In Memoriam.

BEFORE the present volume was entirely through the press, the author, Captain James Forsyth, Bengal Staff Corps, late Settlement Officer and Deputy Commissioner of Nimar, Central Provinces, formerly Assistant Conservator and Acting Conservator of Forests, Central Provinces of India, died in London, 1st May, 1871, aged 33.

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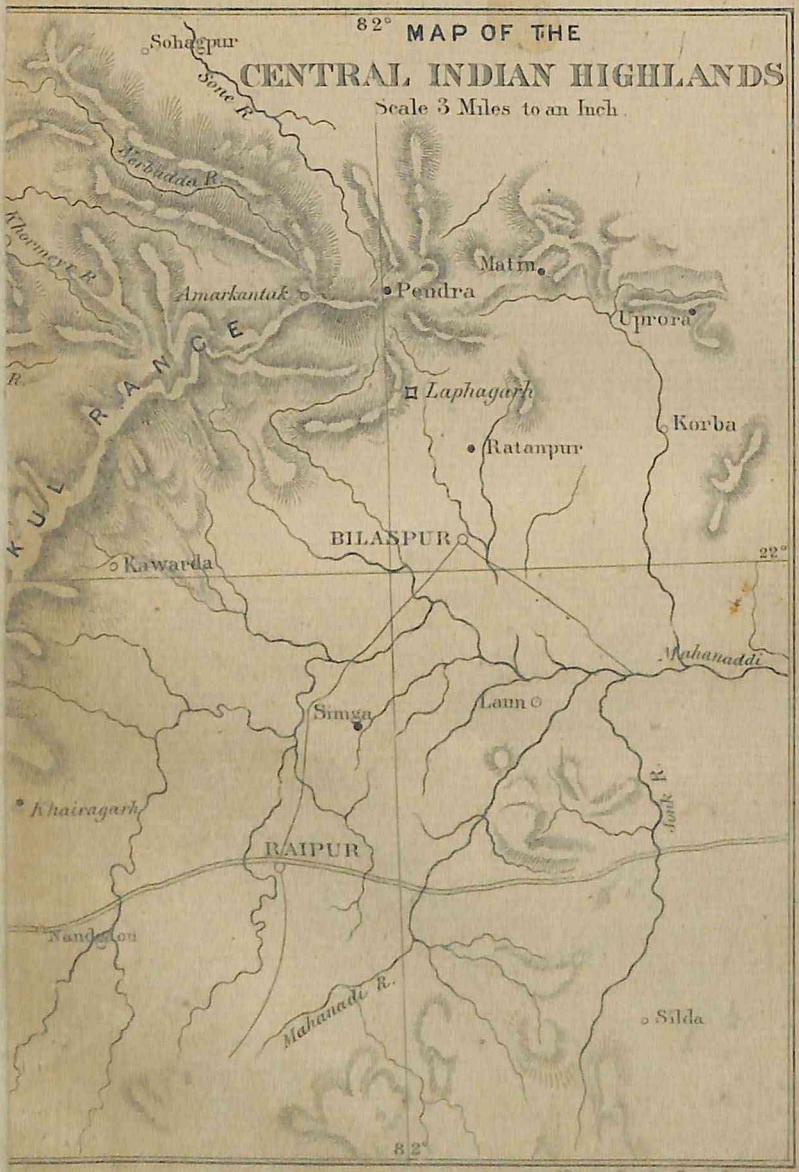


Vincent Brooks Day & Son Lith.

THE

HIGHLANDS OF CENTRAL INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Physical description of the Central Highlands—The Sátpúra Range—Early history of Góndwáná—The Rájpúts and their bards—Mixed races—Immigration of Hindús—The conquest by Akber—Fate of the aborigines—Overthrow of the Gónd Kings—Arrival of the Maráthás—The hill-tribes plunder the low country—The Pindáris—British conquest of the country—Improved administration—Recent ignorance of the interior of the hills—Constitution of the Central Provinces—Energy of the new administration—Establishment of the Forest Department—Exploration of the hill tracts—Their area and character—Settlement operations—Interesting nature of the country—Its aboriginal population—The Gónds—Kolarian races—The Kóls—The Korkús—The Bygás—The Bheels—Singular facts in distribution of organic products—Timber trees—Relation to geological formations—The fauna—Wild buffalo—Twelve-tined deer—Jungle-fowl—Hog-deer—Partridges—Intrusion of Eastern forms—Early destruction of the forests—The Sál—The Teak—Its usefulness—Ruin of the Teak forests.

PEOPLE commonly talk of the "hills" and the "plains" of India, meaning by the former the great Himalayan range, and by the latter all the rest of the country. The mightiest mountains of the earth are called nothing more than "hills;" and popular geography has no name for the numerous excrescences of mother earth which intersect the so-called region of "plains." A range called the Nilgherries, in the south of the peninsula, approaching 9,000 feet in altitude, is known to a few beyond the limits of India as a resort of invalids, and a nursery for cinchonas; but of lesser ranges than this, which

would still be called mountains in any other country, the mass of "ordinary readers" has no cognizance.

Much of this has really been owing to the unexplored and undescribed condition of such regions; but something also to the overwhelming prominence of the great northern range, which rivets the attention of teachers of geography and their pupils, and also, from the exigencies of the art of chartography, renders it almost impossible to delineate on ordinary maps of India the features of inferior ranges.

Yet in the very centre of India there exists a considerable region to which the term Highlands, which I have adopted for a title, is strictly applicable; and in which are numerous peaks and ranges, for which the term "mountain" would, in any other country, be used. Several of the great rivers of India have their first sources in this elevated region, and pour their waters into the sea on either side of the peninsula—to the north the Són commingling with the Ganges, to the east the Mahánadí, flowing independently to the Bay of Bengal, to the south some of the principal feeders of the Godávarí, and to the west the Narbadá and the Táptí, taking parallel courses to the Arabian Gulf. If the reader will seek the head-waters of these rivers on the map, he will find the region I am about to describe. To be more precise, it lies on the 22nd parallel of north latitude, and between the 76th and 82nd of east longitude. It forms the central and culminating section of a ridge of elevated country which stretches across the peninsula, from near Calcutta to near Bombay, and separates Northern India, or Hindostan proper, from the Deccan, or country of the south. The traveller by the new Great Indian Peninsular Railway from Bombay to Calcutta, after some 275 miles of his journey, will come to a point where the line branches into two. The northern branch leads him on up the Narbadá valley,

and so, by Alahabád and the Gangetic valley, to the City of Palaces. If he takes the southern branch instead, he will be landed at Nágpúr, a city in the very heart of India, and its present terminal station. Between these two branches lies a triangle of country in which is situated the western half of the highlands I speak of. From its western extremity, in the fork of these lines, the mountainous region extends eastwards for a distance of about 450 miles, with an average width of about 80 miles.

The general level of what may be called the plains of Central India has here, by gradual, and to the traveller scarcely perceptible, steps, reached an altitude of about 1,000 feet above the level of the sea; and he will rise but little higher than this at any point on the lines of railway. So soon, however, as he leaves the railway, and proceeds a few miles towards the interior of the triangle, he will begin to come on ranges of hills, at first generally low, but in places attaining at once a height of about 1,000 feet from the plain; and beyond them peaks and plateaux will present themselves evidently of much superior elevation. Valleys will everywhere be found penetrating the hills, by following which he may rise gradually to these higher regions; and soon he will exchange the rich cultivation of the flat land through which the railway passes for unreclaimed waste and rugged forest-covered steeps.

He will now find himself in a region where all is chaos to the unguided traveller; where hill after hill of the same wild and undefined character are piled together; where the streams appear to run in all directions at once; and it will not be until he has traversed the whole region, or closely studied a map, that some method will begin to evolve itself, and the geography become plain. He will find that at a height of

about 1,000 feet above the plain, that is of about 2,000 above the sea, the hills have a tendency to spread out in the form of plateaux; some comprising the top of only one hill and a small area; others like a group of many hills, which support, like buttresses, on their summits, large level or undulating plains. From these again he will find shooting up still higher, a good many other solitary flat-topped hills, reaching the height of nearly 3,500 feet; some of which in like manner unite into plateaux at about the same elevation. Yet higher than these, but never assuming the character of a plateau, he will see here and there a peak rising to nearly 5,000 feet above the sea.

As is usual, the inhabitants of the hills themselves have no general name for the whole chain; each individual hill or minor range being called by a local name derived from the nearest village, or the species of tree it bears, or a god, or a river, or some other accidental circumstance. The Hindús of the plains have several terms for its different sections, calling the most easterly the Mykal, the centre the Máhádeo, and the western the Sátpúra hills. Geographers have applied the name Sátpúra to the entire range; and the name is perhaps as appropriate as any which could be selected.

The watershed of these mountains varies in direction in their several sections. In the extreme east the range terminates in a bluff promontory with a precipitous face to the south, throwing the whole of the drainage of a vast area towards the north. This is the cradle of the Narbadá river, which soon leaves its parent hills, and flows through a wide valley of its own along the northern face of the range. In the centre the range culminates in the bold group of the Máhádeos, crowned by the Puchmurree peaks, throwing the drainage almost equally to the north and south, the former into the

Narbadá and the latter into the Godávarí. The western section (the Sátpúras proper) is cleft in two by a deep valley, and drains inwards, forming the river Táptí, which, like the Narbadá, flows for but a short part of its course within the hills before it leaves them altogether, and runs along their southern face to the sea. Such, however, is the tortuous formation of these mountains, that their streams frequently surprise one by turning short round in their courses, and making off towards the wrong river, as if they had suddenly changed their minds. The drainage of the great central Máhádeo block is a striking example of this. Two streams rise near its southern face, the Dénwá and the Sónbadrá. Both flow nearly south, away from the Narbadá, for a short way, when the former turns to the east and the latter to the west. Presently, however, they find two vast cracks in the range, and turn sharp to the north, passing through them to the northern face, where they unite and fall into the Narbadá after all.

This extensive region emerged from the outer darkness that shrouds the early history of such immense tracts in India only within the last three centuries. Before then we have nothing to grope by in the thick darkness but the will-o'-the-wisp lights of tradition, and the scarcely more reliable indications of a few ruinous remains and vague inscriptions. The aborigines have never possessed a written language, and the Hindú races, who have within the last few centuries peopled the valleys that surround and interpenetrate the hills, have allowed their literature to remain the monopoly of a priestly caste, whose very existence was bound up in the necessity of falsifying all history. Their only writings which wear even the remotest semblance of history—the Máhábhárat and Rámáyan epics—speak of all India south of the

Jamná as a vast wilderness inhabited by hostile demons and snakes. Religious hermits of the northern race are described as dwelling in leafy bowers in their midst, while heroes and demigods wandered about like knights-errant, protecting the devotees from their hostile acts, which seem more like the pranks of frisky monkeys than the actions of human beings. The snakes and demons have been conjectured, with some probability, to have been the black aborigines of the country, and the scenes of the epics to pourtray the gradual advance of the Aryan race and religion into their midst. The wandering Rájás are frequently described as allying themselves in marriage with the daughters of the potent demons, and so far the poems agree with what is otherwise shown to be probable. Nothing like a connected historical narrative is, however, to be extracted from the mass of Brahminical fiction; and whatever value such materials may yield to the investigation of the history of the Aryan or conquering races, they are worth nothing as bearing on that of the wild men of the wilderness, who are throughout regarded as being as much beyond the pale of humanity as their country was beyond the Aryan pale—the land of clearings and the black antelope.

We have a few architectural remains and inscriptions that tell of Aryan chiefs holding power in parts of the Narbadá valley and the central plateaux, between the 5th and the 14th centuries. But who and what they were, and what was really their position, their is nothing to show. Remains of religious edifices surrounded by fortifications point to the probability of their having been the heads of isolated bands of the warlike caste, protecting settlements of missionary priests, and perhaps, by superior courage and arms, holding in nominal subjection the aboriginal tribes around them. Traditions exist of a pastoral race, to whom is attributed every ancient build-

ing that cannot be otherwise accounted for. It is highly probable that the cow was unknown to the aborigines before it was brought by their Aryan invaders. Tradition would probably fix on so striking a feature as the possession of herds by those early colonists ; and thus it does not seem necessary to suppose the existence of any peculiar pastoral people, distinct from other Aryan settlers in these central regions.

But what these early immigrants may really have been is unimportant. For, when first the light of true history breaks upon the country, at the period of its contact with the invading Mahomedan in the 14th century, all of them had ceased to have any separate existence. Most probably they had been absorbed in the great mass of the aboriginal tribes who surrounded them : and we find the country then called by the name of Góndwáná, from the tribe of Gónds who chiefly inhabited it. The petty tribal chieftainships, into which, there is reason to believe, it had formerly been divided, had then been united into three considerable principalities, under the sway of chiefs whom all the evidence we have proves to have been of mixed aboriginal and Hindú (Rájpút) descent. Architectural remains, and the recorded condition of the country at the time mentioned, show that these little kingdoms had acquired a considerable degree of stability and development ; and it has often been wondered how a tribe of such rude savages as the Gónds could have reached a stage of civilization at that early period so greatly above anything they have since shown themselves to be capable of. The explanation seems to lie in the circumstance mentioned. The real establishers of these courts, and introducers of the arts, were not Gónds but Hindús.

It is the custom in all families which trace their lineage to the fountain-head of Hindú aristocracy among the Rájpút

clans of Rájasthán to retain, like the Celtic chieftains of our own country, family bards, whose duty it is to record in a genealogical volume, and recite on great occasions, the descent and family history of their patrons. The bardic office is hereditary, and where the lineage of the family is really ancient the bard is generally also a descendant of the bards of the original clan. Often he is the chief bard of the clan itself, and resides with its hereditary head at the family seat in Rájasthán, visiting at intervals the cadet branches of the house to record their domestic events. In Góndwáná numerous chiefs now exist who claim either a pure descent from Rájpút houses, or more frequently admit their remote origin to have sprung from a union between some Rájpút adventurer of noble blood and one of the daughters of the aborigines. Few of them are admitted to be pure Rájpúts by the blue-blooded chiefs of Rájasthán; but all have their bards and genealogies. These, like such documents in all countries, often go back to fabulous times, and are overlaid with modern fiction; but the legendary portion of the bardic chronicle can generally be separated with little difficulty from a solid residue of probable fact.

The general conclusion to be drawn from the evidence of these writings, supported as they are by tradition and later history, is that during the 14th and 15th centuries, and it may be even earlier, a great immigration of the Rájpút clans took place into the country of the aborigines. The Mahomedan invaders of Upper India were then pressing hard on the country between the Ganges and the Narbadá rivers occupied by the Rájpúts; and it was doubtless the recoil from them that forced these colonies of Rájpúts southwards into the wilds of Central India. Here it would seem that they generally formed matrimonial alliances with the indigenous tribes.

The superior qualities of the Aryan race would soon assert themselves among such inert races as these aborigines; and there is little doubt that before the arrival of the Mahomedans, not only the heads of what have been termed the Gónd kingdoms, but also many of the subordinate chiefs, were far more Hindú than aboriginal in blood. The unfailing evidence of physical appearance supports these indications of tradition. Most of the chiefs possess the tall well-proportioned figure and light complexion of the Hindú, but allied with more or less of the thickness of lip and animal type of countenance of the pure aborigine. The mass of the tribes on the other hand are marked by the black skin, short squat figure, and features of the negretto race of humanity. Between them are found certain sections of the tribes, who would seem to have been also imbued with something of the foreign blood, though in a less degree than the chiefs. Like the latter they affect much Hindú manners and customs; and it is probable that they too are the result of some connection in long past times between immigrant Aryans and the indigenous tribes.

The Hindú proclivities of the chiefs appear to have early led them to encourage the settlement in their domains of colonies of the industrious agricultural races who had already reclaimed the soil of Northern and Western India. But no very extensive arrival of these races would seem to have occurred previous to the establishment, early in the 17th century, of a strong Mahomedan government, under the great Akber, in the surrounding countries. The impetus given to the development and civilisation of the dark regions of India by the wise rule of that greatest of eastern administrators can never be over-rated. Before the absorption into his empire of the minor Hindú and Mahomedan states, their history is one of a continuous lawlessness and strife:

and the further we investigate, the more certainly we perceive that political order, the supremacy of law, sound principles of taxation, a wise land system, and almost every art of civilised government owe their birth to this enlightened ruler. His treatment of these unsettled wilds and their people was marked with the same political wisdom. While, in the surrounding countries, which had already been in a measure reclaimed by Hindú races, he everywhere broke up the feudal system, under which strong government and permanent improvement were impossible, he asked no more from the chiefs of these waste regions than nominal submission to his empire, and the preservation of the peace of the realm. Those on his borders he converted into a frontier police, and the rest he left to administer their country in their own fashion. Acknowledgment of his supremacy he insisted on however; and in case of refusal sent his generals and armies who very soon convinced the barbarous chiefs of their powerlessness in his hands. The influence of his power and splendour rapidly extended itself over even this remote region. The chiefs became courtiers, accepted with pride imperial favours and titles, and in some cases were even converted to the fashionable faith of Islam.

A vast development of the resources of these central regions followed the coming of Akber. A great highway between Upper India and the Deccan was established through a gap in the Sátpúra mountains. A vast city arose in the Táptí valley, which became the seat of government of the southern province of the empire. Armies marching to and fro, and the retinues of a great court, brought with them a demand, before unheard of, for the necessaries and the luxuries of life. The open country, under the rule of Akber was rapidly reclaimed by Hindú immigrants, arriving simul-

taneously from the north and from the west. Nor were they long in extending into the fat lands of the great valleys in the territories of the Gónd princes. The reclamation of the heavy lands of the Narbadá valley, and the country now known as the Berárs, had probably been entirely beyond the resources of the aboriginal races. The immigrants brought with them the necessary energy and the necessary resources; and from this time a process commenced which resulted in the wholesale deprivation of the indigenous races of their birthright in the richest portions of their country, and the establishment therein of the arts of agriculture and commerce.

The Gónds retired to the higher plateaux and slopes of the central hills, where their hunting instincts, and rude system of raising the coarse grains on which they subsist, could still find scope; the more extensive plateaux were also soon invaded by the aggressive race, and their level black soils covered with crops of wheat and cotton. These elevated plains are surrounded by belts of rugged unculturable country which remained in the possession of the aborigines; and thus ere long the tribes were not only surrounded but interpenetrated by large bodies of Hindús.

The Bráhmán priest accompanied the warlike Rájpút and the industrious Hindú peasant to their new country; and brought with him the worship of the Hindú gods and the institution of caste. No separation from the holy mysteries of his faith was demanded from the immigrant. Not only was he persuaded that he was still under the protection of the old gods; but the gods themselves, and all their belongings, were bodily borne into exile along with their votaries. New scriptures were revealed, in which the religious myths of the race were transplanted wholesale, and fitted to local names and places. The Narbadá became more holy as a river than

the Ganges. The mountain of Kailás, the fabled heaven of Siva beyond the snows of the Himalaya, jutted to heaven in the peaks of the Máhádeo range. Krishná and Rámá passed their miraculous boyhood, and achieved their legendary feats, in these central forests, instead of in the groves of Mathúrá and the wilderness of Bindrában. Some remarks will be offered in another place on the social and religious influence of this contact with Hindúism of the aboriginal races who retired before the invaders. A few remained in the country occupied by the Hindús, chiefly in the position of agricultural serfs, of watchers of the villages against the inroads of their wilder brethren or of wild beasts, of hewers of wood, prevented only by the rules of caste from being also their drawers of water. A social status was assigned them below that of all but the outcasts of the other race; and they were compelled to segregate themselves in humble hovels, beyond the limits of the comfortable houses and homesteads of the superior castes.

The semi-aboriginal principalities of Mandlá Deogarh, and Khérlá, which included the whole of this highland region, were thus permitted by the policy of successive Mahomedan rulers to maintain a little irksome feudatory position, until the Maráthá power began to supplant that of the Moghuls in the latter part of the 18th century. Then the irrepressible hordes of the Deccan, having swallowed up the more settled dominions of the Moslem, began to overrun also the country of the Gónds. Before the close of the century the three kingdoms had been entirely broken up, and are heard of no more in history. They seem to have at no time been more than a feudal agglomeration of numerous petty chiefships; and on the ruin of their heads they resolved themselves again into the same elements. The conquest of the Maráthás

assumed little of a practical character in the interior of the hills, the mountaineers continuing to wage against them a desultory warfare from their fastnesses. The present century broke with the commencement of that "time of trouble," when the leaders of the Maráthá confederacy began to quarrel over their spoil, and entered on a deadly struggle for territory and power. The financial straits of the Maráthá chiefs now led to wholesale disregard for all rights of property inconsistent with their demand of a rack-rent from every acre of the soil commanded by their troops. The hill-chiefs were now reft of the last of their possessions in the plains; corrupt and overbearing farmers of the land-tax seizing on the last of their accessible resources. Then they took to the hills with their tribes, and turned their hands against the spoiler, till the name of Gónd and Bheel became synonymous with that of hill-robber. Whole tracts came to be distinguished by the title of the "country of robbers." There is not a district in all that long frontier between hill and plain where tales are not still related of the sudden downswoop of bands of hillmen on the garnered harvest of the plains, of bloodshed, torture, and blazing villages, and of the sharp and savage retaliation of Maráthá mercenaries. A little tributary of the Táptí river that comes down from the hills of Gávilgarh is still called the "stream of blood," from the massacre in its valley of a whole tribe of Nahals, man, woman, and child, by a body of Arabs in the service of Sindiá; and many similar tales have been related to me when travelling in the hills. Then, if not before, every pass in the hills was crowned by a fortified post of the mountain men, and every inhabited village of the plains by a wall of earthwork and a central keep. Then, too, arose the organised bands of mounted plunderers who have been called Pindárís—Ishmaelites of

these central regions, who, like the vulture, sallied forth from their fastnesses in some secluded wild to gorge on the prey struck down by a nobler hand. Thenceforth, for nearly twenty years, the hill-tribes, Pindárí plunderers, and lawless Maráthá soldiery, with their daggers at each other's throats, were unanimous only in robbing the husbandmen of the plains, who ploughed their fields by night with swords and matchlocks tied to the shafts of their ploughs, or purchased peace by heavy payments of blackmail. Vast areas of the country that had been reclaimed by their industry were again abandoned to the jungle and the wild beast; and only round the walls of fortified villages, within which the people and their herds could retreat in time of need, was any tillage maintained at all.

In the year 1818 this unheard-of anarchy was terminated by our final success against the Maráthás, and the extermination of the Pindárí bands. But we entered on the possession of our new territories to find them almost desolated by a quarter of a century of the utter absence of government, with the hill population frenzied by the excitement of a life of plunder, and branded with the character of "savage and intractable foresters." The Ságar and Narbadá territories, as the northern half of the country was then called, were acquired by us in full sovereignty after this war. The southern portion remained nominally the territory of the feudatory Rájá of Nágpúr, but had long been under British administration when, in 1854, it too was annexed on failure of heirs. The Gávilgarh hills, in the extreme south-west, formed part of the Nizam's territory of Berár; but that also has for many years been under British management.

With the establishment of a strong government the hillmen soon proved how greatly they were maligned when

described as "savage and intractable." Since they first came under our rule there has not been an outbreak among them of the least importance; and, on the contrary, they have long since gained the character of being a remarkably submissive and law-abiding people. The chiefs were early secured in their feudatory position, with the full proprietorship of such territories, both in the hills and in the plains, as they could establish a title to; and for many years they were left almost to themselves in the management of their internal affairs. Our early administrators were too fully occupied with the work of restoring prosperity in the open country to have much time to spare for the Gónd and his wildernesses; and thus we find that the interior of their country remained an almost unexplored mystery up to a very recent period.

Two and a half centuries ago the great Akber knew nothing of the Gónds but as a "people who tame lions so as to make them do anything they please, and about whom many wonderful stories are told;"* and within the last twenty years even they have been described as going naked, or clothed in leaves, living in trees, and practising cannibalism. "So lately as 1853, when the great trigonometrical survey of India had been at work for half a century, and the more detailed surveys for some thirty years, Sir Erskine Perry, addressing the Bombay branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, wrote,—'At present the Góndwáná highlands and jungles comprise such a large tract of unexplored country that they form quite an oasis in our maps. Captain Blunt's interesting journey in 1795, from Benares to Rájámandrí, gives us almost all the information we possess of many parts of the interior.'"† Till

* Gladwin's 'Ayeen Akberee,' vol. ii. p. 59.

† 'Introduction to the Central Provinces Gazetteer,' by Charles Grant, Esq., C.S.

within a few years, "unexplored" was written across vast tracts in our best maps; and, though lying at our very doors, unexplored in reality they were. With few exceptions, the civil officers of those days never dreamt of penetrating the hilly portions of their charges; and the writer is acquainted with one district containing some 3000 square miles of forest country, and inhabited by between 30,000 and 40,000 aborigines, in which one officer held charge for eleven years without once having put foot within this enormous territory. All accounts of such tracts were filtered through Hindú or Mahomedan subordinates, whose horror of a jungle, and its unknown terrors of bad air and water, wild beasts, and general discomfort, is such as to ensure their painting the country and its people in the blackest of colours.

But a new era dawned on these dark regions, when the conscience of the British rulers of India was awakened to the wants of their great charge, after a rebellion which nearly ousted them from their seat. Along with many more important provinces, this secluded region felt the benefit of the impulse then given to the administration of the empire. That great civiliser of nations—the iron road—was to be driven through the heart of its valleys; and Manchester had prophetically fixed an eye on its black soil plains as a future field for cotton. Something stronger than the divided and limited agency of the several local officers who had been sitting still over its affairs was wanted for the guidance of a country and a people who possessed all the elements of a rapid progress. Accordingly, in 1861, were constituted what have since been known as the Central Provinces, under the chief commissionership of Mr. (now Sir Richard) Temple, of the Bengal Civil Service.

Then were seen strange sights in that unknown land; when

distant valleys and mountain gorges, that had heard no other sound than the woodman's axe, echoed to the horsehoofs of the tireless Chief, and his small knot of often weary followers; when the solitary Gónd or Bygá, clearing his patch of millet on the remote hill-side, was astonished by the apparition, on some commanding hill-top, of that veritable "Government" (Sirkar) in the flesh, which to him and his for several generations had been an abstraction, represented, if by chance he ever visited the district head-quarters, by a "Saheb" in his shirt sleeves, sitting in a dingy office smoking a cheroot!

A Chief who thus, by dint of hard riding, insisted on seeing the requirements of the country for himself, was not long in perceiving that the highland centre of the province, with its extensive forests and mineral wealth, its limitless tracts of unreclaimed waste and scanty half-wild population, and its great capabilities for the storage of precious water, was worthy of a principal share of attention. It had already been whispered by a few that its forests, calculated on by the projectors of the railway lines, then being constructed through the province, for their supply of timber, were likely to prove a broken reed, having been already exhausted by a long course of mismanagement; and one of the first steps taken was the organisation of a Forest Department, for the detailed examination and conservation of the timber-bearing tracts. An officer* who had already interested himself in the question, and had travelled extensively in these regions, and who was admirably fitted for the task by physical qualities, and the possession of that faculty of observation which is not to be attained by the labours of the study, was selected as superintendent of the

* Captain G. F. Pearson, of the Madras Army, now Conservator in the N.W. Provinces.

new department. During the five succeeding years several officers, *quorum unus fui*, were unremittingly employed in the exploration of the 36,000 square miles which may be taken to be the area of the central hills, besides doing much to examine an almost equally extensive tract of low-lying forest in the south of the province. In later years the regular civil officers of the district, those employed in the land revenue settlement, surveyors, missionaries, and many others, have traversed many parts of these mountains; and a great mass of information respecting their physical character and inhabitants has been accumulated, which, although of very unequal value, is yet a mine of useful ore from which much good metal may be extracted. Much of this has already been printed in the form of official Reports; and recently the cream of it has been abstracted into a Gazetteer of the Central Provinces, the Introduction to which, from the pen of Mr. Grant, late Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, is a résumé of the history of the province, admirable for its conciseness and research. Good maps of all but the remotest tracts have also now been made available; and statistical information of all sorts is annually prepared with much care and made public by the Government.

My design, then, in thus venturing before the public, is not that of attempting to rival these most complete official documents in accuracy or extent of information, but rather to present, in a more popular and accessible form, the lighter and more picturesque aspects of a country in which an increasingly large section of our countrymen may be expected to take an interest, now that two railways, carrying most of the passengers between India and England, pass for several hundred miles within sight of the hills of Góndwáná. Though most of what I shall have to say is founded on, or corroborated by, my

own observation during many years of acquaintance with the region described, I shall not refuse to avail myself of well-authenticated material collected by others.

The highland region is comprehended within eleven of the nineteen districts into which the province has been subdivided for administrative purposes. A portion of most of these districts lies also in the adjacent plains, either to the north or south of the hills, a judicious arrangement which combines in one jurisdiction the hill and the plain people who have dealings together. The total area of these districts is, in round numbers, 44,000 square miles, of which about 11,000 are under cultivation, and the remainder waste. Where such extensive mountains are included, it will not be surprising to find that of this large unreclaimed area, about 20,000 square miles are estimated to be wholly incapable of tillage, the remaining 13,000 being probably more or less fit for improvement. These figures are obtained by the returns of the department employed in what is called the "settlement of the land revenue." *

Few readers will require to be told that in India the great mass of the land has always paid a tax to the Government (which is really of the nature of a rent-charge which had never been alienated by the original proprietor of all land—the State); and in these provinces most of the hill-chiefs even were found, on the country coming into our hands, to be liable to the land tax, which in their case, however, was usually a very light one. During the times of anarchy which preceded our rule, the proper amount of this tax had become very uncertain, the assessment in fact having very much resolved itself into a struggle between the rulers and the ruled, "that

* The writer served for three years as settlement officer of one of these districts, and can vouch for the general accuracy of the statistics.

they should take who have the power, and they should keep who can." It was also by no means clear in many cases from whom the tax should be demanded, rights of property in land having fallen greatly into abeyance during a period when to claim the proprietorship was to invite spoliation and oppression. Our strong and equable rule so greatly encouraged the arts of peace that population soon began to press upon the immediately available land; and this circumstance, together with the moderation and certainty of our land taxation, soon bestowed on property in land a value which it had never before possessed. Rival claimants then began to bring forward conflicting, and often long-dormant, claims to possession; and the courts established for the ordinary business of the country were soon swamped by the number and complexity of these cases. It was found, too, on inquiry, that there had never really existed any clearly recognised right of property, in our sense of the term, which would give the agricultural classes a real interest in the improvement of their lands, while many classes of persons had been allowed to exercise very undefined powers over the whole of this immense area of unreclaimed land. The culturable wastes were becoming much in demand by enterprising settlers, a demand which the shortly expected opening of the country by the railway promised to largely increase. Such operations were clogged by these uncertain claims, and thus the progress of the country was in danger. The forest question also became urgent, timber being required in large quantities by the railways, while a fear arose of the impending exhaustion of the whole forests of the country. Nothing could be effected in this direction either, until the question of title in these wastes should be determined. The Government then determined to appoint special officers for the settlement of all these matters in every district of the province;

and after ten years of hard work they have now been set at rest. Few persons can conceive the amount of personal labour, in the field and in the office, involved in the settlement of one of these districts. Every village and hamlet has to be visited, and every acre of land appraised and assessed; the title of every claimant to any interest in the land has to be investigated from the beginning of time; and finally a minute and accurate record of the whole process has to be drawn up, to form the substantive law for the disposal of future cases in the civil and revenue courts of the district. The grand result, as affecting rights and interests in the land, was, that where any title which could be converted into a right of property was established, the freehold, bearing liability to the fixed Government rent-charge, was bestowed on the claimant; while all land to which no such private title could be established was declared to be the unhampered property of the state. Most of the hill-chiefs were admitted to the full ownership of the whole of their enormous wastes, though certain restrictions as to the destruction of the forests have here (as in all civilised countries), been imposed on these proprietors. Thus the area which has remained to the State in these highlands is only about 14,500 square miles, of which about 9,500 are considered to be culturable, and the rest barren waste. A portion of this area has been reserved from disposal to private persons, as State forest; but in every district there is much good land available for sale or lease, under rules which will be found in an Appendix.

Few parts of India present so great a range of interesting natural objects for investigation as this. Situated in the very centre of the peninsula, the ethnical, zoological, botanical, and even geological features of north and south, and of east and west, here meet and contrast themselves. As has been

noticed above, two distinct streams of the so-called Indian Aryans, approaching from Northern and Western India, here meet and intermingle, differing considerably in appearance, in character, and in speech. Where the land has been suitable for their agricultural processes, the original dwellers of the land have been driven out to the central hills; and there we find them in several tribes, which yield to the investigator points of connection with several branches of the human race.

The total population of the tracts I have included in this sketch is about 4⅓ millions, of whom about 3⅓ millions are Aryans, and one million only belong to aboriginal races. The great majority of these (826,484) are the Gónds, who have given their name to the country, and who are distributed in greater or less density over the whole of the hilly portion of the tract. The infallible test of language shows that the Gónds belong to the same family of mankind as the Tamil-speaking Dravidians of Southern India.* In the extreme north-east of the tract, are found about 37,000 of the tribe known in the Bengal hill-tracts as Kóls, a race closely allied to the Sántáls and other tribes of the north-east; and in the very centre of these highlands, on the high plateaux of Puchmurree and Gávilgarh, surrounded and isolated by the Gónds, are found another race, called Kúrs or Korkús, numbering about 44,000, whose language and general type are almost identical with these Kóls and Sántáls, though they themselves are utterly unaware of the connection. All these Kolarian tribes differ radically in language from the Dravidian Gónds; and some connection has been traced between them and the

* A supposed connection between the Gónds and the Bráhúis, a Mahomedan tribe on the Sindh frontier, based on the correspondence of a few words in their languages, does not appear to bear the test of a closer examination.

aboriginal races of countries lying to the east of India. Further to the east again, in the Mykal range, and like the Korkús imbedded among the Gónds, is found a small body of about 18,000 Bygás, who have not yet been traced either to the Kolarian or the Dravidian stock. They present, from many circumstances to be afterwards noticed, the most curious ethnical problem of all. Less raised above the condition of the mere hunting savage than any, and clinging to the most secluded solitudes, they have yet entirely lost all trace of their own language, and speak instead a rude dialect of the tongue of the Aryan immigrants. They present some points of affinity to the Bheels of Western India, of whom also, in the extreme west, some 20,000 are reckoned in this cauldron of peoples. The number of the aborigines is completed by about 25,000 souls, forming the fag ends of tribes who have lost all semblance of distinct cohesion, without language or territory of their own.

Which of these entirely distinct families are the autochthones of the land, or which of them first settled here, may possibly never be known. None of them have any reliable tradition of their arrival; and no evidence, bearing on the subject, beyond what has been already mentioned, has been discovered. It is not within the scope of my present purpose to attempt any elaborate investigation into the ethnical history or peculiarities of these tribes. The evidence yet recorded is too scanty to yield valuable results; and such has been the admixture of their customs, religion, and language with those of the Hindús, that it is improbable now that much of their original distinctive peculiarity remains to be discovered. Yet there is much that is curious and interesting in their present condition, gradually being absorbed as they are in the vast mixture of races composing

modern Hindúism; and a grave problem remains unsolved in the question of our duty towards these races as a Government. What I have to say on these points will find a place further on.

The region is also remarkable as forming the meeting ground of some forms of vegetable and animal life, which seem to be characteristic of North-eastern and South-western India. The principal forest-tree of upper India is the Sál (*Shorea robusta*), a tree whose habit it is to occupy, where it grows at all, the whole area, almost to the exclusion of others. It thus forms vast forests in the lower Himalaya, and covers also the greater portion of the hilly region to the south of the Gangetic valley. From the latter tract it stretches along the table-land of the subdivision of Bengal called Chota Nágpúr, and thence extends into the Central Provinces in two great branches, separated by the open cleared plain of Chattísgarh. The southern branch reaches as far as the Godávarí river, and the northern embraces the eastern half of the highlands I have described, both branches ceasing almost exactly at the eightieth parallel of east longitude. To the west of this the characteristic and most valuable forest-tree is the Teak (*Tectona grandis*), which is not found at all in Northern India, or Bengal, and but scantily in the Central Provinces to the east of 80° longitude. The Teak-tree is, however, not so exclusive in its habit of growth as the Sál, appearing rather in the form of scattered clumps among other forms than as the sole occupant of large areas.

Some explanation of this peculiar disposition of these two timber trees may perhaps be found in their habits of growth and relation to various soils. The Sál is a tree possessed of a remarkable power of propagating itself, shedding an enormous number of seeds, at a season (the commencement of the rains)

when the usual jungle fires have ceased, and which sprout almost immediately on their reaching the ground. On the other hand, the Teak seeds after the rainy season, and the seeds themselves are covered by a hard shell, which must be decomposed by long exposure to moisture and heat before they will germinate. This necessitates their exposure throughout one hot season, when the whole of the grass covering the ground below is burnt in the annual conflagrations. Thus a large per centage of the seeds of the Teak never germinate at all. It is clear then, that if these two species were growing together, on soil equally suitable for both, the Sál must possess an immense advantage in the "struggle for life" over the Teak. And if to this natural advantage be added an adventitious one, in the fact that the Teak is much more generally useful to man—particularly to man in a primitive state—as is really the case, there seems to be a sufficient reason why the Teak should disappear before its rival in tracts where the latter has obtained a footing and is equally suitable to the soil and climate. Now an examination of the tracts on which these trees are found in Central India shows that, while the Teak does not appear to shun any particular geological formation, it thrives best on the trap soils which predominate in the south and west of the province. But the Sál, on the other hand, clearly shuns the trap formation altogether. Not only is it unknown within the great trappean area to the west of the eightieth degree of longitude, but even to the east of that line, in its own peculiar region, it does not grow where isolated areas of the trap rocks are found. Further I believe that in no part of India where this tree grows is there any of the trap formation. With the exception only of this volcanic rock the Sál appears to thrive on any other formation, being equally abundant within its own area,

where primitive rocks, or sandstones, or lateritic beds predominate. Thus I believe that the Sál, where the soil is suitable, that is where there are no trap rocks, has exterminated the Teak, of which it is a natural rival. In other parts of India, where the Teak does not meet with this rival, as in Malabar and Burma, it flourishes on the soils from which it is here excluded by the Sál. The general conclusion appears irresistible, but sharp contrasts perhaps best illustrate such peculiarities. Many such might be mentioned, but two in particular are very noticeable. Within the Sál region, in the hills immediately to the east of the town of Mandlá, there is a considerable area covered by Teak, to the total exclusion of the Sál. The whole of this region is composed of a trap overflow; and all around it, as soon as the granitic and lateritic formations recommence, the Sál again entirely abolishes the Teak. Again, within the area of the trap and Teak, in the valley of the Dénwá river, 150 miles west of the furthest limit of the general Sál region, is found a solitary isolated patch of the latter, occupying but a few square miles. Here the Sál grows on a sandstone formation. It is surrounded on three sides by trap rocks, and there it entirely ceases, and is supplanted by the Teak as the principal timber tree. But how to account for this small and unimportant outlier of the great Sál belt? To maintain our theory, some link to connect them together should be found. I think that a hypothesis, much less extravagant than many which are introduced into such arguments, will do so. Towards the fourth side of the Sál patch in the Dénwá valley lies the great open plain of the Narbadá into which the sandstone formation extends, and passes on along with primitive rocks, and with little interruption from the trap, right up to the main body of the Sál forest at the head of the Narbadá valley. The Sál, it is true, ceases in the

open Narbadá valley, but so does all forest, the country having been completely cleared and cultivated for many generations. It is not then a very violent assumption to suppose that the Sál forest at one time extended down the Narbadá valley as far as the Dénwá, and that, when the country was cleared, this little patch alone was left securely nestled under the cliffs of the Máhádeo range, in the secluded valley of the Dénwá, into which there was no road even until within the last few years.

These are strange facts. But it would be still more strange if a corresponding distribution of animal life could also be demonstrated. Something of the kind is really almost possible. Equally with the Sál tree, several prominent members of the Central Indian fauna belong peculiarly to the north-eastern parts of India. These are the wild buffalo (*Bubalus Arni*), the twelve-tined "swamp" deer (*Rucervus Duvaucellii*), and the red jungle-fowl (*Gallus ferrugineus*). All these are plentiful within the area of the great Sál belt, but do not occur to the west of it, *excepting in the Sál patch of the Dénwá valley*, where the two latter, though not the buffalo, again recur. In the Dénwá valley there is but a solitary herd of the swamp deer, I believe; the red jungle-fowl are not so numerous as the rival species, *G. Sonneratii*, which replaces it in the west and south of India; and it is not surprising that the wild buffalo should have disappeared when his range had been reduced, by the clearance of the intermediate forest, to the narrow limits of this small valley. So large and prominent an animal requires a much larger range than deer and birds; and there is no part of the surrounding country suitable for his habits until we reach the Sál tracts again, though very probably the extensive black soil plains of the Narbadá valley were so before they were cleared. In corroboration of the

probability of his formerly having extended further down the valley than at present, skulls and horns have been found in the upper gravels of the Narbadá in no way differing, except in superior size, from those of the existing species. Their greater size is not surprising, as they are not larger than the horns still occasionally met with in Assam, where also the average size is stated to be now rapidly diminishing under the attacks of sportsmen.

Two other large representatives of the eastern and western faunas, the wild elephant and the Asiatic lion, also appear to have formerly extended far into this region. In modern times, however, the advance of cultivation and the persecutions of the hunter have driven them both almost out of the country I am describing. The former, in the time of Akber (as is ascertained from Abúl Fuzl's chronicles), ranged as far west as Asirgarh, but is now confined to the extreme east of the province. Sir Thomas Roe, ambassador from James I. to the Court of the Great Mogul, in the 17th century, speaks of the lion as being then common in the Narbadá valley. It is now seldom heard of further east than Rajputána; although a solitary specimen sometimes appears in their old haunts further east. A lion was killed in the Ságar district in 1851, and another a few years ago only a few miles from the Jubbulpúr and Álahabád railway. The hog-deer (*Axis porcinus*), I have never met with in the west of the province, nor is it very numerous even in the east, though very common in the Sál tracts of Northern India. The black partridge (*Francolinus vulgaris*) of Northern India, does not extend into these provinces at all, its place being taken by the painted partridge (*F. pictus*), a very closely allied species. The great imperial pigeon of Southern India does not, I think, cross the Narbadá to the north, though not uncommon in the higher forests to

the south of that river. Scientific research among the minor forms of animal and vegetable life (for which I have had neither the time nor the knowledge), may possibly elicit many confirmations of the law of distribution I have thus roughly stated from observations that have presented themselves to me as a forester and a sportsman.

I need here only indicate another matter in connection with this subject. It has already been stated (p. 22) that a tribe called Korkús, closely connected with what is called the Kolarian stock, which is represented by the Kóls and Sántáls of Bengal, is found embedded among the Gónds of these central hills. Now the commencement of the range of this tribe precisely agrees with the isolated patch of the Sál forest in the Dénwá valley; and their nearest relatives of the same stock are the Kóls of the country to the north of Mandlá, where the Sál forest again commences. Thus we have an outlier of the human tribes of Eastern India existing along with an outlier of its vegetable and animal forms, and the country between the whole three and their nearest congeners occupied by other forms. It is a most singular coincidence; and such must be my excuse for devoting so much of my space to what must be to many an uninteresting discussion. It is worthy, I think, of further investigation.

I have said that at the time the Central Provinces were constituted little was accurately known regarding the forest resources of their vast waste regions. It had, indeed, been suspected that the projectors of the railways had over-calculated the possible supply; but it was little guessed that the exhaustion had gone so far as really proved to be the case. In another place (p. 96) will be found an account of the system of cultivation of the hill-tribes, who had for centu-

ries devastated the forests, by the cutting and burning of their best timber to form ashes to manure their wretched fields of half-wild grain. This was itself almost sufficient to have proved the ruin of the forests, but other causes had not been absent. The most valuable timbers for the railway and other useful purposes are the Teak and the Sál; indeed no others have been found to be really lasting when subjected to the great and sudden variations of an Indian climate. The Teak tree is perhaps the most generally useful in the whole world. In combined strength, lightness, elasticity, and endurance there is none to compare with it. At the present day its uses cover a wider range than those of any other timber, from the handle of an axe in its native forests to the backing of an ironclad in the navy of England. But it is unfortunate also that it is the easiest of all timbers to fell, and makes better firewood and charcoal than any other. It is little wonder, then, that on it almost exclusively, where found, had fallen the weight of the people's requirements, ever since the country was first populated by civilised tribes. I have already said that it is a most difficult tree to reproduce, the seeds being exposed to the extremities of danger before they have the opportunity to germinate. The seedlings also, with their great dried leaves like so many sheets of tinder, are more exposed to injury by fire than those of any other tree. Thus the Teak had everywhere been mercilessly cut down, and had to struggle with the most adverse circumstances to maintain a footing at all. Over great tracts, where it probably once grew, it has been utterly exterminated, giving place to a "shoddy aristocracy" of such worthless species as the *Boswellia*, which no one would dream of cutting, and on which nature has bestowed all the indestructible vitality of a weed. The Teak has but one rare and valuable

property, by means of which it has alone continued to survive at all in many places. However much it may be cut and hacked, if the root only be left, it will continue to throw up a second growth of shoots, which grow in the course of a few years to the size of large poles. This is the sort of timber which was chiefly in demand for the small native houses before the introduction of our great public works; and thus, perhaps, may be explained the apathy with which the native Governments witnessed the destruction of the forests of large timber. A further reference to this matter will be found further on.

