so plentiful that the boatmen caught them in their clothes as they waded through the stream. We also collected a quantity of oysters, of which there was a bed at the mouth of the creek. Some of these oyster beds have been allowed to go on accumulating for years, the aborigines never disturbing them; for though partial to all other kinds of shell-fish, they seem to have a disrelish for oysters, probably on account of the copper they contain. The young and smaller sort are not at all of inferior quality to the best imported oysters; and have, perhaps, a purer taste of the genuine Native oyster, and are equally rich and tender. If some means could be devised of preserving them, (and I believe they can be kept alive through a long voyage if daily supplied with salt water,) they would prove a source of profitable speculation, and the novelty might be presented of fresh oysters offered for sale in the Calcutta markets.

On our return we found the soldiers still stationed where we had left them. Some of them had beguiled the time with bathing, but they had met with no adventure to divert them, except an unsuccessful chase after a pig, and had not seen any aborigines. To indulge their

curiosity, I proposed to visit the North Tribe, and to take to them the pigs and provisions which we had brought to propitiate the other tribe who seemed so little disposed to reciprocate our friendly advances. Topsy was greatly distressed as we passed Ross Island, and stood up in the boat and called to Jumboo, but she recovered her spirits at the sight of friends, as soon as we reached the camp, and went amongst them exchanging news and describing to them all that she had observed during the morning excursion. She was very much afraid that we would leave her at the camp, and frequently came to me entreating me to allow her to return with us to Ross Island. As I was walking on the shore she came and caught me by the arm, and enjoining secrecy and silence, silyly beckoned to me to follow her, and then looking cautiously round to see that no one was watching her, she led me through the jungle till we came to a tree amongst the foliage of which was carefully concealed a large bundle of arrows. She pointed to them and made signs to me to take them, and then ran away laughing and calling out as she went "jumbol tweecken, jumbol tweecken," which was a significant hint that she had shown me the arrows as an inducement to take her back to Jumboo. When I carried them to the camp she looked perfectly innocent of the transaction, and pretended to the owner that I had discovered them myself while searching about the bushes, which the man believed, though if they had known how I came by them they would have been very indignant with Topsy for betraying their treasures to me. I was glad to observe a proof of grateful feeling on the part of Crusoe, one of the Andamanese whom I have frequently referred to in these Reports, towards one of our party, Mr. D'Cruze of the *Tubal Cain*, who had shewn him much kindness on their passage from Moulmein to Port Blair two years before. He at once recognized Mr. D'Cruze, and ran and threw his arms round his neck; and then leaving him went and brought him from the woods a finely finished bow which a short time before he had denied giving to some stranger who had offered him cutlery of much more than its value in exchange for one. I have seen Crusoe, who is evidently a man of some consequence amongst the tribe, shed tears like a child when his feelings have been acted upon; and I cannot think that these poor people are so brutalized, as they have been represented to be, when I see them evince so much sympathy and tenderness, and cling so fondly and confidently to those who have befriended them. I am certain that those of them who have been a short time under my care at Port Blair would follow me any where, and commit their lives to my protection with implicit confidence; and I believe in the same way, in the course of time, by kind and firm treatment all the other tribes, if they at all resemble those whom we have conciliated and attached to us, might be rendered equally tractable and submissive, and reclaimed out of their present state of barbarism into a condition in which they would be of essential service to the interests of the Settlement by facilitating discoveries and removing the obstacles which are at present opposed to the development of the great natural wealth and advantages of these Islands.

Snowball was lying in one of the huts and seemed almost insensible from the effects of a severe fever from which he was suffering. He had nothing under him but a thin mat; his head rested on the lap of a woman who strongly resembled him, and appeared to be about the same age; but Crusoe who understands a few words of English told us that she was his "mama." The poor woman was very much afflicted, and nursed and fondled him with great affection, doing all she could by the most tender care to alleviate his sufferings.

There was a large canoe in the creek concealed under some bushes; the Andamanese looked disappointed and annoyed when we discovered it, but they were very much pleased when they saw that we had no intention to deprive them of it.

When we were about to return, several of the women and children ran to our boats and jumped into them of their own accord. Topsy had secured a seat long before we started, and screamed and made great resistance when we pretended to oust her out of it; the rest almost capsized our boat in their ecstasies of mirth, swinging their arms, and dancing on the benches and sides of the boat as vigorously and with as much coolness and disregard of consequences as if they had been "tirpahing" on the boards of a verandah; the women were fascinated with the red coats of the soldiers, and paid them the most embarrassing attentions, seating themselves quite leisurely on their laps, putting their arms round their necks, slapping their faces, pulling their whiskers, and indulging in other sportive and absurd liberties.

When, on our arrival at Ross, they had all assembled at the "Andaman Home," they began as usual to relate to each other all that they had observed through the day, describing the most minute occurrences, and mimicking and "taking off" any thing that appeared to them droll and laughable in our manners and actions. Topsy's vanity was particularly gratified by the importance which she assumed in the estimation of the audience; she told them how much her services had been in demand throughout the day, that some one or other was constantly calling to her "here Topsy, there Topsy, Topsy, Topsy, come Topsy" (she remembered and repeated the words), and that one person would drag her by the arm in one direction, and another in another. They have all a lively sense of humour and uncommon powers of mimicry, and their words, which are delivered with a rapid and voluble utterance, sound singularly droll in connection with their comical gestures.

Soon after this I paid another visit to the mainland in order to give any of the Andamanese in the Settlement, who wished to return to their homes, an opportunity to do so. Only one of them, the woman Bess, Snowball's wife, availed herself of the opportunity.

