ORIENTAL MEMOIRS:

SELECTED AND ABRIDGED FROM

A SERIES OF FAMILIAR LETTERS

WRITTEN DURING

SEVENTEEN YEARS RESIDENCE IN INDIA:

INCLUDING

OBSERVATIONS

ON

PARTS OF AFRICA AND SOUTH AMERICA,

AND

A NARRATIVE OF OCCURRENCES IN FOUR INDIA VOYAGES.

Illustrated by Engravings from Original Drawings.

By JAMES FORBES, F.R.S. &c.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER XII.

CONTAINING

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF ANJENGO;

AND THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE COAST OF MALABAR.

1772.

Learn from the birds what food the thickets yield;
Learn from the beasts the physic of the field:
Thy arts of building from the bee receive;
Learn of the mole to plough, the worm to weave;
Learn of the little nautilus to sail,
Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale.
Here subterranean works and cities see;
There towns aëreal on the waving tree.
Learn each small people's genius, policies,
The ant's republic, and the realm of bees;
How those in common all their wealth bestow,
And anarchy without confusion know:
And these for ever, though a monarch reign,
Their separate cells and properties maintain.
Mark what unvaried laws preserve each state,
Laws, wise as Nature, and as fix'd as Fate. POPE

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER XII.

THE climate of Anjengo not agreeing with my constitution, and the situation I held affording no emolument equivalent to the sacrifice of my friends and a delightful society at Bombay, at the expiration of the year I obtained permission to return there, and wait for some other appointment.

During my residence at Anjengo, I endeavoured to acquire a topographical knowledge of that part of Malabar; and the manners and customs of the natives of Travencore: its natural history opens a very ample field for investigation, and the inhabitants differ in many respects from the northern Hindoos.

The sandy soil on the sea coast is planted with extensive woods of cocoa nuts; beyond the river are fruitful fields of rice, natchnee, and other grain; large plantations of pepper and groves of cassia; which add a delicious fragrance to the morning breeze.

Although not partial to Anjengo as a residence, I never made a distant excursion without being charmed with the beauty of the country, and the variety of its rivers: sometimes we glide through narrow devious channels, between steep craggy rocks, with woody summits, where the branches uniting over the stream, form a ver-

dant canopy, impervious to the tropical sun: from these dark recesses we suddenly emerge into an extensive lake

" pure as the expanse of heaven;"

again we enter a romantic scene of rocks and woods, or pursue the serpentine course of a broad gentle river, fringed by odoriferous plants, and encircling many verdant islands, some inhabited, others woody and wild: these scenes are animated by beautiful birds; and the waters abound with excellent fish. Cultivation extends to some distance eastward of the rivers; from thence to the foot of the Gaut mountains the country is an entire forest, never frequented by travellers, and little known even by those who live in its vicinity: there, amid the solemn stillness of uncultivated nature, I have ranged for miles, rapt in solitary musings.

These excursions were my chief enjoyment at Anjengo: the fertile plains, the hills clothed by mango, cashers, and cassia trees, bounded by the stupendous Gauts, towering in rude magnificence, formed a landscape not often exceeded; its grandeur was augmented when seen from the heights of Eddova and Quilone; where I have often beheld the sun majestically rising above the summit of the eastern mountains, and throwing a broad expanse of light over the western sea. In such situations we experience the truth of Addison's remark, that " our imagination loves to be " filled with an object, or to grasp at any thing that is too big for " our capacity: we are flung into a pleasing astonishment at " such unbounded views, and feel a delightful stillness and amaze- " ment in the soul, at the apprehension of them."

Among the various productions of the southern districts in Malabar are the pepper-vine, and cassia, (piper nigrum, & laurus cassia, Lin.) The former is a staple commodity at Anjengo, and grows on a beautiful vine, which, incapable of supporting itself, entwines round poles prepared for it, or, as is more common in the Travencore plantations, the pepper-vines are planted near mango and other trees of straight high stems, which being stripped of the lower branches, the vine embraces the trunk, covering it with elegant festoons, and rich bunches of fruit, in the picturesque style of the vineyards in Campagna Felice. The mango and jac trees are generally used for this purpose; few pepper gardens contain more than eight or ten trees: the vines are planted near the trunk, and led to it while young; the stem is tough, knotty, and strong: some begin to bear in the fourth year, others not till the sixth; they are in perfection about the ninth or tenth year, and continue bearing as many years longer, if in a congenial soil; from that period the vine gradually decays; a new soil is then prepared for a considerable depth round the tree, for the reception of fresh shoots from flourishing vines.

The leaf of the pepper plant is large, and of a bright green; the blossoms appear in June, soon after the commencement of the rains; they are small, of a greenish white; succeeded by bunches of green berries, which turn brown and hard as they ripen: the pepper is gathered in February, and has the same appearance as in Europe. The flavour of pepper is more or less communicated to the fruit of the tree which supports it; a circumstance not at all relished by the proprietor, as many mangoes

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taste strong of turpentine, and are not improved by the additional pungency of pepper.

Assiduity and cleanliness are essentially necessary in a pepper garden; not a weed is permitted to grow; the produce, however, amply compensates the trouble: for although the Anjengo pepper is not so much esteemed as that produced at Onore and Carwar, it is sold, on an average, at eighty rupees a candy; five hundred and sixty English pounds weight. It is treason to destroy a pepper-vine in Travencore, where the king monopolizes that branch of commerce; but permits the merchants of Anjengo to have a free trade with his subjects in cassia, coir, cables and cordage, made from the outer husk of the cocoa-nut.

As warehousekeeper at Anjengo, I received all the pepper purchased by the Company from the king of Travencore; whose agents brought it to the warehouses, and delivered it by the maund, a weight of twenty-eight pounds: I kept a particular account of the quantity annually received from the Travencore country, together with the average price, per candy; but the changes in Malabar, since the death of Tippoo Sultan, render those documents less interesting than the observations at a later period by Dr. F. Buchanan, respecting the general produce of pepper in the Malabar province, which has now become a national concern.

" Before the invasion of Hyder Ally, in 1764, that country produced annually about fifteen thousand candies, of six hundred and forty pounds each: from that period the crop has gradually diminished to half the quantity: so that a good season will now produce only eight thousand candies; a bad one not more than four thousand. Europeans usually purchase about

five-eighths of all the pepper that is produced in Malabar; and the price which they give absolutely regulates that of the whole. Since the French have been driven from Mahie, the whole of this has of course fallen into the hands of the Company."

" In 1797 the Company exported four thousand one hundred and fifty five candies of Malabar pepper, of six hundred pounds each; which was the largest exportation during seventeen years: since the capture of Mahie, in 1793, the Company has, according to Maccay, sent annually about four thousand candies to Europe direct, to Bombay, and to China. The remainder of the pepper is exported chiefly by native traders. The largest quantity goes to the Bay of Bengal; the next largest to Surat, Cutch, Scindy, and other ports in the north-west of India; and a considerable quantity goes to the Arabian merchants of Muscat, Mocha, Hodeida, Aden, and Judda. The demand from Seringapatam was the smallest, and used to amount to about five hundred candies a year. The pepper that went to Coimbetore came chiefly from the Cochin and Travencore dominions."

" The Company have always made their purchases by a contract entered into with a few native merchants. In December and January, when the crops are so far advanced that judgment can be formed of the quantity of pepper likely to be obtainable, the commercial resident assembles the contractors, and a written agreement is entered into with them, settling the price, and the quantity that each is to deliver: at this time, sometimes the whole, and in general at least one half of the money is advanced to the contractors. The contract for pepper in 1800, was five thousand candies, at one hundred and thirty rupees the candy, of six

hundred pounds; the price varies from one hundred to one hundred and forty rupees; and a contract was made for four thousand candies, in 1794, at two hundred rupees the candy."

The same writer mentions that, in the year 1757, the king of Travencore having received some assistance from the English was willing to favour their commerce: on this occasion Mr. Spencer, the English chief of Anjengo, took an account of the pepper produced in the dominions of that prince, where there was no land-tax, but where the king monopolized all the pepper, and gave the cultivators a fixed price for whatever they could raise. The whole quantity of pepper raised in the dominions of Travencore amounted to eleven thousand seven hundred candies; for this the king gave to the cultivators thirty rupees a candy. The amount of the sales, even including two thousand candies that were given to the English Company at the low price of eighty-two rupees, came to 13,12,260 rupees, or on an average one hundred and eleven rupees a candy: the king did not, therefore, allow the cultivators more than twenty-seven per cent. of the produce; yet the cultivation was carried on with the greatest spirit.

The cassia resembles the bay-tree, of which it is a species: it is called cassia lignea, to distinguish it from the laurus-cinnamomum, or true cinnamon, to which it is very inferior: the finest cassia sometimes possesses the peculiar properties of that valuable spice, but is in general of a coarser texture and less delicate flavour. The real cinnamon seems indigenous to Ceylon; there are some trees in the Company's garden at Anjengo, as a curiosity. The leaves of the cassia are smaller than the laurel, and more pointed; those of the cinnamon still more delicate: the blossoms

of both, like the flowers of the Arbutus, hang in bunches, white and fragrant; the fruit resembles a small acorn. The young leaves and tender shoots are of a bright red, changing to green as they approach maturity; they taste of cinnamon, but the only valuable part of the tree is the inner bark; which being separated from the exterior, is cut into pieces, and exposed to the sun, when it dries and curls up, and is packed in cases for foreign markets. The tree decaying on being deprived of its bark is cut down, and new shoots spring from the root; it is also raised from seed.

The Travencore country abounds with indigenous trees, whose blossoms and foliage have a pleasing and diversified appearance; most of the fruit and seeds produce oil; one by way of distinction is called the olive-tree, and bears a fruit in shape, size, and taste like the olive; and the oil is rather pleasant; but the leaf and character of the tree is altogether different, and far more beautiful in landscape than the grey tint of the Italian olive.

The silk-cotton tree (bombax cerba, Lin.) grows luxuriantly in those districts: it produces beautiful cotton, but of too delicate a texture for manufacture. This tree is extremely curious in its growth; the branches regularly project in horizontal stages, gradually diminishing as they approach the top, forming in the Malabar woods a crimson pyramid, of singular appearance; the flower resembles a single peony, or round tulip, of bright red, succeeded by a pod, in size and shape like a plantain, green at first, but ripening to a dark brown, when it bursts open, and covers the adjoining groves with snowy flakes, light as the floating gossamer.

The animals in the southern provinces and mountainous regions of Malabar are tigers, leopards, elephants, buffaloes, hogs, civet-

cats, and a variety of monkeys and squirrels; some of the monkeys are large, and covered with black glossy hair, except a very full white beard and mustachios; which give them a venerable, and almost a human appearance.

The wild buffaloe is common in many parts of Travencore: I had never before been in a country where these animals were indigenous. The Malabars, and especially the Nairs, form large hunting parties to destroy them, as also the wild elephant, tiger, and leopard. They assemble by hundreds, armed with strong spears, and large bows and arrows: forming a circle round the thickets frequented by the wild beasts, they make a loud noise to rouse them from cover, and drive them towards the centre: then gradually contracting the circle, they unite in an armed phalanx, and fall upon their prey, of which very few escape: but they sometimes wound each other in their furious onset, and often sustain dreadful attacks from their enraged foe.

