

MADRAS JOURNAL

OF

LITERATURE AND SCIENCE.

No. 1.—October, 1833.

1.—Extract from the General Memoir of the Survey of Travancore, by Lieutenant P. E. Conner, being a description of the Hill Tribes in that country.

(Read at a Meeting of the Madras Literary Society and Auxiliary of the Royal Asiatic Society held on Thursday the 23d of May 1833.)

A FEW wild but inoffensive Mountaineers share amongst them the whole of the hilly parts. It is difficult to fix their total,* but they are not numerous. Influenced by all the prejudices of Caste, they are divided into several distinct tribes, who have little intercourse with each other. But their character is similar, or only distinguished by minute shades. It partakes of the rude wildness of their Hills, but is in no instance ferocious. Though living in clans, they have little of that union and attachment that belongs to such an association. Each society has its little Chief, most of them owe general allegiance to the Rajah's of Pundalum and Puniattu, caprice leads them to occasionally transfer their fealty, called Mopen, to the South Kunecar, whose authority, rather domestic than despotic, is willingly submitted to. Their mode of life too, is every where the same, subsistence being chiefly derived from the spontaneous produce of the wilderness through which they roam. The spoils of the chase (of which they often rob the Chennai) yields a precarious addition, and the collection of the Hill products affords the means of obtaining the few coarse luxuries suitable to their taste. Wicker work (made from Bamboos) in which they are very ingenious, is the only art they practice. They are not exempt from the Fever common to the Hills, but are in general hardy, and

* It would appear certainly greater than that given in the Statistic Table, scattered we shall not be surprised at any incorrectness in the enumeration.

endure privation with stoicism, a virtue that the wretchedness of their situation too often calls into action. Of migratory habits they move about in small hordes, necessity alone leads them to the inhabited parts, where no inducement could persuade them permanently to remain. In their rambling tours they carry a Staff or Pike, a Knife stuck in the girdle, and sometimes Bows and Arrows, for they have no fire Arms. A Basket, slung at the shoulders, contains some few necessary utensils; and followed by their Dogs and Women, the latter loaded with the younger children and other impediments of the Family, they wander from one place to another, as caprice or convenience may dictate. Their Huts are soon erected, often on Rocks, or Trees, a security against Tigers and Elephants, their fellow occupants of the Woods, with whom they share or dispute possession. Conversing among themselves, they are unintelligible to those from the inhabited parts, this however only arises from the dissonant sound conveyed by their harsh and abrupt utterance. Each tribe is intimately well acquainted with the tract considered particularly its own, and on whose precincts they do not admit encroachments. They trace, as by instinct, its devious paths, and decide with almost unerring certainty on the number and variety of Animals that may have lately traversed them. They are restrained or confine themselves to one Wife or Mistress, often their neice, a connection aimed at as securing the purity of the race; the offspring in most cases is considered as belonging to the mother. Their superstitions are said to have a favorable influence on their morality, but the Women, subject to every species of hardship and drudgery, can have but little leisure or disposition to be incontinent. Their Dress only differs from that of the Nairs, in covering the upper part of the person with an abundance of Cloth, but it is an equivocal benefit, cleanliness being in this instance sacrificed to decorum, as they do convenience to ornament, in encumbering the Ears with pendants, and loading the neck with countless strings of beads, decorations little adapted to their vagrant mode of life. They are haunted by a variety of superstitions, large tracts of Forests sacred to some ideal spirit, however great the temptations their productions might offer, are scrupulously avoided by them; some regard the head with particular veneration, and will not carry any burthen on it. Women under certain circumstances, or when parturient, are objects whose approach or contact is dreaded, in the latter case they are removed to a hut (being supposed to pollute it by their presence) some distance from the Village, and the event trusted to the unaided operations of nature. These Mountaineers

are small in person, are often of a meagre appearance, but have the usual Hindu lineaments, except the

Cowders—Whose flattened nose, robust make, dark complexion, occasionally curly hair, and large white teeth, filed into the form of a Saw, (some other classes of hill people observe a similar practice) give them an African appearance, though their features are by no means so harsh—their hardness has given rise to the observation amongst their neighbours, that the Cowder and Caad Auney, wild Elephant, is much the same sort of Animal. They inhabit the Kodagerry Hills, bordering the Northern parts of Cochin, and engage themselves to the renters (belonging to Coimbatoor) of those Forests, whose productions they alone can collect. The Cowders are infinitely better situated than the

Vaishwans—Occupying the Iddiara and Mulliatoor Hills, a miserable puny race, vitiated by use of Opium; they are employed in the Timber Department, and the profit of their labours dissipated in the purchase of this pernicious drug; they are ever in the extremes of stupid langour or inebriety.

Moodavenmars—Secluded amongst the Chenganaad and Neereamungalum Hills, and nominally dependant on the Pagodas bearing those names, the Moodavenmars (or Male Addeens) have not been corrupted by an intercourse with the plain. They rank high in point of precedency, were originally Veilaulars, tradition representing them as having accompanied some of the Madura Princes to those Hills.—They are somewhat more civilized than the other Hill tribes; at least the comparative regard they shew their Women would induce such a belief.