I have seen it stated that the people are detained at the "Andaman Home" against their will; but a simple refutation of this mis-statement may be adduced from the fact that they are now only too anxious to come to the Settlement, and that we have much more difficulty in

keeping them away from this Island than in inducing them to remain here. It would obviously be a false policy, if we wish to conciliate and attract them to us, to put such a restraint upon their liberty, and make their stay compulsory; for, however well it might succeed for the time, eventually they would dislike and shun us; and our object, which is to familiarize them with us, and to shew them that our intentions towards them are friendly and pacific, would be neutralized and defeated. We certainly cannot have boats daily plying backwards and forwards to their camps, and indulge every sudden whim of theirs to go over to the mainland, perhaps for no more urgent purpose than to paint themselves, or to hunt after pigs, for were we to yield to such capricious fancies, there would be no limit to their exactions; but when they are really anxious to leave they are always permitted to do so within reasonable intervals, and the best proof that they do not consider themselves involuntarily detained is, that, notwithstanding the grievances invented and alleged in their behalf, these very Andamanese, who are said to be pining in imprisonment, after they have been released, return of their own accord to their dungeons, and during the time that I have resided here they have come back time after time, some of them remaining away only one or two days, and they make a more lengthened stay each time that they return. It is, of course, difficult to wean them all at once from habits and modes of life to which they have become attached by long custom, but in many respects they are gradually assimilating themselves to our ways and practices, and can perceive and appreciate the superior comforts and advantages of civilization, and evidently prefer them to the exposure and severe hardships which they undergo in their own jungles.

The trip which I now made nearly terminated disastrously, for our boat was driven, by the violent force of the surf, almost against a rock and nearly swamped, while we were trying to land at a place very far to the north, almost out of sight of Ross Island. Mr. Beresford, the Chief Officer of the *Tubal Cain*, was with me, and it required all his skilful management to avert a collision which must have dashed our boat to atoms, and perhaps cost some of us our lives. We unwisely ventured too far to the north, following the tribe who, roving from one camp to another, had migrated almost to the extremity of South Andaman. We had just caught sight of some of them when the accident occurred, and they ran down to the beach shouting to us to land there. Bess immediately jumped out of the boat and swam ashore diving below the breakers, and gliding through the surf with wonderful speed and agility. When we had baled out the water, and were again clear of the breakers, five of them, seeing us prepared to return, swam to us, and others were about to follow; but we sailed away fearing to overcrowd our boat with too many of them. They seemed to have shifted their camp in search of food, for those who joined us looked wretchedly famished, and slapped their shrunken stomachs and pointed to Ross Island, as an intimation that they were in want of food and wished to return there to replenish themselves. The wind was unfortunately against us, and the rain fell in a continuous torrent, often obscuring the land and rendering it difficult to regulate our course; and the uncertain and shifting gusts compelled us to tack continually, so that we almost despaired of returning to Ross Island that night, and it was very late when we arrived there. The Andamanese became very uneasy and impatient, and could not understand why we should put ourselves to the trouble of tacking so frequently; they constantly pointed to the Island, and evidently thought it a matter of perfect plain sailing to steer straight to it, and were puzzled and vexed that we so often deviated from our direct course and sailed in directions quite opposite to our destination. They shewed their usual contrivance in sheltering themselves from the rain by using our mats to make coverings in the shape of their huts slantingly opposed to the wind, under which they crouched together and kept themselves quite warm and dry; while we were exposed to a pelting rain and almost cramped with the damp and chilly night air. After this perilous excursion I seldom attempted to visit the aborigines at any of their encampments beyond North Point, but they have often come down to the coast opposite the Settlement and signalled by fires to us to send boats for them, and when we have done so, many of them, sometimes seventeen and eighteen at a time, and mostly women and children, have seized the opportunity of returning to their "Home" here. A few weeks ago a European convict, passing close to the mainland, saw some Native convicts and Andamanese, and the latter pointed to the convicts and made signs to him to come and take them. He believed that they had brought back the convicts, perhaps as a means of attracting boats which would otherwise not approach them; there being an order against persons landing at any place on South Andaman where the aborigines are known to have their encampments. More convicts than ever escape now to North Point, emboldened, no doubt, by the more friendly temper of the aborigines towards us; formerly they were terror-stricken at the sight of the ferocious and formidable Islanders, and avoided an Andamanese Camp as they would have shunned the lair of a wild beast; but having lately seen them resort here so frequently, and having heard no doubt of the warning impressed on them of the punishment which would attend their ill-treatment of any person belonging to the Settlement, they take advantage of it to presume on their forbearance and indulgence, and now go quite freely amongst them and even try to exact food from them. The Andamanese have now become so accustomed to see convicts coming to their camps, that when any of them here offend them, they threaten them with their revenge when they catch them on the mainland; and many of them, with that superstitious feeling which is so strong in Natives of India, are really afraid to injure them or to incur their resentment, for fear that, by some fortuitous mishap, they might some day be tempted to run away and fall into the hands of vindictive enemies. Colonel Tytler is anxious that I should try to find some means of inducing our Andamanese friends to recapture escaped convicts; and it would, perhaps, be an act of mercy to do so, if only to hinder Natives from going amongst