The Sál-tree, again, as I have explained, possesses a much stronger vitality as a species than the Teak; though from its liability to heartshake, dry-rot, and boring by insects, as well as its want of all power (like most resinous trees) of throwing out coppice wood, the individual trees are much more perishable than the Teak. It is also not so generally useful, particularly for minor purposes, being hard to fell, of coarse grain, and making very inferior charcoal. It, however, yields a gum-resin valuable in commerce, and this alone has led to a very great destruction of the Sál forests (*vide* p. 364). Again, the Sál tracts were very inaccessible from the populous regions, the nearest point where any great supply could be had for the railway being about 100 miles, by a bad land route. This distance has up to the present time proved an insurmountable obstacle to the general utilisation of the Sál timber on the railway works. The supply of this timber is almost inexhaustible; and a stronger commentary on the commercial value of easy communications could not be found than this, that the railways have found it cheaper to import pine sleepers from Norway, and ironwood from Australia, than to carry the Sál timber growing within a hundred miles

of their line.* There is something wrong where this is the case; and that something is the want of a good road into the Sál regions from the railway at Jubbulpúr, which road should have been made, for many other reasons besides this, long ago (*vide* pp. 376–7).

So much for the Sál forests. As regards the Teak, the supply available for railway uses had already been much reduced from the causes mentioned. A good deal was, however, still left in the remoter forests, where communications were not so easy; and the forests, if properly taken in hand, might have yielded a steady supply of large timber for many years. But unfortunately the grave mistake was now made of announcing that *after a certain time* the forests would be brought under Government management and strictly conserved. This was the death-blow to the remainder of the Teak throughout the northern parts of the tract. The railway contractors, and numerous speculators, foreseeing the value that timber was likely to acquire, owing to railway operations and the closing of the forests, then went into the jungles with bags of rupees in their hands, and spread them broadcast among the wild tribes, with instructions to slay and spare not—to fell every Teak tree larger than a sapling that they could find, and mark them with their peculiar mark. It was only too faithfully done; and scarcely anything that was accessible escaped the axe. Now came delay in the railway works, failure of the contractors, and want of money. The cut timber was abandoned wholesale where it lay. Teak wood is full of oil, and burns readily after lying for a short time. The jungle fires occurred as usual in the long dry grass where the logs

* I would not be understood to say that no Sál timber has been used. A little has; but it has always proved to be a losing speculation in its cost as compared with the imported material.

were lying, and the great majority of them were burnt! The exact amount of the destruction can never be known. For years afterwards, when exploring in the forests, we continued to come on the charred remains of multitudes of these slaughtered innocents, most of them being quite immature and unfit for felling at any time. All that were worth anything were saved by the Forest Department in after years, and the value even of these amounted to many lacs of rupees. They were not a hundredth part of those that were cut, which should probably be reckoned by millions rather than thousands. The injury done to the forests and to the country by this most mistaken measure may never be recovered; certainly it cannot be recovered in less than two generations of the people's life. Such was one of the most material results of the utter ignorance of the administrative officers of that period regarding everything connected with the wilder portions of their charge. The mischief had been completed, and most of the timber speculators had bolted from their creditors, leaving their logs smoking in the forests, before the formation of the Central Provinces, and ere the Forest Department had entered on their labour of exploring and arranging for the protection of what was still worth looking after. Succeeding chapters will give some account of such of these explorations as the writer was engaged in, and of the penalties and pleasures that accompanied the early investigations in these Central Indian forests.

CHAPTER II.

THE NARBADÁ VALLEY.

Start for the Máhádeo Hills—Camp of an Explorer—Travelling in Wild Regions—Capture of a Camel—March down the Narbadá Valley—Gorge in the River—The Marble Rocks—Colonies of Bees—Fatal attack by a Swarm—Their Ferocity—Capture of the Honey—Moonlight Pic-nics—Crocodiles and Fish—Shooting a Crocodile—Cold Weather Marching—Prosperity of the Country—Description of Hindú Races in the Valley—Abundance of Game—Wild-fowl and Snipe—Partridge and Quail Shooting—Adventure with a Snake—The Black Antelope—Methods of Stalking—A Solitary Buck—The Indian Gazelle—Method of Shooting—The Nilgái—The Hunting Leopard—The Wolf—Man-killing Wolves—Destruction of a Pair—"Tinker" and the Wolf—Wild Boars—The People of the Narbadá Valley—Gónd Labourers—The Mhowa Tree—Coal Mines—Snipe Shooting—Hill Forts—Jungle Clearings—Forest Animals.

Early in January, 1862, I received instructions to proceed to the Puchmurree (Pachmarhí) hills—the lofty block I have described as crowning the Sátpúra range to the south of the Narbadá river. There the centre of our operations in that extensive forest region was to be fixed; a permanent forest lodge was to be built in the heart of the country of the Gónds and Korkús, whose interests we were to endeavour to unite with our own in the preservation of the remnants of the fine forests that clothed the slopes of their hills. The country to be explored was, as I have said, little known. But it was sufficiently ascertained that plenty of rough work was before us in overcoming the obstacles presented by the rugged nature of the land and its inhabitants.

The organisation of such a camp as is admissible in such a

wild country, occupies no great time. Since the return of my regiment to quarters a year or so before, I had been almost constantly out on detachment duty, or on shooting excursions; and had added little to the modest properties I found myself possessed of at the close of some three years of camping out in the sub-Himalayan Terae, and subsequent hunting up of skulking rebels over the stony wastes of Bandelkand. There are two ways of travelling in such tracts. The one is to take a full equipment of the large tents and their luxurious furnishings, which render marching about in India, under ordinary circumstances, so little attended by hardship, or even by inconvenience; a corresponding train of servants and baggage animals; and a small army of horse and foot as a protection. Such a camp will perhaps number from fifty to eighty men, and half that number of animals of sorts. An array like this may be allowable or even proper for the civil officer, who has the dignity of his office to maintain, while traversing slowly a populous and well-supplied district of the plains. But the hardship of such an infliction on scattered tribes of poor and resourceless aborigines is sometimes forcibly brought home to the invaders, by finding the country, as they advance, utterly deserted in their track. When I come to describe the extreme poverty in resource of these outlying tracts, this circumstance will perhaps be more easy to realise.

In my shooting excursions I had always marched with only a single small tent, about eight feet square, of the sort called a *Pál*, which is composed of two or three thicknesses of common double-thread country cloth, sewn together, and thrown over a ridge-pole on two uprights, all of the hollow (female) bamboo, which combines strength with lightness in the highest possible degree. It has no doors nor windows, but one of the

gable ends (so to speak) is slit up the middle and fitted with stout laces in case of storms. In ordinary weather this end is kept open to the breeze except at night, and such a tent really affords ample protection and accommodation to the traveller who has no heavy indoor business to do, unless perhaps in the extreme hot weather when no trees are available to pitch it under. It affords room enough for a light folding bedstead of bamboo, a cane stool, a small folding table, a brass basin and stand, and your portmanteau and guns, which is all the furnishing that the mere sportsman or explorer should require. All this, with a good supply of such eatables and drinkables as are not to be had in the wilderness, will go on a good camel; and such had been the extent of my personal requirements during many a rough expedition and hunting trip before the present march. On this occasion I added another tent twelve-feet square, for the servants and a few newly entertained native foresters who were to assist in my explorations; and we were also furnished with a somewhat larger double-roofed tent by Government, which was to be pitched on the hill as a depôt while the contemplated masonry lodge was being erected. To carry these additional impedimenta I entertained four or five of the rough little unshod and unkempt country ponies, called *tattoos*—hardy little villains, whom no amount of work can tire out of immediate readiness for a daily battle royal with teeth and heels the moment they are cast loose from their loads to graze.

My own tent travelled as usual upon a camel. I don't think I would have ventured to take any other camel but "Junglee" into the country I was going to visit. Though the camel is far more at home in rough and difficult country than his ungainly-looking formation would lead one to suppose, there are many passes in the Máhádeo hills where these

animals cannot carry their loads, and some where they could not proceed at all. But "Junglee" was a camel among camels. Of the low, stout, shaggy breed used by the Cabul merchants, who annually during the cold season hawk the dried fruits of their country over the plains of India, I had found and caught him running wild and ownerless among the hills along the Cane river in Bandelkand. When out shooting I was astonished to see him start out of a thicket, and flee like a deer over rocks and ravines; and a rare chase we had —Sepoys, camel men, and camp followers—before we got him into a corner, and bound his sprawling legs and threatening jaws with tent ropes, and led him away between a couple of tame loadsters, to have his nose rebored and be starved into a peaceful return to the uses of his race. He had probably been abandoned by some party of hard-pressed rebels, long enough before I saw him to have become perfectly at home in the jungles, and to have got into first-rate condition. A better beast to scramble over breakneck ground with a heavy load I never saw. Poor Junglee! he afterwards ended his days under the paw of a tiger in the Bètùl forests during one of his periodical relapses into the life of freedom he had tasted in the wilds of Bandelkand.

On the 11th of January, I bade adieu to the pretty little station of Jubbulpúr (Jabalpùr), and to my comrades of the gallant 25th Punjabees. I was really sorry to see the last of the jovial manly company of Sikhs who composed the regiment, one of the first of the force that rose on the ruins of the Bengal army in 1857. But soldiering in India, in time of peace, is truly one of the dreariest of occupations; and I confess I was far from doleful at the prospect of quitting the bondage of parade routine for the free life of the forest; and to think that—

"No barbarous drums shall be my wakening rude;
The jungle cock shall crow my sweet reveillé."

For the first five marches (82 miles), my route lay down the open and well-cultivated valley of the Narbadá. In the first march I went off the highway to pay a last visit to a remarkable scene of beauty, a few miles to the south of the road. What visitor to Jubbulpúr can ever forget the Marble Rocks! In any country, a mighty river pent up into a third of its width, and for a space of two miles or more boiling along deep and sullen between two sheer walls of pure white marble, a hundred feet in height, must form a scene of rare loveliness. But in a bustling, dusty, oriental land, the charm of coolness and quiet belonging to these pure cold rocks, and deep and blue and yet pellucid waters, is almost entrancing. The eye never wearies of the infinite variety of effect produced by the broken and reflected sunlight, now glancing from a pinnacle of snow-white marble reared against the deep blue of the sky as from a point of silver; touching here and there with bright lights the prominences of the middle heights; and again losing itself in the soft bluish greys of their recesses. Still lower down, the bases of the cliffs are almost lost in a hazy shadow, so that it is hard to tell at what point the rocks have melted into the water, from whose depths the same lights in inverse order are reflected as clear as above, but broken into a thousand quivering fragments in the swirl of the pool.

Here and there the white saccharine limestone is seamed by veins of dark green or black volcanic rock; a contrast which only enhances, like a setting of jet, the purity of the surrounding marble. The visitor to these Marble Rocks is poled up through the gorge in a flat-bottomed punt as far as the "fall of smoke," where the Narbadá makes her first plunge into the mighty rift; and there is no difficulty in dreaming away the

GORGE IN THE NARBADÁ. THE MARBLE ROCKS. (From a photograph.)

best part of a day in the contemplation of this marvellous * scene of beauty.

The only drawback to the peaceful enjoyment of the scene is the presence of numerous colonies of bees, whose combs are to be seen attached to most of the jutting ledges of the rocks on the left bank. In cold weather these insects seem to be inoffensive; but from about March to July, anything disturbing or irritating them is almost certain to bring them down in swarms on the offender. Their attack is of a most determined character; and, not long before my present visit, had proved fatal to a gentleman named Boddington, an engineer employed in sounding the river for a projected crossing of the railway. It is believed that, on this occasion, the bees were roused by some of his companions above shooting at the blue rock pigeons that build in the cliffs, on which they attacked furiously this gentleman and a Mr. Armstrong, who were together in a boat below. After a while both gentlemen sought protection by taking to the water. His companion, by taking long dives under water, managed to elude the angry insects and hide in one of the few accessible clefts of the rock; but poor Boddington, although also a practised swimmer, was never lost sight of by the exasperated creatures, and in the end was drowned and carried down the stream. He lies buried above the cliff, under a marble slab cut from the rock beneath which he met his death.

The species of bee that frequents these rocks is, I believe, the common *Bonhrá* (*Apis dorsata*), which attaches its large pendent combs indiscriminately to such rocks and to the boughs of forest trees. There are two other species of bees common in Central India, both much smaller than the Bonhrá,

* A fiend in human shape has perpetrated a pun, in the visitor's book kept at the little rest-house above the cliff, which will here be sufficiently obvious.

and neither of them inclined to act on the offensive. The Bonhrá is of very common occurrence in many forest tracts; and I have myself several times been attacked by them. If attacked, the only resource is to rush into the nearest thick bush, break off a leafy branch, and lay about with it wherever there is an opening. On one occasion, when marching in the Mandlá district, my baggage animals and servants were attacked, and scattered in every direction. Many of the men and animals were so severely stung as to be laid up for several days; and one of the baggage ponies, who could not get rid of his load, was killed on the spot. Our kit was flung about all over the jungle, and was not all collected for several days. On another occasion a valuable elephant was attacked, and driven away into the jungle; and was so panic-stricken that she could not be recovered for days. I have heard of a large force of troops in the Mutiny days being routed, horse and foot, by a swarm of these terrible insects, in the neighbourhood of Lucknow. The honey and wax of this and the other species of bee are regular articles of export from our forests. The people who engage in the business of taking them seem to possess not a little of the art of the bee-master; but they usually resort to more forcible measures, and rob the combs after suffocating the tenants at night with the smoke of torches. Their richest harvests are got from cliffs like this on the Narbadá; and some of their slender ladders of bamboo slips may usually be seen at the Marble Rocks, hanging from the edge of the cliffs over the abyss of water. The honey is inferior in quality to that of the domesticated bee of Europe; and is sometimes even of a poisonous quality, owing to the bees having resorted to some noxious flower. It is easy to procure a comb by slicing it off the face of the rock with a rifle ball; and I once had the gratification of thus operating

on the colonies at the Marble Rocks, from a safe position on the opposite bank, sending several large comb-fulls to a watery grave in the depths below.

The presence of these inhospitable bees renders it a matter for congratulation that the finest impression of the Marble Rocks is to be got "by the pale moonlight." The bees are then quite harmless; and, if the scenery has then lost something in brilliancy of contrast in its lights and shades, it has gained perhaps more in the mysteriousness and solemnity that well befit a spot seemingly created by Deity for an everlasting temple to himself. I am sorry to say that, in the old Jubbulpúr days, we not unfrequently used to desecrate the sanctuary by unholy moonlight pic-nics, in which plenty of champagne, brass bands, and songs that were sometimes very much the reverse of hymns, bore the most prominent part. It was very jolly, though, like most things that are wrong.

A spot so naturally remarkable as the Marble Rocks could not escape sanctification at the hands of the Brahmans. Nothing more completely refutes the accusation of want of taste for natural beauty, so often made against the Hindús, than their almost invariable selection of the most picturesque sites for their religious buildings. Many of the commonest legends of Hindú mythology have, as usual, been transplanted by the local priests to this neighbourhood. The monkey legions of Hanúman here leapt across the chasm on their way to Ceylon; and the celestial elephant of Indra left a mighty footprint in the white rock which is still exhibited to the devout pilgrim. Several picturesque temples dedicated to Síva crown the cliff on the right bank; and by the river's edge is a favourite *ghát* for the launching of the bodies of devout Hindús into the waters of Mother Narbadá. A pleasure party to the rocks is apt to be not a little marred by

a collision with one of these unsavoury objects in mid-stream. In India many a fair scene has its foul belongings and fell inhabitants; and these lovely waters are polluted by ghoul-like turtles, monstrous fishes, and repulsive crocodiles, that batten on the ghastly provender thus provided for them by the pious Hindú.

I believe the common *Magar* of the rivers and tanks of the Central Provinces is identical with that of Upper India (*Crocodilus biporcatus*). The other species of Indian crocodile (*Gavialis Gangeticus*), the long-nosed *Gavìál*, is found in these provinces only in the Máhánadí river, which falls into the Bay of Bengal. The long still reaches of the Narbadá all contain a goodly complement of broad-snouted magars; but, so far as I have observed, they do not attain in our rocky-bottomed rivers nearly to the dimensions I have seen in the slimy tributaries of the Ganges and Jamná. Eight or nine feet in length I take to be here about the limit of the magar's growth. Nor have I ever heard an authentic case of an adult human being having been killed by a crocodile in our rivers. Small animals are frequently carried off, and children sometimes disappear from the ghâts in a suspicious manner. A dog employed in retrieving wild fowl is almost certain to be sooner or later made a meal of by the saurian. The fall of a duck in his neighbourhood generally brings the reptile near the spot; and many a shot bird thus disappears, as if by magic, before the eyes of the gunner. But he will prefer your plump retriever, should he see him nearing the duck as he comes up. A dear old spaniel of mine named "Quail," possessed of an uncontrollable "craze after the deuks," had so many narrow escapes of this sort that I never taught any of the four generations of his descendants I have possessed to retrieve from water.

Although our crocodiles are thus little noxious to life, and may even advance some claims to merit as scavengers, it is not in human nature to refrain from destroying so hideous a reptile when a chance occurs. There is a spot in the gorge of the Marble Rocks where such a chance is seldom wanting. A flat and slightly hollowed rock-shelf at the water's edge invites to noontide repose these unlovely monsters of the deep. Cold weather and a warm sun seem to be the most favourable conditions. The place is on the left bank, some quarter of a mile above the rest-house; and is marked by the droppings of the brutes, and of the aquatic birds that invariably watch over their slumbers. If now, as midday approaches, you will take your rifle and cross over below the house, and get you round to where a cleft in the rocks commands the spot, and if the place has not recently been much disturbed, you will shortly perceive (if he is not there before you) the seeing and smelling apparatus of one or more of the reptiles floating slowly in from mid-stream, like two bungs out of a cask. Nothing but experience will enable you to distinguish them at this distance from the pieces of drift wood always floating down the stream, so marvellously does nature protect even the most loathsome of her productions. The crocodile approaches the projected scene of his siesta with immense caution. Long and keenly he reconnoitres it from a distance; and if he has any suspicions he will sink and rise again and again during his approach. If not he will descend after the first good look, and then swim right in under water; and the next thing you will see of him will be his rugged head lying on the ledge of rock below you, and a pair of fishy eyes slowly revolving in a last survey of the neighbourhood. This done, he will heave his huge bulk and serrated tail sideways out of the water, and lie extended along the edge, ready to "whammle" in again

on the slightest alarm. You will aim at him in the centre of the neck, just where it joins the head; and if you then shoot plumb-centre, but not otherwise, he will never stir. A different shot might eventually perhaps be fatal; but this alone will prevent his reaching the water and escaping, to float up in a day or two a sickening mass of corruption. Nothing possesses such a frightful, "ancient fish-like smell" as a crocodile that has been dead for even a few hours. You can seldom get near enough to one of these creatures in a boat to kill him with certainty; and the only certain plans are to watch for them at noon as I have described, or to bait with a noisy puppy dog in the evening, at which time they appear to be most on the feed.

Few things are more enjoyable than marching along during the cold season in a rich open country like the Narbadá valley with a well appointed camp, and plenty of leisure to linger over the numerous objects of interest or amusement presented by such a tract. Very little of this sort of thing fell in the way of the forest officers of those days, however. Our work lay in the depths of distant forests, or at most in the half-reclaimed frontier belt lying between the hills and the plains, where timber transactions generally took place, and the chief depôts for forest produce had been established. When by chance our direct route from forest to forest led across such an open region, our movements were as rapid as man and beast could make them; and at the earliest possible moment we hurried again from the face of civilization, like ghosts at cock-crow, to bury ourselves again in the depths of the wilderness. In after years, when employed in revenue work in a populous district, I saw the reverse of the picture. Marching by fair roads and easy stages, with a duplicate set of canvas houses (for such our large Indian tents really are), one of which goes

on over-night and is pitched ready for your arrival in the morning, in the deep shade of some mango grove, near a populous village which supplies all your wants; starting after the morning cup of hot coffee to ride slowly along through green fields and grassy plains; and looking on the forest-covered hills on the blue horizon only as an agreeable vanishing point in the landscape, or as unpleasantly complicating the questions of liquor excise and police administration! It is amazing what a difference the point of view makes. The man who has dwelt for years among the forests, and their simple wild inhabitants, will regard nearly every question that arises in a wholly different light from him whose experience has lain only among the corn fields of the plains, and their tame and settled tillers. And each of them will probably arrive at a conclusion as little comprehending the whole bearings of the question as the other.

The climate of Central India in the cold season, that is, from November to March, is almost perfect for the life of combined outdoor exercise and indoor occupation which forms the healthiest sort of existence in India. The midday sun, if a little hot for hard work in the open air, is just sufficient to make the temperature under canvas delightful, while the mornings and evenings are cool and bracing, and the nights cold enough to make several blankets a necessity. In January ice will generally be found on water that has been exposed all night. Nothing can in my opinion exceed the exhilarating effect of a march at such a season, with pleasant companions, through a country teeming with interest in its scenery, its people, and its natural productions, such as is this region of the Narbadá valley.

Of the history of the country and its people something has been given in the last chapter. The valley was not long ago—

not long, that is, in the history of countries,—a hunting ground of the Gónds and other wild tribes who are now chiefly confined to the hills which surround it. At most it could have been but scantily patched by their rude tillage before the arrival of the Hindú races, who have cleared its forests, driven the wild elephant that roamed through them to the far east, and covered its black soil with an unbroken stretch of wheat cultivation that strikes every visitor with admiration. In less than three centuries this has been done; and yet it is the custom to say that India is an unprogressive country, that she has been standing still since the beginning of history! Everything shows that this country is still in its very youth. The people strong-limbed and healthy, rejoicing in the rude abundance that falls to the lot of energetic races tilling an almost virgin soil. Tilling it roughly, it is true, getting from it nothing approaching to the quantity of produce extracted by the denser populations of long-reclaimed tracts from much inferior soils; but still tilling it in the way which is the most profitable to a scanty population with a poor accumulation of wealth and stock. The example of all new countries with much available land, even when, as in America, all the resources of capital and machinery are available, shows that a comparatively rough culture of a large area is more remunerative than the higher tillage of a smaller area; and this alone is the cause of the rude state of agriculture still observed in this and many other parts of India. This undoubted fact is however continually overlooked by those who declaim against the barbarous processes of Indian agriculture, or cry aloud for the imposition in these Central Provinces of a land-tax as heavy *per acre* as that received from the old countries in Northern and Western India. The time is probably not far distant, now that this land-locked valley has been tapped by

the iron road, when population will flow in from denser peopled regions; and the "struggle for life," of which high land-rents are by some the much-wished-for result, will commence among its people; probably leading to the high rate of produce per acre, the high rents, the enrichment of the few and the pauperization of the many, which are the peculiar happiness of "old countries." At present, plenty for all is the rule, poverty the very rare exception. Well-built houses, well-stocked cattle yards, and a general air of comfort and happiness, cannot fail to arrest the attention in Hindú villages. It is true that the people of the soil, those of the Gónds who have preferred to stay and serve a Hindú master to a retreat to the hills, are poorly clad and housed, living like outcasts beyond the limits of the Hindú quarter; but they too are at least sufficiently fed; and nothing but their own innate apathy and vice prevents them from receiving a greater share of the surrounding plenty. This is a matter, however, which will come to be discussed further on.

As the influence on the aborigines in the past, and at the present time, of their contact with these invading Hindú races will afterwards form matter of consideration, it is important to understand of what material these Hindú races themselves are really composed. They have generally been comprehended in the category of "Aryan," as distinguished from the "Turanian" peoples who are believed to have preceded the fair-complexioned Aryan invaders from Upper Asia in the occupation of Hindostan, and among whom are included the remnants of wild tribes still found in the hills. But it needs but little observation of these Hindú races to perceive that they themselves have long been subjected to some influence which has greatly modified the original high Aryan type—a type which includes the noblest races of mankind; the Caucasian

of Europe, the Persian of high Asia, and the Sanscrit-speaking "fair-skinned" people who entered India from the north uncalculated ages ago. That influence cannot have been one of climate only, which would have affected all their descendants equally; whereas we see existing the greatest range of diversity, from the light-coloured, noble-featured Brahman of the extreme north-west to the black and negro-like chamar or pariah of the east and south. Everything shows that the cause has been a mingling of the immigrant race with the inferior Tauranian tribes whom they found occupying the soil before them. To judge from physical appearance, few but the highest castes of Northern India can have any claim to purity of Aryan blood; and the admixture of indigenous blood, as indicated by colour and feature, appears to be greater and greater the further we proceed from the seat of the original Aryan settlements in the north-west. It can scarcely be doubted then that the modern Hindús are a composite race, resulting from the absorption of a wave of Aryanism in a great ocean of peoples of a far inferior type, the type in fact represented by such of them as have still remained undiluted in their inaccessible hills. The force of the wave diminished as it proceeded; and the gradations in the extent of its influence are now so subtle that it is hard to say where the line should be drawn to denote a preponderance of the one element over the other. The difficulty is further increased by the circumstance that the Aryan language, customs, and beliefs, appear to have been carried far beyond any perceptible influence of the Aryan blood, so that whole races who show little or nothing of the latter have become thoroughly imbued with the former.

Not, however, without notable modification have the Aryan language, religion, and customs, thus permeated the masses of

the inferior races. In language, while the tongue of the most northern high-caste races has changed from the classical Sanscrit scarcely more than was inevitable from the wear and tear of use through such long ages, that spoken by the masses of lower physical type has suffered so radical an alteration that a large proportion of its vocables, in some parts as much as half, are not traceable to Sanscrit at all; while in Southern India, where the aboriginal type has been little modified, purely aboriginal languages, unconnected with Sanscrit, are still spoken. Still greater has been the effect on the Aryan religion of contact with these lower races. The gods of the primitive Aryans have almost disappeared from practical recognition. The backbone of the original system survives in its priesthood and ceremonial, just as the backbone of the language survives in the grammatical forms of the invaders. But, as the vocables of the tongue have frequently been adopted from the aborigines, so probably have the popular gods of the pantheon been largely drawn from aboriginal sources. No religious system possesses such facility for proselytizing as a polytheism; and history shows that when two such systems meet, there is nothing to stand in the way of their coalescing but the rivalry of their priests. Here there probably was no such rivalry. To judge from those which remain, the aboriginal tribes had no regular priesthood, and no systematic mythology. They had only inchoate gods, without a history, and numerous as the natural objects whose forces they represented. And when the tribes accepted the Hindú priest and his ceremonial, the priest found no difficulty in admitting to his accommodating pantheon a sufficient number of these to satisfy the conscience of the aboriginal Pantheist. The leading deities in the existing Hindú pantheon, Sivá and Vishnú, were wholly unknown

to the early Aryans; and even they themselves are at the present day scarcely worshipped at all, in their radical forms, by the great body of the people, but only in the form of mythological consorts and sons, and incarnations in many forms, most of which are probably adaptations of the gods and heroes of the races thus absorbed within the accommodating pale of Hindúism. Nor is this all. Even such secondary forms of the regular gods of the Brahmans receive but little of the real devotion of the people, which is paid rather to tribal and village deities, unheard of in recognised mythology, and to the Lares and Penates of the householder. And these, the Brahman priest, who is paid for his services, has no scruple in recognising as orthodox. Superficial inquirers have quoted Hindúism as a faith which cannot admit of a proselyte: but nothing could be more completely the reverse of the truth. Anything in the way of new gods may be brought by new worshippers within the pale of orthodoxy, provided only that they agree to accept the dominion of the Brahman priest, together with the caste rules and ceremonial by means of which he exercises his power.

It was then with a race thus already modified, and with a social and religious system which had thus already engulfed the great mass of the indigenous nations of India, and which was still ready to absorb in a similar manner any number more of them, that the aborigines of Central India came in contact. What has been the result will be discussed in a future portion of this work.

In a new country like this, few objects of antiquarian interest attract the attention of the traveller. Allusion has already been made to the traces of isolated settlements of Aryans in the country, who had all been swept away again, or had been absorbed in the indigenous element surrounding

them, before the true history of the country opens; and a few shapeless ruins still remain to mark the sites of some of these settlements "in the unremembered ages." Generally, however, even the religious edifices, which in the East seem to outlast all others, will be found to be of very modern date, and of little pretension to interest. They will frequently be met with standing on the embankment of some water tank, covered with the lotus in full bloom, and shaded by great trees of mango, tamarind, and fig. Very often the camp will be pitched alongside of them, for the sake of the fine shade; and the wildfowl and snipe that frequent the tanks will probably form an attraction, to the sportsman at least, superior to the allurements of such poor antiquities.

Snipe and wildfowl begin to arrive in these central regions of India, voyaging from the frozen wilds of Central Asia, early in October; and, before the end of November, every piece of water and swampy hollow affords its contingent to the gun. The common teal,* and the whistling teal,† are the most numerous as well as the first to make their appearance. The lovely blue-winged teal‡ is scarcely less common; and of larger ducks, the red-headed pochard,‖ the wigeon,§ the pintail,¶ and the gadwall,** are found throughout the winter on nearly every tank of tolerable size. On the main rivers, and on the larger reservoirs such as those of Bhandára and Lachorá in Nimar, which, though owing their existence to the hand of man (the giants of past days, who knew the requirements of India better than their successors), yet approach the dignity of lakes, many other species of wild fowl will be found, including that king of ducks the mallard,†† the common

* *Querquedula crecca.*
† *Dendrocygna awsuree.*
‡ *Q. circia.*
‖ *Anthia ferina.*
§ *Mareca penelope.*
¶ *Dafila acuta.*
** *Chandelasmus streperus.*
†† *Anas boschas.*

grey goose,* and the black-backed goose.† The latter species is extremely common; the others, which are much superior for the table, are comparatively infrequent. Numerous wading birds, storks, herons, and cranes, haunt every pool and marsh. Few of these offer much temptation to the sportsman, except the Demoiselle crane,‡ generally known as the Coolen, which is much sought after, and is therefore difficult to approach. Few extensive wheat or *gram* fields in the Narbadá valley will be found at this season without a flock of these delicious birds stalking across it in the morning and evening grazing on the young shoots.

If encamped in the neighbourhood of a river or swamp, the traveller will probably be aroused at daybreak by the quavering and sonorous call of the giant Sárus crane,§ a bird revered by the Hindús as a type of conjugal affection. They are nearly always seen in pairs, and, should one of them be shot by the ruthless gunner, the companion bird will return again and again to the spot, to hover and lament over its slain friend in a manner that generally prevails on the hardest hearted to grant immunity to the race for ever after. A contrast to this happy union of lovers is found by the Hindú in the Braminy ducks,‖ which also associate in pairs, but, by a cruel fate, are compelled to pass their nights on the opposite banks of a stream, wailing forth their unavailing love in the melancholy "Chukwa, chukwi," which few travellers by the rivers of India have failed to hear in the dusk of the evening. Their unfitness for the table, probably more than the Hindú adage against their slaughter, protects them from the gun.

Of other winged game, the grey quail—best of Indian

* *Anser cinereus.*
† *A. melanonotus.*
‡ *Anthropoides virgo.*
§ *Grus antigone.*
‖ *Casarca rubila.*

game birds, in my opinion—will be found in good numbers in most grain fields. I have never seen them here in such swarms as in some parts of upper India, where eighty or a hundred brace may be bagged in a day; but the sport is none the worse for that. Twenty brace is a first-rate bag in Central India; and generally the sportsman has to be contented with much less. The common grey partridge, which closely resembles in appearance the English bird, abounds in many places. It hugs the vicinity of villages, and feeds foully. I have seen a covey of them run out of the carcass of a dead camel, and speed across the plain like so many hares. These nasty habits, and its skulking nature, much belie its appearance as a bird of game. Far different is the gallant painted partridge,* which here takes the place of the black partridge † of upper India. I have seen the latter in Bandélkand; but I am positive that it nowhere occurs in the Central Provinces. The appearance of the two species is so alike, and their habits are so identical, that assertions to the contrary have no doubt arisen from mistake. No game bird could afford more perfect shooting than the painted partridge. Of handsome plumage, and excellent on the table, his habits in the field admirably adapt him for the purposes of the gun. He frequents the outskirts of cultivation, in spots where bushes and grass-cover fringe the edge of a stream, for he seems to be very impatient of thirst. The proximity of some sort of jungle seems to be as necessary as the neighbourhood of crops. Morning and evening small coveys or pairs of them will be found out feeding in the stubble of the cut autumn crops, that latest reaped being the most likely find. On being disturbed they seldom run farther than to the edge of the nearest cover, from which, on being flushed, they rise like

* *Francolinus pictus.* † *F. vulgaris.*

rockets, with a great *whirr*, straight up for twenty or thirty yards, and then sail away over the top of the cover to a distance of a few hundred yards; this time plumping into the middle of the cover, from which it is not so easy to raise them again. This beautiful bird is most common in the extreme west of the Central Provinces, and in good spots a bag of ten to fifteen brace to each gun may be made in Nimár and the Taptí valley.

The most common way of shooting quail and partridges is by beating them out with a line of men; but it is a poor sport compared to shooting them over dogs. I have used both pointers and spaniels in this sport. The former secure the best of shooting in the early morning and late in the evening, while the birds are out of cover and the scent good, and four hours' shooting may thus be had in the day. But a team of lusty spaniels is, I think, on the whole preferable, as they are useful also for many sorts of cover shooting where pointers could not be worked. They also keep their health better, and degenerate less in breeding than any other imported dog, which is probably due to their descent from a race originated in a warm climate. They make the best of all companions, and are not so liable to "come to grief" in many ways as larger dogs. Fresh imported blood is however required, at least once in every two generations, to keep all English sporting dogs up to their best in India. The spaniels should either be large Clumbers, or of the heavy Sussex breed, as a small dog like a cocker cannot penetrate the jungle cover. The noble Clumber, otherwise faultless, has the fault for this particular purpose of giving no tongue on game: I commenced the breed, which I maintained for twelve years in India, with a strain of pure Clumber in the never-to-be-forgotten "Quail"—a dog that for looks and quality surpassed anything of the breed

I can now discover in England. All his descendants were more or less crossed with Sussex or cocker blood; but none of them ever gave tongue till the fourth generation, when symptoms of it began to appear. On the whole, then, I think I would prefer the heavy Sussex breed.

On one occasion the whole of my spaniels were very nearly being "wiped out" by one of a class of accidents that must be looked for in India. I was shooting quail in a grainfield near Jubbulpúr, with "Quail," "Snipe," "Nell," and "Jess," when on a sudden they all began to jump violently about, snapping at what seemed to me to be a large rat. But coming nearer I made out that it was a huge cobra, erect on his coil, and striking right and left at the dogs. I lost no time in pelting them off with clods of earth, and then cut the brute's head off with a charge of shot; when I found that the snake had been in the act of swallowing a rat, of which the hind legs and tail were protruding from his jaws, so that his repeated lunges at the dogs had fortunately been harmless. All these spaniels were famous ratters, and had no doubt been attracted by the cobra's mouthful, for they generally had, like all dogs of any experience in India, a wholesome dread of the snake tribe. I never lost any of these dogs by an accident, though exposed to all the dangers of panthers, hyenas, wolves, snakes, and crocodiles; and all of them lived to a good age, in excellent health. As with men, English dogs keep healthy enough if properly treated in accordance with the climate.

Of larger game, the principal animal met with in the settled parts is the black antelope,* which has probably followed the clearings made by the immigrant races. The aversion of this animal to thick uncleared jungle has made it, in the Hindú sacred literature, a type of the Aryan pale, of the land fitted

* *Antelope cervicapra.*

for the occupation of the fair-skinned races; and the appropriate seat of the devotee is still upon its black and white skin. It is too well known to require any minute description. Suffice it to say, that not even in Africa—the land of antelopes—is there any species which surpasses the "black buck" in loveliness or grace. In Central India, although this antelope attains the full size of body, the horns of the buck (the female is hornless and of a fawn colour) rarely exceed a length of 22 inches. I have shot one with horns 24½ inches, and seen a pair that measured 26 inches. The longest horns are probably attained in Gújerát, and about Bhurtpúr in Northern India. In all the corn districts of Central India it is found in considerable herds, and does much damage to the young crops. I have seen herds in the Ságar country, immediately after the mutiny of 1857, when they were little molested, which must have numbered a thousand or more individuals. A tolerable shot could at that time kill almost any number he chose. In most cultivated districts, tracts of the poorer land are kept under grass for cattle-grazing, &c., and these preserves are generally the favourite mid-day resorts and the breeding-grounds of the antelopes. Thence in the evening they troop out in squadrons on to the cultivated lands in the vicinity; and all the night long continue grazing on the tender wheat shoots, returning in the grey of the morning to their safe retreat. Many will, however, remain in the fields the whole day, sleeping and grazing at intervals, unless driven off by the cultivators. In such places the voices of the watchers in the fields will be heard in the still night shouting continuously at the antelopes; but they seldom succeed in effecting more than to move them about from field to field, doing more damage probably than if they were left alone, for a buck killed in the morning will always be found filled nearly to bursting

with the green food. Although many of them are shot by the village shikarís at night, and more snared and netted by the professional hunters called Párdís (who use a trained bullock in stalking round the herds to screen their movements), the resources of the natives are altogether insufficient, in a country favourable to them, to keep down the numbers of these prolific and wary creatures; and it is a perfect godsend to them when the European sportsman hits on their neighbourhood as a hunting-ground.

There are many ways of circumventing them. Living quite in the open, they rely principally on the sense of sight for protection, although at times warned also by their power of smell. One way is to drive up to them in one of the bullock carts commonly used in agriculture. The native shikarí often gets near them by creeping up behind a screen of leaves which he works before him. Where they have not been much harassed the European sportsman, in sad-coloured garments, can usually stalk in on them when passing between the grass plains and the crops. In the very early morning, if a station be taken up in their usual route, they are nearly sure to come within shot, the grunting of the bucks warning the sportsman of their approach some time before they emerge from the darkness. One of the most successful and interesting plans is to ride a steady shooting horse nearly up to the herd. When within say four hundred yards, slip off and walk on the off side of the horse in such a direction as will lead past the herd within shot, if possible on the down-wind side. If they have been so shot at in this way as to be shy of the horse, take a groom and pass them further off; and when a convenient bush or hillock intervenes drop behind, and let the man lead the horse on, passing well clear of the herd. They will probably be so intent on watching them out of the way, that you

will generally be able to creep in on them without much difficulty. Shots at antelope in populous districts are seldom got much under 150 yards now-a-days, which is however near enough for modern rifles to make sure work. One great advantage of employing a horse in stalking is that it will often enable you to follow and spear a wounded buck which might otherwise escape. If you have a brace of good greyhounds in the distance ready to slip, the chances will be still better. A wounded buck often gives a beautiful run with greyhounds, which have never been known to catch an untouched and perfect antelope on fair hard ground, though under conditions unduly favourable to the dogs they have sometimes done so. A shooting horse, like several which I have possessed, who is quite steady under fire, does not need to be tied, and will come to call, is a perfect treasure for many sorts of sport in India. As in all good qualities, the Arab is the most likely to develope such a character; but most horses are capable of being taught something of the business. Should neither horse nor hounds be at hand, a wounded buck should not be followed up too quickly. If left to himself he will probably lie down in the first cover he comes to; and by watching the line he takes you may often follow up and secure him.

In upper India they are frequently shot by approaching them on a riding camel. The more bells and gay trappings he has on him the better, as the antelope on this plan fall victims to their curiosity and amazement. I brought down to Central India with me a trained camel, with which I had thus bewildered many an antelope into rifle distance; but after getting some dangerous tumbles owing to the yawning cracks that form in the black soil in these provinces after the rains, I had to abandon the camel as a shooting vehicle. As a sport antelope-shooting palls upon the taste. There is too

much of it, and it lacks variety. So I should think also would be the case with much of the African sport we read of. To the beginner in Indian sport, however, there is no pursuit more fascinating. The game being nearly always within sight, the excitement is maintained throughout the day's sport. Simple as it seems, it takes a good man and a good rifle to make much of a bag when the antelope have been much disturbed. The old hand is apt to smile at the enthusiasm of the "griff" when he dilates on the glories of antelope-stalking; but the time was when he too passed through the stage at which the acquisition of a particular long spiral pair of horns was more to him than the wealth of all the Indies, and when nothing impressed him so profoundly with the vanity of all human affairs as the miss of "a few inches" under or over, which so frequently terminated the weary stalk. Perhaps I may be allowed to quote a description of the pursuit of a master buck, written many years ago, when I myself was in the throes of the "buck fever."

"I had frequently seen in my rambles over the antelope plains a more than ordinarily magnificent coal-black buck. I had watched him for hours through my 'Dollond,' but my most laborious attempts to reach him by stalking had as yet proved futile. His horns were perfection, of great size, well set on, twisted and knotted like the gnarled branch of an old oak tree. As the sun glanced on his sable coat, it shone like that of a racehorse fit to run for the Two Thousand Guinea stakes—in fact, he was the *beau ideal* of a perfect black buck. Of course, the more difficult the task appeared, the more determined was I that these superb horns should be mine, and that in future I would disregard every buck except the one. He was constantly attended by two does, to whom he confidently entrusted the duty of watching over his per-

sonal safety—and faithful sentinels they were. They seemed to relieve each other with the precision of sentries, and clever indeed would be the stalker who could approach within many hundred paces ere the warning hiss of the watchful doe aroused the grand signior from his siesta. It was then grand to see the majestic air of the buck, as, after stretching his graceful limbs, he slowly paced towards the object of his suspicion, still too far distant to cause him any alarm. Now he stops, and, tossing his nostrils in the air, snuffs the breeze that might convey to his delicate sense the human taint. Now he lazily crops a blade or two of grass, or scientifically whisks a fly from his glossy haunch with the tip of his horn; anon he saunters up to one of his partners, and seems to take counsel regarding the state of affairs. Again, as some movement of the distant figure catches his eye, his sudden wheel and prolonged gaze show that, despite his careless mien, not for a moment has he lost sight of his well-known foe. But soon the does begin to take real alarm; and after fidgeting round their lord, as if to apprise him of the full extent of the danger, trot off together towards some other haunt. Now they halt a moment, and look round appealingly to the buck, and again with feigned consternation start off at a gallop, every now and then taking imaginary ten-barred gates in their stride. At last the buck, after remaining behind a decent time to maintain his character for superior courage, follows them at a pace that mocks the efforts of every animal on the face of the earth but one—the hunting leopard.

"Such was the invariable result of my best efforts for upwards of a week. I would not risk a long shot, as it might drive him for ever from that part of the country. His favourite haunt was a wide grassy plain, intersected here and there by dry watercourses, up which I had many a weary

crawl, *ventre à terre*. I soon found out his usual feeding and drinking places; and observed that to reach the latter he almost daily crossed a deepish dry nullah about the same place. This struck me as affording the means of circumventing him, so I took up my position in the nullah; but as luck would have it *my* buck took his water in some other direction for the next two days. Many other herds of antelope constantly passed within easy shot of where I was ensconced; but not until I was almost giving up hope on the third day, and was taking a last sweep of the plain with my binocular, did the well-known form of the master buck greet my vision, as he slowly wound his way with his two inseparable companions towards the pool to which he had watched so many of his species passing and re-passing in safety.