The buffaloe is one of the strongest and most formidable of the savage race; with short horns, powerful neck, and large tuft of hair on the head. It is justly remarked in the oriental field-sports, that his aspect is extremely fierce; he seems to look with disdain on every living object, and to rely on the great strength he possesses, to overthrow whatever may be opposed to his rage. The smallest provocation irritates him incredibly! and such is his courage, that he will sometimes attack even a group of elephants going for fodder. There cannot be a more menacing object than a single wild buffaloe, disturbed from wallowing in the mud. His looks are ferocious in the extreme; and the knowledge of his brutal disposition by no means allays the apprehensions to which his

countenance and gestures give birth: the whole race, whether wild or tame, have an eye full of mischief, and are never, on any occasion, to be trusted."

It is commonly understood that Providence has allotted to every animal a climate suited to its nature; and a general review, throughout the universe, will add no small weight to this opinion. Whether it be from the original order of things, as arranged by the Great Founder of the world; or, that, supposing some chance to exist, such animals as were not in their habits or constitutions, suited to particular soils, or temperatures, necessarily perished, and became extinct in such situations, we find the most marked attention to that system. But to this general rule we have to plead one exception: namely, that the buffaloe of India is by no means suited to the climate of the country: that animal not only delights in the water, but will not thrive unless it have a swamp to wallow in: there rolling themselves, they speedily work deep hollows, wherein they lay immersed. No place seems to delight the buffaloe more than the deep verdure on the confines of pools and marshes, especially if surrounded by tall grass, so as to afford concealment and shade, while the body is covered by the water: in such situations they seem to enjoy a perfect extasy; having in general nothing above the surface, but their eyes and nostrils, the horns being kept low down, and consequently entirely hidden from view.

The civet-cat (viverra civetta, Lin.) so called, though not of the feline, but weasel genus, is a very ferocious animal, and unless taken young, extremely difficult to tame: it is larger than a common cat, the body and feet shaded with dark stripes over a brin-

dled brown; the head, eyes, and ears resemble a large rat, their food consists of birds, mice and reptiles, for which they insidiously watch, and seize with wonderful eagerness: I kept one for some time in a wooden cage, but the smell at length became so insufferable, that I gave him liberty; for, however the perfume may be esteemed, the odour of the animal is always disagreeable. The civet, or musk, is formed in a glandular receptacle under the tail, from whence it is squeezed out by little at a time, twice or thrice a week; it is then an offensive unguent like thick greasy milk, but afterwards changes to a hard brown substance. A full grown cat always yields more of this perfume when first caught, than after it has been any time confined.

The eastern districts of Travencore, intersected by lakes and rivers, abound with amphibious animals, especially alligators and seals. There seems to be no essential difference between the alligator of India, and the Egyptian crocodile; lacerta alligator, and lacertus crocodilus. Naturalists seem to confine the alligator to South America, the crocodile to Asia and Africa; but in India the lacerta crocodilus, generally called the alligator, is from five to twenty feet long, shaped like the genus to which he belongs: the back is covered with impenetrable scales; the legs short, with five spreading toes on the fore-feet, and four in a straight line on the hinder, armed with claws: the alligator moves slowly, its whole formation being calculated for strength, the back-bone firmly jointed, and the tail a most formidable weapon: in the river he eagerly springs on the wretch unfortunately bathing within his reach, and either knocks him down with his tail, or opens a wide mouth for his destruction, armed with numerous sharp teeth of various

length; by which, like the shark, he sometimes severs the human body at a single bite: the annals of the Nile and Ganges, although wonderful, are not fabulous. The upper jaw only of the alligator was thought to be moveable; that is now completely disproved: the eyes are of a dull green, with a brilliant pupil, covered by a transparent pellicle, moveable as in birds: from the heads of those of large size, musk is frequently extracted.

The alligator sometimes basks in the sun-beams on the banks of the river, but oftener floats on its surface; there, concealing his head and feet, he appears like the rough trunk of a tree, both in shape and colour: by this deception dogs and other animals fearlessly approach, and are suddenly plunged to the bottom by their insidious foe: even the royal tiger becomes his prey, quitting the cover to drink at the river; the wily alligator, concealed under water, steals along the bank, and suddenly emerging, furiously attacks the tiger, who never declines the combat: the alligator generally loses his eyes, and receives dreadful wounds on the head, but at length plunges his adversary into an unnatural element, and there devours him.

The astonishing size and strength of the alligator and crocodile render them very terrible: the small ones live chiefly on fish; and, far from attacking the human species, dive instantly on their approach: the female sometimes lays three or four hundred eggs, which she covers with sand to be vivified by the sun; in about a month the brood break the shell and instinctively take to the water. I kept a small one several months in a garden pool, but growing large and destructive to my poultry, I set him at liberty.

I shall conclude this desultory account of the alligator, with a few passages from the sublime description of the Egyptian crocodile in the book of Job. "Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook, or his tongue with a cord? canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons, or his head with fish-spears? Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more! none is so fierce that dare stir him up; shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about: his scales are his pride, shut up together, as with a close seal; one is so near to another, that no air can come between them: they are joined one to another; they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. By his neesings a light doth shine; and his eyes are like the eye-lids of the morning; out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out; out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot, or caldron. In his neck remaineth strength; his heart is firm as a stone; the sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold; the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon: for he esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood: darts are counted as stubble, he laugheth at the shaking of a spear. Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear!"

The ichneumon, or mongouse (viverra ichneumon, Lin.) which is said to destroy the eggs of the crocodile on the banks of the Nile, are equally destructive to those of the alligator, deposited near the rivers of Travencore; where these useful animals abound; they also devour the young ones on shore, as their food is vermin, and reptiles of every description: they are enemies to serpents, with whom they wage perpetual war; and when wounded by their

poisonous fangs, instinctively go to an herbaceous antidote, with which they are well acquainted. This animal was adored by the ancient Egyptians for his national services; and is domesticated by their descendants, to destroy rats, mice, and other vermin. The ichneumon is formed, like the weasel, with a slender head, long nose, bright eyes, very sharp teeth, and a long coat of hair beautifully brindled, often shining like silver. It sometimes springs suddenly on its prey with wonderful agility; at others, it steals insidiously among the high grass and bushes, and seizes it unawares: it is very courageous, and frequently attacks animals much larger than itself.

The salt waters of Travencore abound with a seal of that species, which is called phoca pusilla, an animal seemingly between the beaver and the otter, in some respects partaking of both, and differing from the phoca vitulina, and others of the genus, found on the rocky islands of the ocean. The Travencore seal has a round head, short ears, thick neck, tapering body, and flat tail, like a fish; it is web-footed, and the skin covered with a soft oily hair: this amphibious creature, uniting in so many respects the quadruped with the aquatic animal, seems to link the two species in the great chain of creation: they vary in size and appearance in different countries; at Anjengo they seldom exceed four feet in length: they are gregarious and sociable; form parties on the banks of the rivers, but always plunge in at the approach of a stranger.

The birds in the southern parts of Malabar, as in most tropical climates, are gaily clothed; but less melodious than the northern songsters. The parroquets are remarkably handsome; the head

shaded with red, purple, and blue, finishes in a black circle round the neck, from whence to its long tapering tail the plumage is a lively green: the parrots are not so beautiful, but their number is astonishing: they are as much dreaded at the time of harvest as a Mahratta army, or a host of locusts: they darken the air by their numbers, and alighting on a rice-field, in a few hours carry off every ear of ripe corn to their hiding places in the mountains: I have often witnessed these depredations, and thought of Pope's significant queries:

> Is thine alone the seed that strews the plain?
> The birds of heaven *shall vindicate* their grain.
> Thine the full harvest of the golden year?
> Part pays, and justly, the deserving steer.

The bird of Attinga, or pied bird of Paradise (picus orientalis, Lin.) is common in the queen of Attinga's dominions; its elegant form, purple crest, snowy plumage, and long tail, constitute it one of the most beautiful in the Indian ornithology.

Like most other countries between the tropics, Anjengo is infested by a variety of noxious insects and reptiles: the most curious is a small black snake, called by the natives the crescent snake, though I should rather class it with the polypus: it is two or three inches long, with a head shaped like a crescent; from the outer line of the semicircle are small teeth, easily discerned through a microscope; I could not discover any eyes: on cutting off this head, the other end immediately supplied the loss; it moves in a retrograde manner, and lives after the amputation: it is entirely covered with a glossy slime, which, like the snail, it leaves wherever it goes: this is said to be poisonous, and the bite mortal; a

characteristic often ascribed to the Indian serpents without foundation.

There was also at Anjengo a small black species of the amphisbœna, or double-headed snake. The tail is shaped and marked so like the head, as not to be easily distinguished from it. The idea of the amphisbœna having two heads, with perfect organs, is erroneous; but as it proceeds, at pleasure, with either head or tail foremost, this opinion has been adopted. The bite of this snake is also reputed mortal by the natives; but being, like the former, destitute of fangs, the usual conveyance of a serpent's poison, I am doubtful of its malignity.

The houses at Anjengo, being mostly thatched with the matted leaves of the cocoa-nut tree, afford shelter to snakes, scorpions, centipedes, lizards, and insects of all descriptions.

I mentioned the termites, or white ants of Bombay; these extraordinary insects are far more numerous and destructive at Anjengo, where it is difficult to guard against their depredations: in a few hours they will demolish a large chest of books, papers, silk, or clothes, perforating them with a thousand holes: we dare not leave a box on the floor without placing it on glass bottles, which, if kept free from dust, they cannot ascend: this is trifling, when compared with the serious mischief they sometimes occasion, by penetrating the beams of a house, or destroying the timbers in a ship;

> Where in some gallant ship, that long has bore
> Britain's victorious cross from shore to shore,
> By chance, beneath her close sequester'd cells
> Some low-born worm a lurking mischief dwells,

Eats his blind way, and saps with secret guile
The deep foundations of the floating pile.
In vain the forest lent its stateliest pride,
Rear'd her tall mast, and fram'd her knotty side;
The martial thunder's rage in vain she stood,
With every conflict of the stormy flood;
More sure the reptile's little arts devour
Than wars, or waves, or Eurus' wintry pow'r. WARTON.

These destructive animals advance by myriads to their work, under an arched incrustation of fine sand, tempered with a moisture from their body, which renders the covert-way as hard as burnt clay, and effectually conceals them at their insidious employment.

I could mention many curious instances of depredation by the termites; one happened to myself: I left Anjengo in the rainy season to pass a few weeks with the chief at his country house at Eddova, in a rural and sheltered situation. On my departure, I locked up a room, containing books, drawings, and a few valuables; as I took the key with me, the servant could not enter to clean the furniture: the walls of the room were white-washed, adorned with prints and drawings, in English frames and glasses: returning home in the evening, and taking a cursory view of my cottage by candle-light, I found every thing apparently in the same order as I left it; but on a nearer inspection the next morning, I observed a number of advanced works, in various directions, towards my pictures; the glasses appeared to be uncommonly dull, and the frames covered with dust: on attempting to wipe it off, I was astonished to find

the glasses fixed to the wall, not suspended in frames as I left them, but completely surrounded by an incrustation cemented by the white ants; who had actually eat up the deal frames and back-boards, and the greater part of the paper, and left the glasses upheld by the incrustation, or covered-way, which they had formed during their depredation. From the flat Dutch bottles, on which the drawers and boxes were placed, not having been wiped during my absence, the ants had ascended the bottles by means of the dust, eat through the bottom of a chest, and made some progress in perforating the books and linen. The chief's lady with whom I had been staying at Eddova, on returning to her apartments in the fort, found, from the same cause, a large chest, in which she had deposited shawls, muslins, and other articles, collected preparatory to her leaving India, entirely destroyed by these voracious insects.

