



of a casual half hour, more honorary distinction than can be acquired by years of philanthropic toil. It is the glory of such men as Cleveland and Wilkinson, Dixon, Ovans, and Macpherson, that they have labored on in the cause of humanity, without any of the ordinary encouragements and incentives to exertion, unknown to their brethren at home, almost forgotten by their brethren in India, without the stimulating and sustaining aid of a single note of popular applause.

And yet what great things have been done in India by a few European officers—perhaps by a single European officer, located in the heart of a newly-acquired province, and surrounded by rude barbarians, slaves to the most degraded superstitions, and habitual practisers of almost every vice! Look at the case of Mairwarra.* Thirty years ago we found in that country a race of savage marauders—with little or no regard for human life or liberty—murdering their daughters, selling their mothers, committing every kind of atrocity without shame and without remorse. They were many of them fugitives from other states—men whom society had spued out—the rugged elements of a fearless race of bandits. They were robbers, indeed, by profession and by practice. Everywhere they took what they could, and kept what they could, and lived in continual strife with their neighbours. Their vicinage was always uncomfortable—often dangerous—and when we came into contact with them we swallowed them up. In 1821 we subjugated the country, and brought these freebooters under British rule.

No sooner had the act of absorption been accomplished than the British officers, to whom the “settlement” of the

* The untravelled reader must look for Mairwarra in the map of India, between the Chumbul river and the Arabala hills, which stretch almost from Delhi to Goojrat. It is under the Government of the North-Western

Provinces, and contiguous to Ajmere. “It is bounded,” says Colonel Dixon, “by Ajmere to the north, and separates Meywar in the east from Marwar on the west; to the south are the hill possessions of Meywar.”



new country had been entrusted, began to address themselves to the work of humanising these wretched people. "The duty to be performed was of no ordinary cast; it was one of considerable anxiety and difficulty. The people had been conquered without calling for the exercise of any extraordinary force or much solicitude. This had proved a matter of comparative ease. We had now to gain their affections, to command their good will in following the path pointed out to them, to win them over to habits of industry, and to habituate them to customs of civilised life. We had to prove to them that, in subduing them, our chief source of solicitude was to improve their social condition, and in all respects to administer to their comfort and welfare." To effect this, it was necessary, in the first instance, to put down the open violence of these marauding clans by an imposing display of force. When we first took charge of the district, authority was openly set at defiance. Armed bands paraded the country, or occupied the passes. The servants of Government were cut off; prisoners were rescued. There was no safety on the public ways. To control these desperate banditti it was necessary to show that on the side of constituted authority there was a power stronger even than their lawless ferocity. And this was speedily done.

It is the rule of the British Government, in these cases, to make the rude barbarians themselves the agents of their own civilisation. We abstain, whenever such forbearance is possible, from a display of foreign force. In Mairwarra, as elsewhere, it was deemed expedient to raise a local battalion, composed of the people of the country, and to employ their energies in the suppression of crime, and the support of the civil authorities. By the establishment of such corps another object is attained. It opens a field for the exercise of a world of restless energy—it reduces to discipline, and holds out objects of honor-



able competition, to men who have hitherto warred against their neighbours on their own account, and lived in a constant state of predatory strife.

The Mairwarra local battalion was placed under the command of Captain Hall, of the 16th Bengal Native Infantry—an officer who, in the quartermaster's department of the army, had exhibited considerable ability and force of character—and who, now virtually invested with the political charge of the country, brought all his energies to bear upon the reclamation of these savage tribes. The Mairs, disciplined after our European fashion, proved themselves to be good and loyal soldiers, and the criminal combinations, which had thrown the whole district into confusion, were suppressed by the brethren of the men who constituted the robber-gangs. And this primal measure accomplished, Captain Hall took the next great step along the road of civilisation, and addressed himself to the permanent protection of life and property by the introduction of a judicial system in keeping with the character and the requirements of the people.

The Mairs had always had the most primitive ideas of justice. It had been of the wild kind which degenerates into revenge—or else it had ascended only to the scale of trial by ordeal. Either the contending parties, backed by their sympathising kinsmen, resorted to the arbitrement of the sword; and blood-feuds were handed down among them from sire to son; or the accused was challenged to prove his innocence by thrusting his hand into boiling oil, or grasping a red-hot shot. But under British government a new and better system was introduced. Except in the highest class of offences, resort was had to the *Punchayut*, or arbitration system—a system well adapted to the temper and condition of the people, which worked with the best results; and was one of the most important remedial agents applied to the cure of all these social ills. “It is a strong argument,”



says Colonel Dixon, "in favor of this system of dispensing justice, that during the last twenty-six years, the period of our rule in Mairwarra, no appeal has been made beyond the superintendent of the district."

But the plough was the chief civiliser. Hitherto the land had been so difficult of cultivation that no one cared to possess it. Mairwarra is a mountainous district, and, without artificial means of retention, the rain that fell was soon lost. The falls of rain, too, were uncertain. Sometimes the water supplies totally failed; and cultivation was at a stand-still. In 1832 there had been a great drought, and the country had been nearly depopulated. The industrial energies of the people were paralysed by this calamity. They lost all faith in agriculture as a means of subsistence, and fell into their old marauding habits. This, indeed, in a greater or a less degree, was the result of every drought, and droughts were of frequent occurrence. To remedy this evil, it plainly appeared would be not only to increase the financial prosperity of the people, but to open out the sources of moral reformation, and to reclaim them from their lawless ways. Nothing could be more readily comprehensible than this, or seemingly more easy of achievement.

Compelled by ill-health to abandon his post, Hall was succeeded in 1835 in the charge of Mairwarra by Captain Dixon, an officer of the Bengal Artillery, whose zeal in the cause of humanity, evinced when in no responsible political employment, had secured for him the good opinion and confidence of Sir Charles Metcalfe, who now selected him for a post in which his benevolence might have free scope for active expression. The trust could not have been confided to better hands. Dixon entered upon his new duties with all the energy and zeal of a man whose heart is in the good work. He saw at once what was the great want of the country. Eager to develop the productiveness of an unyielding soil, and to stimulate the industry



of an unsettled people, he addressed himself to this great matter of the water-supply, and left untried no effort to secure it. He appealed to Government. He appealed to the people. Money and labor were both soon at his disposal; and the great want was supplied. By a judicious management of the water-supply, by the digging of tanks and wells, and the construction of embankments, the wasted jungle was soon reclaimed. The plough was in active operation. Every man was encouraged, by small advances of money, to apply himself to agricultural pursuits. The financial results of the experiment were highly favorable. The moral results were more favorable still. A large number of professional robbers were converted into industrious farmers, and peace smiled upon the land.*

Having thus created, by his exertions, a class of peaceful agriculturists, Dixon's next effort was to settle a community of busy traders in this neglected land. Hitherto the Mairs had depended principally upon Ajmere and Nusserabad† for their supplies. Itinerant dealers visited the neighbourhood at times, but their transactions were confined to the Sepoys of the local battalion. With the general population they had no commerce. They seemed to mistrust the Mairs. The object, however, was a great one, and to Dixon it appeared of no very difficult attainment. It seemed to him that if a city were built there would soon be found traders to inhabit it. So a city with a spacious bazaar sprung up at his bidding. It rose with the rapidity of magic. Three months after the laying of the first stone the bazaar was

* "During the last eleven years the sums expended on works of irrigation amounted to 2,41,112 rupees; whilst during that period the excess of revenue beyond the summer of the first year of the present incumbent's superintendence in 1835-36 is 6,41,234 rupees. After reimbursing ourselves for the

outlay on public works, there is a surplus given of 4,00,121 rupees. This large amount is our gain in a pecuniary point of view; as far as affects the moral improvement of the people, the advantages are beyond calculation."

† Distant thirty-two and thirty-six miles from Mairwarra.

opened for traffic. At first the Mairs had looked coldly and mistrustfully at the proposal. They thought that the location among them of a party of foreign traders would only have the effect of subjecting them to unaccustomed exactions. But they soon found the advantage of the undertaking, for it supplied them with profitable employment; and they learnt in time that the settlement of capitalists among them, and the centralisation of trade, must be beneficial to indigenous producers. By the Mahajuns, or traders themselves, this want of confidence was reciprocated. As they brought in their merchandise to the new city, they began to tremble for its safety. The very quiescence—the seeming forbearance of a race of men habituated to plunder, roused their suspicions; and they argued among themselves that the Mairs were only holding back until a richer spoil had been accumulated within the circle of the new city. In this conviction, the trading classes asked that a wall should be built around the town for their protection; and what they sought was granted to them. The Government of India had watched, with lively interest, this worthy experiment, had approved and applauded the noble efforts of the superintendent, and were in no case slow to listen to his suggestions. Now, therefore, the present “proposition received the same favorable attention that had characterised the Government in all measures referring to the improvement and happiness of the Mairs.” And so the city of Nyannuggar was built, and a wall was built around it, and the Mahajuns brought in their goods, and in a short time it was reported that nearly two thousand families, engaged in various manufacturing and commercial operations, were located within the wall.

In the mean while, the agricultural improvements were going on bravely. Tanks were being dug; wells were being sunk; and a regular supply of water was being secured to the fields. The jungle was being cleared;



the people, many after an absence of years, were returning to their native country, drawn by the report of our ameliorative efforts. To one village ninety families had returned, after the lapse of four generations, to occupy the lands of their progenitors. A general spirit of improvement was possessing these long-degraded Mairs. When money could no longer be advanced by Government, they cast about for the means of raising it for themselves; and by the sale of cattle and the betrothal of their daughters, sometimes acquired the necessary capital for the prosecution of the reproductive works, from which they had been taught to look for such ample returns.

And with all these great commercial and agricultural changes, the moral improvement of the people was advancing with prodigious strides. As early as 1827 Colonel Hall had reported "the complete and voluntary abolition of the two revolting customs—female infanticide, and the sale of women."* The re-marriage of widows was also provided for, and the worst forms of slavery abolished. The predatory habits of the people disappeared. They had once been beyond measure lawless and intractable. They now became docile and obedient, and there was something of child-like confidence in the reliance which these untutored savages began to place in the wisdom and kindness of the European superintendent.† They had, indeed, an overflowing faith in the man; and he was worthy of their veneration. What

* For a fuller notice of this see the chapter on *Infanticide*.

† "The high degree of prosperity which it (Mairwarra) has now attained, arises, however, from the system introduced by Captain Dixon. He may be said to live amongst the people. He knows minutely the condition of each village, and almost of its inhabitants individually; is ready to redress not only every man's grievances, but to assist them to recover from any pecuniary or other difficulty in which they may be

involved. . . . Captain Dixon has no European assistance; but his native establishment is so admirably disciplined and controlled, that whether in the construction of tanks, in the assessment of the revenue, or the administration of justice amongst this simple and primitive people, these establishments conduct all matters to almost as happy an issue as he could do himself." —[*Report of Colonel Sutherland, March 17, 1841.*]



Colonel Dixon did, he did single-handed; he had not one brother-officer to aid him. He worked alone in Mairwarra; and, assuredly, it was no light work that he undertook. The success of the great experiment entirely hinged, in his own words, on the untiring zeal and vigilance of the superintendent. "To carry through his projects, it would be necessary that he disengage himself from all private pursuits and pleasures, and devote his entire undivided energies to the fulfilment of the object. His presence would be essential to inspect every large and small work in each village, and to encourage the people in the undertakings on which they were engaged. He must be constantly in camp, without reference to burning heat or drenching rain; in a word, until all difficulties were overcome, all works of irrigation completed, and permanent prosperity secured, he must be a slave to duty. It remained with him to choose whether he would seek personal comfort and ease in restricting himself to ordinary duties, as is done by some public officers, or whether he would face the difficulties and undergo the toil which must be inseparable from an undertaking of such magnitude, continuing through a long vista of years. Happily, little consideration was required in making his election. He chose usefulness at the expense of personal comfort.* And his name will live as the regenerator of the Mairs. It is no small privilege to the compiler of such a work as this, to chronicle, even in a few imperfect pages, the recent annals of Mairwarra, and to show how a wild and lawless people were reclaimed by a single European officer taken from an *Expense Magazine*.†

* *Dixon's Mairwarra*. This very interesting quarto volume, with abundant maps, plans, and graphic illustrations, was published at the expense of the East India Company, and has not, I believe, found its way extensively into general circulation.