a people so little under the restraint of order, and provoking and instigating them to bloodshed, and all other acts of violence, by the annoyance which they cause them; the result of even one indiscreet or hasty act being, perhaps, to fatally mar our attempts to conciliate and civilize them; but I fear that, if we invested people of such a turbulent and reckless disposition with a Police control over truant Natives, we might let loose their worst passions, and encourage their inclination which can now hardly be subsided to attack and ill-use peaceable and unoffending Natives indiscriminately with those who outlaw themselves and forfeit all protection by trying to evade the sentence which has bound them to the Settlement. If we derive advantages, as we undoubtedly do, from maintaining a good understanding with the aborigines of these Islands, it is certainly an evil, consequent on it, that it gives encouragement to convicts to try to effect their freedom, and to evade their work successfully for a considerable time; for they may now venture into the wide jungles and traverse the whole mainland with almost complete impunity, which they were far from likely to do before the Andamanese were intimidated into humane and tolerant conduct towards them. Formerly, if one of them met an Andamanese armed with bow and arrows, he was immediately attacked and stripped, and deprived of all that he carried with him; and the cowardly promptitude with which he yielded, and his supplicating and obsequious manner only excited contempt and derision, and provoked that malicious pleasure which savages find in seeing their victims writhe and look miserable under the tortures which they inflict upon them. I have heard Natives describe and admit their dismay and terror in one of these encounters with the savages. Some of them were once working in the woods near Haddo, when they were suddenly confronted by two Andamanese with bows and arrows, which they brandished and pointed menacingly towards them. At the sight of the hatchets in the hands of the convicts they danced and laughed exultingly. The convicts, afraid to run, fell at full length on the ground, and clasped the feet of the savages imploring mercy, and crying to their "Ram," "Ram;" but the only response to their entreaties was an echo, a mocking echo of their words and screams of derisive laughter. In vain they clasped their hands and again tried the magic influence of "Ram," "Ram;" the savages imitated even their prostrate and supplicating postures and congee, and reflected with painful and cruel accuracy their affrighted and deprecating gestures; and when their love of mimicry was satiated, and they had danced and laughed and slapt their shaking sides till they were exhausted, they seized the coveted hatchets, seemed to hesitate whether they should discharge their arrows or inflict some corporeal incision; but on better thought desisted, and then went away shouting "Ram," "Ram," and describing to each other the consternation of the poor convicts. But other convicts have not generally been so fortunate, and have seldom come away from such an encounter without some mark of the meeting,—such as a slit by a knife or arrow through some part of the body; but latterly these atrocities have not been repeated, and even the southern tribe, perhaps from watching our intimacy with the other aborigines, and the advantages which they have derived from it, have altogether abstained from acts of hostility. Burmese and other Natives have met them occasionally near Haddo and Aberdeen, and so far from showing an unfriendly disposition, the parties that they have met have given them their bows and arrows, and sat down in a familiar and social way, and eaten food with them; and I am told that none of the many runaway convicts who have lately returned have complained of being assaulted or otherwise ill-used by these Islanders. The two tribes are opposite the Settlement, though, by a common consent, they live apart and occupy different and widely distant tracks of country, occasionally meet, and some of the southern tribe have been seen in the woods and at the encampments on the north of the Island; but beyond such occasional visits, which may be for purposes of traffic and barter, there appears to be no intimacy between them, but rather jealousy and dislike, if we may judge from the feeling which the small fraternity here manifest towards their countrymen of the South; for they express great contempt and tell me they are "no good" when I point to that part of the Island and ask them if they are not their "budolahs," "clansmen," there. Some of them will shake their heads dissentingly, and warn me never to go near them, declaring that they will shoot me if I do so. Once, when I was visiting the encampments beyond North Point, a party of Andamanese came from the woods, and on seeing us stood at a distance in a group, conferring together for some moments; when, on a signal from one of them, they all suddenly disappeared, and a Burman convict, who was with me, afterwards explained that they were some of the other tribe amongst whom he once resided, and that the man who gave the signal was their Chief; that he (the Burman) formerly made his escape from the Settlement, and was taken and kept a prisoner by them, but contrived to effect his flight; and that the Chief, when he observed him with our party, pointed to him and laughed, and exchanged some remarks with the others; whereupon, as I had seen, they all at once retreated, fearing, perhaps, that he might recognise them and have them apprehended. I have said that the convicts of the new Settlement seemed to be losing that wholesome dread of the wild men of the woods which had hitherto acted as a check upon their truant propensities, and there was a curious instance of this:—The other day in the singular occurrence of a female married convict leaving the Settlement to try her fortune amongst the aborigines, she, and some other convicts, floated on a raft which they had constructed to North Point, and landing there journeyed along the coast, till they came to an Andamanese encampment; they remained there a few days; but, disappointed in their expectation of being fed and entertained without cost and trouble, and finding that the Andamanese, though they suffered their presence, showed no desire for their company, they repented of their folly and returned; and the woman wisely resolved to submit ever after to her fate; and it may be hoped that her experience of the

discomforts of a vagrant life will be a caution to the other malcontents of her sex who are rash enough to suppose that they can better their condition by exchanging it for Gipsy life amongst the savages. The frequency of cases of convicts escaping from the Settlement, often only to obtain a brief respite from their enforced labour, might seem to indicate something wrong in discipline and management, and to argue a system of unreasonable oppression, and severe and unfair usage, which was felt to be unsupportable; and it might be thought that, driven to despair by such oppression and injustice, they were willing to fly in the face of every hardship and danger, and to hazard even their lives and endure all privations and wretchedness rather than submit longer to the necessities of enforced exile. But persons ignorant of the facts, who drew their inferences from mere appearances, would be altogether mistaken, and form an opinion the very reverse of the truth; for whatever the faults, if there are any, of the system pursued towards convicts in the Andamans, unnecessary and undue rigor is certainly not one of them. Of all the criticisms which I have heard of the measures of the system of administration of this Settlement, not once, to my knowledge, has the cause of the convicts been espoused, or greater indulgence to them recommended; but, on the contrary, frequent and loud have been complaints of the mildness with which they are treated, and of the disposition manifested to lighten their bondage and ameliorate their condition. Those who complain of this alleged laxity would tighten the reins of discipline, and inflict severe labor as a penalty; by which means, they argue, convict labor might be rendered doubly productive, and crime receive its just recompense. But if such councils could prevail, their effect would be to inflame and irritate a large body of men who are, only for this reason, not dangerous; that their interests are not excited and their passions not aroused to attempt resistance, but who, once goaded to resistance, would not be deterred by ordinary motives, or even fear of the severest penalties; men, who, when their lives were of no value to them, and could be forfeited at any moment, with fanatic exultation, would not stay to consider present or distant consequences. It would be impossible, besides, to carry out a system of such crushing discipline, without a much larger and more powerful Force, than we at present possess, to over-awe and keep under control the spirit of disaffection which would be evoked by it; the lash would be every where in constant exercise, and such disorganisation would ensue as would at least be prejudicial to the progress and prosperity of a Colonial Settlement. There will always be a very wide difference in the results of labor and quantum of work done between convicts chained and fettered; and if sterner and more rigorous discipline is employed, they could not safely be trusted to work unfettered; and those who enjoy something of the freedom and cheerful mind, and the healthy activity which it inspires of hired and self-supporting labourers, so that ultimately substantial gain will arise from holding some stimulus and inducement to men constitutionally, and from circumstances, disposed to be desponding by making them feel that they are not wholly bereft of hope, and consigned to life-long decrepitude and degradation, but that they may still reap credit and reward for diligent exertion if they strive by good conduct to amend the past, and merit forgiveness and indulgence. In this question of penal discipline and labor those who object to the condition of the convicts as approximating too much to that of free labourers, and consider their treatment too indulgent, are apt to forget the special circumstances which necessitate a milder and more tolerant treatment of them than of criminals in other parts of India; the peculiar, and altogether exceptional, character of the locality and climate to which they are exiled, and the idiosyncrasies of the people who have to work out a life of bondage here. There is no race of people in whose blood or constitution the "mala diede pays" is more virulently inherent. The Native of India clings passionately to his home and the regions of his nativity. Our servants in Upper India or Bengal will seldom be prevailed upon to serve in stations where they have not relatives or kinsman, or to change a place of residence, and move with their Master from one station to another, though the distance is not further than from Benares to Allahabad, or Lahore to Rawul Pindee. If there is this natural feeling of aversion to change of locality, when only a few days' journey separates a man from his home and relations, how keenly intensified must be the feeling when the Native contemplates a transition so immense as that to distant regions, separated by the wide ocean from the land of his birth and superstitious veneration, when he hears of transportation not within the boundaries of his sacred fatherland, but to a place which, above all others, he regards with dread and abhorrence, to that dungeon of despair beyond the black waters which has obtained throughout India an infamous notoriety.