The story of the termites demolishing a chest of dollars at Bencoolen, is commonly told, if not commonly credited throughout India. Captain Williamson in a great degree clears up that singular anecdote, by introducing another of a gentleman who having charge of a chest of money, unfortunately placed it on the floor in a damp situation; the chest was speedily attacked by the white ants, who had their burrow just under the place where the treasure stood. They soon annihilated the bottom, and were not more ceremonious in respect to the bags containing the specie; which being thus let loose, fell gradually into the hollows in the ants' burrow. When the cash was called for, all were amazed at the wonderful powers, both of the teeth and stomachs, of the

little marauders, which were supposed to have consumed the silver as well as the wood. After some years the house requiring repair, the whole sum was found several feet deep in the earth; and the termites were rescued from that obloquy which the supposed power of feasting on precious metals had cast on their whole race! The captain does not give this story on his own authority; but adds, " the cunning of the white ants is truly admirable. They ordinarily work within plastering, occasionally appearing externally, and forming a shelter, by means of earth; which though taken from situations apparently dry as powder, when worked up, is perfectly moist. Whence they derive the moisture is not yet known. In this manner they construct a kind of tunnel, or arched passage, sufficient to admit passing each other in their way up and down, with surprizing rapidity. Hence they not only arrive unseen, though their ways are obvious, at any part of a house; but, when from finding such articles as they might else attack, insulated by means of frames, of which the feet are placed in vessels full of water, they have been known to ascend to the upper flooring, and thence to work downwards in filaments, like the ramifications of the roots of a tree; and thus descend to their object. In fact it is scarcely possible to prevent them from injuring whatever they take a fancy to."

When a bear finds a nest of any kind of ants, but especially white ants, he demolishes the whole burrow: licking up all the clusters he can get at; and lying with his tongue out, to entice the prey into his mouth: by this means he often obtains an ample meal: for a bushel of them may frequently be

found in the same nest. The white ant is about the size of a small grain of rice; has a white body, appearing like a maggot, and a very strong red head, armed with powerful forceps: it has four short legs. They are an article of food among some of the low castes in Mysore, and the Carnatic.

A nest of these extraordinary insects, in a very singular situation, is mentioned in the drama of Sacontala. "A little beyond "the grove you see a pious Yogee, motionless as a pollard, holding his thick bushy hair, and fixing his eyes on the solar orb! "Mark; his body is half covered with a white-ants' edifice made "of raised clay; the skin of a snake supplies the place of his "sacerdotal thread, and part of it girds his loins; a number of "knotty plants encircle and wound his neck; and surrounding "birds'-nests almost conceal his shoulders."

In the king of Travencore's dominions are some useful public works, but nothing comparable to those in the northern parts of Hindostan: among other beneficial undertakings of the former sovereigns are rows of chashew-apple trees on each side of the principal public roads, extending for many miles: these trees are shady, and beautiful in foliage, blossoms, and fruit. Formerly the road from Lahore to Agra, a distance of near five hundred miles, was in the same manner shaded by large trees; and where there was a deficiency of wells, persons were placed in small arbours at convenient distances, to supply water gratis, to the traveller.

Gold dust is said to be sometimes found in the Nelambur river and other mountainous torrents of Malabar; iron is certainly produced in many places, where they have erected forges for smelting

it; these are capable of much improvement. Dr. F. Buchanan, who had excellent opportunities of ascertaining the fact, and whose knowledge of mineralogy gives him a decided advantage over most other travellers, observes, that in the hills of the southern district of Malabar the "iron ore is found, forming beds, veins, or detached masses, in the stratum of indurated clay, of which the greater part of those hills consists; the ore is composed of clay, quartz in form of sand, and of the common black iron sand: this mixture forms small angular nodules closely compacted together, and very friable: it is dug out with a pick-axe, and broken into powder with the same instrument; it is then washed in a wooden trough, about four feet in length, open at both ends, and placed in the current of a rivulet; so that a gentle stream of water runs constantly through it. The metallic sand remains in the upper end of the trough, the quartz is carried to the lower end, the clay is suspended in the water, and washed entirely away. In this ore the quantity of metallic sand is small, in comparison with that of the earthy matter."

At Velater in Malabar this judicious writer observed thirty-four forges for smelting iron; he gives a long description of the process, from which the forges appear very defective compared with similar works in Europe. Each smelting requires 2160 lb. of washed ore, which costs about three pence halfpenny the hundred weight: the process obtains only from eleven to seventeen per cent. of iron from the ore, and what is produced is very imperfect; the Malabar iron sells at seven and eight shillings the hundred weight, but is in all respects very inferior to that imported

from Europe. This comparison seems to give force and beauty to a passage in the prophecy of Jeremiah, denouncing judgment on the Jews; "shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?"

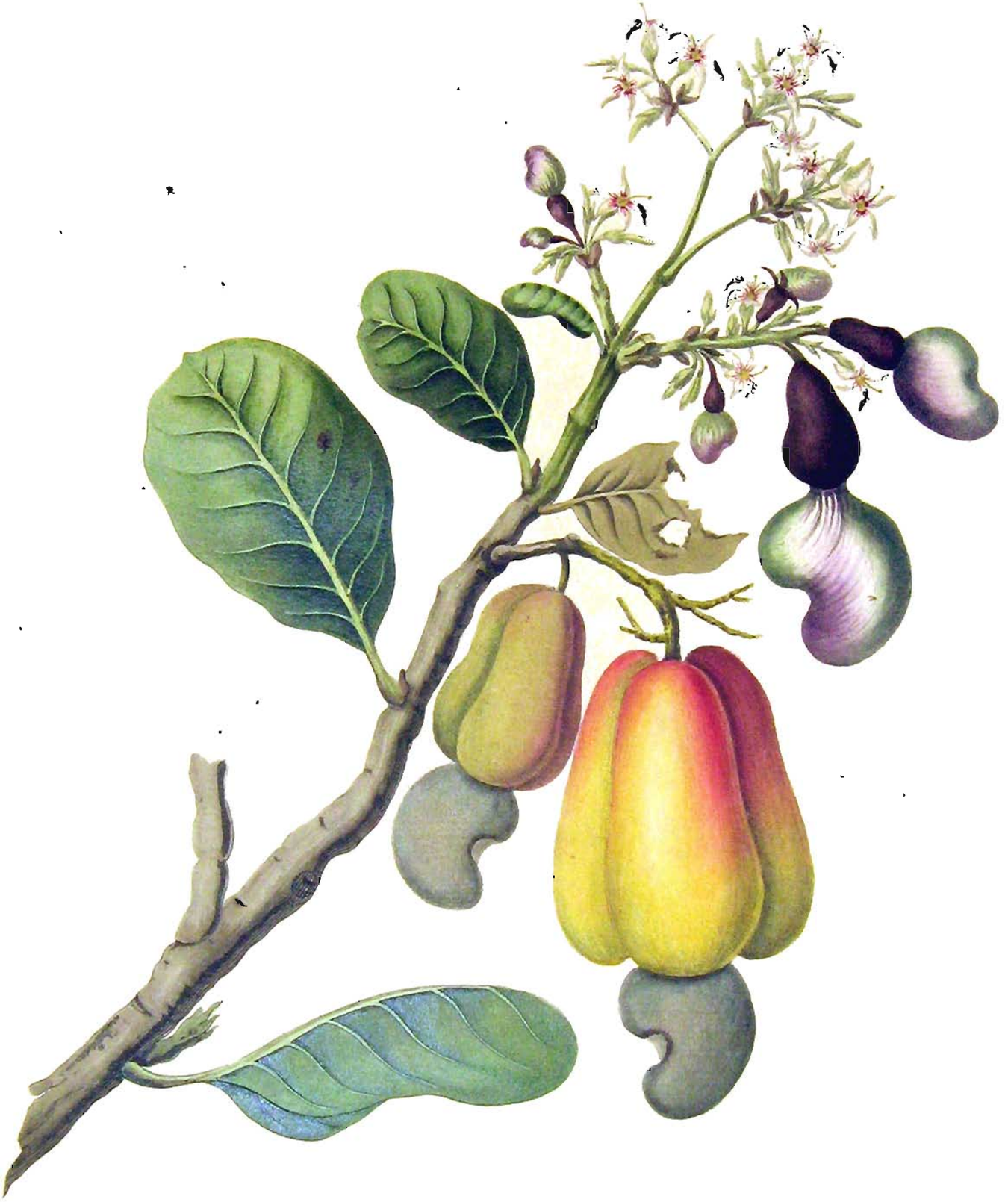
Salt-pans, or rather salt-fields, are formed in Travencore, as in most other parts of the Malabar coast: they are large reservoirs enclosed by mounds of earth, into which the sea flows at high tides; from whence, by a simple process, the water is conveyed into a range of small enclosures, where in the course of the day the fluid is evaporated, and the salt gathered in the evening. These reservoirs are most productive in the hot months preceding the rainy season; and from every part of the coast salt forms the chief article of inland commerce.

These salt-pans being generally near populous towns and villages, the men employed there are not more exposed to tigers and beasts of prey, than those occupied in the usual pursuits of husbandry: not so the Molungies, or salt-boilers, in the Sunderbunds, or wild regions of Bengal; who, of all the castes and tribes throughout the whole extent of Hindostan, seem to have the hardest fate: I would rather be a Pariah or Chandala, subject to their most ignominious treatment, and cruel oppression, than one of these unfortunate Molungies living in constant terror from the fiercest tigers, without any means of safety or redress. Their situation had often been represented to me by gentlemen from Bengal, and as often excited my commiseration; but I had no idea of their complete misery until I read the account of the Sunderbunds by captain Williamson; where, he says, "the royal tigers are often seen swimming across the various rivers which form

the innumerable islands inhabited only by wild beasts, and presenting an immense barrier all along the sea-coast, from *Saugur* island to the great mouth of the Megna. Of this propensity in tigers the *Molungies* are so thoroughly aware, that, while performing their duties on the long spits of sand which project into the sea, from the impenetrable jungles that skirt the soil, a look-out is always kept for tigers on the opposite banks of the rivers; and as soon as any appear, the whole take to flight, and conceal themselves in caves excavated for the purpose; from which, it however sometimes happens, the hungry animal removes every obstacle with his claws, and drags out one or more of the inhabitants, already half dead with terror."

" The reader will naturally inquire, why some means are not adopted for opposing devastations of this nature, and for securing the *Molungies* from such a dreadful misfortune? The fact is, that no one is a *Molungie* from choice; but, according to the principle prevailing throughout Hindostan, the occupation of the father and his ancestors is continued invariably by his posterity. The *Molungies* would, however, readily deviate from this principle if they had the power to do so; but, being kept to their posts by various guards of revenue peons, or officers, they are unable to quit their miserable situation. These revenue officers are, in addition to some provincial militia, posted at all the places whereby it is possible to escape in boats: as to making off by land, it would be utterly impossible; the surrounding country being an immense wilderness, full of tigers, abounding in snakes, and intersected by a labyrinth of rapid waters, replete with alligators and other rep-

tiles. This unfortunate race of human beings sometimes obtains an addition to their number when trespassers attempt to escape from the pursuit of justice, and to wind through the mazes of the inland navigation. These are handed over to the salt-pans, whence not one in a million ever returns. To arm persons of such a description, would be to afford them an immediate emancipation; and would subvert that establishment which supplies Bengal with salt, and affords to the government a revenue not much under a million of money annually! No doubt but time will furnish the means of substituting some less objectionable means of providing so indispensable an article of consumption, and do away what must, till then, be classed among the many necessary evils with which humanity is burthened!



CHAPTER XIII.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE INHABITANTS IN THE KINGDOM OF TRAVENCORE; AND PARTICULARLY OF THE BRAHMINS, NAIRS, AND POOLEAHS, IN THE SOUTHERN PARTS OF THE MALABAR COAST.