"The wind was favourable, and the buck came steadily on till he arrived within a long rifle shot of where I was posted. Here he suddenly threw up his head, and, after standing at gaze for a few moments, turned sharp to the left and started off at a canter for a pass in the nullah, about a quarter of a mile from where I was; I knew he could neither have seen nor smelt me, and was at a loss to account for his sudden panic till, on turning round in disgust, there was the cause behind me, in the shape of a small parcel of does, which had evidently been returning from the water, but, having discovered my unprotected rear, were now pulled up in a body, and staring at me with an air which had telegraphed the state of affairs to the old buck in an unmistakable manner. I felt very much inclined to sacrifice one of the inquisitive does to my just wrath, but preferred the chance of a running shot at the buck; so off I started at a crouching run (somewhat trying to the small of the back) up the bed of the nullah, in the hopes that the buck might have pulled up ere he crossed,

and would still afford me a shot. Nor was I mistaken, for, on turning a bend of the tortuous nullah, there he stood broadside on, in all his magnificence, not eighty yards from my rifle; but, alas! who could shoot after a run, almost on all fours, of some 500 yards or so? When I attempted to bring the fine sight to bear on his shoulder, my hand trembled like an aspen leaf, and the sight described figures of eight all over his body. There was no help for it, however: he was moving away, and I might never have such another chance. So, almost in despair, I fired. I was not surprised to see the ball raise the dust a hundred yards or so on his further side, and with a tremendous bound of, I fear to say how many yards, straight in the air, away went the buck like an arrow from the bow. In for a penny, in for a pound! once fired at, I might as well have the other shot; so stepping from my cramped position, I held my breath as I tried to cover his fleeting figure with the second barrel. He had gained at least 150 yards ere I touched the trigger, but the ball sped true, and over rolled the buck in a cloud of dust. Short was my triumph, however, for ere I had well taken the rifle from my shoulder he had regained his feet, and was off with hardly diminished speed. It is very rare that an antelope thus suddenly rolled over does not succeed in regaining his legs. Their vital power is immense, and nothing but a brain shot or broken spine will tumble them over for good on the spot. When shot in the heart they generally run some fifty yards and then fall dead, and I much prefer to see an antelope go off thus, with the peculiar gait well known to experienced shots as the forerunner of a speedy dissolution, than to see even the prettiest somersault follow the striking of the ball.

"In the present instance I watched the antelope almost to the verge of the horizon. Now and then he slackened his

pace for a few seconds, and looked round at his wounded flanks, and then, as if remembering that he had not yet put sufficient distance between him and the fatal spot, he would again start forward with renewed energy. The two does, as is generally the case when the buck is wounded, had gone off in a different direction; and were now standing on the plain, a few hundred paces from where I stood, gazing wistfully from me to their wounded lord. Such are the scenes that touch the heart of even the hardest deer-stalker, and for a moment I almost wished my right hand had been cut off ere I pulled trigger on this the loveliest of God's creatures.

"When he dwindled before the naked eye till he seemed as a black speck on the far horizon, I still continued to watch him through my glass, in the hope that he might lie down when he thought himself concealed, in which case I might steal in and end his troubles by another shot. Suddenly I saw him swerve from his course, and start off in another direction at full speed. Almost at the same instant a puff of smoke issued from a small bush on the plain—the buck staggered and fell, and many seconds afterwards, the faint report of a gunshot reached my ears."

The person who came to my aid in so timely a fashion was a native sportsman, whom I then saw for the first time. He was more like the professional hunter of the American backwoods than any other native of India I have ever met. His short trousers and hunting-shirt of Mhowa green displayed sinewy limbs and throat of a clear red brown, little darker than the colour of a sun-burnt European. An upright carriage and light springy step marked him out as a roamer of the forests from youth upwards; and the English double-barrelled gun, and workman-like appointments of yellow sámbar leather, looked like the genuine sportsman I soon

found him to be. Many a glorious day did I afterwards pass with him in the pursuit of nobler game than black bucks.

The *chikárá*, or Indian gazelle,* is another antelope very common in Central India. It is called often the "ravine deer" by sportsmen; and, as regards the first part of the name, is so far well denoted. Its favourite haunts are the banks of the shallow ravines that often intersect the plain country in the neighbourhood of rivers, and seam the slopes of the higher eminences rising out of the great central table-land. These are generally thinly clothed with low thorny bushes, on the young shoots and pods of which it browses like the domestic goat. Of course it is wrong to call it a "deer," which term properly belongs only to the solid-horned *Cervidæ*. Considerably smaller than the black antelope, the gazelle also differs much from it in habits. It prefers low jungle to the open plain; and trusts more to its watchfulness and activity than to speed, which however it also possesses in a high degree. It is very rare to catch a gazelle, or still more a herd of them, off their guard; and it is surprising how, on the least alarm, the little creatures manage to disappear as if by magic. They have probably just hopped into the bottom of a ravine, sped along it like lightning for about a hundred yards, and are regarding you, intent and motionless, from behind the straggling bushes on the next rising ground. Should you follow them up they will probably repeat the same manœuvre, but this time putting three or four ravines between you and them instead of one. They also resort to the cultivation to feed, though not so regularly as the black antelope; and their numbers are not sufficient to do any notable damage. In the morning they may often be found picking their way back to the network of ravines where they stay during the

* *Gazella Bennettii.*

day. Should you disturb them at this time, they will most likely seek their cover at top speed; and what that amounts to will amaze you if you let slip a greyhound at them. *Chikárá* have not yet learned the range of the modern "Express" rifle; and consequently they still often let one get almost within the killing distance of the old weapon, and are easily knocked over with the "Express." The depth of their slender bodies is so small, that a bullet must be planted in a space little wider than a hand's-breadth to make sure of stopping them. Shots are generally got at a distance of from 100 to 150 yards; and the difficulty of such fine shooting at uncertain distances, together with their peculiar "dodginess" in keeping out of sight, makes the stalking of them a more difficult, and I think more interesting, sport than the pursuit of the larger antelope. Their art has little variety in it however; and there is something to the experienced eye in the features of the ground which will almost infallibly tell whereabouts one is likely to have stopped after his first disappearance. Unless they have been seen to go clean away, they should always be followed up on the chance of being found again.

The last of the antelopes met with in the open country is the Nílgáe,* the male of which, called a "blue bull," will stand about 13½ hands high at the shoulder. The female is a good deal smaller, and of a fawn colour. Their habitat is on the lower hills that border and intersect the plains, and also on the plains themselves wherever grass and bushes afford sufficient cover. The old sites of deserted villages and cultivation, unfortunately so common, which are usually covered with long grass and a low bushy growth of Palás and Jujube trees,† are seldom without a herd of nílgáe. They are never

* *Portax pictus.* † *Butea frondosa, Zizyphus Jujuba.*

found very far from cultivation, which they visit regularly every night. When little fired at, the blue bull is very easily approached and shot. It is very poor eating, and affords no trophy worth taking away, so that it is not much sought after by the sportsman. The beginner, however, who is steadying his nerves, or the inventor who wants a substantial target for a new projectile, will find them very accessible and convenient. The blue bull is an awkward, lumbering, stupid brute; and it is highly ludicrous to observe the air of self-satisfaction with which a blockhead of a bull, who has allowed you to walk up within fifty yards of him, will blunder off to the other side of a nálá, then turn round and stand still within easy range of your rifle, and look as if he thought himself a very clever fellow indeed for so thoroughly outwitting you. He is a favourite quarry with the unenterprising Mahomedan gentleman. The antelope his style of dress and powers of locomotion do not allow him to approach; the rugged ground and thorny underwood prohibit his succeeding with the forest deer; the tiger he likes not the look of, and the pig he may not touch; so he gets him into a bullock cart, and is driven within a few paces of an unsuspecting blue bull, whose carcase, when shot and duly cut in the throat after the rules of his faith, makes for him the beef which his soul loveth. Awkward and inactive as he looks, however, the blue bull when fairly pushed to his speed will give a good horse as much as he can do to overhaul him. It is in vain to attempt it in or near the jungle; but if you can succeed in getting at him when he has a mile or two to go across the open plain, a real good run may be had with the spear. I have never heard of a blue bull attempting to charge when brought to bay, in which respect therefore the sport of riding them is inferior to pig-sticking.

Such are the principal animals which form the objects of the sportsman's pursuit in the open country. As, however, in a state of nature, there never are herbivorous creatures without their attendant carnivora to form a check and counterbalance to them, so we find various natural enemies attendant on the herds of antelope and nílgáe, whose acquaintance the sportsman will occasionally make. The nílgáe is a favourite prey of the tiger and the panther. But it is in the low hills where he retires during the day, rather than in the plains where he feeds at night, that he meets these relentless foes; and the chief carnivorous creatures of the open country are the hunting leopard,* the wolf,† and the jackal.‡

I have several times come across and shot the hunting leopard when after antelope; but they cannot be called common in this part of India. They live mostly in the low isolated rocky eminences called *Torias*, that rise here and there like islets in the middle of the plains, and on the central plateau, and which are frequently surrounded by grassy plains where they hunt their prey. They are of a retiring and inoffensive disposition, never coming near dwellings, or attacking domesticated animals, like the leopard and panther; and I never heard of their showing any sport when pursued. Their manner of catching the antelope, by a union of cat-like stealth of approach and unparalleled velocity of attack, has often been described. A few are kept tame by the wealthier natives, but more I think for show than real use in hunting.

The common jackal, always ready for food of any description, seldom fails to make a meal of any wounded animal, and I have seen a small gang of them pursue a wounded antelope I had just fired at. The fawns of the antelope and gazelle frequently become their victims.

* *F. jubata.* † *C. pallipes.* ‡ *C. aureus.*

The wolf is extremely common in the northern parts of the province; frequenting the same sort of ground as the antelope and chikárá. I have very seldom met with them in forest tracts; and I think that in India they are clearly a plain-loving species. They unite in parties of five or six to hunt; the latter being the largest number I have ever seen together. More generally they are found singly or in couples. I have several times observed them in the act of hunting the antelope; their method being to steal in on all sides of a detached party of does and fawns, and trust to a united rush to capture one or more of them before they attain their speed. Fast as the wolf is (as you will learn if you try to ride him down), I do not believe he is capable of running down an antelope in a fair hunt, though doubtless old or injured animals are thus killed by him. When game is not to be had, the wolf seldom fails to get a meal in the neighbourhood of villages, in the shape of a dog or a goat. They are deadly foes to the former; and will stand outside a village or the travellers' camp at night, and howl until some inexperienced cur sallies forth to reply, when the lot of that cur will probably be to return no more. Unfortunately the wolf of Central India does not always confine himself to such substitutes for legitimate game; and the loss of human life from these hideous brutes has recently been ascertained to be so great that a heavy reward is now offered for their destruction. Though not generally venturing beyond children of ten or twelve years old, yet when confirmed in the habit of man-eating, they do not hesitate to attack, at an advantage, full-grown women and even adult men. A good many instances occurred, during the construction of the railway through the low jungles north of Jubbulpúr, of labourers on the works being so attacked, and sometimes killed and eaten. The attack was commonly made by a pair

of wolves, one of which seized the victim by the neck from behind, preventing outcry, while the other, coming swiftly up, tore out the entrails in front. These confirmed man-eaters are described as having been exceedingly wary, and fully able to discriminate between a helpless victim and an armed man.

My own experience of wolves does not record an instance of their attacking an adult human being; but I have known many places where children were regularly carried off by them. Superstition frequently prevents the natives from protecting themselves or retaliating on the brutes. In 1861 I was marching through a small village on the borders of the Damoh district, and accidentally heard that for months past a pair of wolves had carried off a child every few days, from the centre of the village and in broad daylight. No attempt whatever had been made to kill them, though their haunts were perfectly well known, and lay not a quarter of a mile from the village. A shapeless stone representing the goddess Devi, under a neighbouring tree, had instead been daubed with vermillion, and liberally propitiated with cocoa nuts and rice! Their plan of attack was uniform and simple. The village stood on the slope of a hill, at the foot of which ran the bed of a stream thickly fringed with grass and bushes. The main street of the village, where children were always at play, ran down the slope of the hill; and while one of the wolves, which was smaller than the other, would ensconce itself among some low bushes between the village and the bottom of the hill, the other would go round to the top, and, watching an opportunity, race down through the street, picking up a child by the way, and making off with it to the thick cover in the nálá. At first the people used to pursue, and sometimes made the marauder drop his prey; but, as they said, finding that in that case the companion wolf usually succeeded in carrying

off another of the children in the confusion, while the first was usually so injured as to be beyond recovery, they ended, like phlegmatic Hindús as they were, by just letting them take as many of their offspring as they wanted! An infant of a few years old had thus been carried off the morning of my arrival. It is scarcely credible that I could not at first obtain sufficient beaters to drive the cover where these two atrocious brutes were gorging on their unholy meal. At last a few of the outcaste helots who act as village drudges in those parts were induced to take sticks and accompany my horse-keeper with a hog-spear and my Sikh orderly with his sword, through the belt of grass, while I posted myself behind a tree with a double rifle at the other end. In about five minutes the pair walked leisurely out into an open space within twenty paces of me. They were evidently mother and son; the latter about three-quarters grown, with a reddish-yellow well-furred coat, and plump appearance; the mother a lean and grizzled hag, with hideous pendent dugs, and slaver dropping from her disgusting jaws. I gave her the benefit of the first barrel, and dropped her with a shot through both her shoulders. The whelp started off, but the second barrel arrested him also with a bullet in the neck; and I watched with satisfaction the struggles of the mother till my man came up with the hog-spear, which I defiled by finishing her. In the cover they had come through my men said that their lairs in the grass were numerous, and filled with fragments of bones; so that there was little doubt that the brutes thus so happily disposed of had long been perfectly at home in the neighbourhood of these miserable superstitious villagers.

Dogs that are in the way of hunting jackals will readily pursue a wolf, so long as he runs away. But the wolf

generally tries the effect of his bared teeth on his pursuers before running very far, and only the most resolute hounds can be brought to face them. I have several times had my dogs chased back close up to my horse by a wolf they had encountered when out coursing foxes and jackals; and only once saw the dogs get the better of one without assistance from the gun. On that occasion I had out a couple of young greyhounds, crossed between the deerhound and the Rampore breed; and along with them was a very large and powerful English bull-mastiff, rejoicing in the name of "Tinker," whose exceedingly plebeian looks in no way belied his name. He was an old hand at fighting before ever he left the purlieus of his native Manchester; and in India had been victor in many a bloody tussle with jackal, jungle cat, and pariah dog. His massive head and well-armed jaws combined in a high degree the qualities of a battering ram and heavy artillery; and his courage was in full proportion to his means of offence. On the present occasion the three dogs espied the enemy sitting coolly on his haunches on the top of a rising ground; and the young dogs, taking him no doubt for a jackal, went at him full speed, Tinker as usual lumbering along in the rear. Soon, however, the hounds returned in a panic, with their tails well down, and closely pursued by the wolf, a large dark grey fellow, snapping and snarling at their heels. The greyhounds fled past Tinker, who steadily advanced, dropping into the crouching sort of run he always adopted in his attack. No doubt Master Wolf thought he too would turn from his gleaming rows of teeth and erected hair, as all his canine assailants had done before. But he never was more mistaken, for the game old dog, as soon as a pace or two only remained betwixt him and the enemy, suddenly sprang to his full height and with a bound

buried his bullet head in his advancing chest. I saw the two roll over and over together; and then the gallant Tinker rose on the top of the wolf, his vice-like jaws firmly fastened on his throat. At this point of a combat he usually overpowered his antagonist utterly, by using his immense weight and power of limb to force him prostrate on the earth, the while riving at the throat with a force that often scooped a hollow in the earth under the scene of action. His efforts were now directed to effect this favourite manœuvre; but the wolf was too strong for him, and repeatedly foiled the attempt. But the young hounds, who were not at all without pluck, soon returned to his assistance, and seizing the wolf by different hind-legs, made such a spread eagle of him that Tinker had no difficulty in holding him down while I dismounted and battered in his skull with the hammer-head of my hunting-whip. None of the three dogs had been bitten, Tinker having got his jaws in chancery from the very first. I am sure that the three, or even Tinker alone, would have killed him in time without my assistance; for Tinker never let go a grip he had once secured, and though not so large, was not much inferior to him in strength.

The catalogue of amusements offered to the sportsman in the open plain would be incomplete without a mention of the "mighty boar." He is to be found almost everywhere—in the low jungle on the edge of cultivation, and sometimes in the sugar-cane and other tall crops; and with a liberal expenditure of self and horse may be ridden and speared in a good many places. Generally, however, the country is highly unfavourable to riding, the black soil of the plains being split up into yawning cracks many feet in depth, or covered with rolling trap boulders, both sorts of country being almost equally productive of dangerous croppers. The neighbour-

hood of Nagpúr affords the best ground; and there there is a regular "tent club," which gives a good account of numerous hogs in the course of the year. The sport has been so voluminously described that I believe nothing remains to be said about it. The hogs that reside in the open plains are not much inferior in size to those of other parts of India; but those met with in the hills are generally much smaller, and far more active. A brown-coloured variety has sometimes been noticed among them. The common village pig of the country shows every sign of having been derived from the wild race originally.

My march down the Narbadá valley led along the tortuous and rugged cart track, through the deep black loam of the surrounding fields, which, before the construction of the railway, was the only means of communication through these fertile districts. Broken carts strewed the roadside, and clumps of thorny acacias overgrew the path. These were justly called the "cotton thief" by the people, their branches being laden with bunches of the fibre dear to Manchester, torn by their thorns from the unpressed bales, as they lumbered along on antediluvian buffalo carts towards the distant coast.

Large gangs of aboriginal Gónds from the nearer hill tracts were labouring on the railway works. The really wild tribes of the interior of the hills were not yet attracted by the labour market in the plains, preferring a dinner of jungle herbs and their squalid freedom to plenty earned by steady toil under the eye of the foreign task-master. But the semi-Hindú tribes of the border-land, who are now the most numerous of the race, and whom long contact with the people of the plains has imbued with wants and tendencies strange to their wilder brethren, have reaped a rich harvest from this sudden demand for labour arising at their doors. How far it has been to them an un-

mixed advantage will be discussed further on. As labourers, their innate distaste to steady toil, born of long years of a semi-nomadic existence, renders them inferior to the regular Maráthá navvy from the Deccan, who is also their superior in muscular power, and can double the wages of any Gónd at this sort of work.

On the 25th of January I quitted the main road down the valley, near the little civil station of Narsingpúr, and struck off nearly at right angles to the south, marching direct for the hills that bounded the horizon in that direction. About half way through the march of fifteen miles the level deep black soil of the valley began to give place to a red gravelly tract of undulating conformation; and numerous fine *Mhowa* trees, forming groups that at a little distance much resembled oaks, and half-cleared fields, gave indications of the approach of the border belt of half-reclaimed land which intervenes between the open plain and the forest-covered hills. The Mhowa (*Bassia latifolia*) is one of the most useful wild trees in this part of India. It is not cut down like other forest trees in clearing the land for tillage, its value being at first greater than that of the area rendered unproductive by its shade and roots. As the country gets more thickly peopled, however, the case is reversed, and it generally disappears in long settled tracts. As a singular instance of the influence sometimes exerted by social customs on the physical character of a country, I may mention an exception to this rule in the case of the district of Nimár, which, even in its fully cultivated parts, is still thickly dotted with Mhowa trees. The reason of this I believe to be that, during the "times of trouble" referred to in my first chapter, the majority of the small proprietors of the land were ousted from possession of their fields; but the custom having been

established that possession of the fruit trees growing on it did not necessarily pass with the land, they mostly retained the proprietorship of these trees. Thus it has happened that the land is often owned by one party and the trees by another. The rent is paid only by the landholder; and thus, though it would pay him to clear off the trees, it would not pay the tree-man; and so they have remained, doubtless to the very great advantage, and certainly to the beauty, of the district.

The value of the Mhowa consists in the fleshy corolla of its flower, and in its seeds. The flower is highly deciduous, ripening and falling in the months of March and April. It possesses considerable substance, and a sweet but sickly taste and smell. It is a favourite article of food with all the wild tribes, and the lower classes of Hindús; but its main use is in the distillation of ardent spirits, most of what is consumed being made from Mhowa. The spirit, when well made and mellowed by age, is by no means of despicable quality, resembling in some degree Irish whisky. The luscious flowers are no less a favourite food of the brute creation than of man. Every vegetable-eating animal and bird incessantly endeavours to fill itself with Mhowa during its flowering season. Sámbar, nílgáe, and bears appear to lose their natural apprehensions of danger in some degree during the Mhowa season; and the most favourable chances of shooting them are then obtained. The trees have to be watched night and day if the crop is to be saved; and the wilder races, who fear neither wild beast nor evil spirit, are generally engaged to do this for a wage of one-half the produce. The yield of flowers from a single tree is about 130lbs., worth five shillings in the market; and the nuts, which form in bunches after the dropping of the flowers, yield a thick oil, much resembling tallow in appearance and properties. It is used for burning, for the manu-

facture of soap, and in adulterating the clarified butter so largely consumed by all natives. A demand for it has lately sprung up in the Bombay market; and a good deal has been exported since the opening of the railway. The supply must be immense; and probably this new demand will be the means of greatly increasing the value of the trees.

I encamped at the end of this march at a place called Mohpáni, the scene of the works of the "Nerbudda Coal and Iron Company." Their labours have however as yet been confined to the coal. This useful mineral has been now discovered in numerous parts of the Central Provinces, of a quality considered equal to most Indian coals. When I visited the mines at Mohpáni, several trial shafts had been driven for some hundreds of feet into the beds, and I believe there is no doubt that an ample supply of coal for the railway could be obtained from here. Other schemes have, however, since presented themselves; the management of the company's negociations does not appear to have always been conducted with judgment; and it seems now to be doubtful whether their labour and money have been laid out to great advantage. Most of the miners employed at that time were Gónds, whose courage in diving into the bowels of the earth was found to be superior to that of other races. The universal pantheism of the Gónd stands him in good stead on such occasions. From his cradle he has looked on every rock, stream, and cavern as tenanted by its peculiar spirit, whom it is only needful to propitiate in a simple fashion to make all safe. So he just touches with vermillion the rock he is about to blow into a thousand fragments with a keg of powder, lays before it a handful of rice and a nutshell full of Mhowa spirit, and lo! the god of the coal mine is sufficiently satisfied to permit his simple worshipper to hew away as he pleases at his residence.

If utility is, as some have thought, a good quality in religions, surely we have it in perfection in a pliable belief like this!

Near Mohpání is one of the best snipe *jheels* in the province. I went out to it in the afternoon with one of the gentlemen connected with the works, who surely never could have seen a snipe before. We took opposite sides of the long swamp, which swarmed with the long-bills; and when we met at the end I had got 27½ couples, while my friend had collected a miscellaneous bag of snippets, plovers, paddy birds, and *minas*, and not *one* snipe among them.

My next march lay under the northern face of the main range of the Sátpúras, which here form a bluff headland rising some 500 feet above the plain, crowned by an old fortress called Chaoragarh. This is one of the many extensive fortifications constructed by the chiefs of the country to the south of the Narbadá, at the time when the resistless tide of Mahomedan conquest, after engulfing the Hindú kingdoms of upper India and the Deccan, was rolling against the principalities of these central regions. The works of these forts generally enclose a considerable space on the summit of a naturally inaccessible hill, having been designed for the retreat of large bodies of the inhabitants, and of armies, in times of successful invasion. The flat-topped and scarp-sided hills of the trap formation are the most suitable for such strongholds, and there are consequently more of them in the trap country than elsewhere. Such additional works as are necessary are composed of massive blocks of rock, roughly squared and laid without masonry. Inside tanks have generally been excavated in the rock to hold a plentiful supply of water, natural hollows being always taken advantage of to avoid labour as much as possible. Before the days of artillery such places must have possessed great strength; but we rarely hear of

their being vigorously defended by their possessors; and they were generally surrendered after a short investment. Doubtless the chief cause was usually want of provisions, masses of people being suddenly huddled into the place, and being unable to carry with them the scanty provender afforded by a poor country in the face of danger. In 1564 the great Akber sent his lieutenant to reduce the Gónd chieftain of Mandlá. The Gónd troops, led by the heroic Dúrgáwatí, the Rajput widow of the last chief, made a noble resistance to the invader near Jubbulpúr; but, the battle at last going against them, their leader stabbed herself rather than suffer the disgrace of defeat; and this fort of Chaoragarh immediately afterwards fell into the hands of the Moslem, together with property and treasure valued in the chronicles at an altogether fabulous amount. The summits of these old forts usually contain a little water in the old tanks; and being generally covered with thick jungle are favourite resorts of the tiger and other animals in the hot weather.

From my camp at Chaolpání a single peak of the Puchmurree hills was visible. It had not a very imposing appearance, however, as I find it recorded as "like half an egg sticking out of an immense egg-cup!" A couple of bears came close up to the camp at night and commenced to fight, making a fearful noise, it seemed to me, as I awoke, inside the tent ropes. The horses were tearing at their pickets, and all the camp in a hubbub. I started out with a gun, but the people said they had just passed through the camp, rolling over each other and growling; and it was so pitch dark that I could not see any distance before me, and had to come back. The next march was fourteen miles to Jhilpa, the last village before the ascent of the hills begins. The view of Puchmurree was lost during this march from our being too close under the

intervening range of hills. On the way I shot a young Sámbar stag; and after arriving in camp a messenger from the village I had left in the morning came in breathless to say that a tiger had killed a bullock in the morning within half a mile of my camp. At that time of year, when the jungle is very green and thick, and tigers always on the move, it was not worth while to go back, even if I had had the time.

This day's march was through a much more jungly country than I had yet met. It could not be called a forest; for the trees were all of the secondary growth which marks land repeatedly cleared and abandoned again; and the cultivation, such as it was, was still carried on with the regular bullock-plough, after the manner of the plains. In many places there was a thick growth of teak poles from old stumps of trees; and many of the fields had been hewn out of these coppices, the poles being burnt on the ground as manure, in the manner to be hereafter described. The clear and pretty stream of the Dénwa, which comes down from Puchmurree, was crossed several times by the track we followed, and contained on its sandy banks many footprints of tigers. There was evidently a good deal of forest game about. The valley is one of those tracts on the border between open plain and dense jungle, where much of the nocturnal life of the forest creatures is passed. In such a tract the traveller will often be astonished at the quantity of signs of animals he will see in the morning all about his night's camp, while not a wild creature of any sort will he find in the neighbourhood if he goes to look for them after the sun is up. The fact is that deer, bears, pigs, etc., travel such long distances at night to their feeding grounds, and depart again to the remoter hills so early in the morning, that unless a very early start be made, nothing but the tracks they have left behind will ever be seen. The tigers

and panthers, again, which prey on them, although not usually retreating so far, yet seek the most secluded thickets and ravines of the neighbourhood at an equally early hour, and in the cold weather are so much on the alert, and can so easily hide in the thick vegetation, that the chances with them, except by sitting up over a bait at night, are equally poor. The native Shikari, watching by night, kills a great deal of game at this season. But it is very slow and cold, as well as rather poaching, work, and few Europeans are cat-like enough to succeed in it. Now, as most Europeans who attempt shooting at all in India (and who does not at first?) only go out during the cold season, and never go deeper into the forest than this semi-cleared belt, the reason of much of the want of success complained of is not far to seek. To ensure success the animals must be followed up into the deeper jungles. In future chapters some sketches of the sport in these wilder regions will be given. The present chapter scarcely deals at all with the subject indicated by my title; but I have given it as a sort of introduction to Indian camp life, and to the field sports likely to be attempted by beginners, and in the earlier part of the season.

CHAPTER III.

THE MÁHÁDEO HILLS.

The Máhádeo Mountains—Sacred Hills—Ascent to Puchmurree—Aspect of the Forest—Park-like Scenery—A Moist Night—Solitary Snipe—Description of the Plateau—Fine Views—The Dénwa Valley—The Ándeh Kóh—Legends of the Place—Ancient Remains—The Great Ravine—The Sonbhadra Gorge—The Great Red Squirrel—A Hill Chief—Caprice of the Hill Men—Their System of Tillage—Destruction of the Forests—Incursions of Wild Animals—Gónd Legend—Dense Jungles—Restlessness of the Aborigines—Their Precarious Livelihood—Produce of the Jungles—The Seeding of the Bamboo—Scarcity in the Hills—Bunjara Carriers—Project a Forest Lodge—Find Lime—The Indian Bison—His Habits and Range—Growth of his Horns—A Grand Hunt—Kill a Stag Sámbar—A Bull shot by the Thákúr—Power of the Bison—A Hill Tiger—A Mother's Defence—Description of Gónds and Korkús—A Midnight Revel—The Wild Men are conciliated—We teach them to Build and Plough—The Dénwa Sál Forest—The twelve-tined Deer—Jungle-fowl—Spur-fowl—Gazelles and Hares—Fire-hunting by night—Bears and Panthers—A troublesome Panther—Fox-hunting at Puchmurree—Bison Stalking—A brace of Bulls—Tracking the Bison—A hard day's work—Death of the Bull.

In the eyes of the Hindú inhabitants of the neighbouring plains, the whole of the range of hills which culminated in the Puchmurree plateau is sacred to their deity Sivá, called Máhádeo, or the Great God; and the hills themselves are called by his name, the Máhádeos. A conception of awe and mystery had always been associated with their lofty peaks, embosomed among which lies one of the most sacred shrines of the god, to which at least one pilgrimage was a necessity in the life of every devout Hindú. But excepting at the appointed season for this pilgrimage, no dweller of the plains

would venture, at the time of which I am writing, to set his foot on the holy soil of Máhádeo's hills; and, as we approached its neighbourhood, gloomy looks began to gather on the faces of my followers, whose fears had been acted on by the conversation of the people they had met. The road to the top was represented as impassable from natural difficulties; and guarded by wild beasts, goblins, and fell disease.

Camp at Puchmurree. Buddhist caves in the background.

I halted a day at Jhilpá, the last village on the plains, to make arrangements for the ascent, and procure guides; and on the 22nd packed my small tent and a few necessaries on a pony, and with two attendants started up the hill on foot. For the first ten miles or so the pathway led up an easy and

regular ascent over shelving rocks and scanty soil, whereon grew a thin forest of the commoner sorts of trees, Sálei (*Boswellia thurifera*), Dhäorá (*Conocarpus latifolia*), and Sáj (*Pentaptera glabra*), being the most numerous species; the grass and vegetation on these slopes had begun already to assume the yellow tinge of the dry season. Such a prospect as this, which is typical of vast tracts in the jungles of Central India, is sadly disappointing to him who looks for the luxuriant tropical forest of low-lying equatorial regions. Forests like those of Southern Africa and the littoral countries of Asia, with their close array of giant trunks, dense canopy of vegetation, impenetrable underwood, gorgeous flowers, and mighty tangled creepers—

"From branch to branch close wreaths of bondage throwing."

are unknown in these central regions of India; and their character is rarely approached save in some occasional low moist valley, where the axe of the woodcutter has not penetrated, and the stagnation of some stream has united with the heat of a close valley in giving to the vegetation a more truly tropical character. Indeed, but for the preponderance of yellows where rich reds and browns should be, and the rare appearance of a palm or other eastern form, most of these low forest tracts might be taken after December for a late autumn scene in a temperate climate. Nothing is more striking than the absence of brilliant flowers, which contrary to popular idea are far more characteristic of temperate than of tropical regions. The Palás (*Butea superba*) is almost the only tree in our forests which possesses really bright colouring.

When an elevation of about 2000 feet (above the sea) had been attained, the character of the scenery began to change.

Vertical scarps of the red sandstone which forms the higher plateau began to rise into view at every turn of the path, which now plunged into narrow and gloomy glens, following the boulder-strewn bed of a small stream. The dried and yellow grasses and naked tree stems of the lower slope gave place to a green vegetation thickly covering the soil, and in places almost meeting overhead. The moist banks of the stream were covered with ferns and mosses, and the clear sparkle of the little brooks appeared singularly refreshing after our long walk up-hill in the heat of a sultry and lowering day. The baggage-pony found considerable difficulty in scrambling over the boulders that now began to block the road; and we relieved him by putting about half of his load on the two guides. After scrambling thus along the sides and bottoms of ravines for some miles, steadily rising at the same time, we suddenly emerged through a narrow pass, and from under the spreading aisle of a large banyan tree (from which this pass gets its name of the Bur-ghat), on to an open glade, covered with short green grass, and studded with magnificent trees, which I found was the commencement of the plateau of Puchmurree.

Heavy masses of cloud had now gathered overhead, and large drops of rain began to fall, betokening, as it proved, the coming of one of the short but severe storms to which these hills are liable at this season. The village of Puchmurree was still some miles distant, and we hurried along over the now almost level plateau to get shelter as soon as possible, as we had already walked about seventeen miles, and the sun was almost set. The road now lay over a hard and gently undulating sandy soil, crossed by many small streams running swiftly in their rocky beds. Immense trees of the dark green Harrá (*Terminalia Chebula*), the arboreous Jáman (*Eugenia*

Jambolana), and the common Mango dotted the plain in fine clumps; and altogether the aspect of the plateau was much more that of a fine English park than of any scene I had before come across in India. By-and-by, through the vistas of the trees, three great isolated peaks began to appear, glowing red and fiery in the setting sun against the purple background of a cloud bank. The centre one of the three, right ahead of us, was the peak of Máhádeo, deep in the bowels of which lies the shrine of the god himself; to the left, like the bastion of some giant's hold, rose the square and abrupt form of Cháu-rádeo; while to the right, and further off than the others, frowned the sheer scarp of Dhúpgarh, the highest point of these Central Indian highlands.

We had little leisure to enjoy this splendid view, however, for a blinding rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning, now came on; and some distance still intervened from the village when we were compelled to seek shelter in a grove of trees. Fortunately there was among them a large hollow banyan tree, within which we all found shelter, including "Quail" and "Snipe," who I forgot to say were of the party, and had revelled in spur fowl all the way up.

I sent on the two guides to the village to procure us some firewood and water; for I determined to encamp here, rather than go further, and probably fare worse, among the unknown disagreeables of a Korkú village. A swampy hollow lay betwixt us and the village, and after we heard the guides go splashing through this and disappear in the darkness it was full two hours before we heard them floundering back again with three or four Korkús carrying bundles of sticks, grass, pots of water, and the various natural productions which have always to be procured from the village where camp is pitched. Meanwhile we sat in our tree and smoked, and very cold and

disagreeable it was, though tolerably dry. With the help of the Korkús the little tent was soon pitched, and I transferred myself and dogs to its shelter, while a fire was lit in the hollow of the banyan, and the natives were soon crouching over it as jolly as sandboys; while my servant plucked and grilled over its embers one of the spur fowl I had shot, as a "spatchcock." About midnight the rain ceased, and the sky cleared. It was an excessively cold night; and when I got up shivering in the morning I found my men had stayed up the greater part of the night by the fire for the sake of the warmth.

The morning broke fine and bright, however, and I started off for a ramble over the plateau. In passing through the swamp below the tent, the dogs put up, and I shot several couple of snipes, and among them a fine specimen of the solitary or wood snipe.* This fine snipe is of rare occurrence in Central India, and in fact I have only met with it on one other occasion, in the Mandlá district. I suspect this is the bird that has stood for the woodcock in the stories told of the latter's occurrence in the Central Provinces; for though I have hunted every likely spot in the hills for the latter bird, I never found a single one of them.

There were two small settlements of Korkús on the plateau. One at Puchmurree itself, and another about a mile to the north of it. The former was the larger of the two, consisting of about thirty houses, and, besides the Thákúr, a few families of traders from the plains lived in it. The functions exercised by these Hindú dealers in the rural economy of the aborigines will form the subject of some remarks further on.

A brother of the Thákúr of Puchmurree accompanied me in my ramble, a fine athletic intelligent young fellow of

* *Gallinago nemoricola.*

eighteen or twenty, and an ardent sportsman, who was afterwards my guide over the whole of this wonderful mass of mountains. We were out nearly all day, the succession of fine views from the different heights and bluffs luring me on and on, till what was meant for a stroll ended in a pretty hard day's work.

I found that the plateau had something of a cup-like shape, draining in every direction from the edges into the centre, where two considerable brooks receive its waters and carry them over the edge in fine cascades. The general elevation of this central valley is about 3400 feet, the ridge surrounding it being a few hundred feet higher, and here and there shooting into abrupt peaks, of which the three I had seen the evening before attain a height of 4500 feet. The area of the plateau is altogether about twelve square miles, some six of which in the centre resemble the portion I had before passed through, and consist of fine culturable, though light, soils. Everywhere the massive groups of trees and park-like scenery strike the eye; and the greenery of the glades, and various wild flowers unseen at lower elevations, maintain the illusion that the scene is a bit out of our own temperate zone rather than of the tropics. Though the ascent on the side I had come up was generally gradual, I found that in all other directions the drop from the plateau was sudden and precipitous. There are three other pathways by which a man can easily, and an unladen animal with difficulty, ascend and descend. Subsequently we took lightly laden elephants (which, when there is *room* for them, are the most sure-footed of all creatures) up and down both of the passes leading to the south; but the eastern pass (Kánjí Ghát) has never, I believe, been traversed by any baggage animal. The view from the edge of the plateau, in almost any direction, is

singularly fine; and a still more extensive sweep is commanded from the tops of the higher peaks.

To the south, as far as the eye can see, lie range upon range of forest-covered hills, tumbled in wild confusion. To the east a long line of rampart-like cliffs mark the southern face of the Máhádeo range, the deep red of their sandstone formation contrasting finely with the intense green of the bamboo vegetation, out of which they rise. Here and there they shoot into peaks of bare red rock, many of which have a peculiar and almost fantastic appearance, owing to the irregular weathering of their material—beds of coarse sandstone horizontally streaked by darker bands of hard vitrified ferruginous earth. Looking across this wall of rock, to the north-east, a long perspective of forest-covered hills is seen, the nearer ones seeming to be part of the Puchmurree plateau, though really separated from it by an enormous rift in the rock, the further ranges sinking gradually in elevation, till, faint and blue in the far distance, gleams the level plain of the Narbadá valley. Standing on the eastern edge of the plateau, again, the observer hangs over a sheer descent of 2000 feet of rock, leading beyond, in long green slopes, down to a flat and forest-covered valley. Its width may be six or seven miles, and beyond it is seen another range of hills rising in a long yellow grass-covered slope, dotted with the black boulders, and ending in the scarped tops that mark the trap formation. That is the plateau of Motúr (Mohtoor), with which the general continuation of the Sátpúrá range again commences, after the break in it occasioned by the Máhádeo group. On this side, the forest that clothes the valley and the nearer slopes presents a very dark green and yet brilliant colouring, which will be noted as differing from the vegetation in any other direction. This is the Sál forest, which I have

mentioned before (p. 26), as forming so singular an outlier far to the west of the line which otherwise limits the range of that tree in Central India. It fills this valley of the Dénwá, almost to the exclusion of other vegetation, and, creeping up the ravines, has occupied also the south-eastern portion of the plateau itself.

A remarkable feature in the configuration of the plateau is the vast and unexpected ravines or rather clefts in the solid rock, which seam the edges of the scarp, some of them reaching in sheer descent almost to the level of the plains. You come on them during a ramble in almost any direction, opening suddenly at your feet in the middle of some grassy glade. The most remarkable is the Ándeh-Kóh, which begins about a mile to the east of the village, and runs right down into the Dénwá valley. Looking over its edge, the vision loses itself in the vast profundity. A few dark indigo-coloured specks at the bottom represent wild mango trees of sixty or eighty feet in height. A faint sound of running water rises on the sough of the wind from the abyss. The only sign of life is an occasional flight of blue pigeons swinging out from the face of either cliff, and circling round on suspended pinion, again to disappear under the crags. If a gun is fired, the echoes roll round the hollow in continually increasing confusion, till the accumulated volume seems to bellow forth at the mouth of the ravine into the plain below. If tradition be believed, no mortal foot has ever trodden the dark interior of the Ándeh-Kóh. I myself never found an entrance to it, though, with the aid of ropes, I got once at the easiest place within a few hundred feet of the bottom. I may say, however, for the benefit of adventurous explorers, that a way in may probably be found by going round behind the Máhádeo peak, and following down the bed of the stream which issues from

the cave of the shrine I am about to describe, and which, I think, eventually falls into the Kóh under the scarp of Cháurádeo.

Legend has made the Ándeh-Kóh the retreat of a monstrous serpent, which formerly inhabited a lake on the plateau, and vexed the worshippers of Máhádeo, till the god dried up the serpent's lake, and imprisoned the snake himself in this rift, formed by a stroke of his trident in the solid rock. It needs no very ingenious interpreter of legend to see in this wild story an allusion to the former settlements of Búddhists (referred to as snakes in Bráhminical writings) on the Puchmurree hill, and their extinction on the revival of Bráhmánism in the sixth or seventh century. Certain it is that there once was a considerable lake in the centre of the plateau, formed by a dam thrown across a narrow gorge, and that on its banks are still found numbers of the large flat bricks used in ancient buildings, while in the overhanging rocks are cut five caves (whence the name of Puchmurree), of the character usually attributed to the Búddhists. Beneath the lower end of the lake lies a considerable stretch of almost level land, on which are still traceable the signs of ancient tillage, in the form of embankments and water-courses. Looking from the portico of the rock-cut caves, it is not difficult for the imagination to travel back to the time when the lower margin of the lake was surrounded by the dwellings of a small, perhaps an exiled and persecuted, colony of Búddhists, practising for their subsistence the art, strange in these wilds, of civilised cultivation of the earth, and to hear again the sound of the evening bell in their little monastery floating away up the placid surface of the winding lake.

Another very striking ravine, called Jambo-Dwìp, lies on the opposite side of the plateau from the Ándeh-Kóh. About

a thousand feet of steep descent, down a track worn by the feet of pilgrims, leads to the entrance of a gorge, whose aspect is singularly adapted to impress the imagination of the pilgrim to these sacred hills. A dense canopy of the wild mango tree, overlaid and interlaced by the tree-like limbs of the giant creeper,* almost shuts out the sun; strange shapes of tree ferns and thickets of dank and rotting vegetation cumber the path; a chalybeate stream, covered by a film of metallic scum, reddens the ooze through which it slowly percolates; a gloom like twilight shrouds the bottom of the valley, from out of which rises on either hand a towering crag of deep red colour, from the summit of which stretch the ghostly arms of the white and naked *Sterculia urens*, a tree that looks as if the megatherium might have climbed its uncouth and ghastly branches at the birth of the world. Further on the gorge narrows to a mere cleft between the high cliffs, wholly destitute of vegetation, and strewn with great boulders. Climbing over these, and wading through the waters of a shallow stream, the pilgrim at length reaches a cavern in the rock, the sides and bottom of which have been, by some peculiar water action, worn into the semblance of gigantic matted locks of hair; while deep below the floor of the cavern, in the bowels of the rock, is heard the labouring of imprisoned waters shaking the cave. It is small wonder that such a natural marvel as this should be a chosen dwelling place for the god to whom all these mountains are sacred, and that it forms one of the most holy and indispensable points in the circuit which the devout pilgrim must perform.

The place has also a slight historical interest. During the last of our struggles with the Maráthás, Áppá Sáheb Bhonslá, Rájá of Nágpúr, on his way to an exile justly earned by re-

* *Bauhinia scandens.*

peated acts of treachery, escaped and fled to the fastnesses of the Máhádeo hills; and it was in this secluded ravine, if tradition speaks the truth, that he was concealed by the fidelity of his aboriginal subjects till he finally made his escape, while detachments of British troops were hunting for him in every other nook and recess of the mountains.

Beyond the Jambo-Dwìp, or "great ravine" as we called it, and between it and the valley of the Sonbhadrá, lies another group of wild hills, a little lower than the Puchmurree block in elevation, and with few level plateaux of any extent. One or two poor hamlets of Korkús occupy its most sheltered nooks; but the soil is everywhere extremely thin, and there is a great absence of water in this section of the Máhádeo range, so that it is almost uninhabited. The Sonbhadrá valley itself can only be entered where it leaves the southern face of the hills, by a difficult pathway along the edges of the rapid stream; but the scene is well deserving of the scramble of eight or ten miles on foot by which it is reached. It is utterly untenanted even by animals, save a few melancholy bears, and its steep precipices, and long slopes of grey and naked rock, interspersed with scanty moor-like vegetation, are singularly suggestive of a comparison with the well-known valley of Glencoe.

These deep and gloomy dells that seam the Puchmurree block are the home of a splendid squirrel (*Sciurus maximus*), measuring two and a half to three feet in length, and of a rich deep claret colour, with a blue metallic lustre on the upper parts of the body, the lower parts being rufous yellow. They dwell in the upper branches of the wild mango trees, making nests of the leaves, generally in the very top. They live chiefly on the mango fruit, lavishly squandering the supply while the fresh mangoes are attainable, and afterwards crack-

ing the discarded stones for their kernels. They seem to be of a retired and melancholy nature, appropriate to the sunless ravines they reside in; and they are not very numerous either here or at Amarkantak, which is the only other part of the hills where I have met the species. They are easily captured in the nests when young, but make most foolish and uninteresting pets, having a singularly vacant expression of countenance, and nothing of the light-hearted vivacity of the other members of the squirrel family. If an exquisite fur for a lady's muff or a sporran is an object, some pretty shooting may be had in knocking them off the tops of the high trees with a small rifle. Numerous vultures and birds of the rapacious order build on the ledges of the cliffs. Among them is the grand imperial eagle (*A. imperialis*), whose wings measure eight feet from tip to tip, and whose soaring flight and harsh scream forms a grand feature in the scenery of this range of mountains.