It can be understood, therefore, that convicts, when they first arrive here, are laboring under fears, misgivings and regrets which greatly depress their minds, and so injuriously affect their health and impair their efficiency. Disease to which they are thus too often predisposed by mental causes, and which, in some form or other, has, in many instances, enfeebled their constitutions, is aggravated by a new and inclement and continual exposure throughout the day to rain and scorching sun-heat, necessitated by their out-door employments in which all but a few self-supporting convicts are engaged. Such causes, and the want of sufficiently substantial and strengthening diet, may account for the extraordinary and most deplorable mortality amongst the Native convicts of this Settlement, and also for their abhorrence of a place where exile has not a single alleviating circumstance in their regard to render it endurable.

The Native convicts have a foolish notion that there is an almost continuous land-link between these Islands and their own country; hundreds have essayed the feat of trying to

discover such a passage; and no reasonings, nor even their experience of the invariable and often disastrous failure of such attempts, can disabuse their minds of the dearly cherished hallucination. They imagine, too, that there is a Rajah at the "*Cows*" who is friendly to their countrymen, and who will protect and provide for them if they can only reach the Islands.

It is surprising how far some of these escaped convicts wander through the jungles. In the course of an excursion up one of the creeks above Viper, we met one of them fifteen miles or more from the Settlement, and by his own account he had been seven days wandering about the woods in all directions trying to find an outlet. He had subsisted during that time on berries, unripe fruit, and leaves, and looked miserably emaciated. The junglees, or wildmen as he called them, had made him eat pork; of course much against his will, as he was a strict Mussulman; and, except that they pelted him with stones when he remonstrated, they had not interfered with him, but shared their food with him and otherwise treated him kindly. The expedition referred to, deserves some notice, as it was the result of an endeavour to explore one of the largest creeks into the mainland. It has long been the Superintendent's desire to find some passage through the interior to the opposite coast; and it was supposed, from the formation of the land on the other side of Viper, that one of the many creeks which penetrate into the interior towards Port Mouat might afford such a passage, or at least conduce far enough to diminish very considerably the extent of jungle to be cleared; and it was to examine one of these creeks that I went with Lieutenant Carr, on the 20th of July, taking a party of Burmese and nine men of the 9th Madras Native Infantry, and as guides two Andamanese Topsy and Jacko. We had three boats, each of which carried a guard of Sepoys, one our baggage and provisions. The latter, which was the heaviest, gave some trouble and retarded our progress, till we came to difficult passes of the creek, where the first boats had to stop to remove impediments, and thus allowed time for the slower one to overtake them. The creek which we selected for exploration is a mile to the south of Viper, and runs mainly south-west, and has already been partly explored by Colonel Haughton, who was able, with the Settlement Gun Boat and a light Burmese Canoe, to go and return some twelve or fifteen miles in one day. We started for two days and provisioned ourselves accordingly, but the Sepoys, mistaking Lieutenant Carr's order to supply themselves with two days' provisions, took only two meals, which compelled us to return sooner than we otherwise should have done; though fortunately we had, in some measure, anticipated such a dilemma by taking a superfluous bag of rice to make up any accidental deficiencies. The Burmese were as scantily provided with food as the Sepoys, for their whole stock was only a little rice; but if they had not brought a morsel with them, they would have fared, at least to their own taste, as sumptuously as any of us. In the first place their knowledge of the vegetation, much of which exists no where else, but in their own country, and for which the botany of no other country but theirs supplies a nomenclature; the knowledge of the properties of herbs, plants and fruit, and forest trees, would have enabled them to find sustenance where a Bengal or Madras Native would not have thought of seeking for it. As soon as we halted for the day, three or four of them would sally forth into the jungle with a pack of common pariah dogs, which they had trained to pig-hunting, and in a few minutes we would hear yelps, crashing of branches, and encouraging exclamations of Ho! Ho!; to which the Burmese with us would respond with grunts of satisfaction; and then, in a few minutes more, back they would come with all the dogs jumping and yelping after them, dragging a huge-tusked hog, or, as it sometimes happened, a sow and some of her litter. They also found beds of cockles in deep waters of the stream, where we should not have known that they existed; they brought these to the surface with their feet, and soon collected as many as would have served for a meal. But their ingenuity was exerted in other ways, besides satisfying their appetite. Their Overseer with some others, as soon as we halted for the night, felled bamboo branches, stitched together wild plantain and palm leaves, and in an hour or two built huts and matchans enough for all our party. Altogether, their contrivance, activity, and good temper, contrasted favorably with the fastidiousness and helplessness of the Sepoys, who proved an incumbrance to us, rather than of any service. They would have acted differently under ordinary circumstances; but, of course, they felt all the inconveniences of such rough campaigning, and complained that they had neither tents nor an adequate supply of food, and their caste-scruples added to the difficulty; for most of them declined all food except rice which we offered them. On the first day, we stopped at a place ten or twelve miles from the mouth of the creek, where some Burmese had been a few weeks cutting bamboos, and had left thatched huts which we occupied during the night. We used every precautions to guard ourselves against attack, took up our oars and placed them under a guard, and lashed the boats to the bank to prevent the convict boatmen escaping with them, which we suspected they had a design of doing, and we set Sentries, and lighted a large fire which illuminated the forest and enabled them to watch every movement; the Natives and Burmese also lighted fires opposite their huts, and for want of more solid fuel, piled upon them dry and green bamboos, the crackling of which, bursting and blazing in all directions, sounded like the explosion of so many guns; and often startled us during the night, when we suddenly woke up with the sound of a loud volley, and before recollecting ourselves, imagined that it was a real discharge of musketry, and that the savages were attacking us. At first we were all in high glee and good humour; the Burmese regaled, to their hearts content, on roast pig, rice, and cockles; puffed their huge cheroots and bandied fun with Topsy and Jacko; the Sepoys collected round the poor Mussulman, and rallied him on the subject of his religious scruples and aversion to pig flesh; Topsy and Jacko went about the camp levying contributions, and amusing every one with their merry pranks and eccentricities; altogether our camp presented a lively and diverting spectacle. But our mirth was soon damped metaphorically