† It has been hinted to me, from more than one quarter, but always in a friendly spirit, that in a former work I displayed something of a tendency to over-rate the achievements of officers belonging to the Bengal Artillery. Perhaps the same charge may be



In the mean while, in the same western regions, but many miles lower down to the south, in that part of the country with which the English in India first made acquaintance—in the province of Candeish, where one of our earliest settlements was located—another great experiment was going on.* Candeish, in the old days of Mahomedan rule, and during the first half century of British sovereignty in the East, was a great and flourishing province. But in 1802 the Mahrattas had ravaged the country; and in the following year a great famine had desolated the land. What Holkar and God's providence commenced, the mis-rule of the Peishwah's officers completed. The province was reduced to a state of anarchy and desolation not easily to be described. It was, indeed, for some years, almost depopulated; and when the people began slowly to return to their old possessions, a new calamity descended upon them. The Pindarrees ravaged the open country, and some Arab tribes, establishing themselves in the hill fortresses, laid the neighbouring country under heavy contribution.†

In this province of Candeish were located certain Bheel tribes, constituting in all about an eighth of the population.‡ When the country was in a settled and flourishing state, these people had been principally employed as village-watchmen; and village-watchmen have

brought against me with reference to this work. I confess that I do not record the doings of Colonel Dixon in Mairwarra with less pleasure because he belongs to that distinguished regiment (though he is personally as much a stranger to me as if he had fought under Lord Clive), but the praises which I have bestowed upon him fall short of those which have been lavished upon him by his official superiors, and confirmed by the general voice of all who have ever given a thought to the subject.

* Candeish—an extensive province in Western India, through the northern portion of which the river Tapi runs,

will be readily found in the map to the south of the Sauthpooree Hills. It is, however, not to the entire province, but to a district, consisting of various portions of it, acquired in the Mahratta war of 1818, and formed into a collectorate under the Bombay Government, that my remarks, in so far as they relate to our operations for the civilisation of the Bheels, mainly refer.

† *Captain Graham's Historical Sketch of the Bheel tribes, inhabiting the province of Candeish.* See, also, *Reports of Colonel Robertson and Mr. Giberne.* MS.

‡ *Report on the Bheels of Candeish,* by W. S. Boyd, Esq., 1833. MS.

in no part of India been celebrated for the regularity of their habits or the honesty of their pursuits. In the best of times it does not seem that these clans were other than a lawless and unscrupulous people. Political disorder and social confusion were, indeed, greatly to their taste. They now rejoiced in the convulsions which rent the province. Their legitimate calling was at an end, and they took readily to the open exercise of a profession, which before they had secretly practised under cover of their recognised pursuits. For many years they existed merely as a group of robber-gangs—either aiding the depredational excesses of more powerful marauders, or working independently for themselves. Heavy retribution often descended upon them. They knew what was the penalty, and they were prepared to pay it. They lived without law, and they often perished without law. It was no uncommon thing, under native rule, for them to be massacred by hundreds. Sometimes, however, a combined effort of the different clans enabled them to beat down constituted authority. On one occasion ten thousand of the Guicowar's troops, sent to coerce them, were driven back defeated and disgraced.*

It was in 1818, at the close of the Pindarree war, that certain parts of this once thriving province of Candesh were brought under British rule. They had been regularly ceded to us by Holkar; but the Arab colonists had occupied a great part of the country, and they could be driven from it only by force. The subjugation of the district, therefore, became necessary. And it was easily subjugated. The Arabs submitted. But the Bheels, who had never been elevated to the dignified position of a recognised enemy, still remained unconquered and unreclaimed. They had suffered too miserably at the hands of other governments to have any faith in the new rulers, who now called upon them to enrol themselves as their

* *Captain Graham's Historical Sketch.*



subjects. They believed that if they came in, they would be massacred without remorse. Native governments would have dealt with them in this way; and they thought that the English troops were only waiting for an opportunity to shoot them down or bayonet them to a man.

So, although the British flag was hoisted in Candeish, and British rule proclaimed, the Bheels held possession of the hill-tracts, defied all authority, and violated all law. It was vain to think of settling the country until these people were coerced. There was little protection for life or property in Candeish beyond the range of our guns. Various measures were attempted without success. Conciliatory proclamations were of no avail, for the Bheels would not believe our promises. Recourse was had to arms; but the country and the climate baffled the gallantry of our troops. The Political Agent, Major Briggs, a man of comprehensive knowledge and enlarged humanity, proposed to pension the marauding Bheels; but the plan was not officially sanctioned.* Liberal landed settlements were offered, but this attempt also failed. The Bheels clung to their old habits. Long oppressing, and long oppressed, they were suspicious and mistrustful; and it seemed that they were neither to be subjected nor reclaimed. The effect of that great civiliser, the gibbet, was tried; some summary executions were ordered; vigorous measures, for a while, took the place of conciliatory schemes—but they were equally unsuccessful.†

* *Captain Graham's Historical Sketch. Reports of Colonel Robertson and Messrs. Giberne and Boyd. MS.*

† The Court of Directors were inclined to think that Major Briggs threw too much severity into his measures; but it does not seem that he betook himself to violence until conciliation had failed. Colonel Robertson, in his Report on the Bheels of Candeish, 1825, nobly vindicates the character of his

predecessor. "I will only, on taking leave of the Honorable Court's observations, suggest," he says, "that should a tabular picture be formed from the correspondence regarding the Bheels, of the measures of Major Briggs on the one hand, and of the repeated rejection of all advances, the frequent breaches of engagements, the reiterated aggressions of the Bheels, and the consequent sufferings of the people on the other—



It was time now, after some years of continued ill-success, to look the matter steadfastly in the face. The Court of Directors had earnestly addressed themselves to the consideration of the subject, and, taking a most humane and liberal view of the question, had recommended the continued prosecution of conciliatory measures. They could not bring themselves to believe that these Bheels, who, if they had been much sinning, had also been much sinned against, were altogether irreclaimable; and there were British officers on the spot who entertained the same opinions. It required, it is true, that a large amount of knowledge and sagacity—of patience on the one hand, and energy on the other—should be brought to bear upon the work. It was, indeed, no easy task that lay before them. The Bheels of Candeish might not be wholly irreclaimable; but we knew enough of their character to feel assured that the civilisation of such a people could only be accomplished, under Providence, by such a combination of wisdom and vigor, in planning and achieving, as had seldom been displayed before. They were a wild and predatory people, without laws, without ritualities, almost even without a rude sense of natural religion. Reckless and migratory, they passed from one place to another, throwing up a cluster of rude huts in the course of a few hours, and delighting not in more permanent habitations. Anything like honest industry they abhorred. Indolent and improvident, they lived as they could, from hand to mouth; they hunted down the game in the jungles; collected wild berries and roots; or, by a successful border foray or marauding expedition, secured a sufficiency of plunder to feast them sumptuously for a while.

carefully, in all instances, marking the dates—it would prove that we begun with conciliation, and, though one-half of the crimes of the Bheels are not recorded, continued it longer, it is probable, than was prudent.”—[*MS. Re-*

cords.] The Court, as the sequel proved, were right in recommending conciliatory measures; but conciliatory measures are never so potential before, as after we have shown our ability to punish.



A few days were spent in dissipated idleness, and then the exhaustion of their stores sent them forth after new pillage. They were the Ishmaelites of that part of the world. Their hands, were against every man, and every man's hand was against them. Murder and robbery were habits which sat easily upon them. They streamed down from their mountain-homes, sacked and fired the villages on the plains, drove away the cattle of the villagers, and carried off their head men for the sake of the ransoms they would fetch. Drunkenness, too, was one of their favorite infirmities. They delighted in long debauches. They maddened themselves with burning spirits. It would have been hard to find a more licentious or unscrupulous race, or one with fewer redeeming qualities. It seemed a matter of almost utter hopelessness to reclaim such savages as these.

But there were, fortunately, men in Western India at this time whom the seeming hopelessness of the task only inspired with courage, and roused to vigorous action. It was assuredly a great and worthy experiment that was now to be made. The more irreclaimable these savages, the greater the glory of reclaiming them. The oppressions of the native governments had driven these people to desperation, and made them the reckless criminals they were. The reformatory measures of our benevolent predecessors had consisted chiefly of a number of dreadful massacres. The wells had been choked up with the trunkless heads of the offending Bheels. Whole families had been hewn down and extirpated. They believed that the curse of God had descended upon them, and that it was their fate to be hunted and destroyed—hunted and destroyed like the wild beasts of the forest—and therefore, like the wild beasts, they turned and stood at bay before civilised men. To dispel these delusions, and to win their confidence, was therefore the first step towards



the great reformation which our English administrators yearned to achieve.

Mountstuart Elphinstone was, at this time, Governor of Bombay. Bringing all his quick intellect, his sound sense, his warm benevolence to bear upon this great matter of the reclamation of the savage Bheels, he soon worked his way to the conclusion that, if a few English gentlemen could be brought into intimate relations with the barbarous tribes—if they could acquaint themselves with the habits, study the feelings, and in time win the confidence of the Bheels, by familiarly associating with them, and proving that the British Government were eager only to do them good, success might be eventually accomplished. It was his desire to turn them from their lawless pursuits by finding other employment, alike more pleasant and more profitable. If, for example, we could convert them into disciplined soldiers and peaceful colonists, not by proclamations and vague offers of reward, but by the immediate influence of English officers living among them, it seemed that we might overcome the barbarism of the tribes in the manner most in accordance with the suggestions of reason and the dictates of humanity.

It seemed to him, in the first place, that if we could induce the Bheels to enter our military service—if we could raise a corps of these savage men, under the command of British officers—we might win the confidence of a few, and through them of many, and, in time, make the Bheels themselves the agents of their own civilisation. He had recommended this course both to Colonel Briggs and his successor, Colonel Robertson; but the political agents, thinking perhaps that the arms which we put in the hands of these lawless men would be turned against ourselves, had not furthered the suggestion. But events soon developed themselves which strengthened



Elphinstone's conviction of the wisdom of the measure, and an order went forth for the formation of a Bheel corps.