On my return to the tent I had an interview with the Thákúr, or chief, of Puchmurree. This potentate is the proprietor of a considerable tract of hill and forest in the Máhádeo range, and the valleys at its base. He is the representative of one of the families already referred to as having been established in the early days of Aryan colonisation, by an intermixture of the blood of the adventurous Rájpút with that of the aboriginal (in this case Korkú) occupants of the soil. In personal appearance and habits the family exactly correspond to their descent. Taller and fairer by far than the undiluted Korkús about them, they still possess the thick lips and prominent jaw of the aborigines. With all the love of tinsel and sounding form of the vain Rájpút, they unite much of the apathy and unthrift of the savage. In religion they are (like all converts) ultra Hindú, worshipping Síva, looking on the

slaughter of a cow with horror (though they will kill the nearly related bison of their hills), wearing the holy thread of the twice-born castes, and keeping a family Bráhmán to do their household worship for them. The Puchmurree Thákúr was a well-grown young man of about twenty-five; but awkward in manner and incapable of any sort of conversation. I subsequently found that he was, like most of these petty chiefs, a confirmed opium-eater. By his side, however, stood the Bráhmán "Dewan," or minister of state (!), whose glibness of tongue was fully sufficient for both. Behind them came four or five tatterdemalion retainers, in quilted garments of many hues, girded as to their loins with broad embroidered belts of Sámbar leather, in which were stuck, or suspended, swords, daggers, and the cumbrous appointments of a matchlockman, the matchlock itself being borne, with smoking match, over the shoulder of each. These were mostly of the same breed as the Thákúr, being his poor relations in fact. This description would serve sufficiently well for the great majority of these petty semi-aboriginal chiefs, who are so numerous in the hills of Central India. Though the breed between the Rájpút and the aborigine produces the best of all shikaris and foresters, in a somewhat higher sphere they are chiefly remarkable for debauchery, and a vain and silly pride which leads them into expenditure beyond their means, and ruinous debt. They all call themselves "Rájás," and keep up minute standing armies of these ragamuffin retainers, as well as one or two Bráhmán bloodsuckers to manage their holy and clerkly affairs. As they are always seeking for brides for their sons in families with higher claims to Rájpút descent than their own, they have to pay enormous sums for marriage expenses, and this is probably the chief cause of their generally hopeless poverty.

I found I was likely to have a good deal of trouble in getting the wild hill people to help in building our lodge. The Thákúr made all sorts of excuses for withholding from us his influence with his "subjects." There was great scarcity among them, owing to a failure of their precarious crops; they had nearly all left the hills to seek service in the plains; they were engaged in preparing the land for their crops; they hated work they had not been accustomed to; they would be afraid to help in making a house on Máhádeo's hill—and so on. Truth was, I saw the chief himself and his advisers hated our intrusion. With some truth they feared we were come to break up their much-loved seclusion, and untrammelled barbarism; their rich harvest from the taxation of pilgrims to Máhádeo's shrine they thought was in danger; and they would have none of us. They promised, however, to send me a gang of men to start wood and grass cutting next morning. Of course they did not come; and the Thákúr I found had gone off to a village he had below the hill, and quite out of reach of my camp; and he did not return to Puchmurree, except when I sent for him, all the time I was there. Luckily I had a friend in council in the shape of the younger brother, who had shown me the lions of the place. Not being a chief he had little to live on, and was in fact scarcely to be distinguished in position or worldly wealth from the common Korkús about. He promised to use his influence to get them to come and work for me, and went off on a visit to the neighbouring hamlets, partly with this object, and partly to look for traces of any bison or other larger game there might be on the hills, as I contemplated a grand hunting party at which I hoped to overcome the shyness of the jungle population.

They were really in great distress owing to the failure of

the previous harvest, on which great part of their subsistence for the year depends. The system of cultivation of all the wild tribes of these provinces is much the same, and is, in fact, almost identical with the method followed by all the unreclaimed aboriginal races throughout India. Though large tracts of splendid level land lie untilled on the Puchmurree plateau, and in the valleys below, the Korkú has no cattle or ploughs with which to break it up. He has nothing in the way of implements but his axe. This is enough, however, for his wants. He selects a hill side where there is a little soil, and a plentiful growth of grass, timber, and bamboos. He prefers a place where young straight teak poles grow thick and strong, as they are easiest to cut, and produce most ashes when burnt. He cuts every stick that stands on the selected plot, except the largest trunks, which he lops of their branches and girdles so that they may shortly die. This he does early in the dry season (January to March), and leaves the timber thickly piled on the ground to dry in the torrid sun of the hot season. By the end of May it will be just like tinder, and he then sets fire to it and burns it as nearly as he can to ashes. With all his labor, however (and he works hard at this spasmodic sort of toil), he will not be able to work all the logs into position to get burnt; and at the end of a week he will rest from his labor, and contemplate with satisfaction the three or four acres of valuable teak forest he has reduced to a heap of ashes, strewn with the charred remains of the larger limbs and trunks. He now rakes his ashes evenly over the field and waits for rain, which in due season generally comes. He then takes a few handfuls of the coarse grain he subsists on and flings them into the ashes, broadcast if the ground be tolerably level, if steep, then in a line at the top, so as to be washed down

by the rain. The principal grains are Kódon (*Paspalum*), Kútkí (*Panicum*), and coarse rice. But nearly all the ordinary crops raised in the plains during the autumn season are also grown more or less in these *dhya* clearings, as they are called, though usually from greatly degenerate seed, the produce of which is often scarcely recognizable as the same species. A few pumpkins and creeping beans are usually grown about the houses in addition to the *dhya* crop. Such is the fertilising power of the ashes that the crop is generally a very productive one, though the individual grains are far smaller than the same species as cultivated in the plains. A fence against wild animals is made round the clearing by cutting trees so as to fall over and interlace with each other, the whole being strongly bound with split bamboos and thorny bushes. The second year the dead trees and half-burnt branches are again ignited, and fresh wood is cut and brought from the adjoining jungle, and the same process is repeated. The third year the clearing is usually abandoned for a fresh one. Sometimes the owner of a dhya will watch at night on a platform in the middle of the field and endeavour to save it from wild animals, but oftener he does not think it worth the labor, and lets it take its chance till ripe, while he earns his livelihood in some other way.

The dhya clearings are of course favourite resorts for all the animals of the neighbourhood. The smaller species of these—peafowl, partridges, hares, &c., are often trapped in ingenious "deadfall" traps set in runs left open on purpose; and the larger are frequently shot by the sportsmen of the community. None of the Gónds of the Central Hills now use the bow and arrow; but few villages are without their professional hunter, who is generally a capital shot with his long heavy matchlock, and as patient as a cat in watching for game. He

usually takes it in turn to sit up at night in all the dhya clearings of the village, getting as remuneration all that he kills, and a basket of grain at hárvest-time besides. The skins of sámbar are of considerable value in the market for making the well-known soft yellow leather—the best of all materials for sporting leggings and other accoutrements.

The abandoned dhya clearings are speedily covered again with jungle. The second growth is, however, very different from the virgin forest destroyed by the first clearing; being composed of a variety of low and very densely-growing bamboo, and of certain thorny bushes, which together form in a year or two a cover almost impenetrable to man or beast. I have often been obliged to turn back from such a jungle after vainly endeavouring to force through it a powerful elephant accustomed to work his way through difficult cover. In such a thicket no timber tree can ever force its way into daylight; and a second growth of timber on such land can never be expected if left to nature. The scrub itself does not furnish fuel enough for a sufficient coating of ashes to please the dhya cutter; and so the latter never again returns to an old clearing while untouched forest land is to be had. Now, if it be considered that, for untold ages, the aboriginal inhabitants have been thus devastating the forests, the cause of the problem that has puzzled railway engineers—namely, why, in a country with so vast an expanse of forest-covered land, they should yet have to send to England, or Australia, or Norway for their sleepers—will not be far to seek. Stand on any hill-top on the Puchmurree or other high range, and look over the valleys below you. The dhya clearings can be easily distinguished from tree jungle; and you will see that for one acre left of the latter, thousands have been levelled by the axe of the Gónd and Korkú. In

fact I can say, from an experience reaching over every teak tract in these hills, that, excepting a few preserved by private proprietors, no teak forest ever escaped this treatment, unless so situated in ravines or on precipitous hill-sides as to make it unprofitable to make dhya clearings on its site.

The system of cultivation thus adopted by the wild tribes, which seems to be a natural consequence of their want of agricultural stock, necessitates a more or less nomadic habit of life. The larger villages, where the chief of a sept, and the Hindú traders who effect their small exchanges, reside, is usually the only stable settlement in a whole tract; the rest of the people spreading themselves about in small hamlets of five or six families, at such intervals as will give each a sufficient range of jungle for several years of dhya cutting. Their huts are of the most temporary character, and made from materials found on the spot—a few upright posts, interlaced with split bamboos, plastered with mud, and thatched with the broad leaves of the teak, and an upper layer of grass. It costs them but the work of a day or two to shift such a settlement as this in accordance with the changes of their dhya sites.

The system of cultivation, if it can be so termed, I have thus described is of course of the most precarious character. The holding off of rain for a few weeks after the seed is sown, or when the ear is forming, will ruin the whole, and then the owner may be compelled to subsist entirely on what always largely supplements his diet—the wild fruits and products of the forest. Nature has been very bountiful in these forests in her supply of food for their wild human denizens. Many species of tree and bush ripen a wholesome and palatable fruit in their season; and the earth supplements the supply by many nourishing roots. The Mhowá flower before referred

to (p. 75), the plum of the ebony tree (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), and the fruit of the wild mango, are the staples in these hills. The berries of the Chironjí (*Buchanania latifolia*), and the Bér (*Zizyphus jujuba*), the seeds of the Sál (*Shorea robusta*), the bean of the giant Bauhinia creeper, and many other products of trees, are also eaten in different parts of the hills. A species of wild arrowroot (*Cúrcuma*), and a sort of wild yam, are also dug out of the earth and consumed.

The rare occurrence of the general seeding of the bamboo forests, is a godsend to the aboriginal tribes. A certain number of bamboos seed every year, but a general seeding is said to occur only once in about thirty years. Then every single bamboo over a vast tract of country will drop its leaves, and form at the end a large panicle of flowers, to be followed by the formation and shedding of myriads of seeds which are hardly to be distinguished from grains of rice. This done the parent bamboo itself immediately dies, while a fresh and vigorous crop at once begins to spring from the seed. For some years the scarcity of so useful an article as the bamboo may be severely felt, though it is not often that all the sources of supply are at once cut off; but in the meantime an abundant supply of wholesome grain is afforded, not only to the wild tribes but to multitudes of the poorer inhabitants of the open country, and the cities around, who crowd to the spot to obtain their share of the heaven-sent provender. There is a proverb that this occurrence portends a failure of the common food staples of the country; but like many such it has not been verified by experience. It would probably be in vain to guess the cause of this sudden renewal at long intervals of the whole crop of bamboo.

This diet of herbs is varied and improved by the flesh of

wild animals, procured by extensive drives in which the whole population of a tract will unite; and many small fish are also captured in the mountain streams, chiefly by poisoning the pools with various vegetable substances, of which I am acquainted only with the leaves and fruit of the species of *strychnos* that grow wild in these hills.

Those of the wild men who live in the neighbourhood of the plains, and have got accustomed to contact with their inhabitants, add considerably to their means of subsistence by trooping out in large numbers, after they have cut their own dhyas, to the reaping of the wheat harvest of the plains in the month of March, much after the fashion of the gangs of Irishmen who cross the Channel about harvest time. But the genuine hill-man of the far interior cannot yet bring himself to this, and is often put to severe straits by the failure of his scanty crop.

Such was now the case with the Gónds and Korkús in and about the Puchmurree hills; and I soon saw that to make anything of them I must appeal to their bellies. I accordingly sent down to the nearest large market in the plains, and purchased a mighty store of wheat and millet—about twenty-five bullock loads I think—and had it sent up by the agency of some of the Banjárá* carriers, who are in the habit of penetrating the

* These Banjárás are a curious race of nomads who are found everywhere in Central India, acting as carriers with herds of pack bullocks. Their name means "Forest Wanderer," and they appear to be perfectly distinct both from Hindús and from the known aboriginal tribes. It has been conjectured with some probability that they are gipsies. They are a fine stalwart light-coloured people, ready for any adventure, and of dauntless courage. With the aid of their splendid dogs they do not scruple to attack and spear the wild boar, the bear, and even the tiger; and they are at all times ardent and indefatigable sportsmen. Each *tanda*, as their camps are called, is commanded by a chief called the *naik*, whom all obey, and who, in council with the elders, disposes of intertribal offenders, even to the extent of capital punishment it is believed. The old men and many of the women and children remain encamped

remotest tracts of these hills with loads of salt, and taking back forest produce in return.

In the meantime I got up the remainder of my camp, pitched the large tent, and erected a hut of wattle and daub as a storehouse for the grain and tools, and made myself comfortable. At the same time I arranged for a few artificers, carpenters, and masons, being sent up from the plains; but it was long before any of them could be induced to venture into the dreaded region. Though the geological surveyor of the Narbadá valley had given no hope of limestone being found in these hills, I discovered an excellent supply of it in one of the deep glens a little below the scarp of the plateau. After searching long and wearily for it in vain, and receiving on all hands assurances that such a thing had never been heard of, I was directed to the place by a Korkú whom I incidentally saw in the unwonted occupation of chewing *paun*, in the composition of which lime has a place. I found a huge block of pure white crystalline limestone jammed in the bottom of this ravine; and it is curious to conjecture by what fortunate geological process this immense boulder of an article without which building would be impossible at Puchmurree, could have been brought and so conveniently deposited at an elevation of at least 2000 feet above the nearest formation of the kind. Though I believe I have at one time or other been in almost every other ravine in these hills, I never found another piece of limestone but one—a smaller boulder of the same sort, similarly situated, but at a rather lower elevation.

The young Thákúr came back in a day or two, with about

at some favourite grazing spot during the expeditions, where all return to pass the rainy season and recruit their cattle. Though eminent in the art and practice of highway robbery, the Banjárás are scrupulously faithful in the execution of trusts, and are constantly employed in the interchange of commodities between the open country and the forest tracts.

half-a-dozen Korkús from the neighbouring hills, and news of a herd of bison in the Bángangá Valley, behind and below the high peak of Dhúpgarh ; so I determined to have our grand hunt in that place. Invitations were sent to all the Gónd and Korkú chiefs in the neighbourhood, with their followers, and every available man in the hills was sent for to beat. A store of grain enough to feed them all was sent down to the little hamlet at the bottom of the Roríghát pass, where the beat was expected to end ; and one of the Puchmurree grog-shops was taken bodily down to the same place to supply the drinkables.

In after days I spent many a long day in the chace of the bison on these splendid hills; and have also made the acquaintance of the mountain bull in many other parts of the province. Some account of his habits may, therefore, not be out of place here, particularly as they are frequently a good deal misrepresented. And first as to his name. The latest scientific name for him is *Gavæus Gaurus*, but what he is to be called in English is not so easily settled. Sportsmen have unanimously agreed to call him the "Indian Bison," which naturalists object to, as he does not properly belong to the same group of bovines as the bisons of Europe and America. They would have us call him the *Gaur*, which appears to be his vernacular name in the Nepalese forests. I would, however, put in a plea for the retention, by sportsmen at least, of the name "Indian Bison." In the first place it fully accomplishes the object of all names in distinctly denoting the animal meant. Ever since he became known to Europeans he has been so called, and no other animal has ever shared the name. Then his structural distinction from the true bisontine group appears to consist chiefly, if not solely, in his having thirteen instead of fourteen or fifteen pairs of ribs, and somewhat flattened

instead of cylindrical horns (Jerdon). Lastly, there is no vernacular name universally applicable to him, "Gaur" being unknown in Central India; while his occasional Central Indian name of *Bhínsa* (with *Bun* or "wild" prefixed to it) is almost identical in sound with "bison," and is no doubt derived from the same root. If you ask for "bison" in these forests where he is known (and speak a little through your nose at the same time), you will certainly be shown *Gavæus Gaurus* and no other animal.

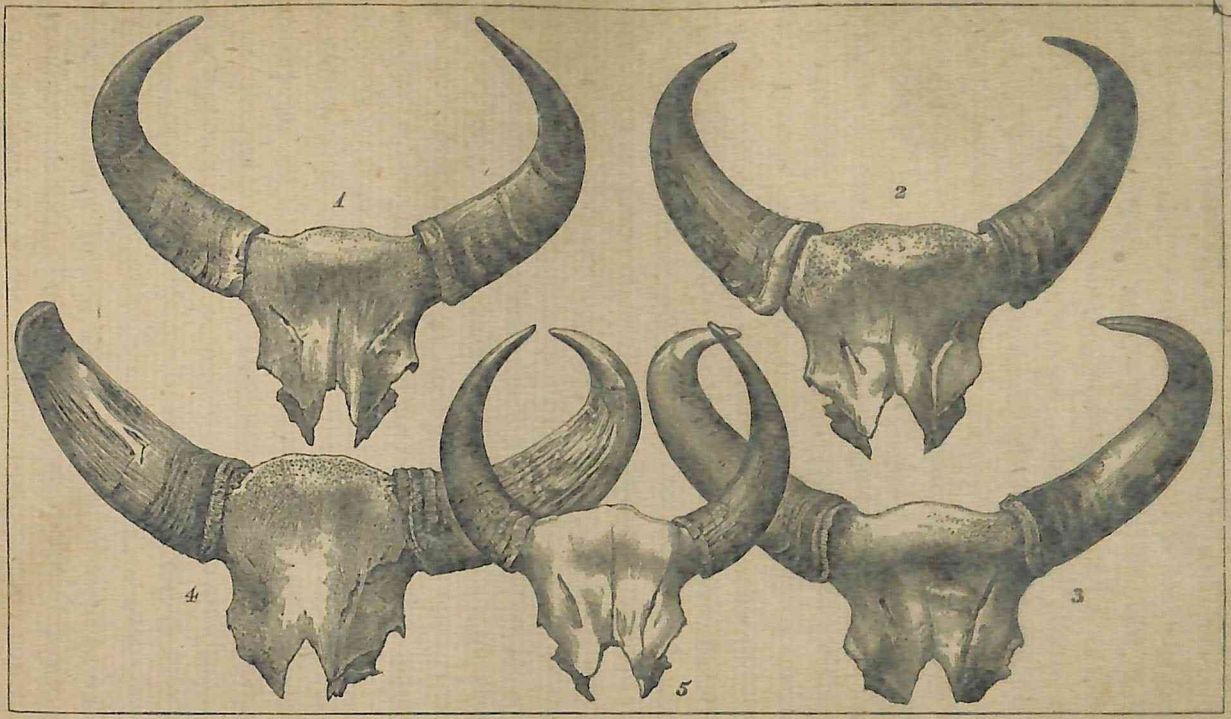
The respective ranges of this animal and the wild buffalo (*Bubalus*) have sometimes been defined by sportsmen in the saying that the bison is not found north, nor the buffalo south, of the Narbadá river. Like most apophthegms, however, this contains little more than a flavour of the truth. Not only does the bison inhabit many parts of the Vindhyá Mountains, directly to the north of the Narbadá, but he also stretches round the source of that river and penetrates into the hills of Chotá-Nágpúr and Midnapúr, and crosses over to the Nepalese Terae, and the hilly regions in the east of Bengal. The wild buffalo also covers the whole of the eastern part of the Central Provinces far to the south of the latitude of the Narbadá, and also the plateau of Mandlá and the Godávarí forests, directly to the south of that river. In fact, the bison appears to inhabit every part of India where he can find suitable conditions. These appear to be, firstly, the close proximity of hills, for though he is sometimes found on level ground, he is essentially a lover of hills, and always retreats to them when disturbed; extensive ranges of forest little disturbed by man or tame cattle, for, unlike the buffalo, he cannot tolerate the proximity of man and his works; a plentiful supply of water and green herbage; and lastly, so far as I have observed, the presence of the bamboo, on which he constantly browses. In

the Central Provinces of India all these conditions are unfortunately still present over enormous tracts of country. Thousands of square miles in the central range, much of which will one day be reclaimed to the uses of the plough, are now the very perfection of a preserve for the bison.

Perhaps he is nowhere more completely at home than in the Máhádeo hills. There, as a general rule, he will be found to frequent at any season the highest elevation at which he can then find food and water. During the cold season succeeding the monsoon they remain much about the higher plateaux, at an elevation of 2000 to 3000 feet, where they graze all night on the bamboos that clothe their sides, and on the short succulent grasses fringing the springs and streams usually found in the intervening hollows. They generally pass the day on the tops of the plateaux, lying down in secure positions under the shade of small trees, where they chew the cud and sleep. Their object in lying under trees seems more the concealment thus afforded to their large and dark-coloured bodies than shelter from the sun, as the shade is seldom dense, and a secure windy position is always secured irrespective of the sun. I have observed that single animals always lie looking down wind, leaving the up wind direction to be guarded by their keen sense of smell; and, in my experience, it is far easier to baffle their sense of vision in a direct approach, than to stalk them down wind, however carefully the approach may be covered. It is extraordinary how difficult it often is to distinguish so strongly coloured an object as a bull bison when thus lying down in the flickering shadow of a tree.

The colour of the cows is a light chestnut brown in the cold weather, becoming darker as the season advances. The young bulls are a deeper tint of the same colour, becoming, however, much darker as they advance in age, the mature bull being

almost black on the back and sides, and showing a rich chestnut shade only on the lower parts of the body and inside of the thighs. The colour of both bulls and cows varies a good deal in different localities. The lightest coloured are those of the open grass jungles in the west, the darkest those of the deep bamboo forests of Puchmurree and the east. The white stockings, which are so characteristic a marking of this species, also change with advancing age, assuming a much dingier colour in the old bulls. A singular change also occurs in the growth of the horns, which will be well illustrated by the accompanying plate of a photographed series belonging to bulls of different ages shot in the same locality (Nimar). No. 1 belonged to a young chestnut-coloured bull of about five years old. Its shape, it will be seen, approximates to that of the cows (No. 5), being, like them, slender and much recurved at the points. No. 2 pertained to a very dark, but not black, bull, evidently a year or two older than the first, but not quite mature. The horns have considerably increased in girth at the base, and have assumed a more outward sweep, with less incurvature at the points. No. 3 are still thicker and more horizontal, with some signs of wear at the tips, and were taken from a full-grown jet-black bull, the lord of a herd. No. 4 adorned a very old and solitary bull, and are, it will be seen, extremely rugged and massive, with scarcely any curve, and are considerably worn and blunted at the points. They measure thirty-seven and a half inches across the sweep, and seventeen round the thickest part. No. 3 are the longest round the curve of the horn, each measuring twenty-five and a half inches, the extreme girth being only fifteen and a half inches. The largest of these bulls measured exactly seventeen and a quarter hands (five feet nine inches) at the shoulder, measuring fairly the right line between two pegs held in the



Growth of Horns of *Gavœus Gaurus*.

line of the foreleg. I once measured a bull in the Puchmurree hills which was two inches taller than this, and I am convinced that this is about the extreme height attained by them in this part of India. I strongly suspect that the much greater heights often given have been taken from unfair measurements. A common way is to take an oblique line from the forefoot to the top of the dorsal ridge, and follow the curvatures of the body besides. In this way twenty-two hands may doubtless be made out, but we might as well measure the distance from nose to tail for the height as this.

At this season of the year (the winter months) the bison are rutting, and they will be found collected in herds numbering ten or twelve cows, with one bull in the prime of life, and a few immature males, the remaining old bulls being expelled to wander in pairs, or as solitary bachelors, in sullen and disappointed mood. Very old bulls with worn horns are almost always found alone, never apparently rejoining the herd after being once beaten by a younger rival. These solitary gentlemen wander about a great deal; while the herd, if undisturbed, will constantly be found in the same neighbourhood. Each herd appears to possess a tract of country tabooed to other herds; and in this are always included more than one stronghold, where the density of the cover renders pursuit of them hopeless. When frequently disturbed in and about one of these, they make off at once to one of the others.

As the hot season advances, and the springs in the higher ranges dry up, the bison come lower down the hills; and may even, if compelled by want of water, come out into the forest on the plains, drinking from the large rivers like other animals at that season. But they are always ready to retreat to their mountain fastnesses when much disturbed; and as soon as

the fall of the rains has renewed the supply of water, and freshened the grass in the higher hills, they retire again to their favourite plateaux. At this season the cows begin to calve, and separate a good deal, remaining for two or three months secluded in some spot where grazing and water are plentiful. The bulls and young cows are then often found together in herds of six to ten, the oldest bulls, however, always remaining alone. During the lulls in the monsoon a species of gadfly appears in the jungles, which is exceedingly troublesome to all animals. At such times the bison seek the high open tops of the mountains; and I have then seen a solitary bull standing for hours like a statue on the top of the highest peak in the Puchmurree range.

Though at first sight a clumsy-looking animal, which is chiefly due to his immensely massive dorsal ridge, the bison is one of the best rock climbers among animals. His short legs, and small game-like hoofs, the enormous power of the muscles of the shoulder, with their high dorsal attachment, and the preponderance of weight in the fore part of the body, all eminently qualify him for the ascent of steep and rocky hills. For rapid descent, however, they are not so well adapted; and I have known cases of their breaking a leg when pushed to take rapidly a steep declivity; a bull with one foreleg broken is at once brought to a standstill.

Terrible tales are told of the relentless ferocity of the bison by the class of writers who aim rather at sensational description than at sober truth. I have myself always found them to be extremely timid, and have never been charged by a bison, though frequently in a position where any animal at all ferocious would certainly have done so. In all my experience I have only heard of one or two cases of charging which I consider fully authentic, and in all these cases the animal had

previously been attacked and wounded. Captain Pearson was once treed by a wounded bull in the Puchmurree hills, which charged and upset his gun-bearer; and an officer was killed by one some years ago near Asírgarh. Often the blind rush of an animal bent on escape is put down by excited sportsmen as a deliberate charge. Much, too, of the romance attached to the animal must be attributed to his formidable appearance; for the sullen air of a mighty bull just roused is very impressive; and much to the wild tales of the people in whose neighbourhood they live, who always dilate on their general ferocity, but can seldom point to an instance of its effects, and who are, moreover, frequently from religious prejudice, desirous of withholding the sportsman from their pursuit. Still there is sufficient evidence on record of the occasional fierce retaliation of the bull bison when wounded and closely followed up, in some resulting even in the death of the sportsman, to invest their pursuit with the flavour of danger so attractive to many persons, and to render caution in attacking them highly advisable. The ground on which they are usually met is fortunately favourable for escape if the sportsman be attacked, trees and large rocks being seldom far distant.

Although a closely-allied bovine, the Gayal of trans-Brahmáputrá India, has for ages been domesticated and used to till the land, all attempts to do so with the subject of my remarks, or even to raise them to maturity in a state of captivity, have failed. After a certain point the wild and retiring nature of the forest race asserts itself, and the young bison pines and dies. It has always struck me as curious why the most difficult of all animals to reclaim from a wild state are precisely those whose congeners have been already domesticated. The so-called wild horses, and the wild asses, are almost untamable; so also with the wild

sheep and goat, the wild dog and the jungle-fowl. A young tiger or hyena is infinitely easier to bring up and tame than any of these.

This unconquerable antipathy of the Indian bison to the propinquity of man is slowly but surely contracting its range, and probably diminishing its numbers. Gradually cultivation is extending into the valleys that everywhere penetrate these hills; and the grazing of cattle, which extends far ahead of the regularly settled tracts, is pushing the wild bull before it into the remotest depths of the hills. I have, in a comparatively brief acquaintance with these hills, myself known considerable areas where bison used to be plentiful almost entirely cleared of these animals. Other wild beasts retire more slowly before the incursions of man, partly subsisting as they do on the products of his labour. The tiger who finds himself suddenly in the middle of herds of cattle merely changes his diet to meet the situation, and preys on cattle instead of wild pigs and deer. Even deer seldom live entirely in the deep forest, but hang on the outskirts of cultivation, and, mainly subsisting on it, need not materially decrease in numbers so long as there remain uncleared tracts to furnish a retreat when pressed. But the bison admits of no compromise. I have never heard of his visiting fields even when he lives within reach; he never interbreeds with tame cattle; and the axe of the clearer and the low of domestic cattle are a sign to him, as to the traditional backwoodsman, to move "further West." It may be that the time is not far distant when the tracts now being marked out, to remain for all time as reserves for the supply of forest produce to the country, will be the only refuge for these wild cattle, as has been the case with the bison and the wild bull of Europe.

On the day appointed for our grand hunt I started early,

with the young Thákúr and a few of the Korkús, by a way that led right over the top of Dhúpgarh. After walking along the open plateau for about three miles we commenced the ascent of the hill, which is close on 1000 feet above the plateau. The zigzag track was hardly distinguishable among the grass and bamboos that clothe the hill; and every here and there a road had to be cleared with the axe, no one having passed that way since the preceding rainy season, when all vestiges of paths in these hills become obliterated. We were amply rewarded, however, for the climb by the magnificent prospect that awaited us when we gained the summit—the finest by far in all this range of hills. The further slope of Dhúpgarh was not nearly so precipitous as that we had come up, but fell, by steps as it were, to the bottom of a deep and extensive glen, which was the one we were about to beat. Beyond this again rose the mural cliff that buttresses the whole of this block to the south; and far past this, to the left, stretched out below us the wilderness of forest-clad hills, that reaches with scarcely a break to the Táptí river—a distance, as the crow flies, of sixty or seventy miles. All this immense waste is the chosen home of the bison; and beyond it, on either side of the Táptí, on the elevated Chikaldá range, and in the wild hills of Kálíbhít, lies another tract of equally wide extent, where, too, the mountain bull roams, as yet scarcely troubled with the presence of man or cattle. This is the region of the Teak tree *par excellence* in this central range of mountains, to which I will have the pleasure of conducting the reader in a future chapter.

Tracks of bison and sámbar were numerous on the top of the hill, which is covered with bamboo clumps and with a low thicket of the bastard date.* I have frequently, on other

* *Phœnix sylvestris.*

occasions, found both bison and sámbar on the very top of Dhúpgarh in the early morning. The descent of the farther side of the hill, over long slopes of crumbled sandstone, and the curious vitrified pipes of ironstone that exfoliate from the decomposed surface of these hills, was fully more tiresome than the ascent. Many a time after this did I tread the same path to reach this valley, where bison were nearly always to be found, and many an effort did I make to discover a shorter and less precipitous road. But all in vain; for the sheer ravines that everywhere else hem in the flanks of the Dhúpgarh mountain render a passage round it a matter of infinitely greater time and toil than the way over the top. At the bottom of the valley, below a shady grove of wild mango trees, where the stream that drains the large valley has formed a considerable pool in a rocky basin, I found assembled three or four of the Ráj-Gónd chiefs whose possessions lie in the hills to the south of Puchmurree. They differed not at all from him of Puchmurree, unless that they were somewhat more intelligent and polished in manner. Each had brought his small retinue of matchlock men, and a large gang of common Gónds and Korkús to beat; so that altogether we mustered some twenty guns, and between two and three hundred beaters. The people were well acquainted with all the beats and passes, having always several great hunts of this sort during the year; and everything had been arranged before I came. The bulk of the beaters had gone on hours before to surround the valley, and, as we were a little later than was expected, it was likely that they would already have commenced to beat. We lost no time, therefore, in taking up our posts, which stretched in a long line right across the lower end of the valley. First, however, I had to furnish powder to load the whole of the matchlocks of my

native friends; and had I not guessed that such would be the case, as usual, I would certainly not have had sufficient in my flask. Six fingers deep is the rule for these weapons, and it is of no avail to point out the superior strength of our powder. They will have six fingers of Hall's No. 2, whatever the consequence. As they put generally two bullets, a leaden and an iron one, on the top of this charge, and wad with a handful of dry leaves, the result often is the bursting of the barrel, and always considerable contusion of the user's shoulder.

This was to be a silent beat; that is, the people were to advance without noise, beyond the rapping of their axes against the trees, as there was another dense cover lower down which usually held bison, and sometimes a tiger, and which was to be beaten also in the afternoon. I had sat an hour at least behind the screen of leaves that had been put up for me when the first sign of the beat appeared, and for another half-hour nothing was heard but the occasional knock of an axe-handle on a tree. Presently a shot rang from the extreme flank of the line of guns, then another, and a clatter of hoofs inside showed that a herd of something had been repulsed in an attempt to escape. As the beat advanced more shots were heard on either side, and the galloping about of the imprisoned animals, now and then met by a shout from behind when they attempted to break back, became productive of considerable excitement on my part. At last a rush of animals advanced down the side of the stream where I was posted, and eight or ten sámbar clattered past within half a stone's throw. I had just fired both barrels of my rifle at a couple of the stags, dropping one of them in his tracks, and had advanced a few paces towards it, when I heard a shot on my immediate right, and a fine bull bison, with two cows and a small calf, trotted past almost in the same line as the sámbar

had taken. Those were not the days of breech-loaders, and though I had another rifle it was a little behind, leaning against the tree, and before I could get hold of it nothing but the sterns of the "beeves" (as a friend used to call them) were to be seen. When I got it I favoured the bull with both barrels *à posteriori*, but there was no result. The young Thákúr, who occupied the post on my right, had been more successful; and when the beaters came up immediately afterwards I found a fine four-year-old bull lying dead, with two of his bullets through the centre of his neck. All the guns now came dropping in, and gathered in a group round the slain bison. One had seen a bear, another a couple of sámbar, and so on. All had fired, and of course hit hard, but the net result was the Thákúr's beeve, my sámbar, and two little "jungle sheep," as they are called, the proper name being the four-horned antelope.*

I had never seen a bison before, and though this was only a young chestnut-coloured bull with small horns I was much struck with the bulk and expression of power belonging to the animal. Such was the width of the chest that when lying on the side the upper fore leg projected stiff and straight out from the body, without any tendency towards the ground. The head in particular has a fine highbred, and withal solemn appearance, which is still more noticeable in old bulls. From the eye of a newly slain bison, turned up to the sunlight, comes such a wonderful beam of emerald light as I have seen in the eye of no other animal; and the skin emits a faint sweet odour as of herbs.

We tracked the wounded sámbar and bison a little way down the valley, the former showing signs of being hard hit, and a little blood was found also on the track of the bull. We

* *Tiltaceros quadricornis.*

left a few of the best trackers to follow up their trail with the next beat, and went round to take up our places about a mile further down, and close to my camp at Roríghát. The same process was repeated here, and this time with much shouting and hammering of drums, as a tiger was usually somewhere in this part of the valley, and his tracks had been seen in the morning. I did not get a shot on this occasion. One of the Gónd Thákúrs shot another sámbar; and my wounded stag was found and killed with their axes by the Gónds. The wounded bull was in the beat, and broke near one of the Thákúr's retainers, who was too astonished to fire. The rest of the bison, or another herd, broke through the side of the beat, and plunged down a very steep and rocky descent, which the people said they had never attempted but once before, when one of them had broken a leg. Certainly I should not have thought that any animal so large as a bison could go down that place and live.

Nothing had been seen of the tiger, and had I known him as well as I afterwards did, I would not have been surprised. I knew that tiger intimately for many months after this, and yet I never once saw him. He was a very large animal indeed, but entirely a *jungle* tiger, that is, preying solely on wild animals, and keeping during the day to the most inaccessible ravines and thickets. He frequented the bison ground round Dhúpgarh, and hung on the traces of the herds, apparently with an eye to the young beeves. I never came across evidence of his killing any of them, though I once saw a place on the plateau where the whole night long he had evidently baited an unfortunate cow with a calf. Within a space of some twenty yards in diameter the grass had been closely trampled down and paddled into the moist ground by their feet, the footprints of the calf being in the centre, while

the tiger's mighty paw went round outside, and the poor cow had evidently circled round and round between the monster and her little one. I am glad to say that I tracked the tiger off in one direction, and the courageous mother and her calf safe in another. The tiger cannot, I believe, kill even a cow bison, unless taken at a disadvantage; and with a bull he could have no chance whatever. I seldom went out without meeting the tracks of this tiger; and often followed him through his whole night's wanderings, which were laid out as on a map in the clean sand of the stream beds; but I always lost him in the end, though I believe he often let me pass within a few yards of him without saying anything. He came at rare intervals, like the bison, on to the plateau; but his regular beat was round the bottom of Dhúpgarh, a thousand feet lower down. Once, long ago, a tiger took up his post on the plateau, and became a man-eater, almost stopping the pilgrimage to Máhádeo, till he was shot by the uncle of the Thákúr.

I followed the wounded bison bull for about a mile from where he was last seen; but he was moving fast, and the blood had ceased to drop. He would never stop, the people said, till he got to a stronghold of the bison of these hills, about five miles off, a hill called the Búrí-Má (Old Mother); and so I reluctantly gave up the pursuit. When I returned all the beaters were assembled; and a more wild and uncouth set it never before had been my lot to see. Entirely naked, with the exception of a very dingy and often terribly scanty strip of cloth round the middle, there was no difficulty in detecting the points that mark the aborigine. They were all of low stature, the Korkús perhaps averaging an inch or two higher than the Gónds, who seldom exceed five feet two inches; the colour generally a very dark brown, almost black in many indivi-

duals, though never reaching the sooty blackness of the negro. Among the Gónds a lighter-brown tint was not uncommon. In features both races are almost identical, the face being flat, forehead low, nose flat on the bridge, with open protuberant nostrils; lips heavy and large, but the jaw usually well formed and not prominent like that of the negro; the hair on the face generally very scanty, but made up for by a bushy shock of straight black hair. In form they are generally well made, muscular about the shoulders and thighs, with lean sinewy forearm and lower leg. The expression of face is rather stolid, though good humoured. Some of the younger men might almost be called handsome after their pattern; but the elders have generally a coarse weather-beaten aspect which is not attractive. All the men present carried the little axe, without which they never stir into the forest, and many had spears besides. During the beat they had killed a good many peafowl and hares, and one little deer, by throwing their axes at them, in which they are very expert.

The Korkús, I found, were prevented by prejudice acquired from the Hindús from eating the flesh of the slain bison; so the Gónds from Almód, and a number of a tribe called Bharyas, who had come from the Motúr hills, had him all to themselves, while the Korkús set to work on the sámbar with their sharp little axes, which are all that is wanted for skinning and cutting up the carcass of the largest animal. My servant secured the tongues and marrow-bones, and a steak out of the undercut of the bison—all delicacies of the first water for the table of the forest sportsman; and the remainder of the flesh was given up to the hungry multitude. As night fell, they lit fires where the bison had fallen, and near the village where they had brought the deer; and for hours after continued carrying about gobbets of the raw meat, which they hung up

on the surrounding trees, broiling and swallowing the titbits during leisure moments. This was only the preliminary to the great feast, however—the dozen of oysters to whet the appetite for turtle and venison. Soon the trees were fully decorated with bloody festoons, and the savages set to work in earnest to gorge themselves with the half-cooked meat. The entrails were evidently the great delicacies, and were eaten in long lengths, as Italians do maccaroni. The gorging seemed to be endless, and I sat outside my little tent for hours looking on in wonder at the bloody orgie. The bonfires they had lighted threw a ruddy glow over the open glade, and on the crimson junks of flesh hanging on the trees, bringing the dusky forms of the revellers into every variety of picturesque relief, and forming a wild and Rembrandt-like picture which I shall not soon forget. Till a late hour many new arrivals continued to add to their numbers, winding down the steep path that leads over the Roríghát, with lighted torches and loud shouts to show the way and scare wild beasts. All were welcome to a raw steak and a pull at the pot of Mhowa spirit that stood beside every group. Ere long they began to sing, and then to dance to a shrill music piped from half-a-dozen bamboo flutes. The scene was getting uproarious as I turned in; and my slumber was broken through the greater part of the night by the noise and the glare of the great fires through the thin canvas of my tent.

Next morning I was roused by the crow of the red jungle-fowl, which swarm in the bamboo cover of this little valley, and by the unremitting "hammer, hammer" of the little "coppersmith" barbet,* of which there seemed to be more in this valley of Roríghát than in all the rest of the country. I found the revellers lying like logs just where they had been

* *Xantholæma indica.*

sitting; and it was no small labour to rouse and get them together. A couple of days' supply of flour was served out to each, as remuneration for their labour in the drive; and plenty more was promised if they would come and help to build the lodge at Puchmurree. I also gratified the Chiefs by presenting them with sundry canisters of powder and all my spare bullets; and we parted, I believe, mutually pleased with each other, and with promises of plenty more hunting-meets of the same sort. I had had enough of that sort of sport, however; and, excepting once with the Thákúr of Almód, never again drove the hills for game. It is poor sport in my opinion, and is seldom very successful even in making a bag.

Two days after this parties of my aboriginal friends began to drop in at the bungalow work; and, as a few masons and brickmakers had also arrived from the plains, our prospects looked cheerful. The wild people brought their women and children along with them, and in half a day erected huts of boughs sufficient for their accommodation. They were all told off in parties to cut and bring in Sál poles for rafters, and bamboos and grass for thatching, to break and carry up lime from the ravine, to puddle earth for brick-making, etc. The wood-cutting part of the work they were well accustomed to; but those to whose lot fell the lime and earth business were much disgusted, and were with difficulty kept to their work. All payments were made in kind, the convoy of Banjárá bullocks being now unremittingly employed in carrying grain from the plains. The work rapidly progressed, and was but slightly interrupted by the absconding after a while of all our masons and brickmakers, who had very unwillingly come up from the plains. Their places were at once taken by the Gónds who had been employed under them, and whom I had

selected to learn these branches of the work, with a view to such a contingency. An old foreman carpenter, who stuck by us and superintended the work, had fortunately some knowledge of bricklaying, and with his help we soon began to get the Gónds to turn out very respectable work indeed. Nobody knew how to turn an arch, however; and I had to evolve the idea of one out of my own consciousness, and build the first over the fireplace myself. The Gónds were immensely amused at the idea of the *Koitor*, or "men," as they call themselves, dabbling in bricks and mortar, and laughed and joked over it from morning to night. Regular industry, however, was not to be got from these unreclaimed savages; and there were seldom half of those on the muster-roll actually present. Every now and then, too, they would walk off in a body, and have a big drink somewhere for a couple of days, returning and setting to work the next morning without appearing to think a word of explanation necessary. The height of absurdity was reached when I imported a plough and a pair of bullocks from below, and sent a Korkú to work with them to plough up a piece of land for a garden. He really made a sad bungle of it at first, having no conception of the business; and I had to set one of my peons, who had followed the plough before he donned the badge of office, to help him. In a little while, however, several of the Korkús became quite *au fait* at ploughing; and an acre or so of fine soil in the old bed of the tank was soon fenced in, deeply ploughed, and prepared for gardening operations at the commencement of the rainy season.

For the next few weeks my spare time, was pleasantly passed in exploring the neighbourhood of the hills and their productions. I visited the Sál forest in the Delákárí valley to the east of Puchmurree. It was one of the few forests in this part of the country which had till then escaped

destruction at the hands of the timber-speculator or the dhyá-cutting aborigine, being inaccessible to the former from want of roads, and unsuited from its level character and the size of the trees to the operations of the latter. It, however, affords an example of one of the great difficulties of growing large timber in the dry upland regions of Central India. Though the trees bore every appearance of being fully mature, their size was by no means first rate, the largest averaging no more than six or eight feet in girth, while most of them when subsequently cut down were found to be almost useless from heart-shake and dry rot. At this time there was a great outcry for sleepers to lay the Great Indian Peninsular Railway line; and it was important to secure so promising a forest as this, both for present wants and to be regularly worked on a proper system in after years. It belonged to the Thákúr of Puchmurree and another Chief; and I soon after concluded a lease of it for Government with them, and laid out a road connecting it with the open country. The view looking upwards to the Puchmurree heights from the Denwá valley, or across from the opposite Motúr hills, is exceedingly fine, the rich reds of the sandstone scarp mellowing into an indescribable variety of delicate shades of purple and violet in the evening sun, while broad belts of shadow thrown across the green slopes at the foot, and gathering in the recesses of the ravines, seem to project the glowing summits of the rocks to an unnatural height in the soft orange-tinted sky.