and literally by the deluge of heavy rain which descended upon us at midnight. Great was our anxiety to know whether our roofs would bear it. But in a few minutes down came the drizzle, drop by drop, on our coverlets; the sluices in the thatch widened; the winds splashed the rain in upon us from the open sides, and we were soon as much exposed as if we had been lying on the bare and uncovered ground. But there was no retreat from the rain and tempest;—the jungle was impenetrable, and it would have been like a retreat from Scylla into Charybdis to seek shelter in the bamboo grove, for the ground was covered with leeches. Fortunately, soon after daybreak, the rain ceased, and a bright and unclouded sky gave promise of at least a brief interval of fair weather. We re-lighted our fires, dried our clothes, and in less than two hours had made preparations to embark again on our voyage of discovery. But we had now to encounter many obstacles to our progress: The stream in many places was almost impassable with logs and branches which had floated down the current and accumulated in narrow channels, and formed bars which we had to cut and clear, or with much labour and difficulty drag our boats over. Large trees too had fallen right across the stream, and formed bridges so close to the water that our boats had to be weighed down almost to their full depths to allow of their passing under. We had frequently again to drag our boats across shallow bars in the stream, which varied in depth from less than a foot to more than fifteen feet. The banks on each side were densely wooded, and showed no signs of foot-tracks; there were no huts nor any traces of aborigines, though they must, at some time, have been there,—for Topsy and Jacko knew every turn of the creek, and shewed us a short passage where two branches of the stream met, which they could not have known unless they had examined both passages as we did, and thus found which was the shortest. Nothing could adequately describe the luxuriance of the vegetation and the wild beauty of the scenery as it appeared to us under all the favorable effects of fine weather, and the sensations excited by its novelty and freshness. Creepers, rising to the full height of the forest and overspreading its surface, decked with their bright leaves and lovely flowers the whole of the sloping landscape. The trees rose to almost incredible height, and each supported a little forest of its own, of ferns and flowering orchids and countless varieties of creeping plants which covered their stems, and branches, and straggled upwards to the surface. Wild palm, and plantain trees, and prickly cane spread their branches over the stream; and bunches of ripe little plantains hung down tantalizingly. Sometimes we passed under almost perpendicular heights, as densely planted with trees of prodigious size, towering into the air from their lofty summits. Every turn of the stream presented a new feature of rare loveliness and grandeur. In some places the stream widened into the breadth of a large river; its course, as it penetrated further, became more rambling and irregular, winding by turns in almost opposite directions. We had proceeded many miles without seeing any place on the banks where we could have effected a lodgment, for the jungle was so thick that it would have been a work of some hours to clear enough ground for an encampment. But about 3 p. m. we came to a large bamboo grove on a high embankment, a most inviting situation, which would have afforded natural shelter if we had not preferred to cut down the bamboo trees and make huts out of the branches. This was soon done, though half the grove was felled in the operation; and the Burmese, who had wisely collected palm and plantain leaves during the day, completely thatched two huts before night; the other huts were partly sheltered by the bamboo trees which still remained, but not enough to save their occupants from a complete drenching when the rain fell, as it did very heavily during the night. The Burmese succeeded in catching two large pigs which they liberally shared with Topsy and Jacko. The latter presided over the cooking, and appropriated a very undue portion; not content with helping himself first, and gorging himself almost to suffocation, he wrapped as much more as he wanted in leaves and hid the bundle under our hut; and again during the night ate so plentifully that he complained the next morning of being very unwell, and Topsy had to bleed him. Topsy and Jacko were very much alarmed when they found it was our intention to proceed further the next day, and did their utmost to dissuade us. They made me understand that we should encounter an unfriendly tribe of aborigines of whom they themselves seemed to be in great dread. Jacko pointed to my heart and represented the act of a savage aiming at me with his bow and arrow, of the arrow piercing my heart and of my falling wounded, closing my eyes, and expiring. Topsy also pathetically enacted the death scene, and both waved their hands deprecatingly in the direction disapproved of, and entreated me not to proceed further but to return to the "*Burra Chab*," ("Katah Decayrdah, Burra Chab tweecken"), that there were none of their tribe in the other direction, but that it was "*Meecheymyayrdah, Meecheymyayrdah*," a word which they frequently repeated with emphasis and in a tone of great disgust. When we were about to start in the morning, they again seemed alarmed, and Jacko made the sound of the twang of a bow and the same signs that the savages would attack us, but we pointed to our weapons and discharged some shots to show him that we were prepared and able to defend ourselves, and he at last appeared to forget the danger, real or imaginary, in the prospect of getting more pigs and of returning the same day to Ross, which we promised him he should do. We had thought, as the stream was gradually becoming narrower and more shallow, we might find some indication of its source in the course of the day, but after proceeding ten miles, the stream again widened and became deeper; we were indeed effectually stopped by a bar of some length, but if we could have drawn our boats across it, we might still have continued our journey for many miles further; and perhaps at length have found an outlet in the sea with which, from the direction in which the stream flowed, it seemed likely that it communicated. It was the opinion of those of our party most competent to judge, that, in this expedition up the creek, we traversed altogether a distance of about thirty miles; but, of course, such calculations are very uncertain,