Arreeamars—The Arreeamars to the South called Vailamars, often Male Arrisens (Lords of the Hills) hold the chief place as to Caste. They occupy the hilly tracts bordering on the inhabited parts, and are less migratory than the other tribes. The Hills are shared amongst them, each Family having a certain extent as its patrimony. To the spontaneous produce of their wild domain, they add such as they can collect in the more mountainous and distant parts, a rude and lazy culture ekes out a scanty subsistence. Their Houses are picturesquely scattered (sometimes in little knots, but usually distant from each other) over the Hills, are sheltered by some projecting crag, and embowered in Plantain Trees, which intermingled with a few Areka and Jack are also seen strewn along its vallies. The Hill and in some measure its inhabitants are often the property of a Pagoda or Junmeecars, they are subject to some

slight tax, and are bound to aid the capture of Elephants, for which they are remunerated. Active in clearing lands, they are employed in this way by the inhabitants of the Plain, but naturally supine, necessity alone impels them to industry.

Oorallays—The distinguishing characteristics of the Arreeamars, are less remarkable than the Oorallays, who wander over the Thodhuwullay Hills. Their numbers are very limited, some belong to the Circar, and are under a Kyeaulchy or Manager, who rarely fails to make the most of his authority over them. They were (as also some other of the hill tribes) at a remote date, the particular property of the Alwanchayree Tumbracul. Their singular aversion to the Buffaloe, whose approach they anxiously avoid, is supposed to mark their purity as a Caste, which ranks with the Moodavenmars. They are expert in the use of the Bow, and particularly attached to their Dogs, who share all their toils; they pay much respect to parental authority, are timid, mild, but even less amicable than the other tribes.

Prædial Slaves—Prædial Slavery* is common to a considerable portion of the Western Coast, but its extent throughout this principality is comparatively greater, and the prejudices of the people renders the degradation it entails more complete. Those subject to prædial bondage are known under the general term of Sherramukkul (Children of Slavery) their name is connected with every thing revolting, shunned as if infected with the plague, the higher classes view their presence with a mixture of alarm and indignation; and even Towns and Markets would be considered as defiled by their approach. The Sherramukkul are attached to the Glebe, but real property in absolute Market value not much above the Cattle united with them in the same bondage, and greatly below them in estimation. But though a slavery deserving commiseration, it is by no means the most rigid form of that wretched state, they are treated with a capricious indifference or rigour, much of this arises from the prejudices of the Nairs, the Christians have no such excuse, but though divided in Caste, they agree in oppression. Personal chastisement is not often inflicted, but they experience little sympathy. In sickness they are wholly left to nature, perhaps dismissed to poverty, and in age often abandoned.

Manumission is rarely practised, or even desired, indeed as a Polayen never possesses property of any kind, his freedom could only be productive of starvation; or a change of servitude, which occurs

* It is nearly unknown in Nanjaysaad.

when he is presented to a temple in compliance with some superstitious vow. The Sberramukkuls are held by various tenures, and the reluctance of their Masters finally to dispose of them is so great, that the most pressing necessity can alone induce them to it. They are most frequently mortgaged or held in Punnium, that is the owner receives the full value, but retains the power of recalling the purchase, tenures but little adapted to improve the situation of the slave, whose services being received as equivalent to the interest of the debt, holds out an inducement to urge his labours, and diminish his comforts: they are not sold out of the country.* A very considerable number of Prædial slaves belong to Government, to whom they escheat as other property on the failure of heirs; they are partly employed on Circar lands, partly rented out to the Ryots. A male being rated at about eight Purrahs of Paddy annually, (not quite two Rupees) the female less than this amount. If however hired from a Junmes (owner) the demand would be much greater. The value of a Polayen varies from six to ten Pagodas, that of a female may reach perhaps to twelve, but (amongst some of the Caste of Sberramukkul) they are very rarely subject to sale.

In earlier times the murder of a Slave was scarcely considered as a crime the deed of transfer goes to say, "you may sell or kill him or her," the latter privilege has now of course ceased. The Sher-ramukkuls are only employed in Agriculture, they live in hovels situated on the banks of the fields, or nestle on the Trees along their borders to watch the crop after the toils of the day, and are discouraged from erecting better accommodation, under the idea, that if more comfortable, they would be less disposed to move as the culture required. Their labours are repaid (if such can be called compensation) in Grain. Three measures of Paddy to a man, two to a Woman, and one to a child, is their daily pittance, this is not regularly given being reduced to half on days when they do not work, and withheld entirely on symptoms of refractoriness. Harvest is a period of comparative plenty, but their meagre squalid appearance betrays the insufficiency of their diet, and the extreme hardships to which both sexes are equally doomed. They have no idea beyond their occupations, are never guilty of violence to their masters, are said to be obedient perhaps from the sluggish apathy of their character, which renders them unmindful of their lot. The external distinctions of the Prædial Slaves are subject to great varieties, they are sometimes remarkable for an extreme darkness of complexion,

whose jetty hue (which cannot be the effect of exposure,) approaches that of an African, but they are invariably stamped with the Hindu features, nor bear any traces of a distinct race. The bark (Spatha) of the Areka often furnishes their whole clothing, which at best never exceeds a bit of Cloth, sufficient for the purpose of decency. The hair allowed to grow wild, forms in time an immense mass, whose impurities cannot be imagined without shrinking. They are divided into several distinct classes, marked by some peculiarities, the

Vaituwans—Vaituwans (literally Hunters) or Konakens are ranked high, and prized for their superior fidelity and tractability. They are expert Boatmen, and often employed in the manufacture of Salt; their Women as an Article of Sale are not much valued, the Children of this class being the property of the Father's Master.