This difficult and dangerous duty was entrusted to an officer who has since earned for himself one of the brightest names in the recent history of India. It was entrusted to James Outram, then a lieutenant in the Bombay Native Infantry, who had already foreshadowed those fine soldierly qualities which a quarter of a century of continued action have ripened and refined. He was then a very young man, full of animal spirits, active and courageous; but with all his energies and activities, tempered with strong sense and sound judgment; and he went about his work eagerly, and yet thoughtfully, measuring its difficulties aright, but resolute to overcome them. And he soon had practical proof of their nature and extent. The Bheels were at this time* in the very height of their lawlessness. They were carrying on their depredations up to the very picquets of the British camp, and sweeping off our cattle in triumph. A strange belief held possession of them, that we shrunk from encountering their robber bands, or following them to their mountain homes. And they thought that all this pretence of raising Bheel corps, and offering their people regular pay in the service of the Company, was only a snare to draw them into our camps, and to cut them off in detail. And so the enlistment of the Bheels was, for some time, only a thing talked of and desired. The people would not come at our call.

It is characteristic of Outram that he should have desired to show the Bheels at the outset, what our troops were willing and able to do, and to convince them that in no part of the country were they secure from the vengeance of the British Government. He longed to attack them on their own hills; and he soon found fitting opportunity

* In 1825.

With a handful of his old regiment he beat up their quarters, surprised a strong party just as they were about to start on a marauding expedition, and scattered them like chaff. A cry was raised that the red-coats were upon them, and the Bheels were soon in panic flight. A few were killed; but far more important, a few were captured, and the prisoners, whom Outram had taken in their own mountain homes, enabled him to lay the foundation of his corps.

Releasing some of his captives, and despatching them with friendly messages and offers of employment to their relatives, he contrived to draw the people to his tent, and soon effected an intercourse with some of their leaders. With them he went about, freely and fearlessly, in their jungles. He listened to their stories; he joined in their pastimes; he feasted them when they were well, and doctored them when they were ill; in his own words, he "won their hearts by copious libations of brandy, and their confidence by living unguarded among them;" and it might have been added, their admiration, too, by proving how bold a hunter he was. Keen sportsmen themselves—trusting often to the chase for their daily food—with something of religious faith in the accidents of the field, these wild heathens looked with wonder on the exploits of the Christian Nimrod, and recognised a mighty spirit in him.* It did not seem that he had come among them

* I am no sportsman myself, but I can appreciate all developments of manliness, and I know that the fine sportsman-like qualities of the English have done much to raise them in the estimation of all the hardier Indian tribes. It is not difficult to imagine the effect which such prowess must have had upon the Bheels, especially when we learn that during Outram's connexion with the corps, he and his comrades killed 255 tigers; 18 panthers; 42 bears; 19 wild buffaloes; and numerous hogs, deer, and other smaller game. Among a number of papers re-

lating to Bheel civilisation, I have chanced upon a memorandum by Col. Outram, containing the following curious anecdote relative to the superstitions of the chase, to which I have made allusion in the text. "The Bheels," he says, "have the belief that those who slay a tiger maintain power over that animal in the next world; but that those slain by a tiger are rendered hereafter subservient to the animal. On the occasion when Cundoo Havildar was mortally wounded, he implored me to hasten to kill the tiger, whilst he was yet alive, saying that as



as an enemy, but as a friend and a companion. He was himself, indeed, one of them; and they felt unconstrained in his presence.

And recruits came in at last—slowly at the outset, it is true; but there was no fear of ultimate success when the beginning had once been made. His muster-roll, at first, contained the names of only five men; but the number had soon swollen to twenty-five, and a few months afterwards had risen to a hundred. And in spite of temporary hindrances—in spite of the occasional recurrence of their old fears and suspicions, and the false reports of evil men,* the Bheel corps, once doubted and despaired of, became a substantial fact. Outram brought his wild recruits into familiar contact with high-caste Sepoys of his own regular corps—Brahmins and Rajpoots—and the conciliatory manners of the old soldiers, who conversed freely with them as comrades, and courteously presented them with beetle-nut, went far to rivet the confidence which the bold, frank manner of their young leader had engendered within them. And soon did they settle down into orderly subjects

he had marked the animal down, and left scouts to watch him, its death would be attributable to him, and he might then die in peace. I succeeded in slaying the monster, and hastened to assure Cundoo of the fact. He was just dying when I went to him, but had sense left to understand and express his satisfaction, immediately after which he expired. Several gentlemen witnessed my interviews with the poor Bheel before and after the death of the tiger, and were much affected by the anxiety he expressed at the former time, and the satisfaction and resignation he evinced at the latter. On all occasions of danger the Bheels displayed astonishing presence of mind and *pluck*; and almost invariably when in tracking a tiger they suddenly came upon the animal, they caused him to slink off, from the bold front they maintained. Whether the Bheel singly became opposed to a tiger, or several were together, he never thought of turning or running, but caused the brute to walk

off instead, by literally staring him out of countenance. Often in critical moments when hunting on foot has a tiger been turned from me by my faithful Bheels; and on one occasion when a panther had got me down, they killed him with their swords, when rolling with me on the ground, with my head in his mouth.”—[*MS. Records.*]

* “They were told at one time by the evil-disposed, that the object was to link them in a line like galley slaves, and to extirpate their race; and for a long time there was a fear existing in the minds of most that this assembly or corps were merely drawn together to be destroyed. At the very place where the head-quarters had been fixed, Dhurungaun, there had been a most cruel and treacherous massacre of those people under the former Government. This strengthened their suspicions.”—[*Report on the Bheels of Candeish, by George Gibberne, Esq., Collector, 1828. MS. Records.*]

and good soldiers—learning the English drill system with diligence and attention, and keeping all their old bad propensities in control. So peaceful was their bearing, that it was soon officially reported that, for many miles around the neighbourhood where they were encamped, no excesses had for some time been committed by the Bheels. Indeed, they not only reformed themselves, but helped to reform the manners of their brethren, and began to exercise very efficiently the duties of a military police. A year after the first attempt to establish the corps, Outram wrote to Mr. Bax, collector of Candeish: “I believe there is no offender at large now within many miles of my headquarters, and no robbery is ever now heard of within thirty miles of it; and I trust that in the course of a short time the beneficial influence of the corps will extend over the whole province.”*

In the mean while our civil officers in Candeish were exerting themselves to bring other remedial measures to bear upon the reformation of the offending Bheels. Several European officers, under the denomination of Bheel Agents, were appointed to aid the Candeish collector in carrying out this good work. They were instructed, by every means in their power, “to preserve the peace of the country; to ameliorate the condition of the Bheels; to keep a watchful eye of superintendence over those in the range committed to their charge; to inspire them with confidence in the Government; to encourage them to turn their attention to industrious pursuits; to be careful that those on whom pensions were conferred were duly paid; to attend to and redress their complaints against each other, as well as against other classes—under certain circumstances pointing out the means of redress against other classes; to act as arbitrators when the parties mutually agreed; to apprehend offenders and commit them for trial, if of a serious nature—if otherwise, to inflict such punishment as might

* Lieutenant Outram to Mr. Bax, July 1, 1826. *MS. Records.*



be customary among themselves ; and if advisable, a punchayat of their own tribe might be resorted to ; and, lastly, to superintend such military operations as might be considered necessary to reduce to order any tribes or bands committing depredations." "To superintend the Bheels," it was added, "the agents should call upon them to give an account of the manner in which they obtain their livelihood ; to restrict them from assembling in masses ; to prevent them from quitting their regular places of abode without intimation of the same, and to check all assemblage in hutties under any pretence whatever. Security should be taken from all against whom strong suspicions are entertained, and in failure thereof the agents are called upon to report all the circumstances of each case to the collector. The agents, to a certain extent, should reward meritorious conduct in aiding the police, or for remarkable industry—such rewards as land, rent-free for a given time, a bullock or plough, or other implements of husbandry or grain, &c., might be given ; they should call on the Potails for correct returns of all the Bheels in their range of the mode by which they subsist ; and when not adequately provided for, should recommend land and "tuccavee" to be given. The Potails should be encouraged to assist in promoting these objects ; and on their distinguishing themselves it should be reported, &c., and marks of approbation should be bestowed."*

Such substantially, stated in official language, were the measures by which it was hoped the reformation of the erring Bheels might now be accomplished. And all this was to be done mainly, as Outram had done his work, by mixing familiarly with the people—by disarming them of their suspicions—by showing that we were really their friends. The great thing was to convert them, if it were possible, into an agricultural population—to convince them that there were better modes of earning a subsistence than

* *Report on the Bheels of Candeish, by George Giberne, Esq., Doolea Collector, 1828.*

by ravaging the country and plundering their neighbours; and to give them every facility for entering advantageously upon their new avocations. Immunity was, therefore, granted for past offences, with written engagements to this effect. At the same time grants of land for cultivation were given to them, under the signature of the Bheel agents, and formally recorded.* And soon a number of peaceful little colonies were established, and a number of ploughs were at work.

The foundation of these Bheel settlements was laid by Mr. Graham, then assistant to the Candeish collector, in whose hands was the charge of the Agency until the autumn of 1825, when it devolved on Major Ovens, whose name has since become especially identified with these measures. The experiment was at first considered a hopeless one; and, doubtless, the difficulties in the way of its success are not easily to be exaggerated. But the might of mildness was everywhere triumphant. One by one the chiefs† were induced to present themselves at the Agency, to receive their grants of land, their written engagements with the Bheel agent, and, perhaps, the advance of money or farm-stock, which was necessary to enable them at once to commence their operations. Many kindly influences were set at work to secure the adhesion of these men to the great reformatory scheme. "The Bheel," wrote Major Ovens, in a very able report of these proceedings, submitted to

* The following is a translation of one of these engagements:

"To — Bheel, of the village of —, Pergunnah, —.

"You have lived in the hills, and plundered the roads and country of the Sirkar, and committed thefts and various crimes; now you are prevented and have petitioned the Sirkar that if pardoned you will not again offend, and that if Tuccavee be given to you you will cultivate and thus earn a subsistence; on this your prayer has been considered, and the Sirkar has shown favor to you, and has this once pardoned your past crimes, and has given you for your support Tuccavee and land to

cultivate, and this Kowl is written and presented to you that you may remain in your village and cultivate, and thus gain your livelihood. After this, if you again commit any offence, your former crimes will not be considered as forgiven, but you will have to answer both for them and the new crime.

(Signed) "—, Bheel Agent."
—[*Captain Graham's Historical Sketch.*]

† I use the word most familiar to the English reader. These head-men were known as "Naicks." The Bheels clustered together under the government of these men, and submitted themselves, in all things, to their guidance.



Sir John Malcolm, then Governor of Bombay, "is wonderfully susceptible of being worked upon by kind and liberal treatment. By attention to his little wants and petitions — by a present to his women, and by showing that you take an interest in him and his affairs, anything may be done with him. The true secret, however, of the power we now possess over the minds of this wild people is, that they feel themselves secure in the faith of our 'kowl's' (engagements). This they never did before; and it is owing to this implicit reliance on the sanctity of our word that they submitted themselves so readily, and have re-established themselves so generally with their wives and children in the villages on the plains, where upwards of six hundred families are now settled at the plough alone."*

But although much reliance was to be placed on the good feelings of these poor people, it was hardly to be supposed that the erratic desires and habits of a life were to be rooted out in a few months. Ovens wisely determined, therefore, to surround the colonies with a cordon of mild restraint. He established a system of registration, whereby he was enabled to deal with the Bheels of the Agency each in his own individual distinctness. They were required never to leave their village, even for a day, without the permission of the Naicks or Potails; and if this rule was infringed the offence was at once reported at the Agency. A darogah, or police superintendent, was appointed to each talook, or division, whose duty it was to proceed from village to village, and to see that these regulations were enforced, whilst in every colony one of inferior rank was appointed to control and report upon the proceedings of the colonists.