Here I ascertained the existence of the Bárá-Singhá, or twelve-tined deer (*Rucervus Duvaucellii*), an animal which, like the Sál forest in which it lives, had been supposed not to extend to the west of the Sál belt in the Mandlá district. I was not so fortunate as to shoot a stag myself in this place; but I shot two does, and saw a frontlet of the

male in the possession of a native shikarí, with the unmistakable antlers attached. Since then, too, I have heard of a fine stag being shot there by a railway Engineer. I believe they are not very numerous here; indeed, the Sál forest, to which I believe their range is confined, covers an area of only a few square miles.

I also found that the red jungle-fowl of North-eastern India (*G. ferrugineus*) inhabits this Sál forest and the hills around it, although, so far as I am aware, it is not found anywhere else in these hills further west than the great Sál belt of Mandlá. The other species of jungle-fowl, which properly belongs to Western and Southern India (*G. Sonneratii*), is also to be met with on the Puchmurree hills; and I have shot both species in the same day in the ravine where the Máhádeo Cave is situated. The red fowl could hardly be distinguished from many a specimen of the domesticated race either in appearance or voice, while the grey fowl does not crow like a cock, and is, I think, a much handsomer bird than the red. His peculiar hackles, each feather tipped as with a drop of yellow sealing-wax, are much valued for fly-dressing. Jungle-fowl shooting with spaniels in these hills is capital fun. The cover they frequent is very thick, and they take a good hustling before they fly up and perch on the trees. When you approach they generally fly off, and are very clever at putting a thick cover between themselves and the gun, making the shooting by no means so easy as it looks, so that a couple of brace are a good bag for a morning's sport. I never saw reason to suppose that the two species interbreed, nor that either of them crosses with the domestic fowl of these hills.

I have already remarked on the singularity of thus finding a patch of the forest peculiar to eastern India, together with its most characteristic mammals and birds, isolated among the

vegetation and fauna of the west, at a distance of about one hundred and thirty miles from the nearest point of the main forest to which they belong.

Two species of spur-fowl are pretty common on the hills. The one is the common little red bird,* which, but for its size, might easily be mistaken for the red jungle-fowl, being very like a small bantam cock. The other species is, I think, the same as the painted spur-fowl,† an exceedingly handsome bird, with a long double spur on each leg. The latter species is generally found on the edges of the ravines, down which it drops, when flushed, like a stone, and can seldom be found again. The red bird I found chiefly on the little broken hills that surround the plateau, and in the same places as the jungle-fowl; and very pretty sport it gives with spaniels.

The common *Chikárá* gazelle of the plains inhabits the undulating part of the plateau; and the little four-horned antelope, already referred to, is not uncommon in the thicker parts. The black antelope is quite unknown, though on the similar plateau of Toran Mál, in the western Sátpúras, it is said to be common. Hares are very numerous. The Korkús have a curious way of killing them at night. I discovered it by observing a strange will-o'-the-wisp-like light flitting about the edges of the little eminences across the valley below my tent, accompanied by a faint jingle as of bells. It is very simple. One man carries a pole across his shoulders, from the fore end of which is slung an earthen pan full of blazing faggots of the torch-wood tree,‡ arranged so as to throw the light ahead. The pan is made out of one of their ordinary earthen water-vessels, by knocking out the side. It is balanced at the other end by a basket of spare

* *Galloperdix spadiceus.* † *G. lumulosus*, Jerdon.
‡ *Cochlospermum gossypium.*

faggots. Another man carries a long iron rod, with a number of sliding rings, that jingle as he walks. Three or four lusty fellows follow, carrying bamboos fifteen or twenty feet in length; and the party proceed to move about the edge of the thickets, where unsuspecting hares come out to feed after nightfall. As soon as one appears in the streak of bright light thrown across the ground by the fire-pan, the whole party rush towards her, jingling frantically at the bells, and keeping her terror-stricken form in the circle of light. Poor puss seldom attempts to escape, but sits stupefied by the glare and noise, till a bamboo brought down on her back ends her existence. A party generally gets five or six hares in this way in a few hours. They sometimes come across small deer, and kill them in the same way; and I have heard stories of panthers and even tigers being met with, and turning the tables on the fire-hunters in an unexpected fashion. I once took a gun out with one of these parties; but found that it spoiled the whole affair, all the hares in the neighbourhood retreating to the cover at the first shot.

I have already said that tigers rarely come on to the plateau. Bears are equally scarce; in fact, I don't think I ever saw the track of one above the passes, and very few below. The opposite range of Motúr, however, as well as the Máhádeo hills further west, are full of them. The panther, on the other hand, is pretty common in Puchmurree. The first night my camp came up, one of a small flock of sheep I had brought, in case of provisions running short, was killed by a panther close to my tent. He dropped from an overhanging branch into an enclosure of prickly bushes that had been put up round the sheep; and his attempts to drag it through the fence created such a disturbance among the people that he left it and leaped out in the confusion. The next night he

seized one of my Clumber spaniels at the door of my tent; but a big greyhound named "Jack" flew to the rescue, and little "Nell" escaped with a few scratches and a great fright. The same panther became afterwards very troublesome on the hill when the workmen at the bungalow had left, attacking my dogs, sheep, and goats nearly every night, and coming boldly through the very rooms of the house. He was a toothless old brute however, to which circumstance the dogs owed several escapes out of his very jaws; and though so daring at night in attacking our animals he would never face the men. Several times my horsekeepers and dog-boys sent him skulking off sideways, like a crab, from the vigour of their applications of long bamboos across his back. I never could kill him, though I tried every conceivable plan. One night I might have shot him as he passed along below the raised plinth of the house in the moonlight; but of course I had seized the only unloaded gun in the rack in the hurry, and the locks snapped harmlessly within a foot of his back. He was shot by a shikari after I had left the hill.

Coursing foxes was another great amusement. A colony of the pretty little fox of the plains* inhabited a small open glade a little to the west of my camp. They had a great many burrows almost in the centre of the plain, all of which appeared to run into each other. I never failed to unearth one or more foxes here by the aid of "Pincher," a minute black and tan English terrier, with the spirit of a lion, who could get into any of the holes, and would die rather than not get out his fox. Often he showed signs of severe subterranean combats; and once I thought he was done for, when the greyhounds ran a fox into the very hole he had gone in at. We had to get picks and spades and dig down

* *Vulpes Bengalensis.*

to him, and we found him lying with one fox before him pinned up in the end of a blind hole, which he had already half killed, and another blocking the way out behind him. Poor gallant little Pincher! He died of a sunstroke some three months later, from being dragged through a long eighteen-mile march in the hot sun by a brutal dog-boy, without getting a single drop of water. I had two brace of capital greyhounds at that time; one couple crossed between the English and Rámpúr breeds, and the other bred from a Scotch deerhound out of a Bunjárá bitch. The Indian fox is not above half the size of English Reynard, but he has an astonishing turn of speed, and doubles with wonderful agility. These dogs had, however, the speed of them, and the run was generally much in a circle; so that though the ground was well suited for riding, I generally went on foot, along with some of the workpeople who greatly enjoyed the sport, and some of whom (Bharyás) eat the foxes afterwards. It was capital training for bison-shooting, which severely tries the wind, and in which I also spent a day or two now and then.

Stalking the bison in these hills is very severe work indeed. At times they may be found pretty near at hand, but more generally the Dhúpgarh hill, or the great ravine, has to be crossed first, and either implies a good many miles of stiff work before the sport really begins. Then bison, though they seem to move slowly, are often really going very fast; and, as scarcely a yard of the country they live in is anything like level, what is apparently nothing to them is really a very hard pull for their pursuer. The bottoms of the valleys are also very hot even at this time of year; and at all times exercise under an Indian sun is much more fatiguing than in a cold climate. A wounded bison never stops going while he can short of nightfall, and must be pursued while a ray of hope

remains. Thus hill after hill, and ravine after ravine, are put between one and home in the excitement of the chase, till suddenly you pull up and realize what an immense distance you have come, and that you cannot possibly get back before the middle of the night. If you have anything to eat, the best course under such circumstances is to sleep where you are. I often used to bivouac thus when out after bison; and seldom found it much of a hardship. A good fire can always be lit in a few minutes, dry wood being never far off in an Indian jungle. An elevated place, at the same time sheltered from the wind, should be chosen for the purpose, as the valleys are more malarious at night. A shelter of boughs should always be knocked up, which your wild men will do handsomely in five minutes. I learned more of the simple nature of the forest people during the few hours' chat by the fire on these occasions than I believe I would have done otherwise in as many years. I think they got attached to me a good deal; and, though they are not very demonstrative at any time, I was often touched by some simple act of thoughtfulness one would hardly have expected from their untutored natures.

About the hardest day I had was after a couple of bulls I had seen grazing on the very top of Dhúpgarh, looming against the sky-line like two young elephants in the red sunlight. It was evening when I found them, and, as the spot was inaccessible by stalking, I sent round a couple of Korkús to move them, while I posted myself on the road they would be most likely to take down the hill. They went, however, by a pass a few hundred yards further on; and though I ran over the intervening bare and slippery rocks as hard as I could to get a shot, I was only in time to see them floundering down the hill-side like two great rocks, and they never pulled up till far down in the blue haze that hung over the bottom of

the valley they looked scarcely bigger than a couple of crows. As they had not been alarmed by shooting, and would probably be found in the valley next day, I went home and prepared for a long hunt. We took the road round by the great ravine, instead of going over Dhúpgarh, because it was rather shorter when the bottom of the valley had to be made for, and also because we expected to find another herd on the way. We were disappointed, however, in this, seeing nothing till we got to the valley except a bear with her cub, the former of which I shot. Arriving in the valley, we spread about in all directions to look for bison-tracks. The young Thákúr of Puchmurree, the best hunter and tracker in the hills, was unfortunately laid up with a sprain he had got the preceding day; but we picked up two capital bison-trackers out of a lot of Korkús from a village across the great ravine, whom we found cutting a dhyá on one of the hill-sides as we passed. I had found the footprints of the Dhúpgarh tiger in the bed of the stream, and was following them up with one of the Korkús, when I was recalled by a whistle to a place where the tracks of the two bulls had been discovered. They were making for a high plateau covered with thick bamboo jungle at the top of the valley, and we at once started on the trail. It was clear everywhere, and the men ran it at a sharp walk nearly to the top of the hill. Here, however, a sheet of rock intervened, and above it was a mass of large boulders intermixed with heavy clumps of bamboo. We were a long time puzzling the track through here, as the bulls had stopped and fed about on the young bamboo shoots. At last, however, one of the men we had picked up took a long cast over the top of the hill, and returned with the news that the bulls had separated, one going off to the south, apparently in the direction of a well-known haunt in the Borí teak forest, while

his companion had gone off up the hill in the opposite direction. We decided to follow the latter, as it led more nearly in the direction of home. The wilderness of bamboo-covered hills and deep intervening rocky-bottomed or swampy dells, over and through which we carried that trail till the sun was getting low, is beyond description. Every now and then we thought we were just upon him, freshly cropped bamboos and droppings showing that he was not far in front. But he had never stopped for long. This restlessness I afterwards found to be the habit of bison which have recently been disturbed. He was evidently making off steadily for some distant retreat. We started several herds of sámbar and solitary stags, and once a bear bustled out of a nálá we were crossing, and bundled off down the hill-side; but we were bent on nobler game and durst not fire at them. By evening we had got right to the further side of the great ravine beyond Jambo-Dwíp, and the peak of Dhúpgarh glowed pink and distant in the rays of the declining sun. We were descending a long slope among thin trees and high yellow grass, and I was a little ahead of the rest, when I suddenly saw the head and horns of a bison looking at me over a low thicket, and was putting up my rifle to fire when, with a loud snort, the owner wheeled round, and plunging noisily down the hill disappeared. This snort, which sounds like a strong expulsion of air through the nostrils, is very commonly uttered by bison when suddenly disturbed, and is the only sound I ever heard from them, except a low menacing moan, which I have heard a bull utter when suspicious of approaching danger, and the quivering bellow which they sometimes emit in common with most other animals when *in articulo*. I ran to the edge of what proved to be a deepish ravine full of bamboos, and was just in time to see a small herd of six or seven cows and

calves disappearing over a low shoulder on the opposite side. But behind them slowly stalked one bull—a majestic fellow nearly jet-black, and towering like a young elephant in the rapidly-closing gloom of the evening. As he reached the top of the rise he paused and turned broadside on, his solemn-looking visage facing in our direction. He was about ninety yards from where I sat, with the heavy 8-bore rifle I had wearily dragged after him all day rested on my knee; and, forbidding though he looked, I sighted him just behind the elbow and fired, fully expecting him to subside on the receipt of two ounces of lead driven by six drachms of powder. But there was no result whatever, save a dull thud as the bullet plunged into his side; and he slowly walked on over the brow as if nothing had happened. My other barrel caught him in the flank, and then I seized the spare rifle that was thrust into my hand, and sped across the intervening ravine. I was toiling up the other side, very hot and much out of breath, when a heavy crash beyond fell upon my delighted ear. I had been in agony lest I had missed the mighty target after all; but it was not so. There he lay as he had fallen, and rolled over down the hill until stopped by a clump of bamboos. A mighty mass of beef, truly, secured at last. But we were six or seven miles from Puchmurree, and there was no more than half-an-hour of daylight left. The road I knew was frightful, with hundreds of ravines besides the great one to cross, and it was not to be thought of at night. After due consideration we determined to go and sleep at a recently cut dhyá that was known by the people, about a mile from where we were; so, leaving the fallen bull to the shadows of night, we went and made ourselves sufficiently comfortable for the night, under a canopy of the newly-cut branches, on couches spread deeply with the springy shoots of the bamboo.

We had walked at least twenty miles in the course of the day, and that over fearful ground. I was very tired, but happy, and never slept sounder in my life. On the whole I think stalking the mountain bull among the splendid scenery of these elevated regions, possesses more of the elements of true sport than almost any other pursuit in this part of India.

Head of Bull Bison.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ABORIGINAL TRIBES.

Interest of the Subject—An Historical Parallel—Influence of contact with Hindúism—Mixed Races—The Rájgónds—The Korkús—The Bhilálás—Introduction of Caste—Difficulties of Investigation—Meagreness of Aboriginal Languages—Gónd Legends—Religion of the Gónds—Worship of Powers of Nature — Fetishism — Worship of Ancestors — Demigods and Heroes—Idol Worship—Síváism—Religious Ceremonies—The Great Spirit—Religion of the Korkús—Sun Worship—Burial Customs of the Tribes—Personal Appearance—Marriage Customs—Economical position of the Tribes — Drunkenness — Agricultural Position — The Timber-trade — Demoralization of the Tribes—Retribution—Excise Laws—Forest Regulations—Improvement in the Condition of the Aborigines—Effect of High Prices—Culture of the Oil-seed Plant—Influence of Hindúism—Future of the Aborigines—Measures Required—Hindú Pilgrims to the Shrine of Máhádeo—An Indian Fair—Description of the Shrine—The Religion of Síváism—Human Sacrifices—Omkár Mándháttá—Death of a Victim—A Priestly Murder—Cholera among the Pilgrims—Panic and Flight—The Scapegoat.

SOMETHING has already been said regarding the intermixture of Hindú blood, manners, and religion, that has taken place among the aboriginal races of Central India. Were this an isolated event in the ethnical history of the country it would possess a comparatively feeble interest. Its high importance lies in its furnishing us with a living example of a process which has, as already suggested, played an important part in the development of the races which compose the mass of modern Hindúism. It is the uppermost and most accessible stratum of a geological series of untold antiquity; and, as the geologist interprets ancient formations

by the analogy of the processes he sees still going on around him, so it may be that some light may be thrown on the construction of modern Hindúism by the process of transformation which is here going on before our eyes.

It is difficult to say how far the actual admixture of blood has taken place. There is small room for doubt that the so-called Gónd Rájás of pre-Mahomedan times were nearly, or quite, pure Hindú Rájpúts, exercising a feudal authority over numerous petty chiefs of mixed descent. The former have been nearly swept away, their only remaining representative being the pensioned Gónd Rájá of Nágpúr; the latter remain in their descendants, and, almost to a man, show the clearest signs of possessing a mixture of the Hindú and aboriginal blood. The Hindú element in such cases has not been the debased article current among the masses of the laboring population, but the purer strain derived from the aristocratic families of Rájpútáná. It is as it were the *first cross* in the mixed breed, and thus, as might be expected, shows the characteristics of both sides clearly developed. In other cases, among the lower races of aborigines, crosses also appear to have taken place; but in such cases it appears to have been the already debased Hindú of the lower orders that has furnished the foreign element, and the result has been a breed which little approaches the high Aryan character, and is in fact only a slight advance on the purely aboriginal type. Among the chiefs the cross appears to have taken place with all the different tribes of indigenes. Towards the east the mixed breed call themselves Gónd-Rájpúts, or shortly Ráj-Gónds, and are the direct result of the alliance between the Rájpút adventurer and the Gónd. In the Kórku country the same thing seems to have occurred between the Rájpúts and the Korkús. In this case, however, the tribe being an

influential one, the descendants are only known as Korkús. But they differ in many respects from pure Korkús, being tall and fair-complexioned, ultra-Hindú in their observances, and marrying only among their several families, or into purer houses—never among the undiluted aborigines. In the extreme west a distinct race called Bhilálás has originated from the cross between the Rájpút and the Bheel. The Bheels were for a much longer period in close contact with Hindús than any other tribe, and that during a period of Indian history when the restrictions of caste were almost entirely in abeyance. Buddhism, and its offspring Jainism, were the ruling faiths in that part of the country up to the 11th or 12th century; and thus it is probable that a much greater admixture of the races occurred there than in countries where the Brahminical forms prevailed. The Bhilálás are now very numerous, occupying large tracts as almost the sole population, but still there is a marked distinction between these and the land-holding chiefs of the same descent. The distinction is in fact identical with that between the Ráj-Gónd and Korkú chiefs and the numerous commoner classes of the same tribes who are nominally pure aborigines, but are really half Hindú.

As is the case with the divers peoples now included among modern Hindús, it would be wholly impossible now to gauge the extent to which the infusion of the Aryan element has taken place among these aboriginal races. The facility for amalgamation between them—the chemical affinity, so to speak, between the races—seems to be so great, that in a very few generations the points denoting the predominance of one or the other become obliterated. And yet the traveller among them will come on stratum after stratum showing in the clearest manner the intermediate stages between the two

races. And, as a rule, variation of physical type will be found to be accompanied in almost equal ratio by divergence from aboriginal manners and religious ideas in the direction of Hindúism. It is probable that the further commixture of blood, excepting through the occasional immorality of the races, has in recent times ceased as regards the masses, though the chiefs are still unremitting in their endeavours to purify their families by alliance with more blue-blooded Rájpút houses than their own. Blue blood being a marketable commodity here as in other countries, the chiefs have to pay highly for such privileges; and nothing has so much tended to pauperize these families as these constant bribes for the ennoblement of their race, and the equally heavy cost of conciliating the priestly arbitrators of their quality.

For it is through this chink that the influence of Brahmanism has mainly succeeded in penetrating to the very core of these indigenous tribes. The test of purity of caste among races of uncertain descent is much more the extent of their observance of the Hindú code of purity and ceremonial than actual proof of lineage. The Brahmans form a sort of Heralds' College, to be inscribed on the rolls of which for a few generations entitles an aspirant to ally himself with families who have already attained a higher status than himself. Strict reverence for the Brahmans, and adherence to ceremonial purity, are necessary to secure this; and thus it is that all these semi-Hindú chiefs spend the greater part of their time and means in striving to attain the utmost rigour of attention to Hindú religious and social rule. To this end they have abandoned the gods of their fathers for the deities of the Brahmans. They have retained Brahmans as their councillors and to conduct the worship of the gods. They eat nothing unsanctioned by the Brahminical law; and some even employ

Brahmans to cook their food, sprinkling the faggots employed for the purpose with holy water. Thus they have gradually separated themselves from the mass of their aboriginal subjects, and formed a separate caste of their own, either intermarrying among families similarly situated, or if possible seeking brides, as I have said, in houses superior to themselves. Some of them have thus succeeded in almost eradicating the aboriginal taint; and by continued reversion to the purer stocks have attained to an equality of physical type with the higher races. Their social status has come to be acknowledged as that of the Rájpút rather than the aborigine; and many have assumed the sacred thread, the wearing of which denotes membership of one of the twice-born castes. Most of them, however, whether from motives of policy or of superstition, still concede something to their semi-aboriginal descent; worshipping perhaps in secret the tribal deities, and, in cases, placing at certain festivals the flesh of cows, abhorred of Hindúism, to their lips, wrapped in a thin covering of cloth. Many of them also require to be installed on their succession to the chiefship by a ceremony which includes the touching of their foreheads with a drop of blood drawn from the body of a pure aborigine of the tribe they belong to.

Such an example on the part of their influential chiefs was certain to be followed by large sections of their subjects; and in particular by such of them as were themselves in some degree of mixed descent. Accordingly we find the tribes much subdivided into clans, or castes, distinguished from each other by a more or less close adoption of Hindú customs and religious forms. A theory has arisen that the Gónds are divided into twelve and a half formal castes according to the number of the gods they worship, after the pattern of the Hindús; but, as in the case of the latter such a division is

purely nominal, the actual number of Hindú castes being almost infinite, so also among the Gónds this distinction accords with nothing to be seen in practice; and their subdivisions differ in almost every district, being founded partly perhaps on tribal descent, but chiefly on imported distinctions arising from the extent of their approximation to Hindúism. Some of these castes have already succeeded, like their chiefs, in attaining to the status of Rájpúts; and the process is still going on before our eyes in places where the sacred thread is openly sold to aspirants by the chiefs and their obsequious Brahmans. We have only to make a slight change in the machinery to recognize in all this a system of social promotion going on amongst ourselves in civilized England; and it may perhaps be doubted whether, if a slight change of creed were, as here, the password to advancement of social position, a good many Christians might not be found to discover excellent reasons for such a step!

As might be expected, the Gónds have gone further in the adoption of these Hindú sentiments than the other tribes. They are far more numerous; they occupy large tracts of low country intermixed with the Hindús; their semi-Hindú chiefs possessed the ruling power of the country for many generations; and possibly they belong to a branch of the human race more susceptible of modification than the others. Their Tamulian congeners in Southern India, while losing little of their aboriginal physical type, have conformed *en masse* to the customs and religion of Hindúism; while the Kolarian stock, wherever found, has obstinately resisted intermixture with the Hindú.

In the next chapter I propose to give a sample of the legends current among the Gónds, which indicate their own consciousness of the importance of the change that has been

wrought among them by their acceptance of Hindú ideas; and in the meantime will proceed to some description of the aboriginal beliefs and institutions, which still lie, in the most advanced of their sections, but a little way below the surface, and which, among the undiluted denizens of the wilder regions, are yet found in their primitive purity.

It is not an easy matter for the inquirer among such tribes really to ascertain the peculiarities of their language, religion, or ideas. Like all savages there is a child-like vagueness about their conceptions which it is very difficult to get the better of, and to this is added a suspiciousness which frequently leads them to deliberately withhold information the object of which they are unable to comprehend. In the case of these particular tribes, moreover, the admixture of Hindúism has proceeded so far that one has to be constantly on his guard against admitting as belonging to them what is in fact of foreign origin. An intimate acquaintance with Hindú beliefs and peculiarities is therefore the first essential quality of him who attempts to ascertain the distinctive features of these races; and from the want of this great mistakes have constantly been made in describing them. The poverty of their languages is another great obstacle to the inquirer. In the aboriginal tongues there seem to be no expressions for abstract ideas, the few such which they possess being derived from the Hindí. In fact, the aboriginal roots are really almost confined to the expression of the barest necessities of savage existence. The names even of most of their personal deities, the nomenclature of religious ceremony, of moral qualities, and of nearly all the arts of life they possess, are all Hindí. The form, and particularly the termination, of these imported words is, however, frequently a good deal modified, the pronunciation being as a rule broadened; and thus an imperfect acquaintance with

the dialects of Hindí frequently leads to the acceptance of such phrases as purely aboriginal. The greatest difficulty, however, is their vagueness of conception, and their want of abstract ideas. Thus, for instance, in all the recorded vocabularies it will be found that the term for "sky" is nothing but the Hindí name for "clouds," or "sun," or "moon," or some specific object in the sky, not for the sky generally, for which they do not seem to possess a name. It is only in the remotest wilds that either Gónds or Korkús are now found who do not know sufficient Hindí to carry on a simple conversation, although they generally employ their own tongue in talking among themselves. The tribes bordering on the plains, who visit some bazaar town once a week for purposes of exchange, and who are constantly in contact with the people of the plains, have in many cases lost all knowledge of their own language, and speak the Hindí of the plains. There is nothing that is worth preserving in these rudimentary indigenous tongues; and their inevitable absorption in the more copious *lingua franca* of the plains is not at all to be regretted.

In religion the Gónd tribes have passed through all the earlier stages of belief, and are now entering on that of idolatry pure and simple—the last in which religion is still altogether dissevered from ideas of morality. As has been generally observed, however, the objects of worship of each new stage of development here form additions to those formerly reverenced, rather than supplant them.

The foundation of their creed appears to be a vague pantheism, in which all nature is looked upon as pervaded by spiritual powers, the most prominent and powerful of which are personified and propitiated by simple offerings. Every prominent mountain top is the residence of the Spirit of the

Hill, who must be satisfied by an offering before a dhyá can be cut on its slopes. The forest is peopled by woodland sprites, for whom a grove of typical trees is commonly left standing as a refuge in clearing away the jungle. When the field is sown, the god of rice-fields (Khodo Pen) has to be satisfied, and again when the crop is reaped. The malignant powers receive regular propitiation. The Tiger God has a hut built for him in the wilderness that he may not come near their dwellings. The goddess of small-pox and of cholera receives offerings chiefly when her ravages are threatened. Among such elementary powers must be reckoned the ghosts of the deceased, which have to be laid by certain ceremonies. These consist in conjuring the ghost into something tangible, in one case into the body of a fish caught in the nearest water, in another into a fowl chosen by omen. The object, whatever it is, is then brought to the house of the deceased, and propitiated for a certain time, after which it is formally consigned to rest by burial, or in one case by pouring it (in solution) over the representation of the village god. The spirits of persons killed by wild animals are believed to be especially malignant, and are "laid" with much care and ceremony. To this practice has been superadded by some the rite of periodical propitiation of deceased ancestors by sacrifice, implying their continued existence in another world, an entirely different thing it may be observed from the rite already described, which implies only a restless and spiteful existence in *this* world of a ghost which may be made an end of by a ceremony. I believe the superior belief to be entirely derived from the Hindús, with whom it is a prime article of faith.

None of these powers of nature are represented by idols, nor have they any particular forms or ceremonies of worship.

They are merely localised by some vague symbol; the mountain god by a daub of vermilion on some prominent rock; the tree god by a pile of stones thrown round the stem of a tree—and so on. At these the simple savage pays his devotion, almost furtively, as he passes in the grey of the morning to his day's labour, by a simple prostration, or perhaps by the offering of a handful of rice or an onion! More elaborate acts of worship are engaged in by the community at certain seasons, and then these primitive powers may be joined with the more personal deities derived from their neighbours in the general act of worship.

In the next stage the tribes have added certain Fetiches to the list of powers. The principal of these is an iron spear-head called Phársá Pén, and he is supported by the Bell god, the Chain god, a god composed of some copper money hung up in a pot, shapeless stones, and many other objects, the power attributed to which is purely arbitrary, and unconnected with any natural agency. To this stage appears to belong the medicine man and dealer in witchcraft, who still possesses considerable power among the tribes. These medicine men can scarcely be called priests, and are not a hereditary caste. Their business is to exorcise evil spirits, to interpret the wishes of the fetish, to compel rain, and so on. Some of them seem to have acquired the power of throwing themselves into a sort of trance in which they are visited by the deity; but in this respect they are far behind the sorcerers of the Bygá race further to the east, who will be subsequently alluded to.

In a still more advanced stage the Gónds have resorted to hero worship; but it is curious that all the deified heroes they reverence are of purely Hindú derivation. The chief are Bhímá, one of the five Pándú brethren, who is represented by his mythical club either in stone or wood; Hardyál, a Rájpút

hero of much later date; Dulha Deo, the apotheosis of a bridegroom, and many others.

Lastly come the recognized divinities of the Hindú pantheon. Amongst a race whose blessings are few and hardships many it is not surprising that the malevolent members of the Hindú pantheon should have found more acceptance than the benevolent deities. Vishnú is scarcely recognized by them, except in his one terrible development of Narsingha or the Man-Tiger; while Sívá the Destroyer, with his formidable consort Kálí, and son Bhairavá, are the favourite objects of reverence among the more advanced of the tribes. These are represented by rude idols, Sívá himself in his usual Phallic form; and a Brahman in many cases officiates at their shrines. Here for the first time we find mythology—the science of priests—at work. In their earlier stages the tribes had no priests, no hierarchy of gods, and consequently no mythology. Now legends are invented to connect the tribes, and their earlier gods, with the great web of Hindú fiction, and bring them within the dominion of caste and priestdom. In the succeeding chapter will be found a version of one of these fragments. Their art is of the rudest character, often outraging the requirements of Hindú orthodoxy—suited, in fact, to the mental calibre of a people scarcely yet emerging from mere fetishism.

Many have conjectured that the worship of Sívá and his mythic companions, which forms so incongruous an intrusion into the milder faith of the Aryan Hindús, has been in fact derived from the aboriginal races of India. As regards Sívá himself in his Phallic form there seems to be little foundation for such an hypothesis. The emblem has nowhere, I believe, been found as an object of adoration among the indigenous races where Brahmanism has not penetrated, whereas

it was a very ancient form of worship among the peoples of Western Asia, and was even prevalent in heathen Rome more than 1600 years ago. It was, as in India, so in the countries of Western Asia, connected with human sacrifices. It is true that this form of the Hindú religion is chiefly prevalent in the wilder parts of the country, where the aboriginal element prevails, many of its chiefest shrines being in fact situated in secluded wildernesses, and guarded by aboriginal, or semi-aboriginal, custodians. It may be, then, that the personified forms of this deity were adaptations from the cultus of some of the aboriginal races that have been absorbed in Hindúism; but I think we must go much further back in the history of this movement to find the originals of Kálí and Bhairavá than to anything we know of the indigenes as they now exist. May it not have been in the earliest days of Brahminical revival, when competitors for the adherence of the people in the great struggle with Buddhism had to be sought for among the popular deities—when Vishnú was transformed into the popular demigods Rama and Krishna, into the Tortoise, and the Fish, and the Man-Tiger, to suit the tastes of a variety of half-Hindúized races—that then Sívá was also imported from the West, and allied with the sterner objects of worship of the wilder races, to draw them into the great net of the priests, as the incarnations of Vishnú in their popular heroes and totems were employed to draw the more civilized classes of the people? Were these deities really indigenous amongst the Gónds we should certainly see their worship a matter of more widespread and heartfelt devotion than it is. It is in truth still almost confined to the Chiefs and their half-Hindú dependants, and to a few of the most advanced, and probably half-blooded, sections of the tribes. In the great periodical acts of public propitiation of the gods they are

either not admitted, or if so, frequently have to sit under one of the fetishes or nature-gods of the primitive faith.

The chief of these ceremonies occur at the marked periods of their agricultural season—when the crops are sown or reaped, and at the flowering of the valuable *Mhowa* tree—also when severe pestilence threatens the community. On such occasions a row of small stones, taken from the nearest hill side, are set up in a row and daubed with vermilion, to represent the presence of all the gods that are to be included in the propitiation. Sometimes small pieces of iron hung up in a pot are used instead. A bigger stone or bit of iron represents the "Bará Pén," or Great God of the occasion, who is usually the one supposed to want most attention at the time. Cocks and goats, and libations of mhowa spirit, are then offered with much ceremony, dancing, and music; and the affair, like most of their great occasions, usually winds up by the whole of them getting abominably drunk. Such is still the real religion of these peoples, notwithstanding the lacquer of Hindúism many of them have received; and such I may add is not very different from that of the vast mass of the so-called Hindús of the plains, who look on Vishnú and Síva as little nearer to them than do these savages, and pay their real devotion to the village gods, to the gods of the threshing-floor, and to their lares and penates—all unrecognized by the orthodox priest. In both cases their religious belief is wholly unconnected with any idea of morality. A moral deity, demanding morality from his creatures, is a religious conception far beyond the present capacity either of the aborigine or the ordinary Hindú.

The idea of a Great Spirit, above and beyond all personal gods, and whom they call Bhagwán, is, however, accepted by all Hindús, and has been borrowed from them by the Gónds.

He is the great First Cause of all things, but himself endowed with neither form nor moral qualities. He is unrepresented, and receives no adoration. A Hindú will accurately describe all the gods of his pantheon; but of Bhagwán he has no idea, except that he is the great Creator. He is, in fact, that "Unknown God" whom humanity has never yet learned to approach save through the medium of some human or anthropomorphous substitute.

I have not yet touched on the religion of the Korkús. It is, I think, purer than that of the Gónds. The powers of nature are equally adored, such as the Tiger God, the Bison God, the Hill God, the Deities of Small-pox and Cholera. But these are all secondary to the Sun and the Moon, which, among this branch of the Kolarian stock as among the Kóls in the far East, are the principal objects of adoration. I have seen nothing resembling Fetichism among them; and if, as some consider, that is the earliest form in which the religion of savages developes itself, the Korkús would seem in this respect to have advanced a stage beyond the Gónds. The sun and the figure of a horse (a Scythian emblem of the sun) are carved on wooden posts, and receive sacrifices. They also sacrifice to the manes of their dead, but only for a certain period, to "lay" them. Belief in sorcery and witchcraft is not so prevalent among them as with the Gónds and Bygas. Their semi-Hindú chiefs have accepted Sívá and his companions; but the common Korkús seem to care little about them, excepting in the immediate neighbourhood of his great shrine in the Máhádeo hills. A few glorified heroes receive attention, but not to nearly so great an extent as among the Gónds.

In disposing of the dead, the aboriginal tribes all appear to have formerly practised burial; but those who have been

much Hindúized resort by preference to cremation. The process being an expensive one, however, it is not lavished on all alike, women and children being still mostly buried, while adult males are burnt. Also during the rainy season, when burning is inconvenient, burial is often adopted for all alike. Most of the tribes erect some sort of a memorial to the dead; the Gónds generally in the shape of little mounds, covered by slabs of stone; while the Korkús carve elaborate pillars of teak-wood, with emblems of the sun and the crescent moon, and of the deceased party mounted on a horse, which they erect under a tree appropriated to the purpose near each of their villages. A very populous cemetery of this sort may be seen close to the village of Puchmurree.

I have already described the personal appearance of the men of the Gónd and Korkú tribes. Their women, I think, differ among themselves more than do the men of these races. Those of the Gónds are generally somewhat lighter in color and less fleshy than the Korkús. But the Gónd women of different parts of the country vary greatly in appearance, many of them in the opener parts near the plains being great robust creatures—finer animals by far than the men; and here Hindú blood may be fairly suspected. In the interior, again, bevies of Gónd women may be seen who are liker monkeys than human beings. The features of all are generally strongly marked and coarse. The young girls occasionally possess such comeliness as attaches to general plumpness and a good-humoured expression of face; but when their short youth is over, all pass at once into a hideous age. Their hard lives, sharing as they do all the labours of the men except that of hunting, suffice to account for this. They dress decently enough, in a short petticoat, often dyed

blue, tucked in between the legs so as to leave them naked to the thigh, and a mantle of white cotton covering the upper part of the body, with a fold thrown over the head. The most eastern section of the Korkús (hence called *Pothrias*) add a bodice, as do some of the Hindúized Gónds. The Gónd women have the legs as far as they are suffered to be seen tattooed in a variety of fantastic patterns, done in indigo or gunpowder blue. The Pardháns are the great artists in this line, and the figures they design are almost the only ornamental art attempted by these tribes. It is done when the girl becomes marriageable; and the traveller will sometimes hear dreadful screeches issuing from their villages, which will be attributed to some young Góndin being operated upon with the tattooing-needle. Like all barbarians, both races deck themselves with an inordinate amount of what they consider ornaments. Quantity rather than quality is aimed at; and both arms and legs are usually loaded with tiers of heavy rings—in silver among the more wealthy, but, rather than not at all, then in brass, iron, or coloured glass. Ear and nose rings and bulky necklaces of coins or beads are also common; and their ambrosial locks are intertwined on state occasions with the hair of goats and other animals.

In marriage customs they differ from the Hindús chiefly in the contract and performance both taking place when the parties are of full age. Polygamy is not forbidden; but, women being costly chattels, it is rarely practised. The father of the bride is always paid a consideration for the loss of her services, as is usually the case among poor races where the females bear a large share in the burden of life. The Biblical usage of the bridegroom, when too poor to pay this consideration in cash, serving in the house of his future father-in-law

for a certain time, is universal among the tribes. The youth is then called a *lamjan;* and it frequently happens that he gets tired of waiting, and induces his fair one to make a moonlight flitting of it. The morality of both sexes before marriage is open to comment; and some of the tribes adopt the precaution of shutting up all the marriageable young men at night in a bothy by themselves. Infidelity in the married state is, however, said to be very rare; and when it does occur is one of the few occasions when the stolid aborigine is roused to the extremity of passion, frequently revenging himself on the guilty pair by cutting off his wife's nose, and knocking out the brains of her paramour with his axe.

The marriage ceremony is very elaborate and childish, and is generally borrowed in great part from the Hindús. The bride is in some tribes selected from among first cousins by preference. More usually, however, connection is sought among another tribe. Usually an understanding is come to privately before the formal "asking" takes place, so that a "refusal" is scarcely known. The Pardhán is the ambassador, and arranges the articles of the "marriage settlement." In contradistinction to the Hindú practice, it is at the bridegroom's house that the ceremony takes place, so that the whole of the expense may fall upon him. Hindúized tribes, however, practise the reverse. The actual ceremonies consist, first, of an omen to discover the propitious day, on which commences a series of repeated carryings to and fro, anointings and sprinklings with various substances, eating together, tying the garments together, dancing together round a pole, being half drowned together by a douche of water, and the interchange of rings—all of which may be supposed to symbolise the union of the parties. The bridegroom sometimes places his foot on the bride's back to indicate her subjection; and a feigned

forcible abduction of the bride is often a part of the ceremony —the usual relic of olden times of the strong hand. Sacrifice to the gods, and unlimited gorging and spirit-drinking, are usually the wind-up of the affair. Widows are not precluded from re-marriage; and among the Gónds it is even the duty of a younger brother to take to wife the widow of an elder. The converse is not, however, permitted. A widow's re-marriage is accompanied by little ceremony.

There is little in any of these customs, it will be seen, to distinguish these tribes from other races of savages; and it would be unprofitable to devote further space to a record of their details. They may nearly all be found repeated among large masses of the so-called Hindú population of the plains; and, in fact, so far as religious and other customs are concerned, I believe that, were the Gónds not associated with hills and forests into which the Hindús have not penetrated very far, they would long since have come to be looked on merely as another caste in the vast social fabric of Hindúism. The Korkús are more peculiar, and, I think, a far superior race in most respects; and the Bygás or Bhúmias of the eastern hills are still more worthy of observation by the ethnologist. Something will be said of them in future chapters.

It is more important, as regards the Gónds and Korkús of the central and western hills, to inquire into their present economical position and their probable future. Their methods of subsistence in the interior of the hills have already been described; and their life has been shown to be one of great hardship and toil. Although so far inured to malaria as to be able to exist, and in some measure continue the race, in the heart of jungles which are at some seasons deadly to other constitutions, the effect of the climate and a poor diet

is seen in impoverishment of the constitution, constant attacks of fever and bowel diseases, and often chronic enlargement of the spleen. Imported diseases like cholera and small-pox also commit dreadful ravages among them. The life of labour which both sexes undergo, and their low physical vigour, result in very small families, of whom moreover a large percentage never attain maturity. There has been no accurate enumeration of the hill tribes at intervals, from which to judge whether they are increasing or the reverse. I suspect the latter as regards those in the interior, though the better fed and less exposed tribes in and near the plains may probably be increasing.

Until lately habits of unrestrained drunkenness have aggravated the natural obstacles to their improvement. The labour of their peculiar system of cultivation, though severe, is of a fitful character, a few weeks of great toil being succeeded by an interval of idleness, broken only by aimless wanderings in the jungle or hunting-expeditions. Periods of rude plenty, when the rains have been propitious to the crops, the hunt successful, and the crop of *mhowa* abundant, have been succeeded by times of scarcity or even of want. Such a thing as providing for a rainy day has never been thought of. The necessity for constantly shifting the sites of their clearings and habitations has created a want of local attachment, and a disposition to anything rather than steadiness of occupation. Occasional periods of hardship are sure to be followed, in such a character, by outbursts of excess; and thus the life of the Gónd has usually consisted of intervals of severe toil succeeded by periods of unrestrained dissipation, in which anything he may have earned has been squandered on drink. It is this unfortunate want of steadiness that has led to most of the misfortunes of the race, to the loss of their

heritage in the land, and in a great many cases practically even of their personal liberty. Inferior races give way before superior whenever they meet; and whether, as here and in America, the instrument selected be "fire-water," or as in New Zealand, it be our own favourite recipe of powder and lead, the result is the same.

The case of the Gónd has hitherto little differed, whether he has preferred to cling to his rugged hills and struggle with nature, or has remained on the edge of civilization and toiled for the superior races. Everywhere the aboriginal is the pioneer of the more settled races in their advance against the wilderness. His capacity for toil that would break the heart of a Hindú, his endurance of malaria, and his fearlessness of the jungle, eminently qualify him for this function; and his thriftlessness and hatred of being long settled in a locality as certainly ensure the fruits of his labour reverting as a permanency to the settled races of the plains. The process is everywhere much the same. The frontier villages in the possession of Hindú landholders or of the Gónd Thákurs or chiefs usually comprehend large areas of culturable but uncleared land, and there are always numbers of the aborigines floating about such frontiers, earning a precarious livelihood by woodcutting and occasional jobs, or working as farm servants, who can be induced to undertake to break it up. They have, of course, no capital, and seldom any security to offer; and the risk of loss must therefore be borne by the landholder. He either lends money himself for the purchase of a plough and pair of bullocks, and the other small farm-stock required to commence with, or becomes security for such a loan borrowed from the banker who is found in every circle of villages with money always ready to be lent on any such speculation. The interest charged on such a money-loan is never less than 24 per

cent. per annum. Seed grain has also to be borrowed; and this, as well as sufficient food to last the cultivator till his crop is ready, is generally borrowed in kind, the arrangement being that double the quantity borrowed shall be repaid at harvest-time. As grain is cheaper at harvest than at seed time, this does not *quite* represent 100 per cent. interest! Such rates of interest seem high, but the risk of such speculations is very great, the principal being not seldom lost altogether. The short-sighted policy long followed by our legislature, which rendered the recovery of such debts a matter of the greatest difficulty and uncertainty, greatly aided in maintaining these rates of interest. This policy is not even yet extinct, there being, in the Central Provinces at least, a rule which prohibits procedure against the farm-stock of a debtor, although it may all have been purchased with the borrowed money to recover which execution is sought.

It is obvious that transactions of this nature are really of the nature of a partnership between the labourer and the capitalist, the former furnishing nothing but his personal labour and supervision. Sometimes the partnership takes a more explicit form, when the man of money furnishes the oxen against the manual labour of the cultivator. All the other expenses, including the wages of the cultivator's family if he has any, are deducted from the gross produce of the farm, with interest to the capitalist if he has advanced any part of such expenditure, and the balance is then divided equally between the owner of the oxen and the cultivator. In either case the result usually is that all the profit, beyond the bare wages his labour would fetch in the market, is absorbed by the man that supplies the money and takes the risk. But the cultivator is far better off also than if he had been working for hire, for then he would not have labored half so

steadily as his interest in the result of the crop induces him to do.

Until recently the habits of debauchery I have mentioned, together with the low value of agricultural produce, usually prohibited the advance of the aboriginal cultivator from this stage. The harvest reaped, any grain that might fall to his share was at once taken to the spirit-dealer (who usually combined grain-dealing with his more pernicious trade), and converted into mhowa spirit,—gangs of Gónds at this season being constantly to be seen rolling about in a perpetual state of drunkenness, or sitting blear-eyed at the door of the bothy, until the last of their earnings had been dissipated. This effected, they had no resource but to work during the rest of the season, until sowing-time should again arrive, at occasional jobs of wood-cutting or road-making, or anything that might turn up, always getting drunk whenever opportunity served.