Polayens—The Polayens constitute much the largest number of the Prædial servants, they are split into three classes, Vullava, Kunnaka, Moonry Polayen, each baser than the other. Husband and Wife sometime serve different persons, but more frequently the same. The Females of this Class are given in usufruct, scarcely ever in complete possession; the eldest male Child belongs to the Master of the Father, the rest of the family remain with the mother while young, but being the property of her owner revert to him when of an age to be useful, and she follows in the event of her becoming a Widow.

Parriars—The Parriars also form a very considerable number of the Slaves the coast is divided into Perroom Parriar N. of Koddungaloor, Mounay Parriar S. of that place, they are inferior to those of the other Coast, and reckoned so very vile, that their contact would entail the most alarming contamination. Their taste for Carrion has doubtless caused this prejudice, which goes so far as to suppose they inhale a fetid odour. The death of a Cow or Bullock is with the Parriars the season of jubilee, never stopping to enquire its cause, they indulge the horror of the higher classes in the feast it affords. Unlike some of the other Caste of Sherramukkuls they do not connect themselves with their kindred, but as with the Vaituwans, the Children are the property of the Father's Master. They are ingenious in wicker work, and are capable of great labour, but in point of value and character are greatly below the Polayens. They pretend to be great necromancers, and their masters respect their powers or fear their spells;

nor shall we regret the credulity, that puts at least one check on the caprice of their owners.

Vaiduns and Oolandurs—The Vaiduns Oolandurs are the least domesticated of the Prædial slaves, they are employed in cutting Timber, making Fences, guarding Crops, declining or being prohibited from giving any aid in the other rural labours. The former claims a superiority but the existence and subsistence of both is indescribably miserable. They are not insensible to the vanity of ornaments, the neck being hung round with shells, but they use no Cloth, a verdant fringe of leaves strung round the loins being their only covering. A dark complexion, restless glance, and exuberance of hair, gives them a wild appearance; but they are extremely gentle, and so timid, that on the lowest sound of approach, the shock headed savage flies into the woods. Though reduced to a low state of debasement, they are yet superior to the

Naiadees—Naiadees who in the opinion of all are at the very last step of vileness. This wretched race is only found in the Northern parts of Cochin, they are banished the Villages, and live on the low hills near the cultivated lands—a bush or rock being their only shelter. The Naiadees present a state of society not seen in any other part of India; wild amidst civilized inhabitants, starving amongst cultivation, nearly naked; they wander about in search of a few roots, but depend more on charity, which the traveller is surprised at their clamorous impetuosity in soliciting, ascending the little slopes that overlook the Village or road. Whatever charity they receive is placed on the ground near where they stand, but on observing their Petitions are heard they retire from the spot, that they may not defile by their presence those coming to their relief.

(To be continued.)

An Historical account of the Christians on the Malabar coast, by the Venerable Archdeacon T. Robinson A. M. (in three parts.)

PART 1ST.

THEIR EARLY HISTORY.

(Read at a Meeting of the M. L. S. & A. R. A. S. held on the 8th August, 1833.)

The Churches of the Christians of St. Thomas in the countries of Travancore and Cochin, have always formed one of the most interesting objects of enquiry to the general scholar as well as to the

MADRAS JOURNAL

OF

LITERATURE AND SCIENCE.

No. 2.—*January, 1834.*

1.—*Extract from the Memoir of the Survey of Travancore, compiled by Lieutenant Conner.*

(Continued from the 7th Page of our last Number.)

Than Travancore and Cochin, few parts of the Peninsula present so great variety in its population, there is some difference of features and shade of colour, but they are still less distinguished by their habits and appearance, than alienated by prejudice and institution of cast. There is of course some analogy of character, and their manners too has a considerable affinity to those of their eastern neighbours, but each have peculiarities in their habits of domestic life, that mark a discrimination, in some points a much greater diversity, than would be inferred from their vicinity.

Receding a short distance from the coast, the character of the population perhaps somewhat improves. The provincial divisions present some varieties. To the south, probably arising from the deteriorating mixture of Vellaulers, they display an obstinate refractoriness, that it is often as necessary to coerce as to conciliate; approaching north, particularly throughout Cochin, this waywardness of disposition is succeeded by a mild and peaceable demeanor; their simplicity of manners is infinitely less vitiated than in other parts, at least it has received but little alteration from an intercourse with foreigners; with prejudices infinitely more insurmountable and unconnected by any interest or intercourse that could occasion community of sentiment, they assimilate to Europeans still less than any other natives, nor perhaps need we much regret their ignorance of them, as such association too often diminishes their respect, and taints their virtues without abating their prejudices. The interior is seldom visited by Europeans, and to this perhaps may be ascribed the ready attention which the traveller experiences, but the natives by

no means seek his acquaintance; indeed they are shy of strangers and retained by their attachment to the soil (which amongst all ranks is no where so powerful. It may be that the requisites for the support or enjoyment of life are here more limited or less difficult of attainment) for ever within the limits of their own village or district, they know or care little for other countries, have no curiosity of adventure, and even an imperfect knowledge of their neighbours, whom they regard as inferior to them.