1773.

In links of steel, here superstition binds
The unsuspecting native; to his caste
Tethers him; cramps his powers, condemns to ply,
With joyless hands, the trade his sires have plied
For centuries; proscribes all hope of change! GISBORNE

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CHAPTER XIII.

In describing the Hindoos, the aborigines of Hindostan, I divided them into four principal tribes, the Brahmin, Chuttree, Byse, and Sooder; subdivided into a number of smaller castes: the Malabars in this distinguishing characteristic, and many other essentials, resemble the northern Hindoos: as a nation, their four grand divisions are the Brahmins, Nairs, Thivees, and Pooleahs.

The Malabar brahmins, like those in other parts of India, form two distinct classes, engaged in different pursuits: both are held sacred by the other castes: one has the absolute and entire management of every thing relating to religion: occupied by no secular concerns, they spend their days under the sacred groves of their temples in superstitious ceremonies, and listless indolence, or study the sacred volumes, treatises on astrology, medicine, and fabulous legends; they inculcate benevolence to man, and kindness to the animal creation, and are reverenced by the inferior tribes, who swear by their heads, and treat them with filial affection.

The brahmins who live in large towns, and hold situations under their respective princes, as officers of government, collectors of the revenue, and other political departments, do not merit this amiable character: they may, on the contrary, be classed with the

despots so often mentioned, who unfeelingly exercise the rod of oppression over the lives and property of their fellow-creatures: although, by a strange inconsistency, these very people are taught to shudder at the death of an insect, and tremble at the idea of inhaling an animalcule. Superstition leads her votaries to the most extraordinary actions; during my residence among the Malabars, where the ignominious distinction of castes is carried to the utmost extent, I was fully convinced that it puts a stop to the noblest exertions of *real* charity, blunts the finest feelings of humanity, and estranges man from man.

The Malabar brahmins, like the rest of that priesthood, have such faith in the purifying waters of the Ganges, as to believe their sins are absolved by a pilgrimage thither, or even by their virtue when transported to a distant country. The Ganges, Kistna, and Indus, enjoy this preeminence among the numerous rivers of Hindostan; they fertilize the finest tracts in its extensive plains: the Nerbudda, and other northern streams, claim a share of veneration; but I did not hear of any peculiar sanctity annexed to the rivers of Malabar: all waters excite a sentiment of affection and gratitude in a people whose climate and religion require such frequent ablutions, and where shade is so desirable, that the banian tree, and many others, are deemed sacred. In their fertile imagination all nature is animated by an endless number and infinite variety of inferior deities and benevolent spirits; who occupy every grove, preside over every fountain, and fill the heavens and the earth with forms invisible to mortal eyes.

The Malabars regard the cow with as much superstitious veneration as the northern Hindoos; and, if possible, are more severe

in their punishment of those who ill-treat them, or cause their death: a subject of Travencore who is detected in selling a bullock to an European is impaled alive. Religious prejudice operates powerfully in the preservation of this animal; but it is politic in a country where milk forms a great part of the food, and oxen are very useful in commerce and agriculture.

Irrigation being absolutely necessary in a climate where rain only falls during four months in the year, the preservation of water is a most important object; the brahmins, therefore, judiciously persuade their disciples to build reservoirs, and construct wells, as the most acceptable charity they can confer: in the Travencore dominions are many expensive works of this kind; some made by the generosity of individuals, others at the public expense. The high roads are planted on each side with cajew-apple, tamarind, and mango-trees; which adorn the country, and shade the traveller: caravansaries, or choultries, are erected at convenient distances for his accommodation. Charity of this kind is every where inculcated; and it is equally the ambition of a southern Malabar as of a northern Hindoo, to have a tank, a well, or a choultrie, called after his name. Under despotic princes, where property is never secure, and to be reputed rich is to be really unfortunate, such munificent acts are far from being uncommon: the fame of these benevolent works, and the tranquillity of domestic life, form the chief happiness of a people unaccustomed to public spectacles, or the refinements of polished society.

The Nairs of Malabar are equally brave, and more energetic than most of the warlike Hindoos; the national characteristics of both people are otherwise very similar. A mild climate, and the

peculiar tenets of their religion, inspire meekness, temperance, and listlessness: they abstain from intoxicating liquors, are seldom guilty of debaucheries, and not subject to many of those passions which enslave the civilized Europeans.

Strangers to patriotism, and the blessings of liberty, the Malabars, as well as the northern Hindoos, are governed by fear; loyalty and affection form no part of their political system: amongst such a people, ambition has no scope: every man is confined to his own caste, follows the profession of his ancestors, is married in childhood to his equal, and never rises higher than the limited sphere in which he was born: there may be exceptions, but they are very uncommon. One indeed of an extraordinary nature, occurred during my residence in Travencore: the reigning sovereign, who was of an inferior caste of Brahmins, advanced himself into a higher, by purifications, gifts, and ceremonies; part of which consisted in his majesty passing through the body of a cow, of the size of life, and made of pure gold: this was the last stage of purification; and when performed, the cow was divided among the Brahmins.* It is said, that Ragonath Row, the Mahratta paishwa,

* Orme ascribes a different cause for the king of Travencore's regeneration to that given to me by his subjects, who, perhaps, were withheld by fear from assigning the true reason. "The king of Travencore has conquered, or carried war into all the countries which lay round his dominions, and lives in the continual exercise of his arms. To atone for the blood which he has spilt, the brahmins persuaded him that it was necessary he should be born anew: this ceremony consisted in putting the prince into the body of a golden cow of immense value; where, after he had laid the time prescribed, he came out regenerated, and freed from all the crimes of his former life. The cow was afterwards cut up, and divided amongst the SEERS who had invented this extraordinary method for the remission of his sins."

when expelled from his capital, and defeated by his enemies, passed through a golden cow, in hopes of better fortune: and two brahmins, whom he sent as ambassadors to England, were, on their return to Hindostan, compelled to pass through the sacred yoni, or female lingam, made of the finest gold. After performing this ordeal, and making valuable presents to the brahmins, they were restored to the privileges of their caste; which they had lost, by the impurities contracted in travelling through so many polluted countries. The celebrated Sevajee, in the seventeenth century, on the day when he assumed the Mahratta sovereignty, was publicly weighed against gold; his weight was equal to that of sixteen thousand pagodas; which, with a hundred thousand more, were distributed among the brahmins.

Herodotus mentions, that Mycerinus, king of Egypt, having lost his daughter, an only child, it caused him the greatest affliction; and wishing to honour her funeral with more than ordinary splendour, he enclosed her body in an heifer made of wood, and richly ornamented with gold.

The Malabar brahmins, more ignorant and less tolerant than their northern brethren, assume greater consequence than I ever met with in other parts of India: when travelling, they have always precursors to clear the road; who make a loud noise, and compel all of inferior degree to retire: even when their provision is carried along the highway, the same cry is made; and the vulgar are under the necessity of hiding themselves, or falling down with their faces to the earth, that the atmosphere may not be polluted by plebeian breath, while the food of a brahmin passes by. Even the king himself is obliged to alight from his elephant, horse, or palan-

quin, when he approaches a temple; no person being allowed to ride near those structures.

These ignorant and bigotted priests seem to hold strangers in abhorrence, and detest every intrusion into their holy retreats: I nearly lost my life by indulging an innocent curiosity near Quilone, a Dutch settlement, twenty miles to the northward of Anjengo. Strolling one evening through a wild scenery of woods and forests, I accidentally saw a Hindoo temple, almost concealed by banian-trees. Pleased with the scenery, I ascended a rising ground within the grove, to take a sketch; and in an adjoining tank saw a Nair girl performing her ablutions: she instantly snatched up her garment, and ran to an inner court; aware of her high caste, I did not attempt to speak to her; but seating myself on the bank, finished my drawing. In the grove was a Nair at his devotions, who, on the female speaking to him with earnestness, looked stedfastly at me, and departed with her to the temple. Thinking no more of either, I returned leisurely towards Quilone; when hearing a noise, I looked round, and perceived the same man, joined by several others, armed with sticks and stones, hastily following, and alarming the forest with their cries. I had neither time for deliberation, nor any weapon to defend myself; but, with a little distance in my favour, ran to the nearest village, and claimed the protection of some Moplahs, having received a few stones in my flight.

Upon inquiring from these Mahomedans the nature of an offence so undesignedly committed, they told me I had, in the first instance, ventured on sacred ground, untrod by Europeans; and had seen a woman of high caste in a consecrated tank; crimes of

great atrocity among that superstitious people; and had they overtaken me, my life might have been the forfeit of my temerity. The next day the brahmins sent orders to the English party at Quilone to keep at a distance from their districts, lest the atmosphere should be tainted by our breath; and some of the milder sort sent a basket of live poultry to an English lady of our party, that during our abode there, we might abstain from eating beef.

Civilization, as far as the Malabars are susceptible of it, has long attained its height: Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome, from the pinnacle of grandeur, perfection in the fine arts, and the luxury of opulence, have dwindled to a name: the Malabars seem to have been for some thousand years in the same state of mediocrity; on such a system, no new designs in building, no alteration in manners or dress, no improvements in art or science, are to be expected.

This may be alleged of a great part of the world besides; but I do not compare the Negroes and Hottentots of Africa, nor the savages of America, with the natives of India, or the generality of Asiatics: these are certainly placed on a higher scale: as already mentioned in the northern cities of Hindostan, especially among the Moguls, we find eloquence, poetry, painting, and architecture, in a considerable degree of perfection: the Chinese shine with still brighter lustre in the scale of civilized society: as a nation they have never been conquered, although the Tartars usurped the sovereignty, and introduced some changes in their customs: during numerous revolving centuries they have cultivated the arts of peace, have been governed by wise laws, and have enjoyed many enviable blessings; considering their limited inter-

course with the rest of the world, and how little they are beholden to strangers for improvement, we must regard them as an enlightened, polished, and independent people.

That the heat of the torrid zone debilitates the body, and enervates the mind, is very obvious: to this cause may be attributed the want of curiosity, enterprize, and vigour, among the Malabars: their inclinations are chiefly passive; indolence constitutes their happiness, and you cannot impose a severer task than mental employment: with the exception of the warlike Nairs, they pass days, months, and years, in swinging in their verandas, or under the shade of a tree, chewing betel, and singing dismal ditties, without a reflection on the past, or a plan for the future: from this habitual indolence they become incapable of exertion; and thus the laws, manners, and customs, are the same at this day as they were some thousand years ago.

There are, however, occasionally exceptions to this state of listless indolence among the Malabars: during my residence at Anjengo a circumstance occurred which would not have disgraced a Roman matron. The English were at war with the Marawars, a people inhabiting a mountainous country in the southern part of the peninsula: a considerable force from Madras was sent against them, who with great difficulty obtained a conquest: the obstacles chiefly arose from the wildness of the country, and the almost inaccessible fortresses to which the Morawars retreated, in the midst of thick forests and morasses; the rajah was killed in defending his last castle, whither he had retired with his family and treasure: he expired in the arms of his wife; who immediately ordered one of the guards, as he valued his master's honour, to stab her to the

heart before the fortress surrendered: the soldier obeyed; and the English found the unfortunate pair clasped in a last embrace: the commanding officer caused them to be burnt on the same funeral pile, agreeable to the custom of their caste.