Nor was the establishment of these colonies the only ameliorative measure which took shape under the hands of the Bheel agents. It was a great thing now to re-organise

* *Major Ovens to Sir John Malcolm, August, 1830. MS. Records.*



the police of the country, and to call the Bheels back again to their old profession of village watchmen. Indenting upon each village for the materials of this protective body, and providing for them the means of subsistence in such a manner as to warn them against the necessity of ever again resorting to their old predatory ways, he established an effective village police. In conformity with their ancient usages, he placed these men under the supervision of salaried superintendents, residing in their own villages, and entrusted with the preservation of the general peace of the district ; and nothing could have worked better than this organisation of Bheel police.

The good effect of these humanising measures was soon apparent. At the very commencement of 1829, the collector reported that the province was in the enjoyment of entire repose. "For upwards of five-and-twenty years," he wrote, "Candeish has been subject to regular organised bodies of Bheels headed by desperate leaders. The enormities committed by them have been so often stated that on the subject no remark is required. But how satisfactory it is to report that the past year is the first after this long period, during which not a single gang or leader of Bheels has existed. The liberality of Government—the anxiety and exertions of its agents towards the reform of this class, is now amply repaid. The same characters exist. Their evil propensities can certainly not be yet eradicated ; but the wise measures in force have corrected the one and checked the other."*

From this time the civilisation of the Bheels, under the superintendence of our English officers, a mixed agency of soldiers and civilians, proceeded rapidly to its consummation. Occasional local outbreaks showed that in parts which our influence had not yet reached, the natural character of the Bheels remained unchanged ; but even these grew more and more rare, as our operations

* *Mr. Giberne's Police Report, January, 1829. MS. Records.*



proceeded, and the country which had once, across its whole length and breadth, been visited by continual fierce spasms of unrest, was soon lapped in general repose. "The districts," to use the comprehensive language of one of the ablest of the Bheel agents, "formerly the scene of every outrage, where neither life nor property were secure, now enjoyed tranquillity; the roads formerly hazardous for the armed party, were traversed at all hours by single passengers, the formidable list of crimes had dwindled down to the report of a few petty thefts, and the Bheels, from outcasts, had become members of the society, daily rising in respectability and appearance, and becoming useful and obedient servants of the State. It was matter of astonishment to behold the rapid change produced by the liberal system of Government, in a race of miserable beings, who without a rag to cover their backs, and hardly a morsel of food to put into their mouths, had so shortly before sued for life and food from the foreigner, and were now fat and sleek and decently clad, living in their own huts, surrounded by swarms of healthy children, ploughing their own lands, and many in the honest possession of flocks and herds. . . . The Bheel now feels a relish for that industry which renders subsistence secure, and life peaceful and comfortable; he unites with the Ryot in the cultivation of those fields which he once ravaged and laid waste, and protects the village, the traveller, and the property of Government, which were formerly the objects of his spoliation; the extensive wilds which heretofore afforded him cover during his bloody expeditions, are now smiling with fruitful crops; and population, industry and opulence, are progressing throughout the land."*

This was written towards the close of 1843. The language of the Bheel agent is not exaggerated. It reflects no more than the truth. Indeed, the whole is not yet

* *Captain Graham's Historical Sketch.*



told. If there were anything to qualify our admiration of the vigorous humanity of Colonel Dixon in the Mairwarra country, it is the fact that this able and benevolent administrator has thought less of educational measures than I should have expected or desired. There is no remedial agent like the schoolmaster. He was not forgotten in the Bheel country. Outram introduced him to his rude levies—and the civil officers soon dotted the province with schools. A new generation of Bheels is now springing up, among whom the lawlessness and violence of their tribes are mere traditions. A quarter of a century has passed since the work of civilisation commenced. The crooked ways have been made straight, and the rough places plain; and now a new race, trained to habits of peace and industry, are gradually replacing the old marauders who had been bred and nurtured in violence and wrong. There can be no fear now of a relapse. The schoolmaster has taken the young Bheel in hand; the life of an outlaw has no charms for him. He has been brought within the pale of civilised life; and he is well contented to abide there.

I need hardly say that such measures as these received the earnest support and warm encouragement of the Company. The Court of Directors had from the first recommended the adoption of kindly, conciliatory measures towards the erring Bheels, believing that they were not irreclaimable; and in April, 1835, they wrote out to the Bombay Government to express their hearty, unqualified approbation of what had been done. "From the period," they wrote, "when measures of severity were abandoned and conciliatory means resorted to, the rapine and disorder which had prevailed for years previously without any sensible diminution, and in spite of the strongest efforts for their suppression, almost immediately ceased, and the admirable conduct of the officers to whom the immediate executive duties were confided, especially of Major Ovens



and Lieutenant Outram, has been the means of effecting a complete change in the habits of the Bheel tribes. They have universally abandoned their predatory habits; they are now a prosperous agricultural community; from among them a corps has been formed, which has attained so high a state of discipline and efficiency that to its protection the tranquillity of the country is now in a great degree confided; and by its means a degree of security both of person and of property appears to be maintained, which is scarcely excelled in any part of India.

"This signal instance," continue the Court, "of what we have so often impressed upon you—the superior efficacy of conciliatory means in reducing uncivilised and predatory tribes to order and obedience—is one of the most gratifying events in the recent History of British India; and we trust that the success of your measures will impress upon our Indian Governments the policy, as well as the humanity, of pursuing the same course in all similar cases. This wise and benevolent policy was first adopted by the late Mr. Cleveland in the district of Bhaugulpore, some fifty years ago, and was attended with singular success in reclaiming the Hill people of that district from a state of the utmost barbarism; and the memory of that excellent officer is, we understand, held in reverence, even at the present day, by the rude tribes that inhabit the hills as well as by the inhabitants of the more civilised portion of the district."*

* *MS. Records.*—Although I have incidentally mentioned the name of Cleveland in connexion with this great subject of the civilisation of savage tribes, I cannot help experiencing a feeling of shame and self-reproach as I read this affectionate notice of his labors in the above letter of the Court of Directors. I have been anxious, for the most part, to draw my illustrations from more recent history; but the good deeds of one, who at the early age of twenty-eight had done so much to reclaim the savage people by whom he was surrounded,

deserves prominent notice in such a volume as this. Even now I may do something to repair the omission. The history of the civilisation of the Hill people of Bhaugulpore is well sketched in an early volume of the *Asiatic Researches*, from which I may not disadvantageously exhume it:

"Colonel Brown, in his account of these hills, forwarded to Government in 1779, observes that it was about fifteen years since the Hill people had any government among themselves of a general nature, during which period they had become dangerous and troublesome



I trust that these pictures will not be thrown away. They are to be pondered over thoughtfully, and I would

to the Low Country, that their ravages had been the more violent, as they were stimulated by hatred against the Zemindars, for having cut off several of their chiefs by treachery. The colonel might have added, that during that interregnum or dissolution of government, it was a common practice for the Zemindars on the skirts of the hills to invite the chiefs in their vicinity with their adherents to descend and plunder the neighbouring Zemindarees, for which, and for the passage through their lands, the mountaineers divided the booty with them; thus, at one time, from repeated acts of treachery in the Zemindars, the mountaineers were provoked to take ample vengeance on them and their unhappy Ryots; and at other times, from their engaging the chiefs to make predatory incursions, to which they were strongly incited, no less from a desire of plundering their more opulent neighbours, than from the difficulty of obtaining salt and tobacco from the boats, all friendly intercourse was at a stand, the low country bordering on the hills was almost depopulated, and travellers could not pass with safety between Bhaugulpore and Furruckabad, nor could boats, without danger of being plundered, put to for the night on the south side of the Ganges between the before-named places. It was at this period of double treachery on the part of the Zemindars, and predatory hostilities on the part of the mountaineers (from which it may not be a strained inference, that the machinations of the former were in a great measure the cause of that necessity which compelled the latter to such frequent and fatal descents, when these public and private incendiaries were making large strides in ruining these once fertile districts), that Captain Brooke was stationed with a corps of light infantry to avert their utter destruction. On this duty it is well known that he acquitted himself with great credit, from his uncommon exertions and success in pursuing the unfortunate mountaineers into their hills, where numbers must have unavoidably fallen; for it became unquestionably necessary to impress them with a dreadful awe of our prowess; and in this harassing and

unpleasant warfare I have been well informed, by officers who were with Captain Brooke, that his gallant conduct could not be too much commended. He made them sensible of the inefficacy of opposing him in the field, and invited the chiefs to wait upon him, and negotiate, when he gave a feast to those who came in, and made them presents of turbans. But before any permanent establishment took place, he was succeeded in the command of the light infantry by Captain Brown, who made further progress in conciliating the minds of the discomfited mountaineers. He placed them on the road from Furruckabad, near Calgong, to protect the Dawks, on which duty they still continue.

"From this and other measures of his, Captain Brooke, and he, it will be allowed, laid the foundation for the most permanent and happy settlement concluded with the Hill Chiefs by the late Mr. Augustus Cleveland, that could possibly be attained: he was sensible from the rapine and decay of these districts, that the peaceable deportment of the mountaineers ought to be purchased; and while he was reconciling them to become subject to the British Government, he bestowed liberal presents, in money and clothes, to the chiefs, and to all the men and women who came down to him. Of his generosity they speak with gratitude; and for the blessings and benefit which they derive from the wise and judicious conditions which he granted, and which were confirmed by Government, I hope they will ever have reason to be thankful: as long as that Government lasts, the comforts and happiness which they derive from them must ever ensure their obedience. To engage their confidence, Mr. Cleveland, in the early part of his intercourse with the mountaineers, entertained all who offered their services as archers, and appointed many of the relations of the chiefs, officers; they were not (nor are they as rangers, though they very seldom now ask their discharges) bound to serve for any limited time; the corps, of course, constantly fluctuated, and was frequently, I understand, above a thousand strong: he clothed them, and in less than two years after they were formed,



hope benignantly, by those who affect to believe that our career in India has been one of continued spoliation and

from the confidence he had in their attachment and fidelity, obtained fire-arms for them, in the use of which, I may venture to observe, that they are expert, and have address; and I can also without hesitation assert, that they are capable of as high a degree of discipline as any native corps in the service; and I trust I shall have the happiness to prove this in due time. Exclusive of having thus employed so many of the mountaineers, Mr. Cleveland fixed the salary of ten rupees per month for each chief of a Tuppah, three rupees ditto for each of his Naibs, and two for the Maungy of each village, from which there shall be a man enrolled in the hill rangers; but from such as supply not a man, the inferior Maungy receives no monthly allowance. In consideration of these establishments, I understand the chiefs are not only responsible for the peaceable deportment of their own adherents, but bound to deliver over all delinquents and disturbers of the public peace within their own limits to the collector, to be tried by an assembly of the chiefs, either at Bhaugulpore or Rajamahall, as already related. It has ever been customary on these occasions to feast

the chiefs so assembled; when any report is to be made to the collector, it is the duty of a Naib to wait on him with it, should the chief be indisposed or otherwise prevented.