for it would be impossible to judge by mere eyesight of distances over unknown tracks of country, especially by water. Before we returned, a Burman climbed to the top of one of the highest trees on the bank where he was likely to have an extensive view, for the country on both sides of the streams was flat, and no hills or elevations of land were visible. He looked in the direction in which we supposed we heard the sound of waves beating against the shore, and said that he saw a vast blank space which he believed was the sea, but could not positively say whether it was the sea, or a cloud, or only empty space. He performed a surprising feat in climbing this tree, for there was nothing on the trunk to support him but the notches which he made with his dah as he climbed up it, and it made us giddy to watch him ascending so precariously step by step to a height from which the slightest step might have precipitated him, but it was one of those situations where the danger is much less if one can contrive not to think of it; and the Burman was not the man to be daunted by even greater difficulties,—he had already that day shewn surprising courage and self-possession in a desperate struggle with a large snake which attacked him in the water. It had been lying on the bank, and he struck at it with an oar but missed the blow, when to our horror we saw it spring towards him; he retreated up to his neck in water still striking it with his oar, but his blows only drew it nearer, and it was almost touching him when he quickly swerved aside, thrust the oar under it and flung it to a distance; he then followed it and drove it dexterously before him to the shore when with another blow he effectually stunned it. This was the only snake which I have seen in the jungles. We returned to the Settlement on the evening of the 22nd July, one of our boats in less than seven hours, the other two in nine or ten; but we should have been much later had not the current run so strongly in our favour. Topsy was almost beside herself with joy at meeting her husband; he had been very uneasy, and often enquired for her and Jacko during their absence, and shewed by his manner that he feared some harm had befallen them. The other aborigines were delighted with Jacko's account of his adventures, and have often asked me to take them on similar expeditions. On the 27th of July, I had an opportunity of making a voyage in the Settlement Steamer *Lady Canning* to Macpherson's Straits at the southern extremity of South Andaman. A disastrous and very distressing occurrence occasioned this visit. On Saturday the 25th, a party of men of the Naval Brigade left this Island in the Superintendent's cutter to visit some birds-nests caverns on the South Coast with permission to be absent two days. We heard nothing more of them till very early on the morning of the 27th, an Andamanese canoe with three naked Europeans was seen some distance out at sea making towards the Island. There was at once, of course, all manner of surmises which were not set at rest by the reports which were circulated soon after their arrival: for, the first supposed to be authentic intelligence which Colonel Tytler received, was that his cutter with the Naval Brigade men had been wrecked, that the Sailors had been attacked by the aborigines, and some of them massacred, while others including the Cockswain, Wilkinson, (so minute was the account) were lying wounded and bleeding on the beach. The three men who were seen in the canoe had contrived to escape and brought the intelligence. Colonel Tytler, as soon as he espied the canoe at a distance conjectured what had happened, and immediately despatched a party of armed Police in charge of an European; he also ordered Lieutenant Philbrick, Commanding the *Lady Canning*, which was most fortunately here at the time, to make immediate preparations to start for Macpherson's Straits with an armed party of Naval Brigade men. There was great excitement through the Settlement, every one vowing vengeance on "those ungrateful, treacherous, blood-thirsty savages." I was cautioned to keep those of them who were here out of sight, as it was impossible to say what the Sailors might do to them in their rage and excitement; and, of course, all efforts for their good were pronounced a folly and delusion, and they were henceforth to be regarded as no better than wild beasts to be treated like brutes, and hunted down and exterminated. But the real facts, rightly viewed, represented the contrast between their and the more civilised and superior race in very different colours. They were as follows:—The Sailors who had set out on this "bird-nesting" expedition entered Macpherson's Straits, and landed safely on a sandy beach, about a mile beyond the birds-nests caverns, where they found some Andamanese canoes, and on the skirt of the jungle a deserted camp in which the aborigines, who seem to have been scared away by their approach, had left the best part of their possessions, implements, weapons, painted skulls, shell cups, and numerous other curiosities, all scattered about the ground, as if in their hurry and confusion they had not had time to carry them away or conceal them. The Sailors plundered all that they found,—carried their booty to the cutter, fastened the best canoe to the stern, and then set off to return to Ross Island. They were sailing through a heavy sea, and unfortunately too close to shore; for as they were turning the point the boats struck with violence against a sunken rock and immediately capsized; the Crew were now in imminent danger, their boat was carried forward with the impetuous force of the waves and dashed to pieces against the rocks; they struggled desperately amongst the rocks and surf, tossed first forward, then back again into the rough of the sea, but fortunately all could swim but one, sunk immediately; but two of his companions, regardless of their own lives, swam to his assistance and succeeded in dragging him to a rock where he lay insensible; he was not seen again, and they supposed that the receding waves had swept him back into the sea, for his body was not afterwards found, though a careful search was made near the scene of the disaster; it was a miracle of mercy that any of them escaped, but they all, with this one exception, succeeded at last in scrambling up the cliffs out of reach of the waves where they lay for some time in utter exhaustion,—torn, bruised, and bleeding, and one of them apparently lifeless; the latter, Wilkinson, the Chief Petty Officer, was left all night in this position; his companions believing that he was dead, and