Great numbers of them, when once they had resorted to the grog-shop, never again became their own masters, remaining practically the bond slaves of the spirit-dealer ever after. And this introduces one of the most pernicious evils with which we had to contend in the early days of forest conservation. A very great amount of timber, bamboos, grass, and other forest produce is annually required by the people of the plains for house-building and repairing, fencing their fields, and other agricultural purposes. The timber-bearing tracts in the neighbourhood of the cultivated plains having long since been cleared, all this has to be brought down from the interior of the hills; and such work can only be done by the bold and hardy aborigines. Almost the whole of this trade had got into the hands of the Kulárs, or spirit-dealers, by means of the power they had obtained over the tribes by their devotion

to strong potations. Badly off as the poor Gónd was in the hands of the agricultural money-lender, he was at least paid in wholesome grain or hard coin; but here the universal practice was to pay him *in liquor*, all except the pittance necessary to keep body and soul together in the way of food and raiment. Often the Kulárs united the *three* trades, making the Gónd cultivate an autumn crop of grain for his own subsistence and the trader's profit at a season when forest operations were impossible, exchanging his surplus grain for liquor immediately after, until he had him deep in his books again, and then sending him out to the forests to cut wood to repay him, and to purchase back some of his own grain for subsistence. He was clean done and cheated at every turn, having to labour like a horse, and getting out of it nothing but a scanty subsistence, and as much vile liquor as he could swallow without interfering too much with his working power. This trade had become enormously profitable. The numbers of the caste of Kulárs, who alone can legitimately deal in spirits, were limited; and they soon were rolling in wealth. A dissolute flaunting set by nature, they did no good with the money they thus earned, spending it chiefly in gambling and debauchery, and in loading themselves and their women with massive golden ornaments. The evils of the system were incalculable. In his wild state the Gónd or Korkú has been recognized to be truthful and honest, occasionally breaking out into passion which might lead to violent crime, but free from tendency to mean or habitual criminality. Now he became a thief and a scoundrel. His craving for drink made him a ready tool in the hands of every designing knave; and to the dangerous temper of the drunken savage he soon began to add the viciousness of a debased and desperate character. To the forests the injury was scarcely less. Having no im-

plements but their little axes, and their employers being wholly indifferent to economical processes, these woodcutters procured their material in the most wasteful way possible. To produce a post for a cattle-pen a straight young teak sapling of ten or fifteen years' growth would be felled, and a piece six feet long taken from its middle, all the rest being left to perish. To procure a plank for a door a mature tree would be cut down, and hewn away to the requisite thickness with the axe. Timber was then doubtless cheap because nothing but the labour of these down-trodden races was expended in procuring it, and as many of them as they desired could be procured by the spirit-dealers for a wage which to the latter was almost nothing. In those days, the excise arrangements being very lax, the duty levied on spirits was very low; and enough liquor could be brewed to make a Gónd drunk for about a penny of our money. No forests could stand such a drain as this; and this wasteful system of working them was one of the main causes of their impending exhaustion.

It is fortunate that, under an improved administration, means were found at once to put a stop to this wholesale waste, and to greatly ameliorate the condition of the aboriginal labourer. The first step in this direction was the introduction of a new excise law, under which the formerly unrestricted power of establishing spirit-stills and grog-shops among the aborigines was withdrawn. Liquor was allowed to be distilled only at certain central places, and on payment of a fixed and considerable still-head duty. A certain number of retail shops only were allowed, sufficient in number and position to supply all the proper requirements of the people, and capable of being regulated by the police, without forcing temptation in the way of the less provident classes. The licenses for this restricted number of shops were let by public

auction. Now came a just retribution on the whole race of Kulárs. There were far more of them engaged in the liquor-trade than were required to man these shops; all were wealthy and reckless, and also jealous of each other; and so a strong competition for the licenses set in among them. Fabulous sums were bid at the auctions in many cases; and everywhere the price of liquor was so forced up by this and the heavy still-head duty that the poorer classes could no longer afford to drink it in excessive quantity. Sales thus diminished, while the expenses of a shop were largely increased; and the result was the almost universal ruin of the Kulárs, and the complete breaking up of their system of traffic. The gold ornaments they had flaunted to the world gradually disappeared, and many of them ended in utter bankruptcy. It may, perhaps, be regretted that a less sudden and seemingly oppressive method of curing the canker that was eating into the frontier society did not suggest itself; but it is difficult to pity so vicious and unscrupulous a tribe as these Kulárs. Though the consumption of liquor has fallen off immensely, the state revenue has not suffered, the avowed object of getting "the maximum of revenue with the minimum of consumption" being fully attained.

The complement to this overhauling of the excise law was the introduction of our system of forest conservation. So large a subject, regarding which so little knowledge existed, could not be expected to be dealt with in an entirely satisfactory manner all at once. Some mistakes were made, the chief of such being to attempt too much on a sudden, and with insufficient means. The management of all our immense tracts of waste was thrown upon one or two officers, who had not yet even explored the country, and had nothing besides to guide them, and who were expected to administer a code of

rules in detail, throughout this area, which was afterwards found to be much too strict, and to bear very hardly on the people. It could not be done; and things came ere long to a dead lock, till solved by the rules themselves passing into a dead letter. Presently the proper remedy was applied, by reserving the most promising forests to be directly managed by the special Forest Department, while the greater portion was left to be looked after by the ordinary civil officers. Improved experience has still further improved the system; but the main features of it were struck out as early as 1864. Restrictions on the method of felling timber were imposed, and a fixed timber-duty levied. These measures, if in some cases not unopen to exception, at least had the effect of inducing a more economical system of working the forests. The aborigines still furnish the labour in the forests, and, being paid in coin at the regular market value of their work, are enabled to profit by whatever they can earn. For some time the breaking up of the Kulár system left a want of private agency in the timber trade; and the Forest Department itself had to step in and arrange for the supply of the country. At the time this was beneficial in many respects, enabling us to utilize most of the fully ripe standing trees, and the logs lying in the forest, by enhancing the price until it became remunerative to take these out. Now, however, this has ceased to be necessary, and there are sufficient legitimate dealers in the trade to supply all wants.

It was some time before we ventured to interfere with the devastation caused by the wild tribes in their system of tillage by axe and fire which has been described. Having acquired the reputation of "savage and intractable foresters," it was with considerable hesitation that the first steps were adopted. The most promising forests were encircled by

boundary lines, marked by terror-inspiring masonry pillars, within which the formation of dhya clearings was prohibited. The people obeyed with scarcely a murmur; and presently the rules were extended to the great mass of the wastes, in so far that the cutting of valuable timber for clearings was forbidden, except under such arrangements as afforded a prospect of the reclamation of the land being permanent. To the wildest of the tribes certain areas were assigned, sufficient to afford room for a rotation of sites for their dhya-fields. It cannot be said that these comprehensive restrictions have been everywhere enforced to the letter, nor was it to be expected. But the general effect has been very marked: the "intractable foresters" have shown a ready acquiescence in arrangements the object and necessity of which were carefully shown to them; and year by year the influence of law is more fully acknowledged and felt in the forest regions.

The habits of the aborigines are now greatly changed for the better. Excessive and constant drunkenness is almost unknown, though drinking to a greater extent than is good for them on occasions has not entirely ceased. The whole of their earnings is not now dissipated in drink; and the accumulation of the little capital needed to start cultivation on a more regular system is now possible to them all. An immense assistance in this respect has been derived from the great enhancement in the value of all agricultural produce, consequent on the opening up of the country and the American war. Large areas in the west of India, which formerly yielded cereals, have been devoted to the production of cotton, and a great extension of cultivation to supply the consequent scarcity of food grains has taken place, and is still progressing, wherever the country is fitted by proper communications to yield an exportable supply. The great undertakings in railways,

and other public works, which have marked the last decade, have also much increased the demand for labour; and even the natural produce of these central wilds has acquired a commercial value which it never before possessed. Before I left India, the agents of Bombay mercantile houses were probing the recesses of my district (Nimár) in search of various articles of natural production which had suddenly become valuable for export, such as the oil-yielding seeds of the Mhowa (*Bassia latifolia*), and the pure gum of the Dháora (*Conocarpus latifolius*). Altogether a new era has dawned for these "children of the forest." The relation between labour and capital, long unfavourable to the former, has been reversed, and hard rupees are finding their way into the hills of Góndwáná, to the material improvement of the circumstances of its denizens, instead of the poisonous liquor which was fast hurrying them to destruction. Their contact with the Hindú races was long to them nothing but a curse; but there is now a general agreement of opinion that of late they have been fast improving, both in well-being and in character. Where they still continue to work as farm-servants they receive better wages, and save something out of them; and, either from such savings or from their large earnings on the railway works, many have found the means to settle down as small farmers on their own account. Even as borrowers their credit is much improved. A great deal of capital is now seeking the profitable investment offered by agriculture; and loans are given on easier terms even to these still somewhat unreliable settlers. "The high price obtainable for oil-seeds of late years has perhaps done more towards this than anything else. It takes a mere handful of seed to sow an acre of *tillee* (sesamum); it flourishes with the rudest tillage on half-cleared land, for which

no rent is usually paid for the first three years; and it is cut and sold by the beginning of November. I know two 'unencumbered' Korkús who in 1867 cleared thirty acres of light land, and sowed it with tillee. They borrowed 80 rupees (£8) to buy bullocks and implements, and two *manees* (1,920 lb.) of *jowaree* (millet) to eat. The interest on the money-debt was 20 rupees, and, as usual, double the quantity of grain had to be paid back at harvest. They had no other expenses, no rent being charged, and they themselves doing all the labour. The produce was 75 *maunds* (6,150 lb.) of oil-seed, which sold for 215 rupees (£21 10*s*.), from which they repaid the 80 rupees worth of grain and 100 rupees in cash, leaving them gainers of 35 rupees (£3 10*s*.), after paying off the whole of their debt. Thus they got a stocked farm, free from debt, in a single season, by their own manual labour alone, which would afterwards yield them at least £10 apiece per annum, or much more than they could live on in comfort. The money-lender at the same time cleared 40 per cent. on his money in eight months." * Such a farm as this may appear rather a miserable little affair to the English reader; but such are the units of which the vast extent of Indian tillage is made up; and to obtain possession of such a holding, with its slender stock, is an object of ambition to millions of labourers for a bare subsistence.

There can be small room for doubt that the permeation of these aboriginal tribes with Hindú ideas, manners, and religion is steadily progressing; and it may be hoped that this influence is now working rather for the better than for the worse. The flighty, debauched, half-tamed Gónd was a being much deteriorated from his original state of rude simplicity; but the

* Extract from a Report, by the writer, on the Settlement of the Nimár District.

steady and sober, if illiterate and superstitious, Hindú cultivator of the soil is a type towards which we should by no means regret to see the aboriginal races advancing. It is true that in thus joining the great mass of Hindúism they will exchange their rude forms of religious belief for a submission to the powerful priestly influence which still prohibits the advance of the people of India beyond a certain point, and for a superstition which is morally no better than their own. The missionary may lose his chance in the meantime of getting them to accept some of his fetiches* in the place of their own. But probably they will then be no further, if so far, from the acceptance of a pure religion of morality than they are at present; and when the distant day dawns for the dusky peoples of India, when the light of education shall dissipate their hideous superstitions, and lead them to inquire after a pure belief, they will be there, elevated and improved by contact and assimilation with a race superior to themselves.

Such seems to be the probable future of those sections of the aborigines who lie on the confines of Hindúism in the plains. But so long as the vast wildernesses of these central highlands remain uncleared, which physical causes will in great measure render a permanent necessity, so long must human inhabitants of a type fitted to occupy them continue to exist. For such, civilization as we call it is impossible, and undesirable if it were possible. All that can be done for them is to eliminate by thoughtful administration causes which lead to their depression or demoralization, and to avoid any treatment irksome to their wild and timid nature which is not necessitated by the general requirements of the country.

There is probably not room in their jungles for a much

* Of course I mean what would prove fetiches to them in their present intellectual stage—not that they are so to the missionary!

larger number of them than there are to exist in their wild state. In the great areas of unculturable waste their remnants must probably continue to exist much as they are, struggling for a livelihood with the beasts of the forest. But much of their country is also capable of clearance and permanent tillage. In this work the aboriginal will, as hitherto, be the necessary pioneer. Must he also, as hitherto, clear the wastes only to resign them when ready for permanent settlement to the occupation of the Hindú races? Can we not now hope to secure to him some of the permanent fruits of his own toil? Legislation has never yet enabled an inferior to stand before a superior race; but it has frequently done much to put a weapon in the hands of the aggressors without which the invaded might have held their own. There are flaws in our law relating to the occupation of land, and to the legal enforcement of obligations, which, it may be feared, arm the Hindú irresistibly against the aborigine. None but a capitalist can now practically occupy the waste lands so as to secure a legal proprietary title; and the aborigine never has such capital as would enable him to do so. The rules for the occupation of the wastes, given in Appendix B, will sufficiently explain this.

Again, our administration of civil justice, while perhaps sufficiently suited to the requirements of settled districts, is practically a negation of all justice to the aborigine in his jungle. The courts sit at distant stations; and in the Central Provinces there is even a rule *prohibiting* the trial of cases by civil officers on tour, unless *both* parties live on the spot. It wants only the slightest acquaintance with the timid and suspicious aborigine to see that this really amounts to denying him a hearing altogether. He will never come in to the station if he can avoid it by any payment within his means to make,

and, if he does, the chances are against his succeeding in escaping from it, and the crowd of harpies who clog the wheels of justice, without leaving behind him much of his worldly substance. The apparent necessities of a government which impoverishes its treasuries to cover the land with public works have led to an economy in its judicial establishments that inevitably leads to a very superficial investigation of small causes, and to a corrupt execution of the processes of the courts; so that, notwithstanding much recent improvement in these respects, it is still often fully within the power of a wealthy litigant, who is acquainted with the secret springs of the judicial machinery, to obtain a decree, and take out processes of duress and distraint, against an alleged debtor, who may never have even been informed of the claim against him. Of course the law provides subsequent remedies for a person who has been so injured, but they are not such as are within the power of a poor aborigine in a remote jungle. The proper remedy obviously is to encourage, or even prescribe, the hearing of claims against the hill people by the superior civil officers during tours in their own country—tours which for many reasons should be regularly made, instead of, as now, being rendered almost impracticable owing to constant pressure of other work.

The aborigine is the most truthful of beings, and rarely denies either a money obligation or a crime really chargeable against him. When brought into court he will stand on one leg, and, holding his ears in his hands in token of submission, freely confess to having battered in a rival's head with his axe. But he has no idea of letters; and, so long as his admission of having signed a bond is held to prove against him all the obligations that it may contain, he will continue to be cheated by the man of the pen with whom he deals. In addition to an

improved machinery for the disposal of such cases, we should accordingly require some system of compulsory registration of agreements between such parties, without which no claim should be enforced. In fine, our system is too sharp and swift for these people. The dwellers in the plains may be left to adjust themselves to its requirements: they are clever enough to protect themselves. But it is death to the honest, timid, and unsettled aboriginal.

But to return to my doings at Puchmurree, after this long digression. Towards the end of February numbers of Hindú pilgrims from the plains to the great shrine of Sívá in the Mahadeo hills began to pass my camp. They usually encamp at the foot of the hill below the shrine; and, besides the road over the plateau, come by a way which leads through the Dénwá valley below the Puchmurree scarp. Several other roads lead in from the south, all of which are rugged and difficult, and are traversed in fear and trembling by the pilgrims. About this time I crossed over from Puchmurree to visit the opposite plateau of Motúr, which was also at that time under examination as a possible site for a sanitarium in these provinces. The Dénwá valley lay between, necessitating a descent and ascent of about 2500 feet each way. On my return from Motúr on the 26th of February I found the little plain in the Dénwá valley below the shrine, through which my road lay, swarming with the pilgrims, some forty thousand of whom had collected in this lonely valley in a few days, and were now crowding up into the ravine where the cave is situated—a ravine through which a week or two before I had tracked a herd of bison!

Most of these annual gatherings of pilgrims are, to the majority of the Hindús who attend them, very much what race-meetings and cattle-shows are to the more practical English-

man—an episode in their hard-worked and rather colourless existence, in which a nominal object of little interest in itself is made the excuse for an "outing," the amusements of which chiefly consist in bothies for the sale of all sorts of miscellaneous articles, universal gossiping for the elders, and peep-shows and whirligigs for the younger members. It is surprising how the familiar features of a fair at home come out, in an oriental costume, at these so-called religious gatherings. The cow with five legs and the performing billy-goat adequately represent the woolly horse and the dancing bear of our childhood. The acrobats are there to the life, tying themselves into the identical knots we loved so well. The begging gipsy appears in the fantastic Jogee. Ginger-pop and oranges are even faintly typified in Mhowa grog and sticky sweetmeats. Aunt Sally alone is nowhere: there is nothing at all resembling the uproarious mirth of that ancient lady.

Doubtless at all these gatherings there are a certain number of genuine pilgrims, whose end in coming is the performance of sacred rites at these holy shrines at such holy seasons; for the fairs are all held at times when the worship of the local deity is held to be particularly efficacious. But generally their number is no greater a proportion of the whole than is that of the "members of the ring" in a Derby crowd. Such gatherings usually occur near the large centres of population, where solemn temples crown some sacred eminence by the holy Narbadá. But the gathering at the Máhádeo shrine was of another character from these holiday outings. It draws its multitudes into a remote and desolate valley surrounded by the "eternal hills" where the Great God has his chiefest dwelling-place in these central regions. No gorgeous temples or impressive ritual attract the sight-seer. The pathways leading to the place are mere tracks, scarcely discernible in

the rank jungle, and here and there scaling precipitous rocks, where the feet of countless pilgrims have worn steps in the stone. Young and old have to track out these paths on foot; and all the terrors of pestilence, wild beasts, and the demons and spirits of the waste surround the approach in their excited imaginations. Arrived at the foot of the holy hill, the pilgrim finds neither jollity nor anything more than the barest requirements of existence awaiting him. His food is dry parched grain, his couch on the naked earth, during his sojourn in the presence of Máhádevá. Should he be among the first to arrive, the tiger may chance to dispute with him the right to quench his thirst at the watering-place in the Dénwá river.* Those who come to a place like this for pleasure must be few indeed.

On my way back to Puchmurree, as I passed through the assembled multitudes, many of them were starting, after a dip of purification in the holy stream, to scale the heights that contain the shrine. My way also lay up the pilgrims' pass; and as I went I passed through numerous groups of them slowly toiling up the steep ascent of nearly two thousand feet. Both men and women formed the throng, the former stripped to the waist and girded with a clean white cloth, the horizontal marks of red and yellow which distinguished them as worshippers of Sívá being newly imprinted on their arms and foreheads. The women retained their usual costume; but the careful veiling of face and figure, attended to on common occasions by high caste ladies, was a good deal relaxed in the excitement of the occasion (and besides, were they not on their way to be absolved of all sin?); and not inconsiderable revelations of the charms of many of the good dames, of light brown skins and jet-black eyes, were permitted by the wayward

* As I went to Motúr on this occasion I saw the track of a tiger where the pilgrims drink. They had not then arrived, of course.

behaviour of their flowing robes as they turned to stare in astonishment at the *saheb* and his strangely attired attendants pegging away past them up the hill with double-barrelled rifles on their shoulders. Signs of religious fervour there were none. All were talking and laughing gaily—now and then shouting out "Jae, Jae, Mahadeo!" (victory to the Great God). The cry raised by each as he took the first step on the hill was taken up by all the forward groups, till it died away in a confused hum among the crowd who had already reached the shrine, far up in the bowels of the hill. Gloom and terror are the last sentiments in the religious feeling of the Hindú, even when approaching the shrine of the deity who has been called the Destroyer in their trinity of gods. It is considered sufficiently meritorious to perform such a pilgrimage as this at all, without further adding to its misery by wailing and gnashing of teeth. They believe it will do them good, because the priests say so; but they do not think it necessary to weep over it, and "boil their peas" when they can. But at the best it is a hard clamber for those unused to toil. The old and decrepit, the fat trader, and the delicate high-bred woman, have to halt and rest often and again as they labour up the hill. The path was a zig-zag; and at every turn some convenient stone or rocky ledge had been worn smooth by these restings of generations of pilgrims.

For a long way before the shrine was reached the path was lined on either side by rows of religious mendicants and devotees, spreading before them open cloths to receive alms, clothed in ashes picked out by the white horizontal paint-marks of the followers of Sívá, with girdle of twisted rope and long felted locks, hollow-eyed and hideous, jingling a huge pair of iron tongs with moveable rings on them, and shouting out the praises of Máhádeo. The clang of a large fine-toned

bell and the hum of a multitude of voices reached our ears, as, surmounting the last shoulder of the hill, we entered the narrow valley of the shrine. A long dim aisle, betwixt high red sandstone cliffs, and canopied by tall mango trees, led up to the cave. The roots of the great mangoes, of wild plantains, and of the sacred *Chumpun*,* were fixed in cracks in the pavement of rock, worn smooth by the feet of the pilgrims, and moist and slippery with the waters of the stream that issues from the cave.

The cave itself opens through a lofty natural arch in a vertical sandstone cliff; and for about three hundred feet runs straight into the bowels of the hill. It is without doubt natural; and a considerable stream of clear cold water issues from a cleft at its further end. Here is set up the little conical stone (Lingam) which represents the God, and attracts all these pilgrims once a year. No temple made with hands, no graven image, nothing of the usual pomp and ceremony of Brahminical worship, adorns this forest shrine. Outside on a platform a Brahman sits chanting passages in praise of the god, out of the local Sívite gospel (the *Réwa Khanda*); and a little way off an old woman tolls the great bell at intervals. But within there is no officiating priest, no one but a retainer of the aboriginal Chief whose right it has been from time immemorial to act as custodian of the shrine, and to receive the offerings of the pilgrims. No pilgrim ever brings more up the hill with him than he means to offer; for he may take back nothing—his last rupee, and even the ornaments of the women, must be left on the shrine of the god. Before passing into the cave the pilgrim leaves with the Brahmans outside (along with a sufficient *douceur*) his pair of small earthen vessels for the receipt of holy water. These they

* *Michelia Champaca.*

fill from the stream, seal up, and return to the pilgrim, who then proceeds to make the tour of the holy places on the Máhádeo hills. This takes him the whole of the remainder of the day. At each place a cocoa nut is offered; and little piles of stones, like children's card-houses, are erected at some point of their peregrinations to signify a desire for a mansion in Kailás—the heaven of Sívá. Many of the places which should in theory be visited are very inaccessible, such as the top of the Cháoradeo peak, and very few of the pilgrims make the whole round.

I sat for some hours in the ravine sketching the entrance to the cave and the picturesque throng about it. A few sulky looks from the professional religionists, and a drawing closer of their garments by the ladies, when they saw my occupation, were all the notice I met with. The bright colouring which gives such a charm to congregations of Hindús was heightened by the general holiday attire of the worshippers on this occasion; and, in the mellowed light from above, which percolated rather than shone through the canopy of foliage, would have formed a subject worthy of a much better artist than myself. It was hard to believe that all this gay gathering had come in a day, and would go in another, leaving the valley again to the bison and the jungle-fowl. Unlike most shrines where such pilgrimages occur, no one remains to look after the god when the pilgrims are gone. The bell is unslung and taken away, being evidently looked upon as the only thing of value in the place. When I first visited the cave I found that the Great God had been better attended to by the wild beasts of the forest than by his human worshippers—a panther or hyena having evidently been in the daily habit of leaving the only offering he could make before his shrine!

It is a common idea amongst Europeans that the worship

at these Sívite shrines includes rites or mysteries of an obscene character. I believe this to be wholly groundless. No such thing could take place, here at any rate, except in public among a dense crowd; and neither here nor at any other of the many shrines that I have visited have I either seen or heard of such a practice. It is undoubted that the small sects who worship the Sáktí, or female power of Sívá, do indulge in such obscenity. Their unholy rites are not, however, practised at the public shrines, but in the dark seclusion of their secret meeting-places; and their existence I believe is wholly unknown to the great majority even of the ordinary followers of Sívá.

There is one object which will attract attention near this shrine of Sívá, and which will receive a remarkable explanation. Projecting from the edge of a sheer and lofty cliff above the sacred brook is hung a small white flag. Innocent-looking enough it is; but it marks a spot where, "in the days that are forgotten," human victims hurled themselves over the rock as sacrifices to the bloody Kálí, and Kál-Bhairavá, the consort and son of Sívá the Destroyer. The British Government, which cannot be accused of timidity in forbidding so-called religious customs which are contrary to humanity, has long since put a stop to these bloody rites. For centuries, however, they were a regular part of the show at these annual pilgrimages, both here and at other principal shrines of Sívá. They are connected with the worship of the terrible mythical developments of the god above mentioned—forms which have, with some probability, been conjectured to be aboriginal deities imported into the Brahminical pantheon.

Far to the west of Puchmurree, in the district of Nimár, is a rocky island in the Narbadá river called Mándháttá, on which is situated the shrine of Sívá called Omkár—one of

the oldest and most famous in all India. Like that at Puchmurree it is situated among rugged hills and jungles; but it has evidently at one time been the seat of a great centre of Sívite worship. Ancient fortifications surmount its scarps; and the area of nearly two square miles enclosed is piled up with the ruins of a thousand gorgeous temples. The most ancient of the temples at which worship is still paid are held by aboriginal Bheels as their custodians, and the more recent by a Bhilálá family, who admit their remote derivation from the former. A legend is here current, and based on writings of some antiquity, that Kálí and Kál-Bhairavá were here worshipped by the Bheels, long before the worship of Omkár (Sívá) was introduced along with the Rájpút adventurer and his attendant priest, who were the ancestors of the present Bhilálá custodian and of the hereditary high priest of Sívá's shrine. The Rájpút is said by alliance with the Bheels to have obtained the headship of the tribe; and the holy man who accompanied him, to have stayed by his austerities the ravages of their savage deities, locking Kálí up in a cavern of the hill (and if you do not believe it you may still see the cavern closed up), and vowing to Bhairavá an annual sacrifice of human beings. Listen now to the inducements which the local Sívite gospel* holds forth to devotees to cast themselves from the rock. "At Omkár-Mándháttá is Kál Bhairavá. Regarding it Parbatí (wife of Sívá) said unto twenty-five crores of the daughters of the Gandharvás (angels), 'Your nuptials will be with persons who shall have cast themselves over that rock.' Whoever thus devotes himself to Kál Bhairavá will receive forgiveness, even though he had killed a Bráhmán.

* The Narmadá Khandá, which professes to be a part of the Skandá Puráná. A more detailed account of the Holy Island and its Shrines, by the author, will be found in the Central Provinces Gazetteer, 2nd edition.

Let the devotee make a figure of the sun on a cloth ; and take two flags, a club, and a *chawar* * in his hands, and proceed joyously with music to the rock. Whoever shall boldly cast himself down and die, will be married to a Gandharvá. But if he fall faintheartedly his lot will be in hell. Whosoever turns back again in terror, each step that he takes shall be equivalent to the guilt of killing a Brahman ; but he who boldly casts himself over, each step that he takes is equal in merit to the performance of a sacrifice. *Let no Brahman cast himself from the rock.* A devotee who has broken his vows, a parricide, or one who has committed incest, shall by thus sacrificing himself become sinless."

In 1822, a European officer of our Government witnessed the death of almost the last victim to Kál Bhairavá at this shrine. The island then belonged to a native State (Sindiá), and our Government had not then begun to interfere with such bloody rites. The political officer who wrote the account of it was therefore unable to prevent it by force. I came on the description a few years ago in MS., hidden away among many other forgotten papers in the Government record room of the Nimár district. The concluding portion may be interesting, as perhaps the only account on record, by an eye-witness, of such an occurrence. After narrating how he vainly urged every argument on the youth to dissuade him from his design, the writer proceeds to relate how he accompanied him nearly up to the fatal rock. "I took care," he says, "to be present at an early hour at the representation of Bhyroo (Bhairavá), a rough block of basalt smeared with red paint, before which he must necessarily present and prostrate himself, ere he mounted to the lofty pinnacle whence to spring on the idol. Ere long he arrived, preceded by rude music. He approached the

* A yak's tail used for fanning, &c.

amorphous idol with a light foot, while a wild pleasure marked his countenance. As soon as this subsided, and repeatedly during the painful scene, I addressed myself to him, in the most urgent possible manner, to recede from his rash resolve, pledging myself to ensure him protection and competence for his life. I had taken the precaution to have a boat close at hand, which in five minutes would have transported us beyond the sight of the multitude. In vain I urged him. He now more resolutely replied that it was beyond human power to remove the sacrifice of the powerful Bhyroo; evincing the most indomitable determination, and displaying so great an infatuation as even to request me to save him from the fell dagger of the priestess,* should he safely alight upon the idol. So deep-rooted a delusion could only be surmounted by force; and to exercise that I was unauthorised. While confronted with the idol, his delusion gained strength; and the barbarous throng cheered with voice and hand, when by his motions he indicated a total and continued disregard of my persuasions to desist. He made his offering of cocoa-nuts, first breaking one; and he emptied into a gourd presented by the priestess* his previous collection of pice and cowries. She now tendered to him some ardent spirit in the nut shell, first making her son drink some from his hand, to obviate all suspicion of its being drugged. A little was poured in libation on the idol. She hinted to him to deliver to her the silver rings he wore. In doing so he gave a proof of singular collectedness. One of the first he took off he concealed in his mouth till he had presented to her all the rest, when, searching among the

* The priestess here referred to was probably the Bheel custodian of the shrine. There is nothing to prevent the hereditary custodian from having been a female at that time; but *priestesses*, properly speaking, have never existed in India. Her receipt of his collections from the people also indicates this conclusion.

surrounding countenances, he pointed to a man to whom he ordered this ring to be given. It was a person who had accompanied him from Oojein. An eagerness was now evinced by several to submit bracelets and even betel-nuts to his sacred touch. He composedly placed such in his mouth and returned them. The priestess at last presented him with a *pann* leaf,* and he left the spot with a firm step, amidst the plaudits of the crowd. During the latter half of his ascent he was much concealed from view by shrubs. At length he appeared to the aching sight, and stood in a bold and erect posture upon the fatal eminence. Some short time he passed in agitated motions on the stone ledge, tossing now and then his arms aloft as if employed in invocation. At length he ceased ; and, in slow motions with both his hands, made farewell salutations to the assembled multitude. This done, he whirled down the cocoa-nut, mirror, knife, and lime, which he had continued to hold ; and stepping back was lost to view for a moment—a pause that caused the head to swim, the heart to sink, and the flesh to creep. The next second he burst upon our agonized sight in a most manful leap,† descending feet foremost with terrific rapidity, till, in mid career, a projecting rock reversed his position, and caused a headlong fall. Instant death followed this descent of ninety feet, and terminated the existence of this youth, whose strength of faith and fortitude would have adorned the noblest cause, and must command admiration when feelings of horror have subsided. Thus closed the truly appalling scene."‡

With the exception of the murder of a poor old woman

* The usual signal for the termination of a formal interview.

† The place is called the "Bir-Kali" rock, which I believe means literally the "manful leap."

‡ Extract from a letter of 29th November, 1822, from Captain Douglas, Political Assistant in Nimar, to the Resident at Indore.

who shrunk from the fatal leap when brought to the brink, but was mercilessly pushed over by the excited religionists, this was the last of these sacrifices that was permitted, the country coming in 1824 under our administration.

But the powers of evil were not yet to be baulked of their victims. The British Government could prevent deluded and drugged devotees from casting themselves over the Bír-Kalí rock; but it could not deprive Kálí and Kál-Bhairavá of their fell executioner—the cholera demon. Year by year the pestilence invaded the encampments of the pilgrims. Sanitary science would say that it arose from the germs of disease brought from the festering gullies of the great cities, and pushed into activity by the exposure, bad food, defiled neighbourhood, and poisoned water, of the pilgrim camps. But the Hindú saw nothing in it but the wrath of the offended Divinity claiming his sacrifice. Year after year the gatherings were broken up in wild disorder. The valley of the cave, the steep hillside, and that green glade in the Sál forest, were left to bury their dead, while the multitude fled affrighted over the land, carrying far and wide with them the seeds of death. Everywhere their tracks were marked by unburied corpses; and the remotest villages of the Narbadá valley and the country of the South felt the anger of the destroying fiend. A pilgrim fleeing from the fatal gathering could find no rest for the sole of his foot. The villages on his road closed their gates against him as if he were a mad dog; and many who escaped the disease perished in the jungle from starvation and wild beasts. At last, after a terrible outbreak of cholera in 1865, the Government prohibited the usual gathering at the Máhádeo Cave. The people made no complaint. They do not seriously care about these things when left alone by the priests; and here the priests were satisfied by the continuance

to the hereditary custodians, on whom they were dependent, of their average income from the pilgrimage, in the form of a pension. It is very different when their gains are affected. Two years ago a cholera epidemic threatened in Nimár, and the pilgrimage to Omkár Mándháttá was closed by order. The priests and guardians of the shrine were up in arms at once, basing their objections entirely on the money loss they would suffer. Since the closing of the Máhádeo pilgrimage the deities of destruction have been baulked of their prey. The valley of the Dénwá, although now opened up by a good timber road made to penetrate the Sál forest, no longer witnesses the annual pilgrim congress. The Cave of the Shrine is silent and deserted.

The interruption to the business of the country caused by these cholera outbreaks used to be terrible. Whole villages were sometimes swept away. In May of 1865 I had marched nearly twenty miles to a small Gónd village on one of the pilgrim tracks, in the district of Bétúl. I had been eluding the tracks of cholera the whole of the hot season, and had escaped without a single case of the disease in my camp. My people were almost exhausted with such a long march in the height of the hot season; and I joined them at the village, likewise much knocked up by a long exploration in the hills. I found my tent-pitcher and one or two others who had arrived struggling to pitch the large tent, without the usual assistance rendered by the villagers at the camping place. They placidly told me that the village was no longer the home of the living, every one in the houses being dead of cholera! The only living object in the place was a white kid, wandering about with a garland round its neck. It was the scape-goat which these simple people, after the manner of the Israelites of old, send out into the wilderness on such occasions to carry

with it the spirit of the plague. Tired out as we were it was death to stay in this place; so we re-loaded the things and marched eight miles further, straight into the jungle; and at nightfall pitched our camp by the banks of the wide Táwá river, far from human habitation. No one was seized by the disease; and during all my marching, humanly speaking I believe owing to proper sanitary precautions, I never had a single case in my camp.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAY OF SAINT LINGO.

1. The Creation and Exile of the Gónds.
2. The Coming of Lingo.
3. The Deliverance of the Gónds.
4. Subdivision into Tribes, and Worship of the Gónd Deities.

THE Pardháns, or bards, of the Gónd tribes are in possession of many rudely rhythmical pieces, which it is their function to recite on festive occasions to their assembled constituents, to the accompaniment of the two-stringed lyre. The best and most complete of these, extending to nearly a thousand bars or lines, was laboriously taken down in writing from the lips of one of these Pardháns by the late Rev. Stephen Hislop, of the Free Church of Scotland mission at Nágpúr. But the lamented death of that indefatigable investigator into the history and manners of the Central Indian peoples prevented his furnishing it in a complete form. In a collection of his papers afterwards published under the editorship of Sir R. Temple, this legend appeared at length, with a translation of each word as it stood, only so far modified as to conform to the first requirements of English grammar. In this guise, although well suited to the purposes of the student, the piece is almost unintelligible to ordinary readers; and, if it be considered that the Gónds have never had any written language, and that these pieces have only been preserved by tradition from one of these *troubadours* to another, it will not be surprising that a good deal of recension is requisite before it can be made suitable to the general

reader. Whether or not the piece has any original foundation in purely Gónd tradition may be matter of doubt; but it is certain that it has become greatly overlaid with the spirit and phraseology of Hindúism. It professes to recount the creation of the original Gónds at the hands of Hindú (Sivaic) deities; what may be called their subsequent fall through the eating of meats forbidden by Hindú law; their exile and imprisonment by the offended Hindú deity; the appearance by miraculous birth and life among them of a Hindú saint named Lingo,* whom they ungratefully put to death, but who rises again, and, after much penance and suffering, delivers them from bondage, introduces Hindú observances, the arts of agriculture, and the worship of tribal gods, and eventually disappears and goes to the gods. The programme thus bears a singular resemblance in many respects to the legend of Hiawatha, the prophet of the Red Indians; and to some an even more startling parallelism may suggest itself.

My own opinion is that its origin is comparatively recent, subsequent to the propagation among the Gónds of Hindú ideas and rules. It seems to possess little value as bearing on their origin, assigning to them a northern descent, which is contradicted by the strong southern affinities of their language, and which is obviously only introduced as part of the Hindú machinery which pervades the piece. As a composition it has little merit, though here and there exhibiting something of beauty, and more often a good deal of quiet humour. The style of the original is very discursive, constantly losing sight of the narrative, often apparently leading to nothing, and full of repetition,—defects which are probably the natural result of its usage as a ballad, handed

* This name is probably typical of the Lingaet sect, who are known to have actively propagated the worship of the Phallic Síva in the Deccan.

down by mere word of mouth. It gives the idea of having been composed by the gradual accretion round a very slender thread of original story of successive episodes, manufactured by the semi-Hindú Pardháns for recitation before the almost entirely Hindú chiefs of the Gónds. Yet even as such it possesses some interest, as exhibiting, in a somewhat dramatic form, the recent Hindúization of many of the Gónd tribes; and I have, accordingly, endeavoured to throw it into a shape that will not greatly fatigue my readers. I have excised from it most of the Hindú mythology with which it was overlaid, and which was often anything but orthodox; and I have thought it best to omit nearly the whole of the latter part, which consists of tiresome details of marriage and other ceremonial, which do not even possess the value of being an accurate account of the practice of the present day.

Thus the present version is greatly reduced in bulk, and is rather a paraphrase than a translation, though in many parts it will be found to adhere almost literally to the original, and little will be detected which has not some foundation therein. I should, perhaps, apologise for the adoption of the Hiawathian metre and style, and in a few cases even of the words of the American poet, in a piece which may appear almost like a burlesque of his Red Indian legend. It is probable that the originals of the two legends may not have differed greatly in character: and the close and curious parallelism between them could only be brought out by the adoption of the method introduced by the author of Hiawatha, and now familiar to the public. But the "noble savage" of North America is a very different character from the poor squalid Gónd of Central India; and not even the genius of a Longfellow or a Fenimore Cooper could throw a halo of sentiment over the latter and his surroundings. I have therefore

thought it best to give full play to the grotesque element in the tale, for which, it must be confessed, the Hiawathian style is provokingly well adapted. I should add that the serious student of Gónd institutions had better, perhaps, prefer the original to the version now offered.

I.—THE CREATION AND TRIBULATIONS OF THE GÓNDS.

In the Glens of Seven Mountains,*
Of the Twelve Hills in the Valleys,
Is the mountain Lingáwangad,
Is the flowering tree Pahindí;
In that desert far out-spreading
Twelve *coss* round arose no dwelling:
"Caw" saying, there no crow was;
"Chee" saying, there no bird was;
"Raghum" saying, there no tiger was.
And the Gods were greatly troubled.
In their heavenly courts and councils
Sat no Gods of Gónds among them.
Gods of other nations sat there,
Eighteen threshing-floors† of Bráhmins,
Sixteen scores † of Telingánás;
But no Gods of Gónds appeared there
From the Glens of Seven Mountains,
From the Twelve Hills in the Valleys.
Then the Strong God Kárto Subal,‡
The firstborn of Máhádevá,
Of the Great God Máhádevá,
Pondered deeply in his bosom
O'er a circumstance so curious;
Pondered much, and then he fasted,
Devotee-like prayed and fasted
For the coming of the Gónd Gods
From the Glens of Seven Valleys
To the councils of the Godhead.
Pondered thus till on his left hand
Rose a most Portentous Tumour,
Tumour boil-like, red, and growing
Bigger daily, daily bigger,
Till it burst, and from its centre
Came the Koitor,§ came they trooping,
Sixteen threshing-floors they numbered.
Came and spread them o'er the country,
On the hills, and in the valleys,
In the arches of the forest,
Everywhere they filled the country;
Killing, eating, every creature;
Nothing knowing of distinction;
Eating clean and eating unclean;
Eating raw and eating rotten;
Eating squirrels, eating jackals,
Eating antelope and sámbar,
Eating quails and eating pigeons,
Eating crows and kites and vultures,
Eating Dokuma the Adjutant,
Eating lizards, frogs, and beetles,
Eating cows and eating calves,
Eating male and female buffaloes,
Eating rats, and mice, and bandicoots;
So the Gónds made no distinction.
For half a year they bathed not,
And their faces nicely washed not
When they fell upon the dunghills—
Thus at first were born the Koitor
From the hand of Kárto Subal.

* The *Sátpúra* mountains are probably here referred to.

† Such expressions are used throughout the legend to denote indefinite numbers.

‡ Kártik Swámi the son of Síva (Máhádevá) is thus termed in the legend.

§ Koitor is the national name for all the Gónds of different tribes. It signifies properly "men."

Soon a stench began to issue
From the forests and the mountains—
Stench of Gónds that lived so foully.
Rose the stench to Máhádevá,
To his mountain Dewalgirí.*
Wrathful then became the Great God,
Called his messenger Naráyan,
Said he, "Bring these Gónds before me—
Outcast wretches! How their stink has
Spread o'er all my Dewalgirí."
Then the messenger Naráyan
Called the Koitor all together,
Called them up to Dewalgirí
To the Great God Máhádevá,
Ranged them all in rows before him
In the courtyard of the Great God.
Then the Great God washed his body,
Washed a little of the dirt off;
Fashioned it into the likeness
Of the King of Squirrels—Wárché;
Breathed the breath of life into it;
Down before the Koitor threw it.
Straight the Squirrel then his tail made,
Seeking passage to escape them,
Jerking in and out among them;
And the Gónds began to chase it,
Crying, "Catch it!" crying, "Kill it!"
"Let us catch and skin and eat it."
Some took sticks, and some took stones,
Some took clods, and off they scurried
After Wárché, King of Squirrels,
Hip-cloths streaming out behind them.
But the Squirrel—Artful Dodger—
Jerking in and out among them
Popped into a hole convenient
In the mountain Dewalgirí.
And the Gónds all ran in after—
All but four that stayed behind them.
Then a stone took Máhádevá,
A great stone of sixteen cubits,
Shut them up within the cavern
In the mountain Dewalgirí;
Shut them up, and placed the demon—
Monster horrid, fierce Basmásur—
Placed him guardian o'er the entrance.
And the four that were remaining
Swiftly fled from Dewalgirí,
Fled across the hills and valleys,
Fled to hide them from the Great God,
From the wrath of Máhádevá.
Long they wandered thus in terror,
But no hiding-place discovered;
Till a tree at last ascending,
On a hill a straight-stemmed date tree,
Thence looked forth and saw a refuge—
Saw the Red Hills, Lahúgadá,
The Iron Valley, Kachikopá.
There they sped them through the forest,
And they hid them from the Great God.
Now the goddess-queen Párbuttee—
Consort she of Máhádevá—
On the mountain top was sleeping,
On the top of Dewalgirí.
Waked she shortly from her slumber,
Waked to find a something wanting
In the air of Dewalgirí.
Then she grieved, and thought within her,
"Where can all my Gónds have gone to?
Many days our hill is silent,
Once that echoed to their shouting;
Many days no smell ascendeth,
Pleasant smell of Gónds ascending;
My sweet-smelling Gónds, where are they?
And my Máhádevá, also,
Him I see not; much I fear me
He has done my Gónds a mischief."
And she grieved, and took no dinner,
Prayed and fasted like a hermit,
Devotee-like penance doing
For her lost sweet-smelling Koitor.

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* Dewalgirí is one of the highest peaks of the Himalaya range; and is here used as identical with Kailás, the mythic heaven of Síva.

Six months thus she prayed and fasted,
Till the King of Gods, Bhagwantál,*
Swinging in a swing and snoozing,
By her penance greatly moved was—
Moved to rise and look about him;
Sent the messenger Naráyan,
Sent him forth to Dewalgirí,
Sent to see what she was up to,
Why so sadly she was grieving.
Soon she told her little grievance,
How her pleasant-smelling Gónds had
Disappeared from Dewalgirí.
Then Bhagwantál sent and told her
He would try if he could find them;
And betook him to his swinging,
And bethought him how to do it.

II.—THE COMING OF LINGO.