The king of Travencore, in whose dominions Anjengo is situated, governed a country extending from Cape Comorin south, to the kingdom of Cochin north: a district which has always remained free from Mahomedan invaders, and most probably was never subject to any of the great Hindoo rajahs. Travencore is mountainous and hilly, difficult of access, and defended at the passes: the most formidable, though badly fortified, was the pass of Tinevelli, leading into that country. The king usually resided in a town called Trevanduram, about eighteen miles from Anjengo, mean in appearance, and without defence, the palace excepted, which was surrounded by an indifferent fortification near three quarters of a mile in extent. His force consisted of four thousand sepoys, disciplined in the English style, many of them deserters from the Madras army; and about twelve thousand irregulars, armed with English muskets: his cavalry never exceeded one thousand. On an emergency he could assemble a formidable militia, consisting of a hundred thousand men, armed with spears, and bows of a large construction. The Malabars are very expert with these weapons, especially the Nairs; who always assemble under their respective leaders, on the festival of the full moon in September, at the breaking up of the moonson; and being drawn up in two divisions, commence a serious engagement with bows and arrows, spears and lances: this is sometimes protracted for a considerable time, and many fall on both sides; who confer a great

honour on their family by this sacrifice to glory. The principal brahmin and Nair ladies are always present on these occasions, covered with ornaments, if not with drapery.

The throne of Travencore does not descend from father to son, but invariably devolves to the eldest son of the eldest sister, that the blood-royal may be clearly and indisputably preserved. The king on particular occasions is splendidly apparelled, and adorned with the royal jewels; but in general dresses, like the other brahmins, in a muslin turban, with a piece of white cotton cloth round the waist, reaching to the knees: this is the usual dress of the Malabars. The hereditary prince has no outward distinction from the other nobles; and the king's sons, whether by his wives or concubines, have no privileges annexed to their royal descent, neither are they by birth entitled to any importance in the government.

I always found more suspicion and jealousy in conversing with the Malabars, than among any other people in India: they were very cautious of giving information, and deemed the most common questions intrusive; it was therefore impossible from such a people to obtain much knowledge either of a religious or political nature. Whether the Malabars, like the northern Hindoos, adore the triad-deity, with the subordinate divinities in their endless mythology; or whether their idolatrous system comprizes a different set of gods and goddesses, especially of the dii lares, I could not determine; neither could I ascertain the jurisprudence of Travencore, or other Malabar rajah-ships: in those dominions, it is perhaps altogether a nominal science: for in Travencore, as in most despotic states, the subjects are seldom governed by written laws, but implicitly obey the will of an arbitrary despot. The king is considered as

heir to all his subjects when he chooses to exert his full prerogative; consequently they require no laws respecting landed property, or titles of inheritance: as he monopolizes all the pepper, and such other articles as he thinks proper in his dominions, commercial laws are also needless: the women, except among the Nairs, being entirely dependent, and almost in a state of slavery, have no occasion for statutes to regulate dowers or marriage settlements: for as the sovereign is absolute in his kingdom, so is every master of a family in his own house: moral actions and relative duties are regulated solely by the will of a father and a husband. Thus, occasions of wrangling and law-suits are removed: despotic power is allsufficient; and the people, excluded from general information, contentedly submit to the oppressive system.

The Nairs, or nobles, form the second tribe in the kingdom of Travencore: they are a well-made handsome race, of a fairer complexion than the inferior castes, from whom they entirely separate themselves; and neither eat nor intermarry with any other. Their marriages are very extraordinary, and directly contrary to the usual system of polygamy adopted in Asia. Among the Nairs, one wife is common to many husbands, who cohabit with her by turns; during this temporary attachment, the arms of the inmate are placed over the door of the house, to prevent the intrusion of another husband. These marriages are attended with fewer disputes, and disagreeable consequences than might be imagined: the wife nominates the father of the child; and he is obliged to provide for it.

In consequence of these marriages, it is an established custom, both in the royal house of Travencore, and the whole tribe of Nairs, that the son does not inherit his father's estate; which, if permitted by a despotic prince, devolves at his death to his sister's children; where there can be no doubt of the consanguinity. The same law exists among the Hurons in America; on the demise of a chief in that tribe, he is not succeeded by his own child, but by the son of his sister; and in default of such an heir, by the nearest relation in the female line. A similar custom prevailed among the princes of Ethiopia. Montesquieu assigns the following reason for the polyandrian system of the Nair ladies. "In this tribe the men can have only one wife; while a woman, on the contrary, is allowed many husbands: the origin of this custom is not difficult to discover. The Nairs are the tribe of nobles, who are the soldiers of the nation: in Europe soldiers are not encouraged to marry; in Malabar, where the climate requires greater indulgence, they are satisfied with rendering marriage as little burthensome as possible: they give one wife amongst many men; which consequently diminishes the attachment to a family, and the cares of housekeeping; and leaves them in the free possession of a military spirit."

The Nairs, and other high castes of Malabars, burn their dead, intermingling the fuel with sandal-wood, cinnamon, and cassia: the lower classes are contented with a pyre of common wood; and sometimes bury the deceased in their own plantations.

As a further illustration of these extraordinary people, I subjoin the following particulars from Dr. Francis Buchanan's observations in Malabar; travelling by authority in the provinces then

subject to the British government, he was able to obtain more accurate information than it was in my power to do among a people so bigotted, and so jealous of the intrusion of strangers.

" The Nairs marry before they are ten years of age; but the husband never afterwards cohabits with his wife: such a circumstance would be considered as very indecent: he allows her oil, clothes, ornaments, and food; but she lives in her mother's house; or, after her parents' death, with her brothers; and cohabits with any person that she chooses, of an equal or higher rank than her own; but never more with her husband. If detected in bestowing her favours on any low man, she becomes an outcast. It is no reflection on a woman's character to say, that she has formed the closest intimacy with different persons; on the contrary, the Nair women are proud of reckoning among their favoured lovers many brahmins, rajahs, or other persons of high birth. When a lover receives admission into a house, he commonly gives his mistress some ornaments, and her mother a piece of cloth; but these presents are never of such value as to give room for supposing that the women bestow their favours from mercenary motives. A Nair man, who is detected in fornication with a Shanar woman, is put to death; and the woman is sold to the Moplahs: if he have connection with a slave girl, both are put to death; which is a most shocking injustice to the female, who, in case of refusal to her lord, would be subject to all the violence of an enraged and despised master.

" In consequence of this strange manner of propagating the species, no Nair knows his father, and every man looks upon his sister's children as his heirs. He, indeed, looks upon them with

the same fondness that fathers in other parts of the world have for their own children; and he would be considered as an unnatural monster were he to shew such signs of grief at the death of a child which, from long cohabitation and love of its mother, he might suppose to be his own, as he did at the death of a child of his sister. A man's mother manages his family; and after her death, his eldest sister assumes the direction. Brothers almost always live under the same roof; but, if one of the family separates from the rest, he is always accompanied by his favourite sister: even cousins, to the most remote degree of kindred, in the female line, generally live together in great harmony; for in this part of the country, love, jealousy, or disgust, never can disturb the peace of a Nair family. A man's moveable property, after his death, is divided equally among the sons and daughters of all his sisters: his landed estate is managed by the eldest male of his family: but each individual has a right to a share of the income. In case of the eldest male being unable, from infirmity or incapacity, to manage the affairs of the family, the next in rank does it in the name of his senior.

" In the north of Malabar the female Nairs, while children, go through the ceremony of marriage, both with Namburis and Nairs; but here, as well as in the south, the man and wife never cohabit. When the girl has come to maturity, she is taken to live in the house of some Namburi or Nair; and after she has given her consent to do so she cannot leave her keeper; but in case of infidelity to his bed, may be punished with death. If her keeper have in his family no mother nor sister, his mistress manages the household affairs. The keeper, whenever he pleases, may send his mistress

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back to her mother's house; but then, if she can, she may procure another lover. A man's house is managed by his mother so long as she lives; when she dies, his sister comes for the fifteen days of mourning: she afterwards returns to her lover, and remains with him until he either dies or turns her away. In either case she returns to her brother's house, of which she resumes the management, and brings with her all her children, who are her brother's heirs. A Nair here is not astonished when you ask him who his father was; and a man has as much certainty that the children born in his house are his own, as an European husband has; while these children are rendered dear to him by their own caresses, and those of their mother, who is always beloved; for otherwise she would be immediately dismissed: yet, such is the perversity of custom, that a man would be considered as unnatural were he to have as much affection for his own children, as for those of his sister, which he may perhaps never have seen. Of all known manners of conducting the intercourse between the sexes, this seems to be the most absurd and inconvenient."

The Namburis, just mentioned, are the brahmins of Malabar, who consider themselves of so high a caste, that they will neither eat nor drink with those of the northern provinces. These shameless priests, not content with the dancing girls attached to the different temples, who are all prostitutes to the brahmins, have connections with the youngest and most beautiful women among the high tribes of Malabars, who deem it an honour to admit a Namburi to their bed.

The Tivees, although in general only farmers and husbandmen, are far from being a low caste: in the vicinity of Anjengo, they

are called Chagos; and as this tribe includes the bulk of the people, what may be said of them is applicable to the Malabars in general. They are well shaped, of a middle stature, and dark complexion: their dress is a cotton cloth, tied loosely round the waist, reaching below the knee; some wear a turban, others tie the hair on the back of the head, and throw a loose piece of muslin over it: but the brahmins are always distinguished by the sacred cord on the left shoulder. The dress of the Malabar women is similar to that of the other sex; their black glossy hair, tied in a knot on the middle of the head, is copiously anointed with cocoa-nut oil, and perfumed with the essence of sandal, mogrees, and champahs; their ears, loaded with rings and heavy jewels, reach almost to their shoulders; this is esteemed a beauty; instead of a small gold wire in the orifice, as is practised in other countries, the incision is filled with a filament from the cocoa-nut leaf, rolled around; the circles are increased, until the orifice sometimes exceeds two inches in diameter, the ear is then healed, and being stretched to the perfection of beauty, is filled with rings and massy ornaments. Round the waist they wear a loose piece of muslin, while the bosom is entirely exposed: this is the only drapery of the Malabar women; but they are adorned with a profusion of gold and silver chains for necklaces, mixed with strings of Venetian and other gold coins; they have also heavy bangles, or bracelets: a silver box, suspended by a chain on one side, forms a principal ornament, and contains the areca, or betel-nut, with its appendages of chunam, spice, and betel-leaf. Their skin is softened by aromatic oils, especially among the Nairs and Tetees, who are peculiarly attentive to cleanliness in their persons. The Tetees are of the tribe of

cultivators, and the Muckwas of the fishers; both are well made women, sometimes tall, and always graceful.

The Moplahs, or wives of the Mahomedans, who have been for many centuries settled among the Malabars, are in all respects a contrast to the natives; far from exposing any of their personal charms, they muffle themselves up in a covering of thick cotton cloth, and always retire on the approach of a stranger: they are extremely dirty, and pride themselves on their chastity; the young Tetees, on the contrary, never consider it among the cardinal virtues; but after marriage, they make good wives, and affectionate mothers.

I inquired into the truth of Mr. Grose's anecdote of a Malabar woman, who living with an English lady at Anjengo, to please her mistress, dressed in the European manner; but appearing afterwards in the queen of Attinga's presence with her breasts covered, the cruel despot ordered them to be cut off, for such a mark of disrespect: it was confirmed at Attinga. It is not only the vulgar who are thus sparingly clothed; for the first princesses wear only a finer muslin, with costly jewels.

Most of the Malabar men have a knife stuck in their girdle; and the steel pen with which they write their letters, accounts, and records, on the leaf of the Palmyra tree, there called olas: they write in a straight line, in a neat manner, and with great expedition: their books consist of several leaves, fastened together by a thong. The northern Hindoos write with the calamus, or reed, on a smooth glossy paper, made of hemp, rice, and different ingredients.