"From these happy and admirable arrangements, digested by Mr. Cleveland, whose name ought to be dear both to the natives of the hills and lowlands, the ease, comfort, and happiness of the former is ensured (for which they are grateful, and speak of him with reverential sorrow), and peace and safety secured to the latter; and if they have any goodness, they ought not to be less thankful. These solid and essential benefits are attended comparatively with but a trivial expense, and must ultimately be an advantage to Government. I have been led to say more on this subject than I intended; yet it may not be thought foreign to it to add, that the Aumlah and Zemindars erected a monument to the memory of Mr. Cleveland, nearly in the form of a pagoda, and that another was also erected at the expense of Government, by the order of the Honorable the Governor-General and Council; on which is the following inscription:

"To the memory of AUGUSTUS CLEVELAND, Esq.,
Late collector of the districts of Bhaugulpore and Rajamahall,
Who without bloodshed or the terror of authority,
Employing only the means of conciliation, confidence, and benevolence,
Attempted and accomplished
The entire subjection of the lawless and savage inhabitants of the
Jungleterry of Rajamahall,
Who had long infested the neighbouring lands by their predatory incursions,
Inspired them with a taste for the arts of civilised life,
And attached them to the British Government by a conquest over their minds;
The most permanent, as the most rational, mode of dominion.
The Governor-General and Council of Bengal,
In honor of his character, and for an example to others,
Have ordered this monument to be erected.
He departed this life on the 13th of January, 1784, aged 29."

Few of my readers, it is probable, are acquainted with the above, but few are not acquainted with Bishop Heber's delightful "Journal," in which there is a becoming notice of this "excellent young man."

Cleveland was the cousin and beloved friend of John Shore, who was

so afflicted by the intelligence of his death, that his health was severely injured by the blow. After a while he gave vent to his sorrow in verse, and an elaborate "monody" was the result. There is so little verse in this volume, that perhaps I shall be forgiven for extracting a few lines from the piece:

"Let History tell the deeds his wisdom plann'd,
His bloodless triumphs o'er a barbarous land.
Bright in his hand the sword of justice gleam'd,
But mercy from her eyes benignant beam'd—



oppression. A philosophical modern historian, in a work which is laid before me whilst I am writing these sheets—it is the first sentence of his book—has truthfully written, “There are many kinds of war and many degrees of heroic renown, but the highest praise is due to those who by their victorious arms have opened new scenes for the civilisation of mankind, and overcome barbarism in some important portion of the world.”* This overcoming of barbarism is very pleasant to write about. It seemed a very difficult thing to achieve in Mairwarra and Candeish, but English benevolence and English energy accomplished it at last; and the victory has been complete. The servants of the Company have reclaimed men whose savage propensities had been aggravated and seemingly perpetuated by the cruel discipline, the unscrupulous oppression of their native masters. Instead of endeavouring to extirpate, we endeavoured to civilise them. The good work was done. It was done by the personal energy—the fearless courage—the patience and charity of a very few English gentlemen hoping against hope, and finding possibilities in the impossible.

And mercy won the cause;—the savage band
Forsook their haunts and bowed to his command;
And where the warrior's arm in vain assail'd,
His gentler skill o'er brutal force prevail'd—
As some fond sire mistrusts his darling son,
With fostering care he led wild nature on;
And now, where Rapine mark'd the blood-stained field,
The well-till'd glebes a smiling harvest yield;
Now mended morals check the lust for spoil,
And rising letters prove his generous toil.
The traveller secure pursues his way,
Nor dreads the ruffian ambush'd for his prey;
And gaping savages with ravished eyes,
See their lord's name in magic symbols rise.
Humanity surveys her rights restored,
And nations yield, subdued without a sword.”

I need hardly say that these lines are as applicable to the civilisation of the Mairs and the Bheels, as to the civilisation of the hill-people of Rajmahal.

* *Ranke's Civil Wars and Monarchy of France in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.* Translated by M. A. Garvey.



CHAPTER III.

Operations in Goomsur—The Hill Tribes of Orissa—Religion of the Khonds—Prevalence of Human Sacrifice—Efforts for its Suppression—Captain Macpherson—His Measures and Success—Subsequent Efforts—General Results.

I CANNOT dismiss this subject without adducing another noble illustration of the truth with which I prefaced the last chapter. I have taken one example from Bengal, and another from Bombay. I now take a third from Madras.

In the district of Ganjam, which lies on the northern frontier of the Madras Presidency, is the Zemindarry of Goomsur. It was tributary to the British Government; and this relationship might have continued, but that the tribute was not paid, and, after a vain attempt to bring about an amicable arrangement, resort was had to a military force. Early in November, 1835, the British troops occupied Goomsur. The adherents of the Zemindar fired on our camp. Martial law was proclaimed. The forfeiture of the Zemindarry was declared. A reward was offered for the apprehension of the offending chief. And before long it became clear that we were about to be involved in an inglorious but difficult campaign.

The whole country, indeed, was now in a state of open rebellion. Favored by their local knowledge, the insurgents fired from their hills and jungles securely on our advancing troops. We warred against invisible enemies; and one invisible enemy greater than all the rest was striking down our people by scores. The pestilential climate was doing its sure work. Everything, indeed, was against us. We had not a friend in the district. The

people abandoned their homes at our approach. Nothing but forsaken fields and deserted huts greeted us as we advanced. No offer of reward—no threat of punishment—brought in adherents to our cause. It seemed altogether a hopeless, profitless adventure. We were being beaten by an enemy whom we could not reach, and perishing in a country which we could not hold.

The Zemindar fled to the hills. The Khond tribes received him with hospitality, and promised him their protection; but he was not suffered to live to see the redemption of their pledge. It seemed that we had hunted him to death; for in the first pause of the chase he laid himself down and died. Twenty years before, the ladies of his Zenana had been dishonored by a British force, and now, with his dying breath, the Goomsur chief, solemnly as in the presence of their gods, bound the tribes not to suffer the *capture* of his family,* in any event, by our advancing troops.

A detachment of British soldiers was sent forward to penetrate the mountain passes, and to secure possession of the family of the deceased. The attempt was, in the first instance, successful. The family of the Goomsur chief were seized; but the tribes, eager to redeem their pledge to the utmost, came down upon a party of our troops, who were escorting some members of the family, overwhelmed them in a difficult defile, and put to death seven ladies of the Zenana, to save them, as they believed, from threatened dishonor. Heavy chastisement descended upon the offending tribes; but they had partially redeemed their pledge.

There was then a lull in our operations. The pestilence which fell upon our troops compelled a season of inactivity. But with the cold weather the war was recommenced. A fresh force of all arms prepared to attack the tribes in their mountain homes. We demanded their unconditional

* Captain Macpherson's *Khond Report*. Calcutta, 1842.



submission. We demanded the surrender of their patriarchal chiefs. We demanded the betrayal of the officers of the Goomsur Zemindar, who had trusted themselves to the protection of the tribes. But they refused to bring either their guests or their patriarchs to the scaffold; and so our troops were let loose upon the land. I need not dwell upon the history of this "little war." I only wish to speak of its results. Here, on this chain of hills skirting the great province of Orissa, our English officers were first brought face to face with a new and a strange people. The tribes of whom I have spoken were the Khonds. Up to this time, the English had known nothing of the Khonds. And the Khonds had known nothing of the English. They had dwelt for nearly a century within a short distance of each other, but there had been no intercourse between them. Now, therefore, when the civilised white men, after the first excitement of war was over, began to inquire into the nature and habits of the heathen barbarians by whom they had been opposed, they found that they had been brought into contact with a people possessing religious creeds and rituals, national usages and social customs, utterly unlike any with which, in all their ethnological experience, they had ever made acquaintance before.

It was at first, to our unaided comprehension, something rather vague and astonishing than clear and intelligible. We only caught glimpses of what we desired to know. We had for a long time, indeed, only a dim perception of the religion of these strange people. Their external usages and ceremonials were speedily revealed to us, but it was only after the patient investigation of years, that we learnt all the articles of faith upon which these usages and ceremonials were based. And then it was mainly, if not wholly, to the laborious researches of one man—researches prompted by the best feelings of humanity, that

we were indebted for our knowledge of the inner life of the Khond tribes of the Orissan hills.

The officer of whom I speak, Lieutenant Charters Macpherson, of the Madras Army, during the Goomsur war, in 1836-37, had been employed in the survey of a part of the country at the foot of the hills; and being naturally a man of a thoughtful and inquiring nature, and of an energetic benevolence of the best kind, he no sooner obtained a little general outside knowledge of the peculiarities of the Khond tribes than he formed the determination of pushing his investigations far beneath the surface, and of mastering the whole subject of the religious and social life of the strange people who had awakened such a kindly interest within him.

Goomsur was subjugated—pacified—and the Khond tribes of that district became British subjects.* There were many other tribes who owed no allegiance to us, and with whom we had no intercourse. But it was enough for Macpherson to prosecute his inquiries among those with whom his official duties brought him into contact, and he spared no pains to acquaint himself intimately with all the peculiarities of this strange variety of mankind. One of the first things which had arrested his attention was the painful fact, that among these people the barbarous rite of human sacrifice was observed—that the tribes were in the habit of offering up to their deities living sacrifices purchased or bred for the purpose.† And it was mainly with the humane desire of rooting out these abominations that Macpherson now labored to render himself familiar with the social institutions of the Khonds, and with all the peculiarities of the dark faith

* Goomsur was exempted from subjection to the Regulations.

† It was not until some time afterwards that he discovered how female infanticide was with other Khond tribes,

as with some of the more civilised tribes of Central and Western India, a practice held in no dishonor, but generally observed by the heads of families as a matter of social convenience.



which either ordained or sanctioned such iniquities as these.

What this belief is may be briefly told. The Khonds are divided into two great sects. They have certain common articles of faith. They all believe that the Supreme Being, or God of Light, the source of all good, created for himself a consort, who became the Earth-Goddess, and was the source of all evil. The Supreme Being, the source of good, created the world and loved it; and the Earth-Goddess became jealous of God's people. Then she rebelled against the Supreme Being, and introduced moral and physical evil into the world, and from that time there was strife between the powers of Light and Darkness.

And so far this is the common faith of the Khond tribes. But here begin the divergences of sectarianism. The issue of this great strife between the powers of Light and Darkness is the grand subject of dispute between the two contending sects. The one believes that the God of Light utterly overcame the Earth-Goddess, and has ever since held her in thrall, employing her as the agent of his will—the instrument of his rule. The other holds that the Earth-Goddess is still unconquered; that she holds in her hands the balance of good and evil—that the destinies of man are under her control—and that whatever of happiness is vouchsafed to him is only by her sanction or concession, by the dispensation of blessings in her own gift, or the withdrawal of that antagonism which might prevent their emanation from the God of Light. And thus regarding the supremacy of the Earth-Goddess, they recognise the necessity of a propitiation, and they believe that, only by the worship of the power of Darkness, through the agency of human sacrifice, her favor can be purchased for the tribes.

Therefore, by this one great sect of the Khonds the abomination of human sacrifice is esteemed a sacred rite.