On the mountain Lingáwangad,
Grew the flowering-tree Pahindí.
Flowers budding, still unopened,
Yellow flowers of the Pahindí,
Saw the King of Gods Bhagwantál;
Saw and thought him of the Koitor,
Wandering sadly in the mountains,
Pining deep in Dewalgirí;
Saw, and came as comes a raincloud,
Spreading fanlike, came in thunder.
Lightning flashed, the sky was darkened,
Thus the God came to the Flower.
Darkness spread around her cover,
Gently oped the flower her blossom,
Softly fell the quickening shower—
Thus conceived the flower Pahindí.
In the fourth watch of the night time
Fell a heap of yellow saffron;
Fell beneath the tree Pahindí.
Morning dawned, the clouds were opened;
Thundering still the clouds were opened.
Burst the yellow flower Pahindí,
Cracking burst it in the sunlight.
Sprang to life from it my Lingo,
Sprang into the heap of saffron;
Sat and wept among the saffron,
Till his tears the God Paternal
Dried with sprinkling of the saffron;
Sent the Gúlar tree beside him,
Honey dropping from its branches,
Dropped it in the mouth of Lingo.
Sweetness drinking then he cried not.
Blew around him noontide zephyrs;
Grew my Lingo in their breathing.
In a God-sent swing reposing
Gently slept he till the evening.
Purest water may be stainèd;
Stainless all and pure was Lingo.
Diamond sparkled on his navel;
On his forehead beamed the Tiká,
Mark divine of fragrant sandal,
Mark of godhead in my Lingo.
Playing grew he in the saffron,
Swinging slept he in his cradle,
Honey sucking, nothing eating
Of the wild fruits in the forest.
Nine years old became my Lingo,
When his soul began to wonder
Whether all alone his lot was
In that forest shade primeval.
There no wild deer cropped the herbage,
Manlike form there none appearèd;
Somewhere they must be, thought Lingo;
I will seek them, I may find them.
Then he rose and wandered onwards,
Wandered on by brook and meadow,
Through the forest shade primeval,
Till before him rose a mountain,
Mountain pointed like a needle.

* This is intended for Bhagwán, the unworshipped Creator of the Hindús (*vide* p. 144). His introduction here as a mythical personage is not consonant with the usual practice in Hindú writings.

Thither climbing, on the summit
Lingo saw the tree Mandítá,
Saw beneath it Kirsádítá,
Sweetly flowering Kirsádítá.
There its perfume sweet inhaling
Lingered Lingo for a little.
Then he climbed the tree Mandítá,
Climbed and looked forth o'er the forest,
To the valley Kachikópá,
To the Red Hills, Lahúgadá.
Saw a little smoke ascending,
Saw and very greatly marvelled
At this circumstance portentous.
Wandered on, and soon discovered
In that forest shade primeval,
Manlike forms four discovered—
Saw the four Gônds that remainèd
Hiding fearful of the Great God.
Forest quarry having stricken,
Steaks of venison were roasting,
Pieces raw at times devouring.
Seeing Lingo up they started;
Seeing them our Lingo halted;
Long time gazed they at each other.
But the brothers inwards pondered,
Brothers four we are, bethought them,
Let us take him for a fifth one,
Let us take him to our wigwams.
Then they brought him to their wigwams,
To their wigwams in the forest,
And set meat before their brother.
But he asked them whence the meat was,
And they answered, "Of a wild boar."
Then he asked them for its liver;
And they sought long for the liver,
But no liver could discover.
Then they told him, "Lo, a strange thing!
Without liver is this creature
We have slain in the forest."
Lingo laughed at this conception
Of a creature without liver,
Asked to see it in the forest—
Living creature without liver.

Then the brothers much considered
Where on earth they might discover
In the forest or the mountains
Living creature without liver.
One suggested, "He is little,
We are big, and practised roamers
Of the forest shades primeval.
Let us take him to the mountains
Rough and stony, to the thickets
Close and thorny; he will fagged be,
Thirst for water, get so hungry,
Glad he will be to sit down, and
Give up looking for a creature,
Living creature, without liver."
Then they took their bows and arrows—
Bows of bamboo from the mountains,
Shafts of bulrush from the marshes;
And they went by deepest thickets
Of that forest shade primeval.
Kurs the Antelope—they saw it,
Killed it, found it had a liver.
Mawk the Sámbar—found and slew it,
Found it also had a liver.
Malól the Hare—they saw and killed it,
In it too they found a liver—
All the creatures had a liver.
Tired and weary were the Brothers;
Lingo only was not wearied.
Thirsty very were the Brothers;
Clambered up upon a hill-top
Seeking water, but they found none.
Clambered down again, and wandered
Through a close and thorny jungle,
Where a man could scarcely enter.
There they found a spring of water,
Cool and sparkling in the shadow.
And they plucked the leaves of Pulás,
Making cups, and drank the waters,
And refreshed were from their labours.
Then said Lingo, "Wherefore stay ye?
We have not yet seen the creature,
Living creature without liver.
Without liver creature is not."
And he said, "Here in the forest
Let us clear a field and plant it.

Down the trees here—let us fell them;
And the ground here—let us dig it;
Seed of rice here—let us sow it.
I will sleep here for a little
While ye clear away the forest."
Then slept Lingo, slept and dreamed he,
Dreamed he of twelve threshing-places,
Threshing-floors that full of Gónds were.
And his soul was greatly troubled;
And he rose and looked about him.
Found the Brothers sadly hewing,
Hewing sadly at a big tree;
And their hands had blisters on them,
Blisters large as fruit of Aolá.
And their hatchets—down they threw them;
And went off and down they squatted.
Then our Lingo up an axe took,
Took and hewed he at the big tree,
Hewed and levelled all the forest,
Felled the trees and grubbed their roots out—
In an hour the field was finished.
And the Gónds said, "Mighty Lingo!
Lo our hands were sore and blistered,
Hewing sadly at one big tree,
Which we left still undemolished.
In an hour has Lingo done it!
He has levelled all the forest;
Black the land appears below it;
Thick the rice is sown upon it;
High a hedge is raised around it;
Single left an entrance to it;
Strong a gate is placed before it."
Then they rose and turned them homewards,
Homewards went they to their wigwams.
Soon the rainy season cometh,
Black a little cloud appeareth,
Strong the winds from heaven are loosened.
All the sky is clouded over;
Now the rain begins to patter.
In a while the streams run knee-deep,
All the hollows flooded brimfull.
Thus three days and nights it rainèd,
Then it stopped as it begun had.
And the rice began to shoot up;
Green became the field of Lingo.
High as fingers four it sprouted,
Sprouted thus high in a day's time.
In a month 'twas somewhat higher,
With a man's knee it was level.
In the forest shade primeval
Sixteen scores of Deer were dwelling;
Chief among them Uncle Mámán;
Nephew Bhásyal—heir apparent.
Rich the odour reached their noses
Of that rice-field in the clearing.
First the Uncle sniffed the odour,
And the Nephew sniffed it after.
Then the Nephew fetched a gambol,
Upwards leaped he, joints all cracking,
And his ears with pleasure cocking.
To his Uncle near he trotted,
And he said, "My ancient Uncle,
See this lovely field of green stuff.
May we have it for our dinner?"
But the Uncle, ancient Mámán,
Warning, chiding, spake in this wise—
"Ere you leap 'twere wise to look well.
In the valleys of the forests
Many fields there are of green stuff;
Touch ye not the field of Lingo—
Go and graze on some one else's.
Sixteen scores of Rohees are ye;
But of all your noble sixteen
Neither buck nor doe will left be
If ye touch the field of Lingo."
Then spake Bhásyal the Nephew,
Spake disdainfully in this wise—
"Old are you and somewhat feeble,
We are young and rather frisky;
Seven-foot-six about the mark is
We can clear a running high jump—
Stay behind, Old Ninkampúpo!
They might catch you if you tried it."
Then his ears pricked twitchy-witchy,

And his tail cocked jerky-perky,
And went forward to the rice-field.
And the Uncle, deeply thinking,
Greatly grieving, left behind was.
But he slowly followed after.
At the fence the Nephew halted,
And prospected for an entrance;
But an entrance nowhere found he,
For the sixteen scores of Rohees.
And the sixteen scores to mutter
'Mong themselves began in this wise—
"Left behind is ancient Mámán,
He the very wise among us.
Now this Bhásyal, youthful Nephew,
He must show us how to do it.
Uncle Mámán spake of Lingo,
Said that very sapient uncle,
Look behind and look before you,
Ere ye touch the field of Lingo."
Answered them the valiant Nephew—
"Keep not company with ancients,
Full of years and slack of sinews,
Follow me"—and then he bounded
O'er the hedge into the rice-field.
After him the Rohees leapt all—
Leapt the sixteen scores of Rohees;
Leapt they straight into the rice-field,
And the rice began to graze on.
Soon the Uncle coming after
By the hedge stood and looked over;
And his mouth began to water
Like a dripping spring in summer.
But no entrance seemed to offer,
And his joints were stiff and feeble;
So he stayed outside, reproachful,
While those sixteen scores of Rohees
Eat up all the field of Lingo.
Eat it up, and back they leapt all,
Stood beside that ancient Mámán,
Who in words of solemn wisdom
Warning, chiding, spake in this wise—
"Hear, ye sixteen scores of Rohees!
O my children, my poor children!
Very nicely ye have done it—
Eaten up the field of Lingo.
Father Lingo, he the powerful,
When he comes to see his rice-field,
What on earth will he think of it?"
Then the very youthful Bhásyal,
To the sixteen scores of Rohees
Counsel offered, spake in this wise—
"Listen, brethren! let us speed now
To our forest shades primeval.
On the stones our feet well placing,
On the leaves our footsteps keeping,
On the grass our way selecting,
On the soil no footmarks leaving,
Let us cunningly our way take
To our forest shades primeval."
As he said so did the Rohees,
Lightly stepping left no traces,
Marks of footsteps none appeared;
Reached their forest shades primeval.
Some to sit down, some to sleep went,
Some to stand up in the cool shade,
'Gan these sixteen scores of Rohees.
Midst the perfume sweet of flowers,
Swinging in a swing, was Lingo;
Swinging slept he, and he dreamed,
Dreamt of sixteen scores of Rohees,
Of a devastated rice-field.
And his soul was greatly troubled;
And he rose and looked about him.
Looked, and went to reconnoitre
By the way of Kachikopá;
Went he through the Iron Valley,
To the Red Hills Lahúgadá,
Went the very valiant Lingo;
Saw the devastated rice-field;
Thence returning, to the Brothers,
Brothers sleeping in their wigwams,
Spake our Lingo—"Listen, Brothers,
Listen to my doleful story,
How these sixteen scores of Rohees
All our rice-field have demolished."
Then the Brothers, greatly troubled
By this doleful tale of Lingo,
Wailed a wail of disappointment,
Spake the words of bitter anguish—
"To the gods our yearly firstfruits,
Firstfruits that we yearly offer,
Now of what shall we give firstfruits,

Since our rice-field is demolished?"
Answered Lingo—"Lo a firstfruit
To the Gods of Rohees' livers,
Of the sixteen scores of Rohees
Liver firstfruits shall we offer.
On the perfume of the flowers
I, a devotee, can prosper;
Ye are Gónds with hungry stomachs,
Wherewithal shall they be fillèd,
Now these sixteen scores of Rohees
All our rice-field have demolished?"
Then the Brothers took their weapons—
Bows of bamboo from the mountains,
Shafts of bulrush from the marshes;
And in wrath they sought the rice-field,
Where the soil was black and naked,
Saw they nothing but the stubble
Of the rice that waved so greenly.
Then a flame of mighty anger,
From the heels of Lingo rising,
To his matted head ascended.
Reddened were his eyes like firebrands,
Bit his fingers till the blood came;
Said he—"Search ye for the footprints
Of these sixteen scores of Rohees."
Then the Brothers bent them downwards,
Searching closely for their traces,
Traces nowhere that appearèd
Of the sixteen scores of Rohees.
Searched they long and found a footmark,
Single footmarks scarce appearing,
Thence the jungle trodden down was
To the forest shades primeval.
Fast they followed on the traces,
But the sixteen scores they saw not.
Soon a Peepul tree appearèd
Towering high above the forest;
Clambered Lingo to its summit,
Looked he from it o'er the forest,
Spied the sixteen scores of Rohees,
Rohees in the shade reclining,
Rohees sleeping, Rohees frisking
In the forest shade primeval.
Then said Lingo to the Brothers—
"Take your bows and take your arrows;
Quickly get ye round about them,
To the four sides of the Rohees.
Slay and spare not, smite the rascals!
Hence my bolts I will deliver."
Then the Brothers stalked around them,
To the four sides of the Rohees;
Thence their bulrush shafts delivered;
Shot our Lingo from the Peepul.
Smitten were the herd of Rohees,
Only Mámán, Uncle Mámán,
And one little female Rohee,
Of those sixteen scores remainèd.
Then our Lingo aimed an arrow
At that Uncle, ancient Mámán;
But the arrow from his hand fell.
Thought he, surely here's an omen
That this very ancient Mámán
Of our rice has nothing taken.
Then to run began the Rohee,
Female Rohee that remainèd;
And to run began the Uncle.
Brothers all behind them followed,
Shouting "Catch them" to each other.
But they vanished and were seen not.
And the Brothers, much disgusted,
Back returnèd to their Lingo.
Then said Lingo, "Search ye, Brethren,
For a firebox in your waistbelts."
Flints and steel they forthwith brought out,
Struck a spark among the tinder,
But the tinder would not burn.
Thus the whole night long they tried it,
Tried in vain until the morning,
When they flung away the tinder.
And to Lingo said, "O Brother,
You're a prophet, can you tell us
Why we cannot light this tinder?"
Answered Lingo, "Three *coss* onward
Lives the Giant Rikad Gowree,

He the very dreadful Monster,
He the terrible Devourer.
In his field a fire is smoking;
Thither go and fetch a firebrand."
Then the Brothers went a little,
Went a very little, onwards;
Thence returned, and said to Lingo—
"Nowhere saw we Rikad Gowree,
Nowhere have we found this Giant."
Then said Lingo, "Lo my arrow,
By its pathway see ye follow."
Then he fitted to his bowstring
Shaft of bulrush straight and slender;
Shot it through the forest thickets,
Shot it cleaving through the branches,
Shot it shearing all the grass down;
Cut a pathway straight and easy;
Fell it right into the fireplace
Of the Giant Rikad Gowree;
Fell, and glanced it from the fireplace,
Glanced, and sped into the doorway
Of the wigwam of the Giant;
Fell before the seven daughters,
Seven very nice young women,
Daughters fair of Rikad Gowree.
Then those seven nice young women
Took the arrow and concealed it.
For they oft had asked the old man,
Asked him when they would be married;
And he always answered gruffly,
"When I choose that you be married
Good and well, if not you won't be."
And they thought this was an omen.
Now the Brothers, greatly fearing
Lest they all should eaten up be,
Counsel taking, sent the youngest,
Sent Ahkeseral the youngest,
To prospect the Giant's quarters.
By that pathway straight and easy
Went this very young Ahkeseral;
Saw the Giant's smoke ascending;
Coming nearer saw the Giant.
Saw him, like a shapeless tree trunk,
Sleeping by the fire and snoring—
By the fire of mighty tree stems,
Stems of Mohwá, stems of Ánjan,
Stems of Sájná, stems of Téktá;
Blazing red, its glow reflected
From that form huge and shapeless
Of the Giant Rikad Gowree,
Of that very dreadful Rákshis,
Of that terrible Devourer.
Then his knees began to quake all,
O'er his body came cold shudders,
Leapt his liver to his throat all,
Leapt the liver of Ahkeseral.
But he crept up to the fireplace,
Crept and snatched a blazing firebrand,
Blazing brand of Támádítá.
Groaned the Giant, fled Ahkeseral,
Dropped the firebrand, and a spark flew,
Flew and lighted on the Giant,
On his shapeless hip it lighted.
Raised a blister like a saucer;
Started up the Giant swearing;
Also feeling very hungry,
Feeling very much like eating.
Saw that very young Ahkeseral,
Plump and luscious as a cucumber,
Saw him running and ran after,
Ran and shouted loud behind him.
But in vain he followed after.
For the very young Ahkeseral,
Speeding swiftly through the forest,
Shortly vanished and was seen not.
And the Giant, much disgusted,
Then returnèd to his fireside.
And Ahkeseral, returning,
Told his greatly trembling brothers
Of that very dreadful Giant.
But the very valiant Lingo
Said, "Repose ye here a little,
I will go and see this monster
That so much has discomposed you."
At the crossing of a river,
In that straight and easy pathway,
Lingo saw the stick Wadúdá
Floating down upon the current.
Saw he too a bottle-gourd tree,
Saw it growing by the river;

Pulled a bottle-gourd from off it,
Fished Wadúdá from the river,
Stuck the one into the other,
Plucked two hairs wherewith to string it,
Made a bow and keys eleven,
Played a tune or two, and found he
Had a passable guitar.
Pleased was Lingo, and proceeded
To the field of Rikad Gowree;
Rikad Gowree lying snoring
By the fireside, mouth wide gaping,
Tushes horrible displaying,
Lying loglike with his eyes shut.
Close by grew the tree called Peepul,
Peepul tall with spreading branches.
Quickly Lingo clambered up it,
Climbed aloft into its branches;
Sat and heard the morning cock crow,
Thought this Giant soon would waken.
Then he took his banjo Jántur,
Struck a note that sounded sweetly,
Played a hundred tunes upon it.
Like a song its music sounded;
At its sound the trees were silent;
Stood the mighty hills enraptured.
Entered then that strain of music
In the ears of Rikad Gowree,
Quickly woke him from his slumber;
Rubbed his eyes and looked about him;
Looked in thickets, looked in hollows,
Looked in tree-tops; nothing finding,
Wondered where on earth it came from,
Came that strain of heavenly music,
Like the warbling of the Mainá.
Back returning to his fireside,
Sat down, stood up, sat down, stood up;
Listened, wondered at the music;
Jumped and danced he to the music,
Sung and danced he to the music;
Rolled and tumbled by the fireside
To the warbling of the music.
Soon at daybreak his old woman
Heard that strain of heavenly music;
Came she wondering to the fireside,
Saw her old man wildly dancing—
Hands outstretching, feet uplifting,
Head back reeling, dancing, tumbling,
To that strain of heavenly music.
Saw and wondered, saw and called out—
"Ancient husband, foolish old man!"
Looked he at her, nothing said he,
Danced and tumbled to the music.
Said she, listening to that music,
"I must dance too." Then she opened
Loose the border of her garment,
Danced and tumbled to the music.
Then said Lingo, "Lo my Jántur!
To thy strain of heavenly music
Dance this old man and his woman;
All my Koitor thus I teach will,
Thus in rows to sing and dance all,
At the feasting of the Gónd Gods,
At the feast of the Dewálí,
At the feast of Búdhal Péná,
At the feast of Jungo Reytál,
At the feast of Phársá Péná—
Salutation to the Gods all
From this various tuneful Jántur!"
Then he ceased the wondrous music;
Hailed the old man from the treetop,
Saying—"Uncle, Rikad Gowree,
See your nephew, on this tree-top!"
Then the Giant, looking upwards,
Saw our Lingo on the tree-top;
Called him down, shook hands, and said that
He was very glad to see him.
Asked him in and made him sit down;
Rang and called for pipes and coffee;
Apologized for having thought of
Making breakfast of Ahkeseral;
Thanked our Lingo very kindly
For his offer of the livers
Of those sixteen scores of Rohees;
In return proposed to give him
All those seven nice young women,
With their eyes bound, will they nill they,
To be wedded to the Brothers.
And those seven nice young women

When they heard about the young men,
Of those young men faint and fasting
Waiting fireless by the Rohees,
Forthwith packed they up their wardrobes,
On their heads they took their beds up,
Back to Lingo gave his arrow—
Arrow of the truthful omen—
Saying good-bye to their parent,
Followed Lingo to the forest,
To that forest-shade primeval.
Reached those young men by the Rohees,
Made a fire, and had some luncheon
Of the livers of the Rohees.
Then the Brothers 'gan to squabble
O'er those seven nice young women.
Holy Lingo, virtuous very,
Quite refusing to be wedded,
Somewhat easier made the problem;
And he soon arranged it this wise—
That the eldest of the brethren
Each should take two nice young women,
While the very young Ahkeseral
Should be fitted with the odd one.
Then returning from the forest,
By the valley Kachikopá,
To the Red Hills Lahúgadá,
Holy Lingo joined the Brothers
To those seven nice young women,
To the daughters of the Giant.
Water brought and poured it o'er them,
Bowers of branches raised around them,
Garlands gay he threw about them,
Mark of Turmeric applied he—
And declared them duly wedded.
Then the Brothers mighty pleased were
With their good and virtuous Lingo;
Said they'd go forth to the forest,
Go and smite the bounding red-deer,
Bring its liver to their Lingo,
Gather wild flowers for their Lingo,
While those Sisters seven should swing him,
Swing him gently as he slumbered.
Then their bows and arrows took they,
Took and started to the forest.
And the sisters swinging Lingo
Thus began to say among them—
"See this Lingo! who so solemn
As this brother of our husbands?
Neither laughs he, neither speaks he,
Neither looks he even at us.
He must laugh, and speak, and gambol,
Must this very solemn Lingo;
Let us pinch and pull and hug him."
And they pulled him by the arms,
Pulled his feet and pinched his arms;
But the more they pulled and pinched him
All the sounder slept our Lingo.
Till the sisters, vexed to find him
Nothing caring for their toying,
Took to hugging rather closely,
Hugged that very virtuous Lingo,
Till they woke him from his sleeping.
Wrathful then was holy Lingo,
At those wanton Giant's daughters;
Rose the flame of indignation
From his boots up to his topknot;
Looked about him for a weapon,
For a weapon to chastise them;
Saw a pestle hard and heavy,
Pestle made for husking rice with;
Bounded from his swing and seized it,
With it thrashed those Giant's daughters;
Thrashed them till they bellowed loudly,
Fled and roared like Bulls of Bashan,
Fled and hid them in their wigwams.
Soon the Brothers back returning,
Bringing game and bringing wild flowers,
Found their Lingo quietly sleeping;
Sisters none his swing were rocking.
Much astonished, they betook them

To the wigwams of the Sisters.
But had scarce begun to scold them
Ere they found the tables turnèd—
"Pretty fellows are you truly!
Thus to leave your wives behind you
And go hunting in the forest,
While your very holy Lingo
Tries his arts upon our virtue.
We have quite made up our minds now
Not to stay another minute,
But to take our beds and wardrobes,
And return to where we came from—
To our poor deceived papa!"
Then the Brothers said among them—
"O that sinful, wicked Lingo!
How the villain has deceived us!
When we offered him the fairest,
No, he wanted none, he told us;
Called them sisters, called them mothers;
Now to play so mean a trick on
Us when hunting in the forest!
Let us get him to the jungle,
Kill him there, and pull his eyes out.
Hares and antelopes we've hunted,
Now we'll hunt our little Lingo.
Bread or water let us touch not
Till we've played a game of marbles
With the eyes of faithless Lingo."
Then they went and wakened Lingo,
Saying, "Rise, our youngest brother."
And he rose, and wondering asked them
Why so late they had returnèd,
Bringing nothing from the forest.
And they answered, "Lo, a Creature,
Mighty strong, appeared before us;
And we fought him with our arrows,
But this mighty Creature fell not,
Neither fled he; come then with us."
Then rose Lingo, and before them
Stalked he on into the forest,
To the forest-shade primeval.
Looked for traces of the Creature
In the grass, among the bushes;
But this mighty Creature saw not.
Then they sat them down and rested
By the tree called Sârekátá.
And the Brothers went for water,
Went and pondered how to kill him;
And returning softly, hidden
By the stem of Sârekátá,
From their bows four arrows sped they,
Bulrush shafts, at holy Lingo.
Split his skull was, pierced his neck was,
Cleft the liver was of Lingo.
Down he dropped, and out his life passed,
By the Tree called Sârekátá.
Then a knife they took and gouged him,
Out the eyes they bored of Lingo;
In a hole they put the body;
Strewed it over with some branches;
Pulled some leaves and made a goblet
For the bored-out eyes of Lingo;
Tied it up into a waistcloth,
Hied them homeward to their wigwams;
Called their wives, and lit some torches,
Blazing torches made of flax-stalks;
Played their horrid game of marbles
With the bored-out eyes of Lingo.
So the Brothers four of Lingo
And those seven nice young women
Chucked his eyes about like marbles
For an hour's time by the torch-light.

III.—THE RESURRECTION OF LINGO, AND DELIVERY OF THE GONDS.

In the Court of great Bhagwantál
Sat the Deities assembled;
Sat they in the Upper World,
Wondering where, in earthly regions,
Lay the body of their Lingo:
Wondered much, but nothing knew they
In what region it had fallen.
Then Bhagwantál took a basin,
Washed a little of his body,
Washed a little of the dirt off:
Took and made of it an image;
Breathed the breath of life into it;
Made Kagésur, Lord of Ravens.
Amrit* sprinkled he upon it.
From his hand released it, saying—
"Search the forests, search the mountains,
Search the valleys, search the rivers,
For the body of my Lingo."
Then Kagésur, Lord of Ravens,
He the very black and cunning,
Swiftly sped him on his errand;
Searched he first the Upper Regions,
Thence descended to the Lower;
Searched their hills and glens and forests,
Till he reached the Iron Valley,
In the Red Hills Lahúgadá.
Peered among the forest thickets,
Saw the twigs that covered Lingo,
Looked below them, found our Lingo,
Looking horrid, with his eyes out,
Split his skull, and pierced his liver.
Hied him back to great Bhagwantál,
Told the doleful tale of Lingo.

Then the God said, "Ha! I see it,
By his birth-place has he fallen,
By the flowering tree Pahindí."
Then he sent for Kárto Subal,
Gave a flask of heavenly Amrit
(Bade him well to shake the bottle),
For external application
To the skull and neck and liver
Of the gouged and butchered Lingo;
And despatched him with Kagésur
To the valley Kachikopá,
To the Red Hills Lahúgadá.
Flew the Raven straight before him;
Reached the place; then Kárto Subal
Took the flask of heavenly Amrit,
Poured it o'er his wounds and bruises,
Stitching up the chiefest openings
In his head and his abdomen.
Soon his eyes began to open,†
And he saw the Lord of Ravens;
Thought he'd slept a little soundly;
Asked them, "Had they seen his Brothers?"
And was very much astounded
When they told him how they found him
Gouged and butchered by his Brothers.
Then he thought perhaps t'were better
Now to leave this lot of Brothers,
And their seven nice young women;
And go seek those other Sixteen,
Sixteen threshing-floors of Koitor.
So the Strong God and the Raven
Hied them back and told Bhagwantál
Of their surgery successful.

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* The water of immortality.

† It is not related how these organs were restored to him.

And our Lingo *Redivivus*
Wandered sadly through the forest.
Wandered on across the mountains
Till the darkening of the evening,
Wandered on until the night fell.
Screamed the panther in the forest,
Growled the bear upon the mountain,
And our Lingo then bethought him
Of their cannibal propensities.
Saw at hand the tree Nirúdá,
Clambered up into its branches.
Darkness fell upon the forest,
Bears their heads wagged, yelled the jackal—
Kolyál the King of Jackals.
Sounded loud their dreadful voices
In that forest-shade primeval.
Then the Jungle-Cock Gugótee,
Mull the Peacock, Kurs the Wild-Deer,
Terror-stricken screeched and shuddered
In that forest shade primeval.
But the Moon arose at midnight,
Poured her flood of silver radiance,
Lighted all the forest arches,
Through their gloomy branches slanting;
Fell on Lingo, pondering deeply
On his Sixteen Scores of Koitor.
Then thought Lingo, I will ask her
For my Sixteen Scores of Koitor.
"Tell me, O Moon!" said Lingo,
"Tell, O Brightener of the darkness,
Where my Sixteen Scores are hidden."
But the Moon sailed onwards, upwards,
And her cold and glancing moonbeams
Said, "Your Gónds, I have not seen them."
And the Stars came forth and twinkled—
Twinkling eyes above the forest.
Lingo said, "O Stars that twinkle!
Eyes that look into the darkness,
Tell me where my Sixteen Scores are."
But the cold Stars, twinkling ever,
Said, "Your Gónds, we have not seen them."
Broke the morning, the sky reddened,
Faded out the star of morning,
Rose the Sun above the forest,
Brilliant Sun the Lord of Morning.
And our Lingo quick descended,
Quickly ran he to the eastward,
Fell before the Lord of Morning,
Gave the Great Sun salutation—
"Tell, O Sun!" he said, "discover
Where my Sixteen Scores of Gónds are."
But the Lord of Day reply made—
"Hear, O Lingo, I a Pilgrim
Wander onwards through four watches
Serving God, I have seen nothing
Of your Sixteen Scores of Koitor."
Then our Lingo wandered onwards
Through the arches of the forest;
Wandered on until before him
Saw the grotto of a hermit,
Old and sage, the Black Kumait,
He the very wise and knowing,
He the greatest of Magicians,
Born in days that are forgotten,
In the unremembered ages.
Salutation gave, and asked him—
"Tell, O Hermit! Great Kumait!
Where my Sixteen Scores of Gónds are."
Then replied the Black Magician,
Spake disdainfully in this wise—
"Lingo hear, your Gónds are asses,
Eating cats, and mice, and bandicoots,
Eating pigs, and cows, and buffaloes;
Filthy wretches! wherefore ask me?
If you wish it I will tell you.
Our Great Máhádevá caught them,
And has shut them up securely
In a cave within the bowels
Of his mountain Dewalgirí,
With a stone of sixteen cubits,
And his bulldog fierce Basmásur.
Serve them right too, I consider,
Filthy, casteless, stinking wretches!"

And the Hermit to his grotto
Back returned, and deeply pondered
On the days that are forgotten,
On the unremembered ages.
But our Lingo wandered onwards,
Fasting, praying, doing penance;
Laid him on a bed of prickles,
Thorns long and sharp and piercing;
Fasting lay he devotee-like,
Hand not lifting, foot not lifting,
Eye not opening, nothing seeing.
Twelve months long thus lay and fasted,
Till his flesh was dry and withered,
And the bones began to show through.
Then the Great God Máhádevá
Felt his seat begin to tremble,
Felt his golden stool all shaking
From the penance of our Lingo.
Felt, and wondered who on earth
This devotee was that was fasting
Till his golden stool was shaking.
Stepped he down from Dewalgirí,
Came and saw that bed of prickles
Where our Lingo lay unmoving.
Asked him what his little game was,
Why his golden stool was shaking?
Answered Lingo, "Mighty Ruler!
Nothing less will stop that shaking
Than my Sixteen Scores of Koitor,
Rendered up all safe and hurtless
From your cave in Dewalgirí."
Then the Great God, much disgusted,
Offered all he had to Lingo,
Offered kingdom, name, and riches,
Offered anything he wished for,
"Only leave your stinking Koitor
Well shut up in Dewalgirí."
But our Lingo all refusing
Would have nothing but his Koitor;
Gave a turn to run the thorns a
Little deeper in his midriff.
Winced the Great God, "Very well then,
Take your Gónds—but first a favour.
By the shore of the Black Water
Lives a bird they call Black Bindo;
Much I wish to see his young ones,
Little Bindos from the sea-shore;
For an offering bring these Bindos,
Then your Gónds take from my mountain."
Then our Lingo rose and wandered,
Wandered onwards through the forest,
Till he reached the sounding sea-shore,
Reached the brink of the Black Water.
Found the Bindo birds were absent
From their nest upon the sea-shore,
Absent hunting in the forest,
Hunting elephants prodigious,
Which they killed and took their brains out,
Cracked their skulls, and brought their brains to
Feed their callow little Bindos,
Wailing sadly by the sea-shore.
Seven times a fearful serpent,
Bhawarnág the horrid serpent,
Serpent born in ocean's caverns,
Coming forth from the Black Water,
Had devoured the little Bindos—
Broods of callow little Bindos
Wailing sadly by the sea-shore,
In the absence of their parents.
Eighth this brood was. Stood our Lingo,
Stood he pondering beside them—
"If I take these little wretches
In the absence of their parents
They will call me thief and robber.
No! I'll wait till they come back here."
Then he laid him down and slumbered
By the little wailing Bindos.
As he slept the dreadful serpent,
Rising, came from the Black Water,
Came to eat the callow Bindos,
In the absence of their parents.
Came he trunk-like from the waters,
Came with fearful jaws distended,
Huge and horrid. Like a basket
For the winnowing of corn
Rose a hood of vast dimensions

O'er his fierce and dreadful visage.
Shrieked the Bindos young and callow,
Gave a cry of lamentation;
Rose our Lingo; saw the Monster;
Drew an arrow from his quiver,
Shot it swift into his stomach,
Sharp and cutting in the stomach,
Then another and another;
Cleft him into seven pieces;
Wriggled all the seven pieces,
Wriggled backwards to the water.
But our Lingo, swift advancing,
Seized the head-piece in his arms,
Knocked the brains out on a boulder,
Laid it down beside the Bindos,
Callow wailing little Bindos.
On it laid him, like a pillow,
And began again to slumber.

Soon returned the parent Bindos
From their hunting in the forest;
Bringing brains and eyes of camels,
And of elephants prodigious,
For their little callow Bindos
Wailing sadly by the sea-shore.
But the Bindos young and callow
Brains of camels would not swallow;
Said—"A pretty set of parents
You are truly! thus to leave us
Sadly wailing by the sea-shore
To be eaten by the serpent—
Bhawarnág the dreadful serpent—
Came he up from the Black Water,
Came to eat us little Bindos,
When this very valiant Lingo
Shot an arrow in his stomach,
Cut him into seven pieces—
Give to Lingo brains of camels,
Eyes of elephants prodigious."
Then the fond paternal Bindo
Saw the head-piece of the serpent
Under Lingo's head a pillow.
And he said, "O valiant Lingo,
Ask whatever you may wish for."
Then he asked the little Bindos
For an offering to the Great God,
And the fond paternal Bindo,
Much disgusted, first refusing,
Soon consented; said he'd go too
With the fond maternal Bindo—
Take them all upon his shoulders,
And fly straight to Dewalgirí.
Then he spread his mighty pinions,
Took his Bindos up on one side
And our Lingo on the other.
Thus they soared away together
From the shores of the Black Water.
And the fond maternal Bindo,
O'er them hovering, spread an awning
With her broad and mighty pinions
O'er her offspring and our Lingo.

By the forests and the mountains
Six months' journey was it thither
To the mountain Dewalgirí.
Half the day was scarcely over
Ere this convoy from the sea-shore
Lighted safe on Dewalgirí;
Touched the knocker on the gateway
Of the Great God Máhádevá.
And the messenger Naráyan
Answering, went and told his master—
"Lo this very valiant Lingo!
Here he is with all the Bindos,
The Black Bindos from the sea-shore."

Then the Great God, much disgusted,
Driven quite into a corner,
Took our Lingo to the cavern,
Sent Basmásur to his kennel,
Held his nose, and moved away the
Mighty stone of sixteen cubits;
Called those Sixteen Scores of Gónds
out,
Made them over to their Lingo.

And they said, "O Father Lingo!
What a bad time we've had of it,
Not a thing to fill our bellies
In this horrid gloomy dungeon."
But our Lingo gave them dinner,
Gave them rice and flour of millet,
And they went off to the river,
Had a drink, and cooked and eat it.

IV.—SETTLEMENT OF THE GONDS, AND PASSING OF LINGO

Then they rose and followed Lingo,
Followed onwards to the forest,
From the mountain Dewalgirí;
Followed on till night descended,
And before them saw a river,
Dark and swollen with the torrent
Bursting down from Dewalgirí,
From the snows of Dewalgirí.
On that river nothing saw they,
Boat nor raft, to waft them over.
Nothing saw they in the torrent
But the Alligator Púsé,
And the River-Turtle Dámé,
Playing, rolling, in the water.
Then our Lingo called them to him,
Called them brother, called them mother;
Bound with oaths to bear them over.
And the Alligator Púsé,
Looming long upon the water,
Bore the Gónds into the torrent,
Through the black and roaring water:
And the River-Turtle Dámé
With our Lingo followed after.
Soon the faithless Alligator,
In the deep and roaring water,
Slipping from below his cargo,
Left them floundering in the water.
Then our Lingo stretched his hand out,
Fished them out upon the Turtle;
Faithful Dámé bore them onward
O'er that black and roaring torrent,
Bore them on across the river.
And the Sixteen vowed to cherish
Name of Dámé with them ever,
Who had borne them safe and hurtless
O'er that dark and foaming river.
Then they travelled through the forest,
Over mountain, over valley,
To the Glens of Seven Mountains,
To the Twelve Hills in the Valleys.
There remained with Holy Lingo.
He, the very wise and prudent,
Taught to clear the forest thickets,
Taught to rear the stately millet,
Taught to yoke the sturdy oxen,
Taught to build the roomy waggon,
Raised a city, raised Nárbúmí;
City fenced in from the forest.
Made a market in Nárbúmí.
Rich and prosperous grew Nárbúmí—
So they flourished and remainèd.
Then our Lingo called them round him,
Ranged them all in rows beside him,
Spake in this wise—"Hear, O Brethren!
Nothing know ye of your fathers,
Of your mothers, of your brothers,
Whom to laugh with, whom to marry;
Meet it is not ye should be so
Like the creatures of the forest."
Then he chose them from each other,
Chose and named their tribes distinctive;
Chose the first and said, "Manwajjá."
Thus began the tribe Manwajjá.
By the hand took Dáhakwálí,
Bard he called him "Dahakwálí."
Koilabútal named another,
And another Koikobútal—
Koikobútal wild and tameless.
Thus he named them as he chose them,
Till the Sixteen Scores were numbered,
Till the Tribes had all been chosen.
Next among them chose the eldest,
Chose an old man hoary headed,
Chose and called his name "Pardhánú,"
Priest and Messenger he called him.

Called and sent him on a message
To the Red hills Lahúgadá,
The Iron Valley, Kachikopá;
To those Brothers four he sent him,
Sent to ask them for their daughters
To be wedded to his Koitor—
Thus the Tribes our Lingo mated.
Thus they grew and multiplièd.
Then he chose them into houses,
Into families of seven,
Of six, of four, he chose them.
And he said, "O Koitor listen!
Nowhere Gods of Gónds are worshipped;
Let us make us Gods and worship.
Then made Ghagará the Bell-God,
Made and gave he to Manwajjá.
Brought the Wild Bull's Tail and named it
Cháwardeo; brought the War God—
God of Iron, Phársá Péná;
Manko Reytál, Jango Reytál—
Thus their tribal Gods he fashioned.
Taught them how to raise their altars;
Taught to offer sacrifices—
Hoary goats, white cocks a year old,
Virgin cows, and juice of mhowa;
Taught to praise with voice and psalter,
Twang of Jántur, sound of drumming—
Drum of Beejásál resounding—
Dancing, singing, by the altars.
Thus he taught them, Holy Lingo;
And his last words then he uttered—
"Keep your promise to the Turtle,
To the River-Turtle Dámé;
To the Gods I now am going."
Then he melted from their vision;
And they strained their eyes to see him.
But he vanished, and was seen not.

Gónds of the Sahpúra Range. (From a photograph.)

CHAPTER VI.

THE TEAK REGION.

The Trap Country—Condition of the Teak Forests—Other Timber Trees—The Táptí Valley—The Frankincense Tree—Aspect of the Forests in the Trap Region—Jungle Fires—Ancient Settlements—The Korkús of the Táptí Valley—Difficulty of Exploration—Wild Sports—The Sámbar Deer—Its Habits and Food—Death of the Borí Stag—Horns of the Sámbar—Curious Occurrences in Shooting—Incidents in Tiger Shooting—Stalking the Sámbar—The Hattí Hills—The Bheels—A Bheel Fort—Mahomedan Architecture—Difficulty of finding Sámbar—Dháotea—Disappearance of the Sámbar—Return to the Plains—The Valley of the Vultures—Return to the Sámbar Ground—Shoot a Stag—Miss Another—The Four-horned Antelope—Bison Scouting—The "Shrimp" and the "Skunk"—Find a Herd—Kill a Bull—A Dangerous Position—A Solitary Bull—We miss the Water—Another Bull Killed—A Herd of Sámbar—Account of a Bag.

On the 28th of March, having seen our forest lodge in a fair way to completion, I left the Puchmurree plateau, and entered on the first of many long journeys of exploration among the forests of the Seoní, Chindwárá, and Bétúl districts. I have already described these as being situated on the great central table-land of this mountain range, from the centre of which juts up the still higher formation called the Máhádeo (or Puchmurree) group. The general elevation of the table-land is about 2,000 feet above the sea; but this general level is broken by numerous minor projections, besides the great one of the Máhádeo range, which generally exhibit the peculiar flat-topped outline of hills of the trap formation.* The

* Many of these isolated hills, being flat-topped and surmounted by precipitous scarps, and frequently furnished with depressions in which rain-water

overflow of basalt has indeed been nearly universal over all this vast region, the great Máhádeo sandstone block, and a few isolated peaks of granite, known at once by their sharp and splintered peaks, being the only notable breaks in the great volcanic ocean. To judge from the great extent of table-land lying at about the elevation of 2,000 feet, this would appear to have been the original level of the trap overflow, the higher peaks of that formation, which reach in a few places to 3,000 feet, being more probably the result of subsequent upheaval. The plateau has, however, been generally denuded by the larger streams to a depth of about 1,000 feet, where they still run over volcanic beds at the level of the great southern plain of the Deccan. The extent of level plateau is thus much diminished, on the one hand by the ramifications of the drainage system, and on the other by the higher ranges, and the long sloping valleys which connect them with the plateau.

I have called this volcanic region also the region of the teak tree in Central India. It is so *generally*, but, strictly speaking, the teak tree does not accurately confine itself to the trap formation ; nor, on the other hand, is the teak the only, or even the principal, timber tree of the trap country. No such close lines of distinction exist in nature, but the coincidence is, I think, sufficient to warrant the inference of some link of connection between them, an attempt to discover which has already been made in the first chapter. More or less teak is scattered all over this region, but the principal forests are found clinging to the skirts of the higher ranges rising from the general level of the plateau. The more extensive

collects, are natural fortresses of an almost impregnable strength; and, with the addition of some rude masonry works, were generally occupied for this purpose by the hill Chiefs in former times.

level portions of the country have long been cleared of jungle for purposes of cultivation, and for a long way around these settlements the forests have been hacked down into mere scrub for the common requirements in timber and fuel of the people. The outer slopes of the plateau, towards the lower plains, have also been long ago swept of all valuable teak; and, moreover, from their sterile nature, have probably at no time produced any large quantity of timber. Even in the higher and more secluded tracts, where forests of teak yet remain, the causes already referred to have now reduced the number of mature and well-grown trees to a very small proportion of the whole, so small that in few places are there more remaining than will suffice to reproduce the forests by their seed in a period of fifty to a hundred years. Everywhere the teak grows very much in patches intermixed with other species, the principal hardwoods of which in these forests are the Sáj (*Pentaptera*), the Bíjásál (*Pterocarpus*), the Dháorá (*Conocarpus*), and in a few localities the Anjan (*Hardwickia*). Many other species have been observed, of which a list will be found in an Appendix.

The mature teak tree of Central India attains a girth of from ten to fifteen feet, with a boll of seventy or eighty feet to the head of branches. Perfect specimens are, however, rare, the majority of such trees as remain having suffered injury in the sapling stage from fire or axe, so as to permanently contort their form. The soft scaly bark, large flabby leaves, and generally straggling and "seedy" habit of growth of the teak, are certainly, I think, disappointing to those accustomed to the trim firm aspect of other hardwood forests, and particularly to such as have had the opportunity of comparing it with the striking appearance of the evergreen Sál forests of

the more eastern regions. In the rainy season the teak tree is surmounted by a heavy head of large green leaves, supporting masses of yellowish white flowers; and when in considerable masses it then gives a peculiar and not unpleasant character to the scenery. The large umbrella-like leaves are admirably fitted for the great function of vegetation at that season, in breaking the direct impact of the rain torrent on the soil of the hill slopes, which would otherwise soon end in depriving the rocky skeletons of the hills of their covering of earth and vegetation. But this foliage is very deciduous, and by the month of March little of it remains on the tree. Then the yellow brittle fallen leaves in many places strew the ground so thickly as to make silent walking impossible. As a facetious friend once expressed it, in a very unnecessary whisper, when we were trying to creep up to a stag sámbar in such a cover—"It was like walking on tin boxes."