The Malabar Christians dress like their pagan neighbours,

except that the women cover the bosom. The Christians I usually met with were of the lowest class; the Roman catholic missionaries made but few converts of superior rank, although many of them were settled in the Travencore dominions, and permitted to build churches for public worship.

The poorer Malabars live on rice, salt-fish, and jagree; which is a coarse sugar produced from the cocoa-nut tree, wholesome and nourishing; those who cannot afford rice, content themselves with natchnee, a grain of inferior quality. The despotism of the government frequently occasions an artificial famine, and the inhabitants fly the country: a real famine is sometimes attended with dreadful consequences. Rice is sown at the commencement of the rains; which do not always fall as expected, and in some instances they have been entirely withheld for a whole season. Should the ground be only partially inundated, the ear droops, and yields but half a crop. On such occasions the poor wretches are driven by hunger to Anjengo, and other sea-ports, where you see a youth selling himself for sustenance, a mother offering her infant son for a bag of rice, and a desponding father parting with his wife and children for forty or fifty rupees.

Malabar children are generally a cheap commodity at Anjengo; at the end of the rainy season, when there was no particular scarcity in the interior country, I purchased a boy and girl about eight or nine years of age, as a present to a lady at Bombay, for less money than a couple of pigs in England: I bought the young couple, laid in two months provision of rice and salt-fish for their voyage, and gave each of them four changes of cotton garments, all for the sum of twenty rupees, or fifty shillings. English huma-

nity must not pass a censure on this transaction: it was a happy purchase for the children; they were relieved from hunger and nakedness, and sent to an amiable mistress, who brought them up tenderly, and, on leaving India, provided for their future comfort; whereas, had I refused to buy them, they would assuredly have been sold to another, and probably have experienced a miserable bondage with some native Portugueze Christian, whom we do not reckon among the most merciful task-masters.

A circumstance of this kind happened to myself: sitting one morning in my veranda, a young fish-woman brought a basket of mullets for sale; while the servant was disposing of them, she asked me to purchase a fine boy, two years of age, then in her arms: on my upbraiding her want of maternal affection, she replied with a smile, that she expected another in a few weeks, and as she could not manage two, she made me the first offer of her boy, whom she would part with for a rupee. She came a few days afterwards, with a basket of fish, but had just sold her child to Signor Manoel Rodriguez, the Portugueze linguist; who, though a man of property and a Christian, had thought it necessary to lower the price to half a rupee. Thus did this young woman, without remorse, dispose of an only child for fifteen pence!

The houses of the Nairs, and better sort of Malabars, are neat and clean; generally situated in a garden, with a few cocoa-nut and jac trees, betel plants, indigenous roots and vegetables: a small grove of areca, or a shady tamarind, and a well within the inclosure, furnish a Malabar habitation: the furniture seldom consists of more than a few mats, earthen pots, grind-stones, and utensils for cleaning the rice, with the swing already mentioned; where

the thoughtless proprietor passes most of his time in apathy and indolence.

The tools and implements of agriculture and mechanism, are extremely simple: a light sandy soil requires only one yoke of oxen to a wooden plough, which slightly turns the surface: the rice, natchnee, and early grains, are sown at the commencement of the rainy seasons, and reaped soon after they cease; the latter crops are then sown, as already mentioned in the Concan.

The method of inflicting punishment on criminals and debtors in Travencore, is in some respects singular: for capital crimes the culprits generally suffer death; although, as in most oriental governments, money and interest may purchase a pardon; except for the dreadful sin of killing a cow, or selling one for slaughter: this subjects them to the most cruel death. For debts, and non-payment of fines, inflicted as a punishment, they are confined by the caricar, or chief of the district; who draws a circle round the prisoner, from which he dare not move; then, gently laying a sharp stone on the crown of his head, demands payment of the sum required: on a refusal, he places a large flat stone over the other, and ties it firmly on; additional weights are gradually accumulated, with a repetition of the demand, until the sharp stone penetrating the head, either insures payment, or causes a painful death.

Having described the higher castes, and drawn a few sketches of the inferior tribes of Malabar, I now descend to the degraded Pooleahs; an abject and unfortunate race, who, by cruel laws and tyrannical customs, are reduced to a wretched state; while the monkeys are adored as sylvan deities, and in some parts of Malabar have temples and daily sacrifices. I have often lamented

the treatment of the poor Pooleahs, and the cruel difference made by human laws between them and the pampered brahmins: banished from society, they have neither houses nor lands, but retire to solitary places, hide themselves in ditches, and climb into umbrageous trees for shelter: they are not permitted to breathe the same air with the other castes, nor to travel on a public road; if by accident they should be there, and perceive a brahmin or Nair at a distance, they must instantly make a loud howling, to warn him from approaching until they have retired, or climbed up the nearest tree. If a Nair accidentally meets a Pooleah on the highway, he cuts him down with as little ceremony as others destroy a noxious animal: even the lowest of other castes will have no communication with a Pooleah. Hunger sometimes compels them to approach the villages, to exchange baskets, fruit, or such commodities as they may have, for a little grain: having called aloud to the peasants, they tell their want, leave the barter on the ground, and retiring to a distance, trust to the honesty of the villagers to place a measure of corn equal in value to the barter; which the Pooleahs afterwards take away. Constant poverty and accumulated misery, have entirely debased the human form, and given a squalid and savage appearance to these unhappy beings.

Yet, debased and oppressed as the Pooleahs are, there exists throughout India, a caste called Pariars, still more abject and wretched. If a Pooleah, by any accident, touches a Pariar, he must perform a variety of ceremonies, and go through many ablutions, before he can be cleansed from the impurity. With such ideas of defilement, no marriages are contracted between the Pooleahs and Pariars; nor do they eat together; although the only

difference in their epicurean banquet is, that the Pooleahs eat of all animal food, except beef, and sometimes of that which dies of itself: the Pariars not only feast upon dead carcases, but eat beef, and carrion of every kind. The brahmins of Malabar have thought proper to place christians in the same rank with the Pariars.

Dr. Robinson truly says, " the condition of the Pariar is undoubtedly the lowest degradation of human nature: if a Pariar approach a Nair he may put him to death with impunity: water or milk are considered as defiled, even by their shadow passing over them, and cannot be used until they are purified. It is impossible for words to express the sensation of vileness that the name of *Pariar* or *Chandala* conveys to the mind of a Hindoo: every Hindoo who violates the rules or institutions of his caste sinks into this degraded situation. This it is which renders Hindoos so resolute in adhering to the institutions of their tribe; because the loss of caste is, to them, the loss of all human comfort and respectability; and is a punishment beyond comparison more severe than excommunication, in the most triumphant period of Papal power."

Rejection of caste must to a Hindoo appear much worse than death: hurled from the high privileges of a brahmin or a Nair, the delinquent of either sex is obliged to enter the tribe of Pariars, the outcasts of all ranks of society; in which both them and their offspring are compelled to remain for ever! No virtue, no talent, no merit of a child can ever atone for the venial sin of the parent, whose whole posterity must feel the full effect of the dreadful sentence: none are to pray, to sacrifice, to read, or to speak to the

hapless culprit; none are to be allied by friendship or by marriage, none to eat or to drink with him: he is to become abject, and excluded from all social duties; to wander over the earth, deserted by all, trusted by none; never to be received with affection, nor treated with kindness; but to be branded with infamy and shame; the curse of heaven, and the hatred of all good men!

"Stand off, for I am holier than thou," seems to be the predominant sentiment of the brahmin, whether dwelling under the banian shades in northern Hindostan, or secluded among the cassia groves of Malabar. How different is the pride and intolerance of the Hindoo priest from the charity and benevolence of the Jewish monarch, who assembled a mixed multitude of all descriptions, from Dan to Beersheba, to celebrate the passover at Jerusalem; how different the supplication of the pious king to the anathema of the brahmin! "The good LORD pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek GOD; though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary! and the prayer ascended to HIS holy place, even unto heaven!"

The brahmins of Travencore, as in most other parts of India, have taken care to be exempted as much as possible from punishment: at least their sentence is far more lenient than that passed on the other castes for the same crimes; and their power and influence in Malabar are more unbounded than in the north of India.

Consulting Herodotus on the purifications and ceremonies of the priests in ancient Egypt, we find a striking resemblance between them and the brahmins in India, whose time ought to be divided between study and devotion. The Egyptian priests possessed many and great advantages; the brahmins enjoy still greater pri-

vileges, by the laws of Menu, and the invariable respect and affection of their followers.

Beloe, the elegant translator of Herodotus, says "he is dignified by courtesy with the title of the Father of History; that his matter is no less curious than diversified; and his history, as far as his own knowledge and diligent researches could make it, is entitled to attention and belief." This is readily admitted, as far as his own knowledge extends; and it is not impossible to throw light upon many passages in his history, which appear to have no more foundation in truth than the fables in the Odyssey, or the voyages of Sinbad the sailor.

Herodotus says that Darius, king of Persia, on a certain occasion sent for some of the Greeks who were subject to his power, and asked them what recompence would induce them to eat the bodies of their deceased parents; they replied that no sum could prevail on them to commit such a deed. In the presence of the same Greeks, who by an interpreter were informed of what passed, he sent for the Callatiæ, a people of India known to eat the bodies of their parents; he asked them for what sum they would consent to burn the bodies of their parents; the Indians were disgusted at the question, and entreated him to forbear such language. This has staggered the belief of those who have only taken a general view of Hindoo manners and customs, and have always observed them burn the bodies of their dead: but this strange assertion is wonderfully illustrated by the following passage in Moor's Hindu Pantheon; "Not only do the Hindoos, even the brahmins, eat flesh; but they eat, one sect at least, human flesh. They do not, I conclude, kill human subjects to eat; but they eat such

as they find in or about the Ganges, and perhaps other rivers. The name of the sect is *Paramahansa;* and I have received authentic information of individuals of this sect being not very unusually seen about Benares, floating down the river on, and *feeding on a corpse.* Nor is this a low despicable tribe; but, on the contrary, esteemed, by themselves at least, as a very high one; and my information stated that the human brain is judged by these epicurean cannibals as the most delicious morsel of their unsocial banquet. It may be difficult for the English reader to believe this hitherto unrecorded story of the flesh-abhorring Hindoos; as well, perhaps, as the now fully authenticated facts of their prodigality of human life. Anecdotes to a considerable extent might easily be collected of the sanguinary propensity of these people; such as would startle those who have imbibed certain opinions from the relations of travellers, on the character and habits of the abstinent and flesh-abhorring Hindoos, and brahmins with souls as unspotted as the robes they wear."

In many Indian customs mentioned by the Greek historian, we find the same traits of character as among the modern Hindoos; others appear so extremely dissimilar that little credit is given them: such for instance are the Padæi, whom he describes as leading a pastoral life, and living on raw flesh; when any man was diseased, he was put to death by his nearest connections; if a woman was ill her female relations treated her in the same manner: the more aged among them were regularly killed and eaten; few indeed attained to old age, because in case of sickness they put every one to death.

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not, there can be no doubt of the aged parents and diseased relations being at this day frequently carried by their nearest connection to the banks of the Ganges; where, after their mouths and nostrils have been stopped with the sacred mud, they are left to be carried away by the stream as food for alligators. It is well known that in some of the districts near Bengal, there are a tribe of people called *Sheep-eaters*, who seize the animal alive, and actually devour wool, skin, flesh, and entrails, until nothing remains but the skeleton. Lady Anstruther, who made a valuable collection of drawings during her residence in India, has a set of paintings in water-colours, done by a native, which contain the whole process of these extraordinary gluttons, from the first seizure of the unfortunate animal, until it is completely devoured.