The atoning efficacy of the sacrificial blood is an article of faith among these barbarous people, cherished with as much solemn conviction as it has been by some of the most civilised nations of the world. It is necessarily a very lively, operative faith, one that can never exist in a state of semi-animation; it must be everything or nothing to a man. If he entertain it at all, it must be a part of his daily life. It must enter largely into all his worldly calculations. The health of his children, the state of his crops, the condition of his flocks and herds, his immunity from the ravages of wild beasts, from the assaults of his enemies, from the storm-blast and the lightning-stroke, all depend upon the observance of this one ceremonial rite. To neglect it is, in the belief of these people, to draw down upon them the anger of the Earth-Goddess, and with it all human ills. Of all superstitions it is the most enslaving; for it is based on fear, abject fear of immediate retribution. The worshipper of Tari Pennu, or the Earth-Goddess, dare not neglect the act of propitiation. All that he has is too immediately under her almighty control.

The Mexicans, before the Spanish invasion, sacrificed human victims by thousands and tens of thousands. The bloody oblations which they offered to their false gods are too stupendous in the recital for human credulity to entertain. And yet their extent is susceptible of proof. No such wholesale sacrifices as these ever defiled the country of the Khonds. The victims were comparatively few.* They were furnished by a regular class of procurers, who either supplied them to order, or raised them on speculation. They were bought, perhaps, from their parents in hard famine-times, or they were kidnapped on

* It was very difficult to ascertain the number of victims offered up every year—especially as many portions of the Khond country were unvisited by our officers. As far as I can arrive at

an approximative estimate, it may have been about 500 a year. But even this approximation I venture upon with great diffidence.



the plains; or were perhaps the children of the procurers themselves. Devoted often in their childhood to the Earth-Goddess, they were suffered to grow up as consecrated, privileged beings, to marry wives, to hold lands, and flocks and herds, and other worldly goods—cherished and endowed by the community, for whom they were to die, and in spite of the tremendous curse that overshadowed them, leading happy lives to the last.

It would seem that these human sacrifices were of two kinds. Principally they assumed an associative character; they were the joint offerings of certain tribes or villages on the occasion of their public festivals. But sometimes they were individual—exclusive—intended to avert the wrath of the Earth-Goddess, when there was special reason to believe that it had been awakened against a particular family, and could only be so averted.

“The periodical common sacrifices,” says Captain Macpherson, “are generally so arranged by tribes and divisions of tribes, that each head of a family is enabled, at least once a year, to procure a shred of flesh for his fields, and usually about the time when his chief crop is laid down.” In the protective virtue of this shred of human flesh the worshipper of the Earth-Goddess had unbounded faith. A representative of each tribe or village was sent to the place of sacrifice to obtain it, whilst his brethren at home, in rigid fast and solemn prayer, awaited his return. Bound to a stake, the victim received the first signal blow from the officiating priest, and then the crowd of attendant deputies rushed forward with their axes, completed the sacrifice, and tore the quivering flesh from the Meriah’s bones.* The human shred was then carefully wrapped in leaves, carried home to the village, laid on a cushion of grass in some public place, where the heads of families, attended by the priest, went out to give it solemn recep-

* This was the most generally received other modes of immolation. Sometimes ceremonial of sacrifice—but there were the victim was destroyed by a slow fire.



tion. Then the priest divided the sacred flesh into two parts—one of which he buried in the ground, whilst the other he subdivided into minute particles, and distributed among the attendant heads of families. A scene of wild excitement followed. There was shouting and holloaing—wrestling and fighting—heads were broken, and houses thrown down. This over, the recipient took his apportioned remnant of the sacrifice, and buried it in his favorite field. Then the people returned to their homes—ate, drank, and were merry. Three days of ritual observance followed; on the fourth, “they assembled at the place of sacrifice, slaughtered and feasted on a buffalo, and left its inedible portions as a gratification to the spirit of the Meriah.”*

Such is the history of these human sacrifices as ascertained and recorded, after much laborious inquiry, by Captain Macpherson. But, long before we had this amount of knowledge to base our remedial measures upon, our English officers had been endeavouring to root out the horrid custom from the hill districts under our rule. As early as 1836, the broad fact had been announced by Mr. Russel; and it was afterwards ascertained that other Khond tribes were in the habit of murdering their female children, in their infancy, purely as a matter of family convenience. Indeed, among some of the tribes, save in the case when a woman's first child was a girl, no single female infant was spared.† These were lamentable facts, which early arrested the attention of the British authorities, but until the Zemindarry had been formally resumed and the settlement of the country commenced, it was not probable that our consideration of the remedial measures to be adopted should take any definite shape.

* *Macpherson's Account of the Religion of the Khonds in Orissa. Transactions of the Asiatic Society.*—At the place of sacrifice there were three days of feasting, attended with much sensual license.

† “Villages,” says Captain Macpherson, “containing a hundred houses, may be seen without a single female child.”



But as soon as these objects had been attained, Mr. Russel began fairly to consider the "best mode of effecting the abolition of this barbarous custom." In an elaborate paper on the subject, he declared that he was "fully impressed with the belief that it can be accomplished only by slow and gradual means." He sincerely believed that "a law denouncing human sacrifices and providing for the punishment of persons engaged therein would, as a general measure, prove abortive, and involve a compromise of character which should not be hazarded." "In my judgment," he added, "our aim should be to improve to the utmost our intercourse with the tribes nearest to us, with the view to civilise and enlighten them, and so reclaim them from the savage practice, using our moral influence rather than our power."* In these views the Madras Government entirely concurred. Time and the contact of civilisation were to be left to do their slow work.

It does not, however, seem that this resolution was persevered in to the entire exclusion of all active efforts for the suppression of the practice. But the measures which from time to time were adopted seemed rather to attack incidental symptoms than to strike at the root of the evil. On one occasion, for example, Captain Campbell, assistant to the collector of Goomsur, ascended the ghauts, with a party of armed peons, just before the periodical season of sacrifice, and rescued a hundred victims. In 1838, Mr. Bannerman, the collector, went himself upon a tour of inspection among the Hill tribes, and determined to surprise a Khond village just as the people were preparing for the ceremony of the sacrifice. "The preparations for the ceremony," he wrote, "appeared to have been completed. The entrance to the hamlet, which was in the form of a square, had been newly fitted up with wickerworks, and in the centre, close to

* *MS. Records, quoted in the Calcutta Review.*



the rude village idol, had been erected a bamboo pole about forty feet high, on the top of which was an effigy in the shape of a bird, with peacock's feathers." This was the stake to which the wretched victim was to have been bound, previous to the sacrifice. "A young woman from the plains" had been prepared for immolation; but she was rescued by the British officer from her cruel fate. And subsequently seven other victims, concealed in different villages, were reluctantly given up to him. He attempted to reason with the chief people; but he found that their perceptions were somewhat clouded and obscured by the strong liquors which they had drunk, in anticipation of the murderous festival, and nothing came of the controversy. No new light broke in upon the mind of the benevolent British functionary; and on his return from this expedition he could only report that, sensible as he was of "the anxiety felt by Government to put a stop to the barbarous custom of sacrificing human victims," he could but "feel difficulty in proposing any practicable measure with the view of carrying its humane wishes into effect."*

There was a suggestion, however, in his report, which seemed worthy of all attention. I have said that the Meriah victims were supplied by a regular class of procurers. It had been decreed that no compassion should be shown to this abominable race of men. They were, therefore, when occasion offered, apprehended, and tried in our criminal courts. But it was not easy to satisfy all the formal requirements of these tribunals, and to substantiate, by a regular chain of recognisable evidence, as evidence is considered by such courts, the actual commission of the offence as set forth in the indictment. This had been the difficulty in the cases of Thuggee and of professional Dakoitee, and it had been found necessary to authorise a certain relaxation of the law for the purpose of checking

* *Report of Mr. Bannerman. MS. Records, quoted in the Calcutta Review.*



the progress of these crimes.* It was now suggested by Mr. Bannerman that a similar relaxation of the law should be authorised in the present instance, and that a regularly appointed officer should have the power of dealing summarily with persons charged with the offence of trafficking in human life. This measure had, I believe, the approbation of the Court of Directors. It seemed a good idea to strike terror into the minds of the procurers, and so to stop the inhuman traffic. But it does not seem that any special enactment emanated from the Legislature.

In fact, for some two or three years after these expeditions to the Hill country, great as was the desire of both the civil and military officers in the Goomsur country to suppress the barbarous practice, and praiseworthy as were their efforts, little or nothing of an effectual character was really done. Lord Elphinstone was at this time Governor of Madras. It must be recorded to his honor, that he was deeply interested in the painful subject, and that he addressed himself, in an earnest and enlightened spirit, to its consideration. In an elaborate minute on the subject, written in 1841, he acknowledged that hitherto our measures for the suppression of Meriah sacrifice had been attended with little success; and he recommended a more systematic and comprehensive scheme than any which had yet been tried—though some of its details had been previously recommended—embracing, *firstly*, the opening of routes and passes through the wild tracts inhabited by the Khond tribes; *secondly*, the encouraging of commercial intercourse between the hills and the plains by all available means, and the establishment of fairs and marts for that purpose; and *thirdly*, the raising of a semi-military police force from among the Hill men. And the better to carry out these objects, it was proposed that a special agent should be appointed, under the Commissioner

* See the chapters on *Thuggee and Dakoitee*—ante, pp. 354—380.



of Goomsur, to proceed into the Khond country, to obtain the assistance of a petty Rajah on the other side of the Hills, towards the opening of the communication. This measure was sanctioned by the supreme Government; but when delivering their assent, they thought it necessary to issue a *caveat* to the effect that the Agent "should cautiously approach any inquisition into human sacrifices, and confine himself very closely to the immediate purposes of the Mission."

The officer to whom this Mission was entrusted was Captain Macpherson,* of whose first acquaintance with the Khond tribes I have already spoken. He had sent in an elaborate report upon the social and religious institutions of these strange people—indeed, had brought together a mass of information relating to them, which sufficed at once to indicate that there was no other officer in the service to whom this difficult and delicate work could be more advantageously entrusted. With characteristic earnestness he set about his work; but at every step as he advanced, formidable difficulties met the inquirer. They were very much the same difficulties as, in the Bheel country, had stared Outram and Ovans in the face. There was the extreme unhealthiness of the climate,† and the seemingly insuperable mistrust of the people. But Macpherson determined to brave the one, and to spare no effort to overcome the other. Sickness assailed him; his life was threatened, but he did not turn aside from his purpose. The people fled at his approach. The villages were deserted. But Macpherson did not despair. He halted; he waited; he did everything that could be done to assure the tribes; to prove that he was a man of

* Captain Macpherson, during the first exploring expedition, had suffered so severely in his health, that he was compelled to seek change of air at the Cape of Good Hope. He returned to Madras in the cold weather of 1840-41, when by the direction of Lord Elphin-

stone, he wrote the elaborate report which is the basis of our information respecting the manners and customs of the Khonds.

† In the space of twenty-eight days ninety per cent. of the attendants of the Mission were struck down by fever.



peace; and to bring the fugitives back to their homes. And little by little he succeeded. In the neighbourhood of the white man's camp, the villagers who had fled at his approach, soon began to shake off their fears. It was plain that he had not come among them to destroy the people and desolate the country; so they emerged from their protecting forests, and a few of them, doubtfully and mistrustfully at first, came unarmed to the British tents, and were received with encouragement and kindness. Then others, who had been anxiously awaiting the results of the experiment, cautiously crept forward, and were in turn encouraged and assured. And then Macpherson moved forward into the hills; halted again; and again the people came around him; until hostile tribes contended for his favor, and what he sought lay within his reach.* He learnt from the Khonds themselves what were their social institutions, and he learnt—but with greater difficulty, and often longer delay—what was their religious belief.