Generally speaking except the higher classes of Nairs, and the inhabitants of the most southern districts, the body of the population are of a more passive and docile temper than those of the other parts of the Peninsula, their composed deportment and languid gravity of disposition, is not easily heated beyond its usual temperature, and never hurried into that animated vehemence of vituperation, so common on the other coast on the most trifling occasions of dispute; but it is easier still to stimulate their passions than excite their industry; their listless habits, in which the possession of slaves enables them to indulge, renders them averse to active labour, and except the very lower classes, whom a pressing necessity alone urges to diligence, they rather enjoy their possessions in lazy indolence, than increase them, at least at the expense of personal effort. It must be admitted however that mendicity is rare except amongst the christian population, who in fact furnish nearly the whole amount, which presents a greater and more disgusting variety of decrepitude than can be well conceived. Crime is not common, perhaps the more serious offences are less frequent than in the neighbouring countries; if at distant intervals instances of atrocity do occur, they are mostly traceable to the Maupulays; even theft is comparatively rare, and altho' many of the lower classes are tempted by the facility of concealment and urgency of want, this vice is not particularly ascribable to them. Falsehood is the common stain of the native character, but the distance between promise and performance is particularly remarkable in Malliallum, at least this part of it. The inhabitants of which are characterized as perpetual liars, the charge tho' too general in its application, may not be entirely unfounded, but it must not be conceived inconsistent with the possession of many amiable qualities, though truth does not constitute one of them, and they may perhaps be considered as exercising many virtues as their neighbours, but not exactly of the same stamp, at least an abatement must be made on the score of continence which is by no means the most ready attribute of the community here. To mend their morals a more general diffusion as well as improve-

ment in the system of education is necessary ; ethics at present forms no part of their studies, which rarely advance beyond the first elements of knowledge, and such limited accomplishments only belong to the superior classes, who however are susceptible of higher attainments, particularly the Nairs, who have a quick apprehension, are admirable accountants, and perform the operation of writing (leaves every where being substituted for paper) with a rapidity and adroitness quite peculiar to themselves. The language spoken differs in the southern parts where it is largely intermixed with the Tamool, but we do not here observe that mixture of tongues so common on the other coast. The inhabitants of this, never speak any but their own, nor does even their intercourse with Europeans tempt them to acquire their language. Circar schools, two in each district, have been established for the benefit of the community at large, but it would infinitely improve their efficiency were the number as well as the plan (tho' it must be confessed the natives are little disposed to excursive knowledge) on a more enlarged scale. The inferior ranks are wholly untaught, but an alleviation of their physical wants must precede any mental improvement.

They bear a general resemblance to the people of the other coast, but have a greater symmetry of person, a fairer complexion, more mild and agreeable features ; nor do we ever see amongst them that shrewd over reaching cast of countenance, so common there ; natural deformity is rarely met with, but some diversity of exterior is observable ; allowing however for the difference, that coarser fare, greater exposure and severer labour will produce, a great family likeness is perceptible throughout, they have (particularly among the higher orders) an expressive, pleasing though not always fine physiognomy, generally a delicate formation of person, which is rather perhaps below than above the ordinary standard. The stature of the women is inferior to that of their neighbours, but their attractions rather condensed, than diminished, give them claim to a more than equal measure of perfection, particularly those of the Nairs, who have a soft fulness of form, and elegant but fragile contour, while a carriage singularly graceful, lends additional and dangerous allurements to their dusky charms. To their precocity must be ascribed their early decay, with them there is no intermediate space between the freshness of youth, and decrepitude of old age. Rank and cast experience here a degree of homage that in other parts of the Peninsula would neither be required nor given. In the presence of a superior, and each exacts the same observance

that he pays, the Moondoo is removed from the head or shoulders, the hands united are raised for a moment, when the right is applied to the mouth, which is partly free from this polite barrier during the interview, or rather the laxity or rigour with which it is guarded depends on the relative ranks of the parties. This address would appear rather obsequious than respectful, but deserves not the charge of servility. Amongst the higher order of Nairs, an elegance, almost dignity of demeanour, natural and superior to acquisition is not uncommon.

Most of the superior classes substituting physical purity for more material virtues make frequent use of the bath, ablution is a necessary preliminary to meals, the superior orders practice endless subsidiary ones, but they are too fastidious in their notions of defilement, as they can scarcely leave their house, or be approached by any of the lower classes, without undergoing some supposed pollution, many of the very lowest ranks (whose name is an invective) so strongly feel the odious peculiarities attached to them that they fly on the approach of a superior; contact with them is regarded as contagion, and with even the middling ones viewed only as a less deep stain. To avoid the communication of such a taint when delivering any article, they place it on the ground, putting a leaf under it and retire; indeed to avoid contact all classes throw rather than hand what they may be desirous of giving; it may be added that this feeling, so destructive of social intercourse, extends to the very lowest ranks, who view as a species of contamination the touch of those beneath them in precedence. The women have a profusion of dark hair, which they carelessly dispose in a knot on the top of the head, on the fore part of which the men wear a single lock, which arranged with artful foppery is an object of vanity with the young; in every instance this internal vegetation is removed several times in the course of the year: even the eye brows marked only by a thin line of hair share the denudation; we could perhaps wish the retrenchment extended to the nails of the hands, particularly those of the right, which are regarded as becoming in proportion to their length.