surprised, they said, when they returned next morning, "to find him alive again," limping about the beach. The others climbed to a wood plateau on the cliff, which was open to the sea on one side and separated by a ridge of rocks from the jungle on the other, and there they determined that they would remain for the night, as it afforded not only a place of concealment and natural protection against attack by the aborigines, but also the advantage of being able to watch and signal boats or ships passing. They then deliberated on the measures to be taken to convey intelligence of the accident to the Settlement Authorities and procure assistance. It was hopeless to think of travelling so many miles along the coast over precipitous rocks and through dense thickets of mangroves, they were shoeless and exhausted, and had not a morsel of food to support them. What then were they to do?—they might remain where they were till their protracted absence created alarm, and assistance was sent to them, but that could not be till the day following at the earliest; and in the meantime they might perish from hunger and faintness, or suffer a worse fate at the hands of the savages. In this extremity they resolved upon a daring and desperate venture; they had left some canoes on the beach opposite the aborigines' encampment, and three of them volunteered to go down and endeavour to seize one, and, if possible, make their way in it to Ross. We have seen how well this bold enterprise succeeded. They pushed out in the canoe, turned the point safely, though not without some hairbreath's escapes, and guiding themselves as well as they could with a paddle, drifted with wind and tide along shore, towards the Settlement. They had not gone before they saw, or fancied they saw, some of the aborigines running along the beach with torches, and, as they thought, pursuing them; large fires on the shore showed that they were encamped there, and, to avoid the risk of falling into their hands, they steered further out to sea, but the tide carried them so far that they at length lost sight of land, and not knowing in the darkness what course to follow were altogether at the mercy of the tide and wind, which fortunately blew steadily in this direction, and so were driven to eastward of this Island, where they were espied, about four miles off, next morning. When we saw the canoe two of the men appeared motionless, the other was feebly guiding it with a paddle. A crowd of people was waiting on shore to assist them when they landed, and they needed the assistance,—for what with the fatigues they had undergone, and exposure without clothing to rain through the night, and want of food, and extreme anxiety, the poor men had sunk into a semi-stupor, and made no effort at least to save themselves; their canoe struck side-ways against a rock at some distance from shore and fell to pieces; they tumbled over and floundered in the water, but were unable to swim, and must have been drowned if some Natives had not immediately hastened to their aid and dragged them on land. So ended this adventure, happily indeed under all the circumstances, for the consequences might have been much more calamitous if these men had not lived to bring the intelligence, or if the Settlement Steamer had been absent when the accident occurred, for the weather next day was much more tempestuous; and it is doubtful whether any boat, belonging to the Settlement, could have been sent so far with safety, or hope of success to rescue the survivors. The *Lady Canning* steamed to the Straits in about three hours. We had not an opportunity of visiting the renowned caves or making any other observations, for we were wholly engaged, when we landed, with assisting the Sailors who were miserably enfeebled by their long fast and all the hardships they had encountered. All were recovered with the exception of the poor man who had perished on the day of the wreck; the fragments of the cutter, and the sails torn into shreds, were lying on the rocks; but we could not approach the place on account of the heavy surf. The fatality of the misadventure seemed to attend every thing connected with it, for on our return the Steamer scraped her keel against a reef; and, had the tide been lower, she might have run aground and sustained serious damage. The accident, though trifling, exemplifies the necessity of revising and improving the Charts of the Coast, which are said to be very erroneous and imperfect.

This unhappy accident, resulting in the loss of life of one of our Sailors, has had one good effect,—that it has determined the Superintendent to prohibit for the future such adventurous excursions which have, before now, brought the Brigadesmen into collision with the aborigines, and have been followed by results which must have increased the antagonism and hatred of the latter towards us.

Until we fully understand their language, and by that means can impartially investigate their complaints, there will, in the progress of their intercourse with us, be frequent cases in which the aborigines may be unfairly represented, and offences imputed to them of which, if the truth could be divulged, they would be found not to have been guilty; and such being the case, next to the duty of most zealously watching over them to protect their lives and liberty, nothing can be of greater present importance with regard to them than that Government should encourage, by every means, the study of their language, and the instruction in our language of their children, who, when they had acquired a sufficient knowledge of English or Hindoostanee, would be the best medium of communication with them.

At first it seemed as if their language was to be a perpetual puzzle to philologists, and that at least much time would elapse before we should make the poor Andamanese understand that we were seeking intercommunication of ideas and information with them. For a long time every question that we put to them was repeated with the rapidity of an echo, and with most provoking accuracy, till patience was exhausted, and it seemed hopeless to interrogate them; but at last an accidental circumstance discovered to me the key by which to elicit intelligible utterances; since that time my want has been understood, and they have encouraged my efforts to acquire their language. I observed some of the children curiously

examining various articles in my house which caught their attention, and as they examined each, they turned towards me and called out, with an expression on their faces of interest and curiosity, "Kahmeechi Muddah?" "Kahmeechi Muddah?" which it was quite obvious to me meant,— "What do you call this?" "What is the name of this?" and when I, in turn, pointed to something which they knew, and asked them their name for it, they instantly replied giving me the word in their own language by which they designated it.

I have sometimes been asked if the Andamanese observe any form of religion, or if they have ever intimated any thing which would argue their belief of a God, or expectation of a future state of existence after death. That they have such expectations I have reason to believe from circumstance which seemed to me little short of their assertion of that fact. An Andamanese woman had lost an infant child which she had formerly brought with her to this Island. On her appearing here one day without it, I enquired after her baby, and asked why she had not as usual brought it, when she replied that it was dead, and that she had buried it the previous day; and on further interrogation she pointed her finger towards the skies, and said that baby "was there," ("Babylin din ijo lockon kayler), and then raised herself and extended her arm as if straining upwards, and made gestures and exclamation which implied that baby had gone very very far above into their celestial paradise. Had it been a singular incident, I should not have attached so much meaning to it, nor perhaps have founded any opinions of their belief upon it, but many other of the Andamanese, whom I questioned separately about the deceased infant, repeated the poor woman's gestures and expressions.

Their idea of a paradise, if I have rightly interpreted it, is gross in the extreme. They believe that it abounds with pigs, and that their departed kinsmen are perpetually revelling in the delights of pig-hunting ("rogo dayley"), and repasts on pigs ("rogo makney"). Perhaps their expectation of this their supreme enjoyment makes them face danger and brave death with such reckless intrepidity. They appear to perform religious rites at burial. Their dead are interred, not burnt; a grave is dug about three feet deep in which the body is deposited; after filling the grave with sand and green leaves, they light a large fire upon it, and cover the ashes with soil; they then abandon their encampment which is invariably also their burial ground, and will not occupy it again till after the lapse of several months when the skeleton is disinterred, and the skull and other bones are appropriated by the nearest relative. I found the complete bones of human bodies carefully wrapped in leaves and concealed in trees, and when the Andamanese have found them in my possession, they have been most eager to recover them, claiming them as valued relics of their friends; skulls, as is generally known, are worn as ornaments suspended from the neck, and made to serve a useful purpose, holding the sundry small articles which they usually carry about with them. When any of the aborigines have died at the Andaman Home, their friends have seemed to have no further care for them, and have left their burial to convict servants.

Up to the very last moment, that they have entertained any hope of their recovery, their anxiety on their account has been very manifest.

Such are the curious contradictions and inconsistencies in their character which are incomprehensible to us at present.