From any direct interference with the practice of human sacrifice, Macpherson was at this time precluded by the nature of his instructions. But he cautiously felt the ground before him, and spared no pains to ascertain the state of feeling among the Khond patriarchs regarding the wishes and intentions of the British Government. And this much he soon ascertained. "Two general impressions prevailed among them. The first was, that the Government was indifferent to the sacrifice. This view was founded upon the fact, that no decisive and comprehensive measures had been adopted with respect to it, while partial interference had taken place. . . . The second was, that although Government certainly disap-

* The line of Macpherson's advance was between the tracts of country inhabited by the sacrificing and non-sacrificing sects—among the latter of which female infanticide obtained.

proved and desired the abolition of the practice, it was conscious that it had no just right to interfere with it.”*

It was plain that no spasmodic efforts for the suppression of the abominable rite could be attended with any general or permanent results. Macpherson did not, therefore, attempt to rescue any particular Khond victims. But he exerted himself to imbue the chiefs with a thorough knowledge of the views and wishes of the British Government; and he especially endeavoured to impress them with the conviction that our “designs were those of paternal benevolence alone.” In this he was at least partially successful. He mixed familiarly and conversed freely with them. He made the men presents of cloth and tobacco, and gave them money to purchase liquor. At every station he distributed beads among the women, who received them with expressions of gratitude and delight. It was his object to conciliate them by every means in his power; and he soon made them believe that he had no hostile design in his visit to their mountain homes. He had no lack of argument, either, for their benefit, and perhaps he may have done something to shake their belief in the efficacy of human sacrifice.

As time advanced, it seemed to Macpherson that his prospects of success were beginning to brighten. In the month of June, 1842, “the two tribes of Goomsur, which were best known, most under influence and most accessible, freely and intelligently consented to place themselves in practical subjection to the British Government, on the condition of receiving its protection and justice.” They “stipulated that Government should support them with its whole authority in making this diffident and trembling movement.”† Nay, indeed, they sought more than this. Still clinging to the old belief in the retri-

* Captain Macpherson to Mr. Ban-
nerman, April, 1842. MS. Records.

† The same to the same, September,
1843. MS. Records.



butory power of the Earth-Goddess, they demanded that they should have full permission to denounce to their gods the British Government in general, and certain of its servants in particular, as the grand authors of their apostacy, and so to render us the vicarious recipients of the divine wrath.

But although even such doubtful concessions had some encouragement in them, it did not seem that, until we could more securely establish our position and our influence as their rightful rulers and protectors, any permanent advantages would result from such uncertain demonstrations as these. "I conceive," said Captain Macpherson, "the establishment of distinct relations with these tribes as subjects, to be the necessary basis of the authority by which, combined with influences derived from every source within our power, we may hope to effect the suppression of the rite of sacrifice. The relations which I propose to establish are for the nearer tribes—submission to laws directly administered by us. For those more remote the practical acknowledgment of our supremacy."* This matter of the administration of justice among the Khonds was the great pivot upon which all Macpherson's measures subsequently turned. These strange Hill people had a wild unsatisfactory method of settling all disputes among themselves, and they were eager for the establishment of better ordered tribunals to which, in their difficulties, they might betake themselves for substantive justice. They saw at once, indeed, the advantages of this appeal to a power beyond the reach of all sinister influences, and they were glad to divest themselves of the undivided and unsupported responsibility which entailed upon them a world of difficulty and embarrassment, and often involved them in internecine strife.

* *Captain Macpherson to Mr. Bannerman, August, 1842. MS. Records.*



Macpherson undertook to preside over their judicial councils, and they hailed the offer with delight.*

It would have been something to see one of those primitive Khond Courts—Macpherson, under a tree, in a Khond village, sitting on a chair, with his chief people, native assistants and others, on their carpets on either side—the Khond chiefs sitting opposite, in tiers, three or four deep, according to their rank—the plaintiff and defendant volubly pleading each his own cause, and bringing in his several witnesses—and the fluctuating crowd of people in the background eagerly watching the proceedings, made up a picture as suggestive to the inner sense as it was striking to the outer. The case was stated. The witnesses were heard. Then the chiefs, one by one, were called upon to pronounce their opinions. And soundly and intelligently for the most part these opinions were pronounced. Then all having been heard, and notes of their several decisions taken, Macpherson proceeded to state what was the collective result. The judgment which he then pronounced was the judgment of the chiefs themselves; and they never doubted that the final decree of the Court was a correct exposition of their wishes.†

This great boon of pure and systematic justice worked mightily among them. "The result," said Macpherson, "surpassed my expectations. A movement began which gradually acquired force and distinctness. The estimate formed by these tribes of the value of the justice dispensed, which relieved society from the accumulation of public and private questions by which it was distracted, was higher than I could have imagined, and the direct

* It was his especial object not to supersede their authority, but to associate himself with, and to support, the chiefs in the administration of justice, after their own fashion.

† The general proceedings of the

Court were carried on in the Khond language, but it was interpreted into Oorea, through which dialect Macpherson always communicated with the Khonds.



authority, therefore, derived from its administration was great. But that justice was not less important, regarded as a means of subjecting the people to the influences best calculated to sway them. The adherents and the opponents of the religious change sought it alike. But none could sue for it without full exposure, in some measure, at the discretion of its dispensers, to all the general and personal influences which could be devised to promote the extension and confirmation of the movement.”* And under these influences, after a little while, 124 victims were voluntarily given up to the British officer.

Nor was the assistance thus rendered to them in the administration of justice the only benefit which they derived from their close connexion with the British. Increased facilities of traffic with the Low Country were afforded to them. Hitherto they had been much exposed to the chicanery and extortion of the merchants and dealers on the plains. These wild mountaineers were no match for the astute traders of the more civilised districts,†

* *Captain Macpherson to Mr. Bannerman, September, 1843. MS. Records.*

The following illustration of the results of this administration of justice, taken from the letters of Macpherson's moonshee, Baba Khan, is worth reading, for more reasons than one:

“My master had not at all an inclination to punish those prisoners as those that steal in the Low Country, for these had thought that in plundering they only obeyed the Rajah's orders and the Deity's will. But if he had not done so, the sacrificing Khonds and those others who carried on thefts would not be in future afraid. The principal ringleader of these thieves could not be apprehended at first; but on hearing the punishment awarded to the prisoners, he came in most submissively of his own accord to my master, and prostrated himself at his feet, at full length, holding a bit of straw in his mouth, which is the general custom in surrendering to a superior, and begged my master's pardon and protection, and declared that ‘the Khond country is now the Sircar's (British Government's), and that I cannot hide myself anywhere in its hills, and as the

Khonds having given over sacrificing victims, so will I give up robbery from this day, and will never commit thefts; and if there be any others that rob, he would bring them to my master.’ Whereupon the poor fellow was pitied and forgiven. He has now reformed, and associates with the best of Khonds very honestly, subsisting himself entirely by work and traffic.”—[*MS.*]

† The Hill people, however, laughed at the superior civilisation of the Low Country, and reasoned about it in a very amusing manner:

“The Khond witnesses who came to give their evidences against the prisoners lived in Lunjapilly, a village of Soondera Singh's, granted to him by Government. One morning on a sunshiny day, while Soondera Singh was coming in his palanquin to see my master with these Khonds, one of them remarked with astonishment and laughter, ‘See! that palanquin was made in the Low Country; it is very beautiful, painted with colors, fixed with boards, lined with cloth, and iron fixed to it—how well it looks!’ Another said, ‘The senses of the Low Country people are not worth a cowry. How many men must

and when they came down from the hills to buy and sell, bringing their turmeric (it is the best that is sold in London) to market, and taking back in exchange scarlet cloths, brass pots, and other commodities in demand among them, they were generally overreached and defrauded. Especial protection was now given to their trade. They were enabled to buy and to sell on better terms than had ever been obtainable from their neighbours. Fairs were established for their especial advantage; and soon they found themselves in the enjoyment of such commercial prosperity as they had never even dreamt of before. This was something readily intelligible to the most obtuse, and appreciable by the most apathetic; and greatly it tended to strengthen and perpetuate British influence among the Khonds.

But these successes, great as they were, had some element of discouragement in them. And for a time, Macpherson was perplexed by new doubts and opposed by new difficulties. In spite of the pledges given, occasional sacrifices, from time to time, were consummated.* His authority was obviously insufficient for the full accomplishment of so great a work. Government had not declared themselves with sufficient distinctness, and there was an enemy in the way. One Sam Bissye,† a Hindoo here-

(it) have taken—how much trouble in making the palanquin! They felled wood, sawed it into planks, placed them together, and formed them into a palanquin—and then it is only comfortable for one individual—and great wastage of money, whilst on account of one person many suffer much labor. If that man were to walk and go, he would save his money and not give trouble to others. Is not this a wise business? If a quarter part of the money expended by Soondera Singh on that palanquin was spent on purchasing good meat and the marrow-bones of buffaloes for himself, and all was so consumed by him, it would give vast strength to his limbs, be palatable to his mouth, and fill his stomach for a long time to his heart's content. The

Low Country people have, I think, little sense.” [*M.S. Correspondence of Baba Khan, Moonshree.*]

* These, however, were very few. There was always a small recusant minority, who desired to practise the rite, against the wishes of the general body. But the tribes collectively never wavered, and their anger against the offending exceptions was great.

† It is not easy to describe the exact position of this man. He was a kind of agent or minister to the tribes, managing their internal affairs, and communicating, on their behalf, with foreign Courts. He was rich, clever, and of great personal influence. He had been set over the general body of the tribes by the British Commissioner, on our first settlement of the country.



ditary office-bearer, whose influence with the tribes had been diminished by Macpherson's ascendancy, was striving manfully to neutralise all the efforts of the English officer. He declared that the authorities, to whom Macpherson was subordinate, had sanctioned the continuation of the sacrifices; he promulgated a dangerous report to the effect that the British were about to tax the tribes; and for a time it seemed that the machinations of this man would arrest the onward progress of reform.

In spite of shattered health, the English officer set himself bravely to work to counteract the evil influence of the wily Hindoo. Watching his opportunity, he contrived to blacken the face of Sam Bissye in the eyes of the tribes, and to exercise his own authority in matters very dear to them, so as to increase his own influence over them, and to prove that the higher authorities were with him. In a little while the overthrow of Sam Bissye was complete. He was suspended from office, and seized as a criminal.*

* From the interesting letters written by Captain Macpherson's moonshee, I take a passage or two, illustrative of the evil machinations and the punishment of Sam Bissye. Of the former, the writer says: "Last season the old wolf-faced Sam Bissye summoned the Khonds, on whom he had engrafted nectarious (nefarious?) words, and told them 'Captain Macpherson has agreed with the Government to assess and raise taxes in the Khond country, for his own profit, when you give up the Meriah sacrifices; consequently he is now allowing you all very civilly. Should you, therefore, discontinue from sacrificing, the whole of us will be utterly ruined, and, also, it is very wrong to desist from our ancient rites. If you hearken to the advice of Captain Macpherson, at least perform the sacrifice in secret.' This season Sam Bissye was with Mr. B(annerman), the collector, while we were in the Hill country, and after our return he proceeded to his country and summoned all the Khonds, and told them that 'Mr. B. has given me permission to sacrifice six victims, and my whole body is affected with leprosy, on ac-

count of your having discontinued the sacrifice. Come and see; I am going to kill a sacrifice.' He gave them food, and liquor to drink, and asked a Mullick, a chief man in Rissinghur, a friend of his, whether he would kill a sacrifice now or not—that leave was granted by Mr. B. He replied: 'If you give me authority I will do it.' When Sam Bissye gave his consent a victim was sacrificed, and the flesh was taken away by the Khonds. A sacrifice was also executed at Rodungbia, but very secretly, and immediately buried. This is the way Sam Bissye is throwing severe obstacles in our way."