If nudity be considered as provoking sensuality, the costume of the people may afford some excuse for that ascribed to them, its simplicity would denote its antiquity. The various classes have little diversity of garment, nor indeed is any seen throughout the country; even foreigners (inhabitants of the eastern province &c.) assuming the vesture of it, which requires but few cloths, consisting chiefly of a cloth (known by the term Moondoo) passed round the waist and

reaching to the knees (amongst the more wealthy classes, it extends to the ancles) forms a short petticoat or kilt, a handkerchief thrown loosely over the head and covering the shoulders form a sort of cowl, this is substituted for a turband, it is occasionally tied though commonly left flowing, but in either case affords no protection against the sun, their chuttries (and they consider them an indispensable part of their equipment) are supposed sufficiently to answer this purpose, indeed some of their ordinances direct that the head and feet shall always remain uncovered, a precept very generally observed; in the latter instance, the colour of the cloth worn is slightly tinged, with indigo, its texture rather than quantity differs with the ability of the weaver: it is often or generally so transparent as to shade rather than conceal the outline. The female costume is somewhat similar, but (inverting the usual order of things) has a more masculine appearance, a portion of the cloth, forming the short petticoat being passed between the legs and fixed in the girdle behind; this scanty vesture reaching only to the knees, the upper part of the person is permitted to remain uncovered, as a handkerchief thrown carelessly over the head and bosom is worn with no view to concealment, indeed on ordinary occasions entirely dispensed with, the eye is at first startled with so much nudity, perhaps arrested by its novelty, to which however it becomes readily reconciled, but it is impossible not to admire the unsuspecting simplicity, that endures the gaze of surprize insensible of being its object. Their costume it must be confessed leaves more to engage the attention, than pique the curiosity, but the display is as often productive of disgust as admiration, a greater fastidiousness might perhaps desire that it allowed less scope for either; their drapery however scanty is sometimes arranged with singular grace, if we could desire its folds somewhat ampler, a wish for their superior comfort must have a large share in exciting the sentiments. The children go naked till the fifth or sixth year, and most of the lower classes it may be said are almost always so, as the little rag that decency requires can scarcely be called cloathing; amongst half the population the wardrobe of an individual will not exceed the value, if it reaches it, of two Rupees, and thrice that amount would purchase a handsome suit; the comparative wealth or poverty of the different classes is not easily distinguishable* in their dress, nor do they display much taste for splendour, in their ornaments, which are rarely increased in

* A few marks carelessly arranged and made with the powders of sandal substitutes the intricate hieroglyphics, that on the other coast seem to denote cast.

number or value, they are generally limited to a silver pen fixed to the waist, a chain of the same metal forms a girdle, to which seals or keys are attached, the fingers are sometimes loaded with rings each having several; a knife six or eight inches long, the hilt of which is carved, invariably accompanies the pen, this is an indispensable article performing all sorts of offices, even the lower classes are never seen without one stuck in the girdle. The female ornaments are more numerous, though by no means of that complex character worn by those of the neighbouring countries, a perverted taste distends the lobe of the ear to a most extravagant size, it frequently reaching to the top of the shoulder, the apertures thus formed are filled by ponderous pendants of ivory or ebony, or by the leaf of the palmyra rolled into a circular form, they occasionally lavish much of their finery on the neck, which is sometimes observed encompassed by a collar or necklace of gold, from which a few trinkets are suspended, but the more general ornament is the Tally, which is merely a thin cotton cord, to which is affixed a small gold ornament; amongst the wealthier classes a single bracelet of the above metal is occasionally observed, this distinction is only assumed by the other sex when conferred by the chief.

Subsistence is almost entirely derived from agricultural labours, nor do the temptations of commerce attract even the wealthier classes from rural pursuits, which are most esteemed, the handicraft professions being, it has been seen, abandoned to the very lower ranks, nor does the practice of them always secure a certain livelihood, though that might be earned without the interrupted application of industry, might be concluded from the abstemious character of their diet, even that of the higher ranks knows but few delicacies, those not at all intelligible to our luxury are even disregarded by their neighbours, who decry the extreme simplicity of their taste. Conjee or Rice soup (a leaf invariably performing the office of a spoon) forms the first meal, the second consists of Rice (dry grains being very little used) their condiments are of the most ordinary kind. The pulp of the mango reduced to a paste and dried, having been spread on mats for this purpose, is amongst the best. The ordinary oil is a common substitute for ghee, but little animal food is consumed in the interior, those living near the sea in a great measure draw their support from that element. The cocoa-nut in all its shapes constitutes one of the chief articles of subsistence, and the jack, plantain, and mango,⁷ are here articles of the first necessity rather than luxuries—the kernel of the latter is

ground into flour, rice constitute the food of the lower classes for but a portion of the year, their scanty store exhausted, great variety of the yam, cultivated tuberous roots, and sago produced from a species of the palm, affords a substitute, many of the hill tribes subsist almost entirely on arrow root, and the kernels of the eendu, which having been boiled and steeped in a stream for two or three days, operations necessary to extract their poisonous qualities, are ground into flour, but the mountaineers are not alone reduced to this meagre fare, that of all the lower classes is frequently precarious, often, unwholesome and scanty; an indiscriminate appetite makes wild roots of every kind, particularly of aquatic plants, for which the Polayen is seen searching up to his neck the waters of the lake, lizards, mice, &c. contribute to supply deficiencies, nor will much be rejected by a taste to which the alligator is acceptable, many of the most inferior classes being often reduced to this revolting fare. The expence of a Nair family in tolerable circumstances will not exceed ten or twelve Rupees a month, of a Showan family probably not more than a moiety of that sum, which with a Polayen may still be reduced by half: the daily produce is generally consumed at home, butter milk diluted with water and rendered very acid by an infusion of leaves, partly aromatic, being the ordinary beverage; but they do not confine themselves entirely to so primitive a one, most classes (nor have the bramins quite escaped the imputation) indulge in the use of spirits, the temptation is great as it is so easily indulged, the quantity purchased for a few copper coins being sufficient to intoxicate, like all other natives their potations are unsocial, the harsh spirit sufficient for the purposes of their course intemperance being more calculated to produce oblivion rather than conviviality. The better ranks too, are addicted to the use of soporifics (particularly opium) a vice by no means uncommon even amongst the christians, whose pastors are not proof against its allurements; but the placid intoxication it produces is not followed by ferocity, nor do their orgies however intemperate ever end in riot. Of their domestic accomodations little can be said, it has been seen that with the better ranks their houses are objects of vanity and care, feelings that do not extend to their furniture, rude couches, and some brass culinary and household utensils appearing the only articles meriting that designation; a singular simplicity that makes every thing answer every purpose, converts the bark of the Arreka to many domestic uses.*

* Or rather the spathe or leathery covering, that encloses the fruit in its early state.