Forests containing any great number of tolerably large teak trees are, however, now extremely few; and, as I have said, the teak has been indiscriminately hacked down for every sort of purpose, for many generations, over nearly the whole area where it is found. Among its numerous other valuable qualities, however, it includes that of rapidly throwing up a head of tall slender poles from the stumps, if they are allowed to remain in the ground. In five years this coppice wood will attain a height of twenty-five or thirty feet, and a girth of one to two feet. Such poles are invaluable in a country where habitations are in great measure very small, and built of wood alone—far more valuable, in fact, than larger timber, which is only useful for the exceptional class of structures comprising the residences of wealthy persons, European houses, and public edifices. It was thus, perhaps, scarcely very surprising that when we suddenly demanded from the forests a large and

permanent supply of large timber for our railway system, we found that they could not afford it, though it by no means follows that the forests were not in a useful state to meet the ordinary requirements of the country.

Our treatment of this question of the teak forests is a good example of the difficulties in Indian administration which arise from the absence of accurate information on the real requirements of the country, and the obstacles in the way of reconciling the conditions of a low and almost stationary stage of society with nineteenth-century "progress," and high-pressure civilization. In the cry for great timber for our railways we totally forgot, or neglected, the demand of the masses of the population for small timber for their houses and many other purposes. We shut up every acre of the teak-producing country we could, and referred them to inferior sorts of wood, all the best species besides teak having been *tabooed* along with it. The other species of timber, when used young, mostly decay in a year or two in an Indian climate; and so the people were put to a vast unnecessary expenditure of labour in renewals, while we strove, by pruning and preserving, to make large timber grow out of the scrubby coppice wood which had before supplied their wants; and, as it proved, strove entirely in vain. This pollarded teak will not grow straight and large, prune we never so wisely. It will grow well to a certain size, the size the natives require it, but after that it decays and twists into every variety of tortuous shape. What we should have done was to reserve the best forests for timber purposes proper, and apply to the rest—the vastly greater part of them—only such measures as would ensure the best and quickest production of coppice wood for the requirements of the people. It has been said that they should learn to do as European nations

do, convert large trees to smaller scantlings by the saw, as it is an undoubted fact that forests yield a larger aggregate supply of timber when the trees are allowed to mature. The argument is one of a sort too readily applied to many Indian subjects. Theoretically it is true enough, and in the distant future it may be realised. But in the meantime the people have not the capital wherewith to do it, even if the large timber were growing ready for them, which it is not. We have taken one step rightly enough, in strictly reserving limited areas of the best forest to reproduce large timber. But we have not released the rest, nor applied to it a method which aims at the continued reproduction of small timber, for which the teak tree is so admirably fitted by nature. Vast expense is still incurred in attempting to conserve it all after a fashion, and the problem of cheap and efficient management of these forests will never, in my opinion, be satisfactorily worked out until we revise our system altogether, with this object kept in view.

Of other trees than teak these forests produce a great variety, some producing highly ornamental woods for fancy purposes, others useful in the arts, and a good many, when fully matured and seasoned, capable of almost supplanting teak for ordinary building purposes. The useful sorts, however, on the whole, bear a very low proportion to the great mass for which no general use has as yet been found. Round the settlements the valuable sorts have mostly been exterminated; and such parts as are not actually under tillage are covered with a scrub composed of such thorny species as *Acacia Arabica*, *A. catechu*, *Zizyphus Jujuba*, and others. It is remarkable, I think, how the thorny species, which are the best armed to resist destruction, have thus won the race for life in such tracts.

Vast areas, again, do not produce, and do not seem to be capable of producing, any species but such as are, from the softness of their timber, almost useless to the carpenter. A typical example of such a tract is found in the upper valley of the Táptí river, a river which forms so good an example of the streams of this region as to be worthy of some description. Rising among the western spurs of the Máhádeo range, it flows for a short distance over the level plateau of the Bétúl district, in a shallow channel, which, in the hot season, forms a chain of silent pools fringed by great Kowá trees and by the thick green cover of Jáman and Karondá, in which tigers delight to dwell. The surrounding country in this part of its course is partially cleared and cultivated with rice and sugar-cane. Presently, however, it commences its descent towards the level of the lower plains, plunging into a glen riven through the basalt, and assumes the character of a mountain torrent. Here and there it widens out into little bays of level valley land; but is henceforth, for a hundred miles or so, generally shut in between high banks rising from the edge of its channel. Through these the rapid drainage of the higher hills has cut innumerable narrow channels down to the level of its bed, which spread out above into an interminable series of rocky gullies, seaming in every direction a long succession of rolling basaltic waves. The surface of these tracts has been weathered in places into a penurious soil, bearing multitudes of round black boulders of trap, ranging in size from an egg to a small house, and salted over with small white agate splinters, both apparently eliminated from the mother rock in the process of decomposition. This surface is covered with a growth of coarse grass, varying according to the depth of the soil from a few inches to several feet in height, and is studded with small trees, of which ninety-nine in every

hundred are the Sálei, or frankincense tree (*Boswellia thurifera*).

This tree has hitherto been regarded as a mere incumbrance to the ground. Its timber is soft and spongy, and is certainly valueless for building and such purposes. It has also been rejected as firewood, its specific gravity being so low that a great bulk of it has to be transported in comparison with teak and other hard woods to produce a given effect. Yet it produces excellent charcoal, and is perfectly adapted for most ordinary purposes of fuel; and, wherever the carriage of better sorts from remote parts has rendered their use more expensive, the Sálei has been actually used instead. This points to another mistake we have hitherto made in our Indian forestry. Undoubtedly this and other soft wood trees should have been forced into common use by the people as fuel long ago, instead of our giving way to their outcry for hard woods and bamboos, the use of which should be confined to certain special requirements. The Boswellia possesses other properties, which will probably at some future time render these great desolate tracts of high economical value. It yields a fragrant gum resin, which is burnt as incense in Hindú temples. It was long thought to be the Olibanum of the ancients, employed for a similar purpose; but Dr. Birdwood has, in a recently published pamphlet, attempted to show that this substance was procured from other species of the Boswellia in countries to the west of India. It is, however, singular that its Sanscrit name, *labáná*, should still so closely resemble that of antiquity; and it may perhaps be doubted if our knowledge of the ancient commerce of India suffices to exclude India from the list of countries which contributed the frankincense of the *Boswellia* to the fanes of heathen gods. It is highly probable that some much more general utility would be found in this gum resin,

were the attention of persons capable of testing it drawn to the subject. It is also not unlikely that the soft woody fibre of the tree would prove to be adapted for the manufacture of coarse paper or cloth. Should any economic value be found to attach to any portion of the tree, the supply would be practically unlimited; and reproduction of the forests would be easy in the extreme, large stakes when stuck in the ground during the rainy season rapidly taking root and shooting into trees. This quality of the tree has recently been taken advantage of by the railway company for the construction of live fence-posts on which to stretch their fencing wires. The Sálei is of a highly social character, emulating in this respect the Sál (*Shorea*), but admitting in a greater degree than it the companionship of other species. The principal of these are the Sáj (*Pentaptera*); the Torchwood tree (*Cochlospermum*), with its bright yellow solitary flowers gleaming on the extremities of its naked branches; and the Ironwood tree (*Hardwickia binata*), which is perhaps the most graceful forest tree in these regions.

The aspect of these vast forests of the *Boswellia*, of which the country about the Táptí is a specimen, and which cover, I should say, fully one half of the whole of this trap region, is very remarkable. During the height of the monsoon (July to October) the grass is green, and the trees have thrown out a thin foliage of small bright green pinnated leaves. The river beds, too, are then filled by foaming torrents, and the fervor of the sun is moderated by a canopy of grey clouds. At this season one might almost mistake the valley for a scene in some northern primeval wilderness. But gradually, as the clouds clear off and the rain ceases, a change occurs. The rivers shrink in their beds, till a trickling stream in a wide bed of boulders represents the resistless mountain torrent of a month before, while the higher gullies are

utterly dried up. The grass turns from green to yellow, and bristles with a terrible armature of prickles, like needles of steel with the barbs of a fish-hook, which catch in each other and mat together into masses. Woe betide the undefended pedestrian in grass like this. Unless defended by leather, before he has gone half a mile every stitch of his clothing will be run through and through, and pinned to his flesh by multitudes of these barbs, causing the most intolerable pain. The foliage of the Sálei withers and droops after a few weeks of sunning; and its naked yellow stems then fill the prospect like a vast army of skeletons. But this stage is not even the worst. It continues till the month of April introduces the torrid summer season, when the fierce sun laps up the last particle of moisture in these basaltic regions. Then the grass has become like tinder, and a thousand accidents may set it on fire. The traveller dropping a light from his pipe, the wind carrying a spark from an encampment of jungle-haunting Banjárás, the torch of the belated traveller, and, should it escape these accidents, then certainly the deliberate act of the graziers who bring herds of cattle with the first fall of rain in June into these tracts to graze on the resulting new crop of grass, will start a jungle fire which nothing can stop till it burns itself out. Early in the hot season it is a fine sight to watch at night the long creeping red lines of the jungle fires on distant hill-sides. From the hill fortress of Asírgarh the eye ranges over the whole of the upper Táptí valley; and at this season the whole country appears at night ringed with these lines of fire, curving with the curvature of hills; here thin and scarcely visible where the grass is scanty on a bare hill-top; there flaring through tracts of long elephant grass, or wrapping some dried and sapless tree-stem in immense tongues of flame. By night a ruddy glow colours all

the heavens above the spot; while by day a thick pall of smoke hangs over the valley. Near the scene the air is stifling and thick with falling flakes of ash. Wild animals have fled the neighbourhood; and clouds of insects rise before the advancing flames, to be devoured by myriads of birds collected seemingly from every end of the country. Innumerable snakes and noxious vermin of all sorts perish in the fire, including many of the curious grass snake of these regions, which a diligent search will frequently discover twined among the matted masses of the spear-grass. It is a harmless creature, living on insects, and changes its colour from green to yellow along with the grass. When the fires are burnt out the spectacle is a dismal one indeed. Hill-side after hill-side of blackness, relieved only here and there by a long streak of white ashes where a prostrate trunk has been consumed, and by the wilderness of Sálei skeletons, scorched at the base, and above more yellow and ghastly than ever.

Yet, even in the heart of those parts of the basaltic region to which this description most fittingly applies, there are few tracts where, at a little distance, some oasis will not be found. The larger ravines are often filled with clumps of bamboo which never entirely lose their verdure; and here and there a sheltered valley will be met, where there is either a pool of water, or moisture not far below the surface, with its fringe of verdure, and a few Mhowá or Mango trees, perhaps marking the site of some old village, deserted long ago beyond the memory of living man. In the central valley of the Táptí also will be found at intervals bays of rich deep soil, with a moist substratum that is never entirely parched up, and carrying a greener grass which it is hard to burn, and often a covering of forest trees. Most of these tracts have been at one time reclaimed to the plough and thickly populated. That

was in the days when the Mahomedan Viceroy of the Deccan held court at the city of Burhánpúr, some fifty miles lower down the valley, and great armies marching between the Deccan and Hindostan had to be fed. The bays in the valley are still dotted over with the sites of the villages of those times, and with the ruined forts and tombs and mosques of their Mahomedan rulers. Near the ancient site of Sájní, the chief town of one of these tracts, may be seen a banyan tree of immense spread, whose trunk has embraced and lifted bodily up from off the ground the domed masonry tomb, about twelve feet in all dimensions, of some Moslem notable, and so enveloped it with its thousand folds that not one stone of it is to be seen outside, while, passing inside by a narrow opening, the arch of the dome and the wall will be seen to be almost perfect. A Moslem could scarcely desire a fitter entombment than to be suspended thus between heaven and earth, like the prophet of his faith.

It is now some seventy years since the malaria of the encroaching jungle and famine in the country caused by the failure of the rains of heaven and the still more terrible strife of men desolated these settlements in the Táptí valley. The rank jungle then sprang on the deserted clearings, rendered fertile to weed as to cereal by the labour of man, and has now clothed them with a thicket of vegetation of such thickness, and guarded by a miasma so deadly, as to baffle all attempts at renewed occupation by the Hindú cultivators densely crowded in the adjoining open country. Here and there the Korkús, whose constitutions seem impervious to malaria, have settled down on some neighbouring rising ground, and built a neat little village of Swiss-like cottages of bamboo, and have cleared and tilled the opener parts of the valley, raising such crops of wheat on the unexhausted black soil as are the envy

of the laborious tiller of the hard-used lands in the outer valley. But it is a terrible and unequal struggle between the aborigine, even so far reclaimed as these Korkús are, and the jungle with its immense and unremitting strength of vegetation, and tribes of noxious wild beasts. Every now and again the heart of the Korkú fails him, and he abandons the contest, flitting off to some hill-side where he may more easily contend with axe and fire against the less exuberant vegetation of the thin mountain soils. On the whole, however, the habits of the Korkús of the Táptí valley are a great advance on those of the tribes inhabiting the Máhádeo hills further east. Their cultivation is performed with the bullock plough instead of the axe, and is of a much more permanent character. Their villages and houses are much more substantial, and are seldom changed; and habits of providence and steady industry have been developed among them which are unknown to either Gónd or Korkú of other parts. Much of this may, no doubt, be due to their fortunate occupation of a country where cultivation by annual cutting down the forest is scarcely possible, owing to the scantiness of timber and of soil on the slopes of the hills, while the neighbourhood of so large a city as Burhánpúr must always have furnished them with a regular and remunerative market for their produce.

The grass burning universal in the jungles of these provinces is undoubtedly beneficial in a great variety of ways. It allows, and assists by the manure of the ashes, a crop of green and tender grass-shoots to appear for the grazing of vast herds of cattle, which form great part of the wealth of the people in the neighbourhood of jungle tracts. It kills multitudes of snakes and noxious insects. It probably prevents much malaria that would arise from the vegetation if gradually allowed to decay. It destroys much of the harbour

for wild beasts. And the ashes no doubt form a valuable ingredient in the deposits of soil carried down by the drainage of these hills to lower regions, and in the cultivable crust gradually forming in these uplands themselves. It has been held by some that these fires are very injurious to the growth of saplings of teak and other valuable trees. But it is an undoubted fact that teak seeds will germinate and produce seedlings where the grass has been fired better than where it has not; and it is not well established that much permanent injury is afterwards done to the seedlings. By great efforts fires were kept out of one or two favourably situated teak forests for some years, but no result of consequence to the young trees has been observed. On the other hand there is no room for doubt that in unburnt tracts the forests must become greatly more malarious, and wild beasts will multiply exceedingly. The discussion, however, can never assume much practical value, since it would be quite impossible, with any means at our command, to keep fires out of any but a few very limited and peculiarly favourable localities.

The labour of exploring such forests as those I have described during the hot season, when alone they are sufficiently open and free from malaria, is immense—day after day toiling over those interminable basaltic ridges, where many marches have often to be made without meeting an inhabitant, without often a single green tree for shelter, and dependent for water on a few stagnant pools puddled up by the feet of wild animals. This was what often fell to the lot of the forest officers of those early days. I doubt if many of them would have gone on with the task but for the love of sport and adventure which probably led to their original selection of a jungle life; and there is not one of them whose health did not, after a

few years, give way under the combined assaults of malaria and a fiery sun.

Vast tracts of the most sterile portion of this region are absolutely without water during some months of the hot season; and in many others there is no more than perhaps a single small pool, in some shaded hollow of the rocks, for many miles on end. The only animal which can inhabit such wastes as these is the nílgaí, which can and does pass many days without drinking; and scattered herds of them are accordingly found even in the driest parts. The bison wanders over the whole of the forest and hilly portion of the tract, wherever the absence of man and cattle, and abundance of bamboo cover and water, afford him the needful conditions. The deer tribe comprises the Sámbar (*Rusa aristotelis*) and the Axis or Spotted Deer (*Axis maculatus*) in large numbers, and, more rare, the Barking Deer (*Cervulus aureus*), besides the little four-horned antelope already mentioned. The Hog Deer (*Axis porcinus*) does not, I believe, occur so far to the south-west as the trap country. The spotted deer is never found except in the neighbourhood of the larger rivers. Abundance of water and green shade appear to be first conditions of its existence. A few barking deer are found scattered all over the tract, though never very far from water.

Sámbar are rarely found in the very dry interior, but sometimes travel to rest during the day to a long distance from the water hole or stream where they drink at night. On the level table land they are not very numerous, preferring the slopes and summits of the hills. But no animal changes its location so much, according to the season of the year, abundance of food, etc., as the sámbar. Wherever the bison is found, the sámbar is certain to be as well; but his range is not so confined as the bison's, being much more tolerant of the propin-

quity of man and of grazing herds of domestic cattle. While the crops of the table land and lower plains are green the herds of sámbar come out to feed on them at night, remaining during the day near the edge of the jungle, unless disturbed and driven into the depths of the forest by man. They also feed, however, on a great variety of jungle products; and move about in apparently the most capricious manner in search of them. The short green grass that clothes the banks of pools and springs, and the tender shoots of young trees and bushes, may be said to be at all times the foundation of their fare, and during the rainy season almost their only resource. Later on, in late autumn, the young wheat and grain crops of neighbouring clearances are made to pay heavy toll; and with the commencement of the hot season comes a great variety of wild fruits, all greatly relished by the deer. At one time (March and April) it is the luscious flower of the Mhowá tree (p. 75), which they share with the Gónd and the bear and most other animals and birds. The Tendú, the Chironjí, the Áolá, the Bhér, and many other trees, also fruit plentifully in spring; and a little later the pods of numerous species of acacia, chiefly Babúl*, Reunjá†, Kheir‡, and of the tamarinds which have overgrown many deserted village sites, and the fruit of several species of wild fig §, amply support the sámbar through the hot season. Wherever any of these are plentiful, there the marks of nightly visits by sámbar will be found in the morning. But by the earliest break of day the animals will have disappeared; and, having drunk well at some neighbouring water, will probably be well on their way to their resting-place for the day. For the next hour or two they are often to be found at a few miles' distance, apparently

* *A. Arabica.*
† *A. Leucophlœa.*
‡ *A. catechu.*
§ *F. indica, F. religiosa* and *F. guleria.*

loitering about, but all the time slowly making their way in a certain direction, higher up the hills and towards denser cover, and keeping a heedful watch on possible pursuers. As they penetrate deeper into the waste country their watchfulness diminishes, but they generally take a long and keen survey of all their surroundings before lying down for the day. At all times but the rutting season (October and November) the heavy old stags remain mostly solitary, a few young animals only remaining with the herd, which consists of ten to fifteen individuals. The old stags usually travel deeper into the forest and higher up the hills before lying down than the herd, which is often found within a mile or so of their feeding ground. In all cases a patch of longish grass is selected, and a regular form like that of a hare is made by each individual. Each form is usually in the shade of a small tree, the side or top of the hill, where grass is long but trees not very numerous or thick, being preferred to very dense thickets ; and it is curious with what skill the spot is selected, so that the deepest shade shall fall on the form at about three o'clock in the afternoon, which is the hottest portion of the day. Hundreds of forms will sometimes be found in one locality, every one of them at precisely the same point of the compass from its sheltering tree. The large stags do not seem to care so much about shade, and generally lie on the side of some little depression on a hill top, sheltered only by long grass. Their forms can be readily distinguished from those of the others by their greatly superior size. These forms are generally made when the grass is green, and are occupied at intervals all the rest of the year. More than one herd and a few solitary stags will not usually be found in the same tract of country ; but in the rutting season they collect together in much larger numbers on the tops of the high plateaux ; and the hoarse roar of the

stags may then be heard echoing far and wide in the silent night. When lying down for the day, sámbar, and particularly the solitary stags, will frequently allow one to approach and pass them quite close without getting up, trusting to concealment in the grass; and it is really almost impossible in many places for the sportsman on foot to see them unless he actually stumbles on their forms. The hard yellow grass, while unburnt, leaves next to no trail of the passage of a single deer, and thus the search for sámbar on foot after the hour when they lie down is seldom very successful.

If information can be got from the people who frequent the jungles for wood cutting, etc., of whereabouts the sámbar are feeding and resting at that particular season, capital sport can be got with them in the day time with the aid of a riding elephant. This enables you to see over the grass, and generally starts any sámbar that may be lying down within about a hundred yards. The elephant must be thoroughly trained to stop dead short on deer getting up, and should not be furnished with a howdah, the simple pad or *chárjámá* being preferable for this sort of shooting; and the smaller and more active the elephant is the better. You should start about eleven o'clock and hunt till sundown, proceeding as silently as possible through the longest patches of grass, with rifle on full cock, for you do not generally get much time to make ready once the deer get up. The presence of recently used forms (which will be known by the droppings) will indicate the probable proximity of deer; and it is better to beat thoroughly a limited area than hastily a large extent of country. Where the hills rise by steps, as is often the case in the trap country, the outer edge of each step is the most likely place, and the sámbar will almost always run up hill.

A standing shot may sometimes be had during a few seconds after the sámbar first rise, but more generally they dart off at full speed at once, and then comes into play the most difficult of all the arts of the rifleman—snap shooting at running game off an elephant. The elephant is never *perfectly* still for more than a moment, and its short swing must be allowed for as well as the pace of the deer. The sámbar is, of course, from its great size and distinct colour, much more easy to hit than the spotted deer, or barking, or hog, deer; but still it is amazing what a preponderance of clear misses the best shots will make at even running sámbar off the elephant, until long and constant practice has given the peculiar knack which is so difficult to attain. It is, however, by far the most deadly as well as one of the most enjoyable ways of hunting the sámbar. The best stags will, however, seldom be obtained by this method, lying as they do on the tops of remote hills, where one might search for and not find them for a week.

Driving a large extent of country with a long line of beaters is the commonest method of hunting sámbar. It is frequently successful, and often secures a good stag; but for my own part I have very rarely resorted to it. It is difficult often to get a sufficient number of beaters without oppression, and accidents often occur to them from the enclosure of dangerous wild beasts. The whole country is disturbed; the shooting of a creature driven up to you, without the exercise either of skill or any other manly quality on your own part, is not sport; and lastly, to prove successful, a large number of sportsmen are required to guard the numerous passes; and it never has been my fortune (not that I have much regretted it) to be out with a large hunting party in India. A few times however I have helped to drive a jungle, generally

for some other game than sámbar, and these have sometimes proved memorable occasions.

In 1861, in the Jubbulpúr district, I was beating a wooded hill side for sámbar as the shades of evening were drawing on, and the beaters had nearly reached the end of the drive when I suddenly saw them swarming up trees, and the shout reached me of "Two tigers are afoot!" I was then trying for the first time a rifle made on Jacob's principle for explosive shells, and congratulated myself on having so good an opportunity for testing it. Anxiously I waited behind my little green bush, the beaters creating a din enough to deafen a dozen tigers, till at last I saw a striped form glide across an open spot in front, and advancing in my direction. With finger on the trigger I was awaiting his appearance at the next break in the low jungle, when suddenly I heard the bushes crashing on my left, and a large tiger bounded into the jungle pathway on which I was standing, and cantered towards my position. Wheeling round, I delivered the right barrel of the Jacob in his left shoulder, on receiving which he rolled over like a rabbit. At the moment I fired my eye caught a glimpse of the other tiger close by, in the direction I had first seen him; so, seeing the first disposed of, I again fronted, and, with a steady aim, gave No. 2 the left barrel through the neck. As luck would have it, the spine was broken, and he dropped on the spot. All this occupied but a few seconds, being as quick a right and left as ever I fired. On turning my attention again to the first tiger, I was just in time to see him reach the thick jungle some twenty paces off, and, before I could seize another gun, he had disappeared. I had time to perceive, however, that his right hind leg was broken in the body; the shell must, therefore, as he was hit in the left shoulder, have traversed his body from stem to

stern; and yet here were none of the immediate paralysing effects ascribed to these shells at close quarters. On walking up to the second "tiger," what was my disgust to find that it was not a tiger after all, but only a huge striped hyæna I had shot, having mistaken his disproportionately large head in the imperfect light for that of the jungle king! The shell had passed completely through his neck, but, if it exploded at all, must have done so after passing out. The other was a veritable tiger, however. We followed him a little way by his footprints and blood, but it was getting very dark, and prudence compelled us to leave him till the morning. We failed, however, to find him then, though we hunted about the whole day; and it was not till some days after that a cow-herd found his rotting remains beside a pool of water, many miles away.

On another occasion I secured the largest sámbar horns I have ever seen, in a drive. It was in the Borí teak forest, a lovely little valley nestling under the northern scarp of the Máhádeo hills, and surrounded on three sides by its mural precipices. Being very inaccessible from the plains, more teak trees have here escaped the destroying timber contractor than almost anywhere else; and R., D., and myself were engaged in demarcating its boundaries as a reserved forest. Having toiled for some days putting up cairns of stones along the open southern border, where it is not enclosed by precipices, and completed the business, we decided to wind up with a drive in the forest itself for sámbar, and the chance of a few bison whose tracks we had seen during our work. The grass was so long and the forest so thick that driving was then almost the only possible way of getting game. We had had a number of Gónds and Korkús out with us at the boundary work, and the prospect of abundance of meat readily induced

them to beat for us. A long slope of broken ground between the foot of the scarp and the bottom of the glen was to be beaten crossways; D. took the post just below the scarp, R. remained near the bottom, and I had the middle place. I screened myself behind the thick double trunk of a teak tree, forking from the ground. The beat was a short one, and I had not waited long before a tremendous crashing on the hill side above me, followed by a shot from D., announced the approach of some heavy animal. I thought it was a bull bison at least, and was surprised when a sámbar stag burst through the underwood just in front of me, and, with horns laid along his flanks, clattered down the steep hill side. He was going full speed, and was much screened by the long grass and dry bamboos, which he scattered on every side in his passage, so that I had not much confidence in the broadside shot wherewith I greeted him proving successful. Something told me I had hit him, however,—a sportsman who has shot much is seldom mistaken in his inward heart as to the truth of his aim,—and though he crashed away apparently untouched I ran eagerly to the place where he had passed to look for blood. Before I arrived I heard the ring of a rifle in R.'s direction, and then a long holloa which told me that the stag was down. Though greatly disappointed at losing the magnificent head which I saw he carried, I went on to the trail, and there I found great gouts of the red and frothy blood that tells of a shot through the lungs. Some of the Gónds now came up, and I left them to run the trail down hill, while I hastened down to where the stag had fallen. He lay on his side, close to R.'s post, which he had been passing full speed when he fired and toppled him over. The shot hole was, however, in his haunch and that wound I knew would never stop a stag like this. So

we turned him over and found my bullet hole on the other side, just a little too high for the heart. It was a true enough shot after all, and I was very glad when I measured by spans his splendid horns, though sorry for the disappointment of a brother sportsman.

Though not a very large stag he was very old and rather mangy, and had a perfect head with the usual three points on each horn, and measuring from base to tip forty-one inches, round the base ten inches, and eight and a half at the thinnest part of the beam. I have never seen a larger head altogether than this in Central India. It is figured at the end of the present chapter. The horns of sámbar vary greatly in development, some being very massive but short, and others very long but slender. Really good heads every way like this one are the rare exception, and would not be seen once out of perhaps fifty animals shot. About thirty to thirty-five inches is the average length of the horns even of mature stags. Occasionally more than three tines are seen on one or both antlers; but this is an abnormal development, and such heads will generally be found of stunted growth and devoid of symmetry. Sometimes the inner and sometimes the outer tine of the terminal fork will be found the longer.

I have taken much pains to assure myself of a fact, of which I am now perfectly convinced, namely, that, neither in the case of the sámbar nor the spotted deer (both belonging to the Asiatic group of Rusinæ as distinguished from the Cervidæ or true stags), are the antlers regularly shed every year in these Central Indian forests, as is the case with the Cervidæ in cold climates.* No native shikárí, who is engaged

* Probably on the higher hill ranges they shed them more regularly; on the Nilgherry hills I saw a number of stags in the month of July, and none of them had full grown horns. I may add here that but one species of this deer

all his life in the pursuit of these animals, will allow such to be the case; and all sportsmen out at that season must have seen stags with full-grown horns during the hot weather and rains, when they are supposed to have shed them. Hornless stags are seen at that season, but the great majority have perfect heads. I have also known certain stags for successive years always about the same locality, and which I have repeatedly stalked at intervals during this time along with natives who constantly saw them, so that I could not be mistaken as to the individual; and all the time they never once dropped their horns.

One of these was a very peculiar animal, almost jet black in colour, and with large horns so white as to look almost like a cast pair bleached by the weather. He frequented, during several years I knew him, an open part of the Móná valley, a good deal resorted to by wood and grass cutters. He never could be found like other stags in the morning; but seemed to lie down before daylight in some strategical position whence he always managed to effect an escape without being seen till far out of shot. I had never even fired at him though I had seen him often, when very early one morning I was walking over the grassy plain where he was often seen, and some cartmen who were loading hay told me they had seen a stag lie down on the side of a hillock not far off. I made a long circuit to get to the other side of it, and then slowly, inch by inch and with beating heart, drew myself over the brow. Nothing was to be seen from there, and, with finger on the trigger of my little single "Henry," I crawled down the slope. Just then a stick cracked on my left, and looking

is now recognized as inhabiting all India, including the *Gerow* of the Himalayas, and that I believe, after inspecting large collections of horns, &c., it nowhere attains greater development than in Central India.

round I saw the stag running in a crouching tiger-like fashion along the bottom of a water-course I had not noticed, but which doubtless had been duly considered in the selection of his position. I had only time for a snap shot, which caught the top of his shoulder and heavily lamed him. He could go just a little faster than myself after this, and had frequently to stop. But he always got the start of me when I came up, and thus carried me some four or five miles towards the base of the hills, before a lucky shot at a very long range caught him in the centre of the neck and finished the business.

It is curious how often incidents like that one with the Borí sámbar occur. A beast shot in the lungs will run on, particularly down hill, for several hundred yards before he drops, though then he will generally fall stone dead; and the collapse frequently occurs just when he receives another wound, though it may be a very slight one, or when anything occurs to interrupt his impetus. I remember when shooting in the Rohilkhund Terái, a hog deer ran the gauntlet of a whole line of elephants. I had fired at him first on the right with a little rifle carrying a very peculiar bullet, but we all thought we had to register a miss when he fell to the Joe Manton of old Col. S. on the extreme left of the line; and it was not till we were examining the goodly heap of slain brought in by the pad elephants on our return to camp that I thought of looking for my shot, and found that the death wound was from my rifle after all, as we cut out the little bullet from the top of its shoulder, while the Colonel's round ball had only just grazed its quarter. On another occasion I had fired at a large tiger sneaking through some thin jungle in the Bétúl district. The brute dashed ahead out of sight with loud roars, but presently came wheeling round in a circle, galloped along the bottom of a small ravine,

and came up the bank of it right opposite me, as I thought with the determination of making a home charge. As his head appeared over the top I fired at it, at the distance of only some dozen paces, and he tumbled back again to the bottom, where he lay dead. My astonishment was not small to find that I had missed him clean the last time, and that he had died just in the nick of time from the first shot through the shoulders.

By far the finest sport afforded by the sámbar is when he is regularly stalked in his native wilderness, without either elephant or beaters. I will not waste a word on so vile a practice as that of shooting him at night, when he comes to the crops or drinking places. None but a native shikárí, or an European with equally poaching proclivities, would ever think of such a thing. To succeed in stalking, the camp must be pitched as near as possible to where they have been ascertained to resort at night to feed and drink. A party of the aborigines of the place must be entertained to act as scouts, people who thoroughly know the country and the haunts and habits of the deer, and who are not afraid to traverse any part of the jungles in the dark. These must be sent out in couples long before daylight to crown the most commanding hill tops in the neighbourhood, with instructions to mark any sámbar they may see on the way from their feeding grounds to the midday resting place. When deer are observed one should remain to watch them, while the other hastens with the news to some well-marked central point, whither the sportsman himself must leisurely proceed, starting half an hour or so before daybreak, accompanied by one or two of the wild men. It is very likely he may fall in with deer himself by the way, and get a stalk ; but if not some of the scouts are almost certain to bring information in time to get at

the deer before they have lain down. This method of scouting also succeeds well with bison in the thin jungles where they are sometimes found; and I do not know any place where the sport of stalking the bison and sámbar in this fashion can be followed with better chance of success than in the jungles on either side of the upper Táptí valley. Indeed, the very best of this sport can be had within an easy morning's ride of the large city of Burhánpúr, in the Nimár district, situated on the Táptí, a few miles below the point where the narrow rugged valley opens out into a wide basin of fertile and highly cultivated black soil. Here the Táptí is joined by the Moná, a beautiful stream which flows clear and sparkling out of a branch of the Sátpúrá range called the Hattí hills. It is one of the most singular parts of the great basaltic formation, and forms the extreme westerly termination of the highland region I am describing. Last year I traversed the whole of this range from end to end, on boundary settlement business, in company with a friend—Captain T., of the Survey; and though, being on duty, our first object was of course the public service, we found leisure for a little of our favourite sport at different times.

In the end of February we rode out from Burhánpúr to our camp, which was pitched at the last village in the open plain. Next morning a small tent was sent up to a little fort called Gharrí, that crowns the northern face of the Hattí range, and we ourselves took different lines through the hills on foot to the same place. The inhabitants of these hills are all Bheels, a good deal spoilt by "civilization," being mostly lazy and thriftless, and confirmed opium eaters. They are the descendants of ancestors who were nominally converted to Mahomedanism, in the days when a strong Moslem power was established at Burhánpúr, but now retain scarcely anything of

their faith besides the name of the Prophet, and the practice of its most elementary rites. In Mahomedan times the chiefs of these Bheels were subsidized and constituted wardens of the hill passes in this range, over which ran the main highways between the valley of the Táptí and Berár; and they still continue to receive from our Government this subsidy, which is nothing but a compensation for the blackmail levied by their turbulent ancestors from the adjoining plains. A few unconverted Bheels still remain in this country, who are chiefly the hereditary village watchmen of the Hindú villages bordering on the hills. They are usually a good deal Hindúized in manners, but retain much of the keen natural qualities that render the wilder members of the race such excellent hunters. Bheels of the wildest character are also found in the mountainous region west of Asírgarh, depending for subsistence much on their bows and arrows, and still ready for any undertaking of lawlessness and peril. It is scarcely, however, within the province of this work to devote space to this tribe, which is but scantily represented in the highland region of which it treats.

The road to Gharrí lay up a fine level, though narrow, valley in the Hattí hills, containing the sites of several old villages marked by ancient trees and Mahomedan tombs. As we overlooked, from the height of Gharrí, its long level reach, and the narrow gorge formed by a transverse chain of little hills at its mouth, with the level black-soil plain of the Táptí valley stretching away into the distant haze beyond, the thought suggested itself at the same time to both of us, how remarkably suited the spot was for an irrigation reservoir. Without—the land thirsting for water, being underlaid by a sandy subsoil so deep that no well can tap the stratum of moisture below it, and crowded with a

dense population, who pay for their dry and unfertile acres the rent that in many places is given for irrigated sugar-cane land. Within—a natural reservoir, fed by the drainage of forty square miles, and only wanting an embankment of a few hundred yards to hold back sufficient water to convert the whole of the plain without into an evergreen garden. Such sites as these, though not always so favoured by a combination of circumstances as this one, are met with at intervals along almost the whole of the frontier line between the highlands and the open plain. But, alas! the means at the command of so poor a country as India are unequal to the task of realising her own future; and the wealth of life-giving water that annually escapes through these unguarded outlets must still, for many a generation, it may be feared, be allowed to waste itself in destructive inundations and fruitless floods. We are only just beginning to realise that at the bottom of all India's wretched poverty and backwardness lies the exceeding unfertility of her land in the absence of artificial irrigation. A return of wheat no more than four or fivefold the seed, and but forty pounds of clean cotton to the acre, from the deep black soils of the Narbadá valley,—such is the boasted fertility of one of the finest tracts of soil in all India! What might be the changes in the physical conditions and economy of India were the annual rainfall saved which now escapes to the sea it is impossible to foresee. An almost incredible increase in the productiveness of the low country, and the final banishment of the famine demon that now claims its annual thousands and quinquennial millions throughout the land, would probably be combined with a great amelioration of the climate, and improvement of the forests of the higher regions.*

* I would not here be understood to affirm the opinion that such a country as the bulk of the Central Provinces are as yet ripe for large irrigation works. A

Gharrí is situated on the edge of a table-land of considerable extent, but of very irregular outline; on the north winding round the heads of long ravines which drain down into the valley below, and towards the south coming suddenly to a steep drop into the plains of Berár. The more open parts of this table-land have at some remote period been cultivated, the trap boulders having been cleared off and piled into rough walls enclosing large square fields. The land is in many places very deep and rich, and, the elevation being about two thousand feet, it would no doubt grow tea and coffee well. Now it is utterly waste, the lazy Bheels being satisfied with their subsidy from Government, while want of roads, and probably a bad climate, deter the cultivators of the neighbouring plains. There is plenty of water on the top, and one day it will doubtless be the seat of a considerable settlement.

At Gharrí T. went out in the evening, and found two sámbar stags feeding on the pods of some acacias on the site of a deserted village. Being a capital stalker and a good shot, he got close in upon them, and bagged both with a right and left shot. Next day we crossed the plateau to a place called Bingárá, near which T. had a survey station to put up. The road for some distance lay over a tolerably level plain of black soil, covered by a thin scrub of teak poles and thorny bushes; but presently, leaving the plateau, passed on to a very narrow ridge which forms the backbone of these singular hills throughout their length. In some places an exceedingly steep slope of a thousand feet or so led down from this saddle-back to the plains on either side, leaving

much denser population, and more farm stock, will be required before such can be the case. The old district of Nimár however—and particularly the basin of the Táptí valley surrounding the large city of Burhánpúr which is here referred to—is an exceptional tract, fully prepared for the general introduction of irrigation, and ready to pay for it.

with very perfect horns, a long distance across a valley with the "Express." These little creatures are very common in the hills we were hunting in, living solitary or in small groups in all parts of the range. The female is hornless, while the buck has four distinct sheathed horns. The posterior pair are four or five inches long, and set upon high pedicles covered with hair. The anterior pair are generally mere knobs, and never exceed in length an inch and three-fourths. In some specimens they are even absent altogether. The animal is found throughout India; and appears to be generally without the anterior horns in the South. Here, in Central India, some have them and some have not. I never could see any other difference between them; but it is not altogether certain that there are not two distinct species. The preponderance of females appears to be very great, quite as great as in the case of the ordinary Indian antelope, though, from their not congregating in large herds, it is not so much observed. To kill a buck at all is rare, and to kill one with four well developed horns is much rarer still. They seem to be very retiring little creatures, never coming to the crops, and moving very little out of the limited area where they find food and water. There is scarcely a water-hole in all these regions which is not frequented by one or more, and they are nearly certain to be found during the day lying in the nearest patch of grass. They make little forms like those of the sámbar, and allow themselves almost to be trodden on before they start. They run for a short distance at an incredible velocity, with their necks low and making themselves as small as possible, till they suddenly stop, but always with such art that a tree stump, or mound, or thick bush shall screen them from the observer; then another short dash, and another halt, and so on till out of sight. They are nearly sure to be found in the same place

next day however. When seen walking about undisturbed in the jungle their pace is most curious, raising their feet absurdly high as if stepping over large stones, and putting them down with a fastidious delicacy and softness as if they were walking on eggs,—a simultaneous "bobbing" action of the head and neck giving them altogether very much the gait of "that generous bird the hen." They live on the green shoots of bushes, young grass, and fallen jungle fruits; and their venison is coarse and tasteless.

The same afternoon two of the Bheels who had been out scouting in a very solitary part of the hills to the east of the valley came in and reported a large herd of bison as always to be found where they had been. Nothing is more difficult than to get really reliable news about the haunts of animals, until you can get the few jungle people who do know thoroughly enlisted in your interests. If you ask any one else, or even them when they don't care to tell you, ten to one they will charge their faces with a stare of utter vacuity, and ask you "if it is not a jungle,"—implying that, if you allow so much, of course you must know where to find beasts. The little block of hills we were going to visit is quite shut in from all the ordinary lines of travelling in these parts. There is no road into it by which carts can be taken; cattle are never sent to graze there by the neighbouring villagers; and thus no one ever goes into it, excepting a single family of Bheels who are the hereditary Turvees* of an ancient village, said to have existed in the palmy days of Mahomedan rule in one of its valleys, and now represented by half a dozen Mhowá trees, the fruit of which these Bheels still go annually to gather. Two of the family happened to be among our scouts,

* The Turvee is the chief of a Bheel clan or settlement; and all heads of Bheel villages in this part of the country are so called by courtesy.

to rolling away from beneath the unwary foot, the heat developed by the exertion was greatly out of proportion to the progress made. At last, however, we sighted the red-topped tree under which we had marked our stag; and then "the Moon," stripping himself of next to his last fragment of raiment, swarmed up a teak pole to look out ahead. Nothing was seen however, and so we stole on again, friend Chand swarming up trees at intervals, and I balancing myself in fear and trembling on the rounded boulders. We were not to succeed however; for the Bheel in coming off a tree accidentally stepped on a leaf, and the game was up. Though I dashed ahead at once, knowing that we could steal in no further, it was too late; and all I saw was a dark form running low, but at a great pace, through the teak scrub, too far off for a shot. I believe that this was about the only sámbar then on the hills; for though the forms where they had been lying were numerous, and both T. and I hunted the livelong day for them, not another hoof or horn did we see. The Bheels said they had all gone to "Dhowtea"—a place which we afterwards found was so difficult of access that very few of them had ever been there; and so they used it, much as we do "Jericho," to express an indefinite region where everything that can't be found elsewhere must certainly have gone.

Greatly to the surprise of the Bheels, we did shortly after this go to Dhowtea; and if its name was great before it certainly became much more so after we had been there. Neither of us ever saw anything so extraordinary in our lives; and to the Bheels there was nothing short of magical devilry in what we found, or rather did not find. Dhowtea was a hollow on the top of the range surrounded by flat plateaux of small elevation, with a fine stream of water in the centre, and long grass all about. After a long struggle through thick jungle

and over desperate rocky ground we reached it long after sundown, and encamped uncomfortably in the open plain for the night. The place was perfectly puddled up with the feet of sámbar, the footmarks ranging from a day to weeks old; and in the grass around were literally thousands of sámbar forms, while every second or third tree was peeled of its bark by the rubbing of the stags' horns against them. Next morning we started off, with an extra supply of ammunition, in different directions, our only fear being that we had not people enough to carry in all the enormous stags we expected to bag. For my part, I wandered round and round the plateaux, and over their tops, and through the hollow ground, and everywhere within six miles on my side of the hill; and though the sámbar signs were everywhere plentiful and recent, and there were droppings of bison also of some weeks old, not a dun hide of stag or hind did my eyes behold that morning. It was truly amazing, and I almost feared to return to camp lest all the beasts should have gone across to T.'s side, and I should find him smoking the pipe of satisfaction amid a hecatomb of slain. He had returned before myself, however; and mutual delight was no doubt displayed in our countenances when we found that each was in precisely the same plight as the other,—not having seen hoof or horn between us! Half believing with the Bheels that the place was enchanted, we stayed and tried again next day, but the result was precisely the same. Then we vowed that Dhowtea of the Bheels should be written down with the blackest of spots in our mental map. We were utterly ruined, of course, with the Bheels. Having seen these multitudes of ghostly sámbar tracks, we never again found any place vacant of game but to be told with a grin, "Oh, they are gone to Dhowtea, of course!"

We were utterly beaten, and, the unburnt jungle having

also proved too thick for our boundary operations, we determined to retreat to the plains. But we were unwilling to return by the awful road we had come; and, a possible way down the northern face of the hill being reported, we left Dhowtea behind us the next morning, marching along the top of the range for eight or ten miles to a place called Jámtí, the residence of another of these petty Bheel chieftains, and marked by a conspicuous banyan tree which is visible from every part of the surrounding country. Thence we descended the next day to the Táptí valley, intending to return to the hills when the jungle should be clearer. The truth was we had happened to visit Dhowtea just when nearly all the sámbar had gone down the hills to feed on some jungle fruits that had ripened in the valleys; and the few that remained were not to be found among the long unburnt grass. I believe that the immense number of marks we saw were caused by the collection of large numbers of deer there during the rutting season (late autumn). I intended to investigate this had I remained in that part of the country; but neither of us ever got back there again. T. is, I believe, now surveying in the Himalayas, and I am in old Scotland,—content with much smaller game than sámbar. "Such is life," as the poet says!

The path we went down by wound along the top of a long spur of naked basalt. On either side were deep and almost coal-black rifts in the rock, the summits clothed scantily with thin yellow grass, and here and there a Sálei tree stunted and twisted like a corkscrew. At one point the rock assumed the form of a sheer cliff, many hundred feet in height, of the columnar structure seen occasionally in this volcanic formation, where the rock seems composed of a vast conglomeration of pentagonal pillars standing together and broken off at