Another instance given in the same letters has double value, as an illustration, partly of Sam Bissye's influence—partly of the domestic history of these Meriah sacrifices. Such a complication of misfortunes as is here described might well have sent a wavering Khond back to his victim-medicine. "My master questioned Jeetoo Mullick. 'Why did you sacrifice?' He answered: 'My family were sick. A barn fell unawares on my wife, and she died; a tiger devoured my buffalo; and another woman died in childbirth; and I also

And for a while the tide of success was turned in his favor. In May, 1844, he was able officially to report to the Madras authorities: "I have the high satisfaction to state that the great season of sacrifice is past, and that there has been no apparent tendency to sacrifice, in any part of the Khond country of Goomsur."

So far as the Goomsur tribes were concerned, Macpherson's success was well-nigh complete. But now arose the great question of the extension to other tribes of these ameliorative measures. The sacrificing tribes were scattered over a portion of the Hill districts of Orissa partly under the Madras, and partly under the Bengal Presidency.* Macpherson's authority extended only to the former; and in the tracts subordinate to the Bengal Government, though efforts had been made to suppress the inhuman rite, they had not assumed a sustained

was dangerously ill.' Then Gunda Mullick told me, 'What are all these sufferings? Why not sacrifice a victim? I will go and take Sam Bissye's permission to offer one, as I have heard that he has got permission from the Sircar (British Government) to sacrifice victims?' Then I told Gunda M. that 'I have no victims to sacrifice, and am unable to go just now. You had better go for me.' Upon which Gunda M. said: 'You have a piece of land in Hodzogher, and I will procure you a victim for it; then sacrifice and get the better of your sickness.' Then Gunda M. went to Sam Bissye and related of Jetoo's ailment. Sam Bissye stated to him, that although the Sircar prevents you from sacrifice, do not you relinquish it, as that is the most precious medicine, and no other medicine is worth."

The moonshee, in another place, thus graphically relates, after his own fashion, the story of Sam Bissye's seizure:—"While my master sat on a chair, the Zemindarry Sherishtadar of the collector's cutcherry, the principal assistant agent's magistrate's moonshy, with Soondersing and myself of the assistant cutcherry, and several of the Sirdars and principal men of the villages, Ryots, Peons, &c., standing around, Sam Bissye came up with twenty Peon

attendants, brought a goat, some oranges and yams, to my master, and one rupee laid at his feet, and stood before him. My master then told Sam Bissye as follows: 'Government has sent orders to suspend you, and you are suspended from this day, and to be placed in confinement.' When Sam Bissye heard this, he stood as a post of wood, not uttering a single word, and all those present at that moment were motionless as a flock of sheep, flocked together in the evening. Awhile, after every one began to disperse, frightened in their minds as the same sheep, when a tiger gets into the flock and devours a large sheep out of it. The large-toothed like a jungle hog, Madara Poricha, who was always Sam Bissye's right arm, was also there; but weapons were taken from him, and he ordered into confinement, with Sam Bissye, because he was accused of robberies. When the Peons went to take them into confinement, Sam Bissye told the twenty Peons who came with him, 'Oh children, come!' But my master told him that he had nothing to do with them, nor they anything with him."—[MS. Correspondence.]

* And partly, it might be added, in the Nagpore territory.



character. So the Khonds argued among themselves that it was plain the Government had no very strong impressions on the subject of human sacrifice—that, indeed, their desires and intentions respecting the suppression of the practice were anything but clearly manifested, and that probably, after all, they cared little or nothing about the matter. The two Governments seemed not to be acting in concert with each other, if it were not indeed altogether the crotchet of a single inferior officer, whose acts would not be supported by the authorities above him. This was, indeed, a stumbling-block in the way of the movement; and Macpherson represented the difficulty to the Government. It was plain that if his labours were to be effectual, he should be invested with authority more extensive and more defined. Nor were his representations without avail. Early in 1845 he was appointed Agent to the supreme Government for the suppression of human sacrifice and infanticide in the Hill tracts of Orissa.

Macpherson's course was now comparatively easy. This authoritative manifestation at once convinced the tribes what was the will of the supreme Government. Armed, therefore, with these new powers, and surrounded by the prestige of authority, the Khond Agent stepped at once across the boundary and began to extend his effort to the tribes inhabiting the great district of Boad, under the Bengal Presidency. They had been watching with intense interest the progress of the great experiment that had been going on in Goomsur. Moved by a strong spirit of inquiry, they had crossed the border, attended the Goomsur councils, mixed familiarly with the proselytes, and received from them distinct ideas of the advantages of the relationship subsisting between them and the British Agent. The new light, indeed, had already broken in upon the mind of the Boad tribes. They not only understood the nature of the change, but they clearly saw its advantages. They saw how peaceful and prosperous the country had become, and how happily



their neighbours lived under the reformation. There was a great living argument, indeed, better than all theories and speculations, in support of the advocated change. The Goomsur tribes had ceased to defile their hands with the sacrificial blood of their fellow-creatures ; and yet there had been two unusually healthy seasons, and two unusually abundant harvests. Providence, in this, had wrought mightily for us. The Boad tribes viewed the result with wondering admiration. They called us Boora Pennu's people—the agents of the God of Light—and believed that superhuman power was in the hands of the people who had done such things. The wrath of the Earth-Goddess, it was clear, could not avail against us.

It was Macpherson's wont, I believe, in all his arguments with these poor people, to deal tenderly with the abomination of human sacrifice, rather as a religious error than as a great practical crime. He did not fail, indeed, to tell them that other nations had, at different periods of time, clung to a belief in the efficacy of human blood as a means of propitiation, but that as those nations had advanced in civilisation, they had abjured the false faith, and abandoned the pernicious practice. And he especially dwelt upon the fact that our own nation, once sunk in darkness and barbarism, had practised the unhallowed rite ; but that since we had abandoned and denounced it, we had become the kings of the earth. These arguments were now repeated to the Boad tribes, and listened to with marked respect.*

In the mean while, in the Goomsur country, the crown was set upon the great reformation, and a brilliant incident inaugurated the appointment of the Khond Agent. On a given day, the entire body of the Khond tribes prepared, in their several villages, publicly to perform a simultaneous ceremony of final abjuration of their murder-worship, and their adoption of the religion of the God of

* It is only fair, however, to say that the Khonds were by no means wanting in polemical adroitness, for they contended that it was not impossible that, by reason of their sacrifices, all the world had been saved.



Light. And now the tribes of the non-sacrificing sect really believed that the reformation was complete and permanent, and began to associate with them as brothers. They were no longer polluted by drinking the same water, and using the same fire; and they welcomed the erring ones, fully and unreservedly, into their own fold.

Then the Boad tribes, seeing how matters had progressed in the Goomsur country, prepared to follow the example of their neighbours. They declared, not that all along they had been in error—that their worship had been false—but that a change was now imposed upon them by the triumph of the God of Light. Taking, therefore, solemn farewell of the great distinctive doctrine of their sect, by a stupendous act of immolation, they slaughtered 120 victims, and with this valedictory offering to the Earth-Goddess, declared that they had turned their back upon her for ever.

Knowing that they were in this state of mind, Macpherson prepared to take advantage of it. But a new element of difficulty presented itself, and it needed some address to deal with it aright. The Rajah of Boad, a tributary chief of influence and authority over the tribes, looked askance at his operations. It was Macpherson's desire to ally the Rajah's power with his own, and when he went into the Boad country, the man promised to assist him with all the influence he possessed over the tribes. A meeting was then arranged between the Rajah and the British officer, in the presence of the assembled Khond chiefs. But sinister influences had been at work upon him; and when the time came, he was ready only with vague assurances and delusive protestations. He said that the tribes were opposed to the abandonment of a practice which had been observed by remote generations of their ancestors—that he could only so far overcome their obduracy as to induce them to give up a few victims—and he promised that some twenty Meriahs should be handed over to the British Agent. They were all, he said, of



whom he had distinct cognisance. Macpherson held in his hand an authenticated list of some hundreds of Boad victims, but the Rajah still continued to protest that he could do no more with the tribes.

So Macpherson appealed to the assembled Boad chiefs, who had heard the Rajah's declaration. He had brought with him some of the ablest and most zealous of his proselytes, and he now called upon the people of the other district to hear what the men from Goomsur had to say of the great change which had been effected. Well and earnestly the converts bore witness for the truth. Eloquent and striking were their enunciations. But the Boad chiefs declared that they needed not this evidence to convince them. They had crossed the border themselves, and seen with their own eyes the grand results of the reformation. They knew all that the Goomsur men advanced. They admitted, too, that the great oblation of which I have spoken was intended to be a final act of sacrifice, and they declared their willingness to surrender all the victims in their hands. And in the course of a few days a hundred and seventy were in Macpherson's camp.

In the mean while Macpherson had given the Boad tribes a specimen of the manner in which he assisted the Goomsur Khonds to settle their internal disputes. A day was spent in the investigation of a difficult case. And the adjudication was so satisfactory, that one of the staunchest of the opponents of the proposed reform cried, "Now we understand the magic by which the Goomsur Khonds have been gained."

Finding the Boad Khonds were in this satisfactory state of mind, and always desiring to practise as little interference as possible, Macpherson now prepared to withdraw across the border, and to leave the rest to be worked out by the Rajah. But it soon appeared that this man, wrought upon by evil advisers, was bridging all his secret influence to bear upon the counteraction of the Agent's designs. He spread a report that it was Macpherson's



intention first to disarm, then to tax them, and to reduce them to a general condition of servility identical with that of the Khonds of the plains. The horror of this loss of liberty was great. It was intended by the insidious circulation of the report, to incite the Khonds to rebellion; and by these, and similar representations, he induced them to demand back the victims they had surrendered. Victims no longer, for their atoning efficacy had been destroyed—their sacred character profaned—they were given up to the Rajah. The responsibility of their safety, and the onus of this retrograde movement, were thrown upon him; but, indeed, without this protection they would have been safe. There was no fear after this pollution of their being sent to the stake.

Fearing that he might be visited by the displeasure of the British Government, the Rajah now declared his willingness to co-operate zealously with Macpherson. But a storm was impending over the country. Rebellion was breaking out on both sides of him. The people were rising both in Ungool and in Goomsur. These movements were unconnected with the question of Meriah sacrifice; but it devolved upon Macpherson to superintend, in his political capacity, the operations which then became necessary. And here the inquirer, who up to this time has been intent on tracing only the beneficent measures of a British officer engaged in an honorable warfare, as the champion of civilisation and humanity, with barbarism, cruelty, and superstition, finds himself plunged at once into a sea of troubled controversy from which he hastens to extricate himself. The disturbances in Ungool and Goomsur brought new actors upon the scene. The political and military authorities came into collision. General Dyce, who commanded the troops, ordered Macpherson out of the country, and sent in a string of charges against him. Sir Herbert Maddock, who was then Deputy-Governor of Bengal, and President of the Council, dismissed Macpherson and all his assist-