On the whole though we cannot attach any great value to the standard of their improvement, or characterize the people as deserving the reputation of great industry or pure morals, yet they are superior to their neighbours in many things that exalt one class above another; it must nevertheless be allowed that the relative condition of master and servants is here more unfavorably contrasted, and that with equal or greater resources than them, the condition of the lower classes is generally inferior to the corresponding ranks of the neighbouring countries, and their indigence is rendered more striking by the comparative affluence of the higher orders, who agreeable to their measure of it, have a considerable share of enjoyment, their distinction might perhaps be partly traced to an apathetical disposition, that renders them indifferent to higher enjoyments, but perhaps there would be more justice in ascribing it to the tyranny of cast, an indelible line here separates the different ranks, in no part of India are those unnatural divisions so strongly marked, so anxiously regarded, or their degrading or enobling association in such activity.* The enumeration of fifty two casts shews the divided character of the population, but the scale of precedency is still more minutely graduated, each cast being split into various subdivisions, which though serving to divide, as well as distinguish it would be difficult to follow through all their intricacies. It is however observed that the feelings they involve, have been somewhat assuaged. The bramin less deified, permits the Nair to approach him, while he in turn amongst other concessions, submits to the christian being seated in his presence, nor dare he now sacrifice the Polayen to his caprice, or indignation, but the implacability of those prejudices must be infinitely more relaxed, before the lower classes, the most valuable part of the population, and on whom depends the whole productive industry of the country, can rise above their present state of debasement. Their condition (though improved and improving) excites our pity, often our disgust, but above all the situation of the Prædial slaves most deserves commiseration, as at once amongst the most usefulest, suffering a wretchedness scarcely susceptible of aggravation.

Bramins—Though divided by cast the population have a great similarity of manners, but formed of such a medley, an outline of its component parts may be desirable. The Bramins to the south of Quilon are called Poties,† in the more northern parts

* The number of paces to which each may approach the other, is minutely defined, a step beyond entails pollution and punishment.

† They will be spoken of generally under the latter denomination.

Nomboories, a denomination confined to those of Suddikerala.* The Alwanchayree Tambrakal is viewed as the chief of the Nomboories, though he possesses no distinct jurisdiction over them. In the scale of precedency the Adhienmars, or the descendants of eight principal families who once ruled Kerala, hold the first place. Pad is a title bestowed on superior rank, sanctity, or learning. Those who have performed the Ootram are termed Akkaterypad; skill in the offices of priesthood, obtains the appellation of Buttaderypad, while those who have achieved the sacrifice of the Yoigam, merit the title of Chomadreepad, and enjoy the privilege of wearing large gold ear-rings, those having control in temples are called Muttumadda Putter, if Poties, Tundreadhein. The learned in the Vaidans, Sandies, or officiating priests, there are Sunneesees of various appellations, ranks, and shades of difference, though such a life does not here imply the observance of any very inconvenient austerities. There is too considerable distinction of property, but the Nomboories are not split into sects, each deity has an equal share in their homage, nor do their opinions or practice, except in some frivolous observances, differ from the bramins of the other coast, they are said to be lax in the performance of their religious duties, at least less scrupulous than formerly, they deplore but don't amend this degeneracy of faith and zeal; which the Putters over whom they claim a superiority, (denied by them) ascribe to the malediction of Saancara Atchayrai. They have no Agrarams, nor do they ever live segregated, loving retirement, they court the seclusion afforded by the vallies of the interior. Their Illums, large and commodious, canopied in foliage, and seated on the bank of some river or stream, breathe an air of undisturbed repose, and evinces a considerable share of affluence. Those not possessing property, it will have been seen, derive an ample subsistence from the religious establishments: this they receive as a right not as charity. Pursee Rama, having conferred on the Nomboories, all temporal as well as spiritual authority, they still profess to claim the sole sovereignty of the soil, though their possessions have been considerably reduced. At an earlier period they held unbounded sway over the minds of the people, nor has this pernicious influence yet entirely ceased, but originating in the degradation of the lower orders it must decline as they improve. The Nairs are still in some measure their slaves, † at least when holding or superintending their

* The name has some reference to their having been (as the legend says) emigrants.