I am glad to state that some of the South Tribe have lately been induced to visit this Island through the influence of "Crusoe," who warmly exerted himself in this instance to second my endeavours. They had encamped not far from Aberdeen; and having noticed their fires one evening, I proposed to some of the North Tribe in the "Andaman Home" here to visit them the following morning, but they demurred and wished to dissuade me, representing the South Tribe as extremely ill-disposed to us, and warning me that they would assuredly shoot their arrows at me if I landed. When next morning I approached their camp with Crusoe, a crowd of them at first came down to the beach, and Crusoe signalled to them, and shouted most energetically, offering them bags of rice and other grain which we had taken for them in the boat. At first they remained on the beach silently watching us, but when they observed our intention to land near their encampment, they ran back to it, extinguished their fires, gathered up all their bundles, and dispersed in different directions through the jungle. It seemed useless to follow them, and I turned the boat intending to return back, but Crusoe begged me to persevere, promising that if we would row along the Coast he would prevail upon them to come to us. Some of them seeing our boat turned again, shewed themselves on the shore, and then a conversation followed between them and Crusoe, which ended in their agreeing to remain if we landed, which we did. They wished me to proceed with them to a larger encampment of their tribe some distance southward. I left the bags of provisions on the shore, and having persuaded them to come into the boat, set sail; but instead of steering in the direction which they wished, when we were well out to sea, I turned the boat and assuring them that they should be kindly treated, and that they had no cause for the least apprehension, I brought them to this Island. After setting before them such a sumptuous feast of roast pigs and other approved dainties as they had perhaps never before seen, I loaded them with presents and returned next day with them to their camp, taking with me this time more bags of grain to distribute amongst their friends. They were so delighted with this treatment, and their confidence so completely gained, that they persuaded fifteen more of their friends to pay a visit to this Island. Since that time there have been no less than 47 aborigines in the "Andaman Home," of whom twenty are children of various ages.

Some of these have quickly acquired the English alphabet, and words of short syllables, and their imitative powers are so remarkable that they soon catch, and commit to memory,

phrases which they hear spoken. The men are often at first extremely unruly, and I am continually called upon to interfere in cases in which they would not hesitate to take the lives of convicts, of the Native Guard over them, if they persisted in opposing them. Their manner of beguiling their leisure is to sharpen hoop iron into long blades, of which I collect a number every day to prevent their using them against their Parawallahs; this unpleasant duty is not wholly without risk, for they are extremely loath to part with any weapon and are always inclined to resent the seizure of it, even though not their own, as a grievous affront and wrong.

But by unflinching firmness and liberal treatment, I contrive to obtain due attention to my directions, and experience less difficulty than I had expected in restraining their wild habits and bringing them to some sense of order and propriety.

The children, when they can obtain the materials, will employ their time in making bows and arrows, in the manufacture of which they are very skilful, and in the use of them not less so. Two of the boys, each about 10 years of age, sometimes go along the rocks round the Island shooting fish with bows and arrows. I have seen them leap from rock to rock watching for the fish as they dart out from under them, when, with astonishing quickness, and an aim which seldom misses, they discharge their arrows,—which the next moment are seen quivering in the water, and one of them plunges in and drags out a fish sometimes fifteen or twenty inches in length fixed to his arrow point. I have seen them obtain in this way a large basket of fish at times, when, on account of stormy weather, none have been caught by the Convict Fishermen.

They seem to be almost as much in their element in the water as on land, and the feats in swimming which they sometimes perform are so extraordinary that they will hardly be credited. One man, who was fettered and under guard at the Naval Brigade Barracks, escaped one night, and swam in his heavy iron fetters to the opposite mainland.

Two of the Andamanese, under my care, left the "Home" one dark night and swam all the distance from this Island to North Point; and a few days afterwards, when I sent a message to them inviting them to return, they swam back again the same distance in the open day, each resting on a bamboo branch; it would seem from these circumstances and the fearlessness which they indicate, that sharks, which abound in these waters, do not attack them, for they would hardly risk their lives in so reckless a manner if experience had warned them of such a danger. I am bound to correct an erroneous impression of their habits which I have inadvertently conveyed through imperfect observation. It is with regard to the taste for raw flesh which is sometimes attributed to them. Here they both boil and roast their food, one process following the other, and will even reject it if it is not sufficiently cooked for them.

I have found in the Office records of this Settlement the following curious document, which I transcribe into this Report with a view to add to it information, which I have obtained in confirmation of the interesting fact, so much doubted and derided, which it seems to establish, that these poor people, though they have been so long neglected, possess mental capabilities not at all inferior to others, that, in fact, the Almighty has endowed them with faculties which are common to all the human race, and which have so long lain dormant in them only because the attempt has not been made to bring them into exercise:—

"In 1835 or 1837, whilst between Noreomdam and Barren Islands, after a blow from the west-ward, picked up an Andaman canoe containing a man, woman and two children, (a boy and a girl) in a state of starvation,—the boy died immediately after being picked up. They were taken to Penang and made over to the Authorities; after having landed, the man was taken very ill. Dr. Boswell, the Civil Surgeon, was bleeding him when his wife seized a pot containing water, and flung it at his head; the Doctor just had time to stoop to escape the blow; the man died; the girl was put into the Free School and turned out one of the cleverest girls amongst them. After completing her studies, she went under Mrs. Forbes Brown as a sort of a companion; the mother was placed in a Penitentiary at Pulo Tecoos, she had the liberty of going to see her daughter daily a distance of three miles. Mrs. Smith, the School Mistress, was in the habit of giving her a piece of sugar-cane which she was very fond of. Ladies also gave her clothes which she was in the habit of tearing up and getting patches put to make it look gaudy.

"When I was in Penang last, herself and daughter were alive.

"PORT BLAIR;
The 20th November 1861. }

(Signed) H. KINSEY,
Comdg. Lonach."

I have learnt, on good authority, that there is another young Andamanese woman in Penang, who has been from infancy with the family of Mr. Mitchell, a Clerk in the Supreme Court; that she has been liberally educated, receiving in all respects the same advantages as her own daughters; that she is an accomplished Pianist, studious and well-informed; is gifted with a most amiable and excellent disposition, and that her character and conduct are most praiseworthy, and exemplary; that she is a regular and frequent attendant at the Church services; was lately confirmed by the Bishop of Calcutta; and, since her confirmation, has also been a regular communicant.

I was also informed that she is engaged to be married to a European School Master in Penang. Mr. Mitchell's brother is a Clerk in the Superintendent's Office here, and he confirms these statements.