Herodotus further says, that in India is a set of people, who, entirely different from the Padæi, put no animal to death, sow no grain, have no fixed habitation, and live solely upon vegetables. These were no doubt Yogees, Senassees, and wandering Gymnosophists, who live entirely in the same manner at the present day. The Massagetæ and Nasamenes of Africa, who were allowed promiscuous marriage, and during cohabitation with an individual, fixed a staff before the door, resemble in that respect the Nairs of Malabar.

I now take leave of the pagan Malabars, who differ in so many respects from the northern Hindoos: the facts mentioned from my own knowledge, especially concerning the degraded situation of the Pooleah and Pariah castes, having often excited a doubt in the minds of my English friends, when I have related such extraordinary anecdotes, I shall not apologize for confirming them by a few

quotations from Dr. Francis Buchanan's interesting journey in the Malabar province, the beginning of the present century.

" The Pooleahs are called *churmun*, a term applied to slaves in general: the Pooleahs are divided into many different clans, who can eat together, and intermarry: they have no hereditary chiefs; all the business of the caste is settled in assemblies of their elders: they never excommunicate any person, but they impose fines: when they can procure it, they eat animal food, and drink spirituous liquors, but reject carrion: none of them can read. When a man becomes tired of his wife, and she gives her consent, he may sell her to any other person who will pay back the expense incurred at the marriage; which in presents to the girl's master, her parents, cloth for the bride and bridegroom, and charges of the wedding dinner, generally amounts to twenty-four fanams, or sixteen shillings sterling. The goddess worshipped by the Pooleahs is named *Paradévatá*, and is represented by a stone placed on a mound in the open air: they have a sort of priests, but never give any thing to the brahmins, nor do they pray to the great gods whom they worship. The Pariars are also divided into clans: the highest eat carrion, and even beef; so that they are looked upon as equally impure with Mussulmans or Christians; and they may lawfully drink spirituous liquors. Even among these wretched creatures the pride of caste has full influence; and if a Pooleah be touched by one of the Pariar tribe, he is defiled, and must wash his head, and pray."

About a fourth part of the inhabitants of Malabar are Moplahs, or Mahomedans, descended from the Moors and Arabians, who have settled there at different times, and married Malabar

women: they are the principal merchants in the country, both for foreign and home trade: many are proprietors of trading vessels, navigated by Mahomedan commanders and seamen, in which they make an annual voyage to the Persian and Arabian gulfs; and after disposing of pepper, cassia, cardamoms, cotton-cloth, coir-ropes, and other productions of Malabar, they return with coffee, drugs, dates, and dried fruits. Those on the sea-coast use a corrupt language between the Arabic and Malabar: the Koran, and the few books they possess, are written in Arabic. The Moplahs engaged in commerce, and enjoying an intercourse with other people, are tolerably courteous and orderly; those in the interior, who are too proud to work or engage in agricultural pursuits, are generally an idle worthless race; parading about the country with a broadsword, or murdering time in one of the swings already mentioned. These are of a most turbulent revengeful spirit, prone to mischief, especially against the Nairs, whom they consider as infidels, proud and haughty as themselves. When intoxicated with bhang, or opium, they frequently run *a-muck*, and in a dreadful state of phrenzy, murder every person they meet, until they are overpowered and destroyed.

The Nairs are at constant variance with the Moplahs; and the king of Travencore, jealous of their ambitious revengeful temper, keeps them in great subjection, and levies frequent contributions on their property; to which they reluctantly submit, from knowing they would experience the same treatment from other governments. At one period the Moplahs created great commotions in Travencore, and towards the end of the seventeenth century massacred the chief of Anjengo, and all the English gentlemen belonging to

the settlement, when on a public visit to the queen of Attinga: the sanguinary deed was committed near her palace; some were even murdered in her presence, whom she in vain attempted to rescue from their fury, although at that time sovereign of the country.

There was still a nominal queen of Attinga when I resided at Anjengo; who, like the rajah sovereign of the Mahrattas, was little more than a state prisoner, while the king of Travencore, the usurper of her dominions, imitating the peshwa of Poonah, styled himself duan, or minister to the queen of Attinga.

I shall say nothing more of the Moplahs, thus dispersed along the coast of Malabar from Tellicherry to Cape Comorin; but the Syriac churches, or Christians of St. Thomé, settled in Travencore, are objects of great interest and curiosity. I occasionally heard of such a people in the neighbouring country of Anjengo, but I had no idea of their number or respectability: as our accounts generally came through the medium of the Portugueze priests and Romish missionaries, it was not to be expected their intelligence would be impartial or favourable.

My own knowledge on this interesting subject being limited, I shall make a few extracts from Mr. Wrede's satisfactory account of the St. Thomé Christians; who were not unknown to Vasco de Gama, and the first navigators to India: to whom the unexpected discovery of Christians on the Malabar coast, was a matter of the greatest surprise and satisfaction; for they were not more enthusiastic in extending their military glory and conquests, than in propagating their religion among the infidels in the remotest quarters of the world. Their exultation, however, was temporary; for, upon nearer investigation, they found that these Christians followed

the doctrine of NESTORIUS, and acknowledged, instead of the Pope, the patriarch of that sect residing in Syria, for their ecclesiastical supreme chief.

" Their number must have been very considerable in the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the Portugueze became first acquainted with them; since they possessed about one hundred and ten churches in the countries now subject to the Travencore and Cochin rajahs: and at this present time, after the manifold persecutions, oppressions, and successive revolutions that have almost depopulated the whole coast, they are computed to amount to no less than one hundred and fifty thousand souls.

" They are indiscriminately called St. Thomé Christians, Nestorians, Syrians, and sometimes the Malabar Christians of the mountains, by the Portugueze writers of that time, and by the subsequent missionaries from Rome. The most common name given to them by the Hindoos of the country, is that of *Nazaranee*, *Mapila*, and more frequently *Surians*, or *Surianee Mapila*.

" The Portugueze were fond of bestowing upon them the name of St. Thomé Christians, though this appellation does not appear to have been, or now to be, very common amongst themselves. It originates probably from the chief who settled the first colony of Syrians on the coast, and who was, according to their tradition, their first bishop, and founder of their religion in these countries; and whose name was MAR THOME. This is corroborated by the curious circumstance of their giving the name of MAR THOME to every ecclesiastical chief, or bishop of theirs, although his real name be JOSEPH or ABRAHAM; not improbably in compliment to their first bishop and founder, for whom they have still a reli-

gious veneration. His arrival and settlement on the coast, may perhaps at a future period be ascertained, with historical accuracy, to have taken place during the violent persecution of the sect of NESTORIUS under THEODOSIUS the Second, or some time after. But the bigotted Portugueze missionaries laid hold of this name to renew the story of the arrival of ST. THOMAS the Apostle in India; who they pretended had converted a great number of idolaters on the coast of Malabar, and afterwards on the other side of India, as far as *Malliapoor*, now *St. Thomé*, where he suffered martyrdom.

" All traditions and Malabar records agree, that the Syrian Christians, or Nazaranee Mapilas, were known, and had been settled on the Malabar coast long before either the Arabs or Jews. In the Malabar histories, the first mention of a Syrian colony of the Christians is made in the reign of COCOORANGON PERUMAL, who probably lived in the sixth century; a wealthy Syrian merchant, of the name of THOME CANNANES, is said to have landed at *Oranganore*, where he was well received, and induced to settle, by great privileges granted to him by the PERUMAL. He afterwards married two wives; one of the *Nair*, and one of some low caste; by whom he had a very numerous progeny, who after his death had great disputes about his inheritance.

" We find again mention made of two Syrian, or Chaldean bishops, at *Coilan*, or *Quilone*, about one hundred years after its foundation; where they were extremely well received by the rajah, and permitted to build a church, which was still extant when CABRAL first visited Quilone. The grants and privileges which they received from the rajah were engraved upon copper plates; which

many centuries afterwards, were shewn to Archbishop de Menezes at *Terakedroe*.

"If one adds to these historical dates the name of Syrians retained by the St. Thomé Christians, their distinct features, and complexion somewhat fairer than the rest of the Malabars, the style of their building, especially their churches; but above all, the general use of the Syrian, or rather Chaldean language, which is still preserved in all their religious functions, even in those churches which have since embraced the Roman rite, and that to this day they take their Christian and family names from the Syrian or Chaldean idiom, no doubt can remain but that the St. Thomé Christians are originally a colony of *Nestorians*, who fled from the dominion of the Greek emperors, after Theodosius the Second began to persecute the followers of the sect." *

"They made at first some proselytes among the brahmins and Nairs, and were on that account much respected by the native princes; so that even at present they consider themselves equal in rank to either of the above two castes. They are in fact in much greater estimation among the Hindoos than the Christians converted by the Portuguese, and mostly picked up from the lowest caste. Many of the St. Thomé Christians now preserve the manners and mode of life of the brahmins as to cleanliness, and abstaining from animal food.

"We learn from the Portuguese writers, that these Christians possessed upwards of one hundred villages, situated mostly in the mountainous part of the southern division of Malabar. Their habitations were distinguished from those of the Hindoos by being mostly solid buildings, and collected in villages; not scattered and

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dispersed as those of the brahmins and Nairs. They obeyed their Archbishop, both in ecclesiastical and civil matters, paying a very moderate tribute to the different rajahs in whose territory they lived, who very little interfered in their concerns. When any complaints in civil affairs were preferred to the Archbishop, he used to appoint arbitrators or judges, whose sentence was final; they never condemned any person to death, and most crimes were expiated with pecuniary fines. They paid no tithes to their clergy, but at weddings they offered the tenth of the marriage gifts to their churches. On these occasions they were very profuse and ostentatious, and celebrated their nuptials with great pomp; it was then principally that they made a shew of the privileges granted to them by one of the PERUMALS; as of the bride and bridegroom riding upon elephants, of having the hair ornamented with flowers of gold, of musical instruments, also of flags of different colours carried before them. They all wore swords and targets, and some of them had firelocks; they were great marksmen, and from their eighth year frequented the firing schools: husbandry and trade were their principal occupations, and, next to the brahmins, the St. Thomé Christians furnished the greatest quantity of pepper to the Portugueze.

" As to their religious tenets, they followed generally the doctrine of NESTORIUS. They admitted no images of saints in their churches, where the Holy Cross alone was to be seen. They had only three sacraments, baptism, eucharist, and the orders; and would not admit transubstantiation in the manner the Roman catholics do. They knew nothing of purgatory; and the saints they said were not admitted to the presence of GOD, but were kept in

a third place till the day of judgment. Their priests were permitted to marry, at least once in their life. Their rite was the Chaldæan, or Syrian.

" The St. Thomé, or Syrian Christians, never claimed the particular protection of either the Portuguèze or Dutch, which the new Christians generally do, but considered themselves as subjects of the different rajahs in whose districts they lived; and, as long as the old Hindoo system, and the former division of the country, under a variety of petty rajahs, was preserved, they appear to have enjoyed the same degree of freedom, ease, and consideration, as the Nairs. But when the rajahs of *Travencore* and *Cochin* had subjected to themselves all the petty *rajahs* and chiefs, whose respective territories were situated within the lines of Travencore, they also overturned the whole political system established by CHERUMA PERUMAL; and by setting aside the immunities and privileges of the higher castes, they established a most oppressive despotism in the room of the former mild limited oligarchy; and we ought not to be much surprised to behold the present comparatively wretched situation of these Syrian villages, since we see the brahmins and Nairs stript of their old prerogatives, and subject to almost the same oppressions and extortions."