† In addressing the bramins they style themselves so, and are called generally by them Adhienmars or slaves.

lands, but it is an easy servitude in which they are held by interest and spell of cast, rather than law, somewhat aristocritical in their notions, they are shy and rather avoid than seek intercourse with strangers, but the reserve of ceremony once worn away their manners are courteous, but chargeable with the refinements of dissimulation and guile, they cannot be regarded as forming any index to their disposition. They have no influence in civil affairs, and with some trifling exceptions are not engaged in them, but their sanctity not appearing offended by the profane duties of public life, this abstinence cannot be ascribed to a voluntary forbearance. Prejudice prevents them from engaging in any useful profession, some are employed in the performance of religious offices, but the greatest part indulge in indolent repose, and if an easy voluptuous life with nothing to ruffle its uniformity be happiness, they enjoy a large share of it, it is not even interrupted by the cultivation of literature, their erudition rarely exceeds a very imperfect knowledge of sanscrit, they however speak a pure language; of their recreations it is difficult to speak, the vain science of divination serves sometimes to divert their lassitude. Though holding familiar intercourse with other bramins, they will not intermarry with them, and scrupulous as to their alliances decline extending them even to the Poties. Polygamy is nearly unknown, the eldest son of a Nomboorie family alone marries: a restriction imposed probably to prevent the diminution of dignity by the increase of numbers; or that of wealth by too minute divisions of property, should the eldest son have no issue the second marries and so on till the object be attained. In consequence of this custom, the females often enter into wedlock at a very advanced age, or die in a state of celibacy, but so tenacious are they of their observances that the corpse undergoes all the ceremonies of marriage; an Arria Putter performing the part of bridegroom in those posthumous nuptials. Numerous daughters are considered as a misfortune, their dower and other necessary expenditure consuming a large share of the family property. In the selection of a wife, female mediation directs the choice as the veil of concealment is not removed till after marriage, when it is too late to profit by the discovery; but cupidity would seem the only passion necessary to be gratified, as a stipulation on the score of dower always forms the most important article of the treaty, it is unnecessary to repeat the detail of ceremonies that follow its ratification, and equally so to describe those of their obsequies. Voluntary cre-

mation of the widow on the funeral pile seems unknown here,* at least they do not now aspire to the honor of this superstitious, sanguinary, but generous devotion, for which is substituted the easier ceremony of consuming the Tally. Nothing can exceed the precautions taken by the Nombories, to seclude their women from the gaze of profane eyes, guarded with more than moslim jealousy, their nearest relations are interdicted communication: even brothers and sisters are separated in early age. The women are known by no other term than Unterjennem or Agotamar, which may be translated the concealed, their seclusion is more strict than that of a cloister, if venturing to some neighbouring temple, rolled in cloth, fortified by a large umbrella, and preceded by a female servant, who commands the absence of all intruders, they escape the view of the curious. Where chastity is so strictly guarded, a breach of it is not easy, instances of frailty however are not unknown. If the crime be committed with a man of a lower rank, both offenders escheating to the Circar, are sold as slaves to some of the inferior classes, in earlier times it was visited by still further severities. But the indignation it excites is in no measure extended to similar transgressions of the other sex, a ready casuistry reconciles them to the practice of forming connections with the Nair women, a Nomborie being supposed to honor the family from which he chooses a paramour, finds one in every house. The Nombories are comparatively fair, well formed, and their women said to be distinguished by their beauty,—their costume except in being somewhat less scanty differs in nothing from that of the Nairs, the privilege of wearing gold bracelets is the only peculiarity in their ornaments, their cleanliness deserves commendation, and might be ranked as almost a secondary virtue, did not much of it arise from superstition.

Numbuddy, Mootoodda, Aghapaud, Ovel, and Eelieadoo are inferior casts of Nombories, each forming different ranks; they are the descendants of bramins who were degraded from the station they once held for various transgressions at some remote date; tradition has handed down the story of their disgrace, but it is unnecessary to repeat the tale.

Of Foreign Bramins—The prospect of gain and the high veneration experienced by the bramin cast in Travancore, attracts crowds from the surrounding countries. The Putters trace the date of their first emigrations to the period of the earliest Kabetry Princes,

* Although it would appear very common on the other side of the Ghauts as is seen, in the number of rude monuments commemorating this event in Shenecottah.

when their numbers were few, their reputation high, the increase of one, has proportionally deteriorated the other, but the influence of superstition still enables them to hold a place in opinion, that their own equivocal reputation could never deserve. It is unnecessary to minutely enumerate the various classes of foreign bramins that resort here. The Imbrantries from Toolonaad, (Canara) and Patters from the Tirnavelly, Tanjore, Coimbetoor are the most numerous. The latter are collected under Summooghum Muddem which serve as a point of union; they are seventeen in number, and scattered throughout the country, each individual attaches himself to one thus forming little communities or corporations, the Muddem has generally some funds of its own, but all belonging to contribute to its support, and the property of any of its members who may die without heir or intestate devolves to it. Some of the foreign bramins remain permanently, but their abode in most cases is temporary, as they believe that dying in Malliallum exposes them to the risk of transmigrating in the body of an ass; a fate averted by a timely retreat. They are chiefly engaged in the pursuits of commerce, which leads them frequently during their residence to visit the other coast; they traverse all parts of the interior finding a subsistence at every Pagoda, or Ootuperra, and this indulgence they are careful liberally to avail themselves of, the object of all is to accumulate a certain property with which to retire to their families by whom they are rarely accompanied, they are indefatigable in the pursuit of this end, which their singular perseverance and economy generally enables them to accomplish. Ambitious of office they often attain it, but are generally seen performing some of the minor duties of the temples, often in still meaner occupations, frequently of a secular kind, but nearly half are merchants, trading in cloth (of which they once had the exclusive privilege) and grain. The Imbrantrie has some amiable qualities, and is by no means remarkable for the wily duplicity that distinguishes the Putter, but it is superfluous to draw the character of this class of men; emigration has not enlarged the sphere of their virtues, and they may be considered as ranking greatly below the Nomboories in every estimable quality.