Dr. Claudius Buchanan, who visited the Syrian churches in 1806, under the sanction of the Marquis Wellesley, confirms the preceding account, and has given an interesting and affecting detail of his reception by Mar Dionysius the bishop and the pastor of the Christian churches in Malabar: he describes the venerable metropolitan, at the age of seventy-eight, in his episcopal mitre and crozier, as a man of highly respectable character, eminent for

piety, and devoted attention to his pastoral functions: in a conversation with the English divine the Bishop said, "You have come to visit a declining church, and I am now an old man: but the hopes of its seeing better days cheer my old age, though I may not live to see them." On Dr. Buchanan's submitting to the venerable prelate his wishes in regard to the translation and printing of the holy scriptures, he replied, "I have already fully considered the subject; I have determined to superintend the work myself, and to call the most learned of the clergy to my aid: it is a work which will illuminate these dark regions, and God will give it his blessing."

Dr. Buchanan collected an ancient Syrian bible, and several valuable manuscripts among these churches; and the king of Travencore acceded to his request for sending a catalogue of all the Hindoo manuscripts in the temples of Travencore to the English college at Calcutta; a measure to which the brahmins were very averse. Those manuscripts are supposed to contain most of the Hindoo literature of the south of India.

The Christians in Travencore, who exceeded two hundred thousand in number, were much in want of printed versions of the holy scriptures, having only a very few manuscript copies belonging to all the churches. This Syriac version was carried to India, according to the popular belief, at the beginning of the fourth century, before the year 325 of the Christian æra; at which time Johannes, bishop of India, signed his name at the council of Nice. Dr. Buchanan, in company with Colonel Macaulay, the British resident in Travencore, visited Udiamper, where Beliarte, king of the Christians, kept his court; for the Syrian Christians had for-

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merly regal power in Malabar, and when Vasco de Gama arrived at Cochin in 1503, he saw the sceptre once swayed by their monarchs. At Udiamper is the Syrian church, at which Archbishop Menezes, from Goa, convened the synod of the Syrian clergy in 1599, when he burned the Syriac and Chaldaic books.

This well authenticated account of these churches affords many delightful sensations to a reflecting mind, and eminently displays the protecting power of the heavenly Shepherd. Numerous as the Syrian Christians now are, they were formerly a more extensive and flourishing body: and we have every reason to hope there will again be a glorious revival among a people so well prepared; a people who preserved a pure and spiritual worship when Europe was immersed in a gloom, emphatically styled the *dark age*. The uncontrouled power of Papal Rome had not then reached the Syrian churches in Travencore: they preserved their independence, and remained for ages unmolested, until the maritime discovery of India by de Gama: after which, priests and inquisitors from Goa disturbed their peace, burnt their unadulterated versions of the sacred scriptures, and compelled many of their churches to acknowledge the pope's supremacy.

The extensive tract of country, now denominated the Malabar Province, having since the fall of Tippoo Sultan, formed part of the British empire in India, and been placed under the management of the Company's servants, a more accurate and comprehensive detail of the subjects slightly touched upon during my voyage on the Malabar coast, and residence in Travencore, will most probably be communicated to the public. The pride and insolence of the Nambouri brahmins and Nairs will be checked

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under the English government, and by that means many new channels of information, which could not have been accessible forty years ago, will be attainable. A faithful narrative of the civil and natural history of Malabar will be a valuable acquisition to the northern Asiatic Researches: it is a country which affords an ample field for such investigation, especially in botanical pursuits: in that respect the copious descriptions and accurate plates of the Hortus Malabaricus, are truly valuable; but it is a very voluminous, expensive, and scarce work; and, being written in Latin, cannot be generally read. Dr. Roxburgh's beautiful collection of Coromandel plants contains many of those common in Malabar; but others, indigenous to the mountains and vallies of Travencore, are not introduced into that elegant and classical work.

I now close my own account of this singular country, and its more singular inhabitants, with a few very curious remarks by Lewis Vertomannus, a gentleman of Rome, who visited it in 1503, and published his travels in Arabia, Persia, and India, "containing many notable and strange things," upwards of three hundred years ago. His descriptions in Malabar are so curious, lively, and interesting, that I give them in the old English, into which they were soon after translated from the Latin.

"The chiefest idolaters, and of the greatest dignity in Malabar, are the Bramini. They of the second order are named Nairi; whose office it is when they go abroad to bear swords, targets, bows, and lances: the third order consisteth of mechanics or handy-craft men; with those that gather pepper, fruits, and spices. The basest sort of all are in such subjection to the Bramini and Nairi, that on pain of death they may approach no nearer unto

them than fifty paces: and therefore they lie lurking in certain shadows, and dark places, and marshes, lest they should suddenly chance to meet with them. Wherefore when they come abroad, that they may be heard afar off, they cry with a loud voice, that they may be heard of the same Bramini and Nairi; lest being suddenly betrayed, they should be put to death.

" The higher sort of these idolaters, to shew great courtesie and friendship one to the other, use sometimes to change wives; but the children remain with the first husband: they have also divers other customs; for among some of them, one woman is married to seven husbands: when she hath brought forth a child, she may father it to which of them she listeth; who may in no case refuse it.

" When they pray to their idols in the morning before the sun-rise, they resort to the pools or rivers to wash them. Their weapons are certain crooked swords, bowes, and lances: lying along on the ground, they eat their meat out of a tray of copper; for spoons, they use certain leaves of trees: the ruder sort eat so filthily, that putting their foul hands into the pot, they take out rice by handfuls, and so thrust it into their mouths. Among the better sort the women have none other charge or care than to dress and beautify themselves; for their husbands like to have them curiously washed, and perfumed with sundry sweet savours. When these women go abroad, it is marvellous to behold how they are behanged with jewels and precious stones, on their ears, arms, and legs.

" When the king, or any of the priests or gentlemen die, their bodies are burnt in a great fire, made of a pile of wood; then all

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" When the king, or any of the priests or gentlemen die, their bodies are burnt in a great fire, made of a pile of wood; then all the while they sacrifice unto the devil. Whiles the bodies are burn-

ing, they cast in the fire all manner of sweet savours, as aloes, myrrh, frankincense, storax, sandal, coral, and innumerable other sweet gums, spices, and trees: these make the fire much greater, increasing the flame by reason of their gummosity: the wife also of the burned king or priest standeth by the fire alone, without the company of any other woman, lamenting and beating her breast. Within fifteen days after, the wife biddeth to a banquet all her husband's kinsfolks; and when they come at a day appointed, they go all to the place where her husband was burnt, and at the same hour of the night: then cometh forth the wife, garnished with all her jewels, and best apparel: in the same place is made a pit, no deeper than may serve to receive the woman; this pit is set about with reeds covered with silk, that the pit may not be seen. In the mean time a fire is made in the pit with sundry sorts of sweet woods; and the wife, after that her guests have well banqueted, eateth very much of a certain thing called betel, which troubleth her mind, as though she was half mad, or drunken. After the ceremonies are finished, she taketh her leave of all her kinsfolks, and then with sudden outrage, and a loud cry, lifting up her hands, she hurleth herself into the burning pit; which done, her kinsfolks, standing near unto the fire, cover her with little faggots of sweet wood; hurling also thereon much pitch, that the body may the sooner be consumed: and except the wife should do this after the death of her husband, she should ever after be esteemed an evil woman, be hated of all men, and in fine, in danger to be slain both of her own kinsfolks and her husband's, and therefore she goeth to it the more willingly. The king himself is

present at these pompes; which are not commonly used for all men; but only for kings, priests, and noblemen."

As no traces now remain of the ancient city of Calicut, it is impossible to speak of its magnificence when Vertomannus wrote: but, considering the wealth and power of the Mahomedans, and the splendour of their cities in the north of India at that period; many of which, as well as Bezenagur, the metropolis of the great Hindoo empire of Narsinga, the Roman traveller had just visited; it is singular he should call Calicut the "chiefest, and metropolitan of all the cities of India; whose king in royal majesty exceeded all the kings of the east; and was therefore in the Malabar language called *Samory*, or *Zamorine*, that is to say, God on the earth.

That Calicut was the principal city in Malabar, and perhaps the greatest emporium in the east, there is little doubt; although now reduced to a stragging village of fishermen: but as Vertomannus describes the capital of Narsinga to be a city eight miles in circuit, and of proportionable wealth and grandeur, a monarch maintaining four hundred war elephants, and when he rode out or went a hunting, attended by six thousand horsemen, it appears extraordinary he should speak of Calicut in such high terms: not so much of the city as the palace, which, he says, "containeth no less than a mile in circuit; the wall is not high; the building is fair, with beams well joining the frame, clumsily wrought, and carved with the figures and shapes of devils on every side. What pearls and precious stones the king weareth upon him, cannot be expressed for the greatness of the thing; for doubtless it exceedeth

all estimation: although at the time of my being there, he was not given to joyfulness, but lived in grief of mind, as well for the wars which the Portugals made against him, as for a grievous sickness; nevertheless his ears, arms, hands, legs, and feet, were so beautifully and richly garnished with all sorts of jewels and precious stones, that it cannot be spoken. His treasure is esteemed so unmeasurable, that it cannot be contained in two wonderful great rooms; it consisteth of precious stones, plates of gold, and also so much coined gold, as may suffice to lade a hundred mules; as their Bramini report, to whom it is best known: this treasure was gathered and reserved by twelve kings before him, and contains besides a coffer of three spans in length, and two in breadth, full of only precious stones, of price inestimable."

" In the hall of the palace are seen ten or twelve candlesticks, very fair, and of cunning workmanship; much like unto goodly fountains, and of the height of a man. In each of them are divers vessels, and in every vessel three candles light, of two spans long; and great plenty of oil.

" The king of Calicut and his people are given to idolatry, and serving of the devil: he hath a chapel in his palace where he worships him; the entrance is by a door of wood, garnished with carved work, containing divers monstrous forms and shapes of devils. In the midst of the chapel is a seat of majesty made of copper, with also a devil of copper sitting on it: this devil hath on his head a crown, after the manner of the Bishop of Rome; but this hath overplus four horns, his mouth gaping, with four notable teeth, a deformed nose, louring and grim eyes, a threatening look,

crooked hands like a flesh hook, and feet not much unlike the feet of a cock: a monster horrible and fearful to behold. They sacrifice a cock to him once a week; they kill the cock with a silver knife, and the knife also being rayed with blood, they put often in the fire, that no part of the blood be lost. When the king hath left eating, the priests carry away all that is left to certain crows, which they keep for the purpose: these crows are therefore esteemed holy; and it is not lawful for any man to hurt them. When the king marries, the queen is first appropriated to the chief brahmin, to whom the king giveth fifty pieces of gold: which they say is one cause, that after the death of the king, if he have any male children living, they succeed not to the kingdom; for of ancient law and custom the sceptre pertaineth to the king's sister's sons. When the king goeth a hunting the Bramini keep the queen at home, and remain near about her; for there is nothing more acceptable to the king than that the priests should so keep company with the queen."

Many of these singular customs of the high caste of the Tamuri Raja, or Zamorin, mentioned by Vertomannus, are confirmed by Dr. Francis Buchanan, who travelled in this country three hundred years afterwards: sic transit gloria mundi! for so altered is the whole system within that space, that the present Zamorin, instead of possessing the power, wealth, and dignity of his ancestors, is reduced to a cypher, and subsists on a pension from the English East India Company. Notwithstanding his degradation and poverty, Dr. Buchanan says, that all the males of his family are called Tamburans, and all the ladies Tamburetti,

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