Kshetries—The introduction of the Kshetries into Malliallum appears to have originated with the dynasty of Sharren Permaul, the most eminent are called Tumbeemara, or Raujah Coomar Tevooampaud, denotes those of lesser dignity, there is some difference in point of rank and privilege, the Saumunder class though belonging to the Kshetrie tribe are of secondary estimation. It is superfluous to detail

their minute peculiarities, their general character and customs so much resemble those of the Nairs. As with them the manner in which the race is continued gives a wide scope to the wandering sensibilities of both sexes. The choice of the female is confined to the Nomboorie tribe, but restricted in quality not quantity, a fickleness that readily changes its object finds abundant room for selection. The offspring of this connection belong to the Kshetrie cast, the males are debarred forming any union with the women of their own tribe, but such being considered a high distinction amongst those of the first rank, of Nairs, bewildered amidst profusion, the Kshetrie only experience the embarrassment attended on so wide a choice. The progeny springing from such an union, ranks with the Saumunder cast. The Kshetrie abstain from animal food, aspire to consideration from the number and variety of their ablutions, and emulate the bramins in their theoretical piety, probably practical vice; which however is partly redeemed by the presence of some virtues; most of the petty chiefs are of this tribe, but with few exceptions none belonging to it possesses either authority or wealth.

Umblawassies—The Umblawassies hold a rank immediately below the bramins, to which tribe it is said they once belonged, they still continue with the exception of the Varriar, and Mauroyen to wear the sacerdotal insignia. The Umblawassies, though numbers of them are engaged in agricultural pursuits, are generally dedicated to the service of the temples, (in fact they are the Decadassee of the other coast, but much more numerous than the correspondent class) they differ in nothing from the Nairs except that the cast is kept up, as with the Kshetries through the intervention of bramin's assistance. The women of it being solely devoted to that race, while the offspring of an Umblawassie by a Nair woman becomes a Shooder. They are of various denominations, the Shakkaiur performs as dancer in the Koothu Umbalums of the Pagoda; the employment of Pooshagum consists in collecting flowers to decorate the Idol, the deities of the Poosharodu are of an inferior nature. The Varriar, Nangiaar, and Mauroyen, compose the chief musicians belonging to the Pagodas; sound the chank in announcing the approach of Nomboorie Saniassie; profess the science of astrology &c. The last mentioned holds the lowest rank, to his other vocations adding the performance of some menial offices about the dead.

Nairs—The Nairs may be considered as constituting the soul of the population, they are all of the Shooder tribe, but split into various classes. The Velloymah hold the first rank, they are only seen

in the more northern parts, where the Keereeathee class are also more generally found. The Illacurra and the three succeeding ranks predominate throughout Travancore, the above term signifies one belonging to the house of a Nomboorie, and may probably denote the state of dependance in which they were retained by the bramins; while that of Shroobacurra applies more particularly to those who were held in vassalage by the chiefs. Paudamungalum, and Tamulpaudum, (appellations denoting those who were under the controul of temples) constitute the fifth and sixth classes. Pulicham are the bearers of the Nomboories or higher ranks, but performing this office for no others. The Shacouller, or Vellacaoodoo, are those following the profession of oilmongers. The Poolicay, or Andem Nairs, are potters. Vellathudum or Errinkolay, Purriarrie or Veilakathura, are washermen, and barbers, of the bramins, and Nairs, but will only act as such for them. Aggatuchurnaver, are those who perform some menial offices for the former. Yeddachayray Nair, or Yerma Shaudra, are cowherds. Cullatu Nair, or Velloor Nair, are empiricks. Yahbary, merchants. Oodattoo Nair, boatmen, Attycoorchy, or Sideear, a low cast who perform the necessary offices about the dead. There are four principal classes of artificers, silver smiths, braziers, black smiths, carpenters, who constitute (tho' separate in themselves) a distinct body, and are the lowest rank of (if they can be included amongst) Shuders. Many minor subdivisions might be added; each of the above orders are still further graduated and discriminated by various shades. It must be observed, however, that those belonging to each particular class, are by no means confined to the vocation, some of them would seem to point out, and the profession must be generally considered as rather serving to denote a distinct rank than indicating an occupation; this remark it will be seen is alike applicable to the several divisions of artists. The males will eat (and with them the circumstance is important) with those belonging to their own cast, though somewhat lower than them in rank, but they do not carry their condescension very far; the females are quite inexorable on this point, and in many instances even decline using the vessel that has been touched by a person of inferior* (however slight the difference) order.

* Their fastidiousness is occasionally inconsistent. The bramins receiving as food a confection made by the Concanes, as the Nairs do a sweetmeat made by the christians.

The character* of the Nair, in some points rises above that of his neighbours, but it is made up of anomalies, a highmindedness, sensibly alive to personal insult, is united to an insidious duplicity, a rapacity difficult to satisfy or satiate, a more than equivocal integrity at least when in office, and perhaps only then, as they exhibit no particular distrust to each other, and an ingenuity of falsehood that can affirm or deny with equal facility; but there are not wanting qualities to modify and soften many of those darker shades; in their intercourse with each other they are mild, perhaps amiable, nor are they by any means strangers to domestic or social virtues. They possess a considerable share of intelligence, though probably they have more subtilty than ability in business. To their equals their demeanour is courteous, the degradation of the lower orders will account for, and partially extenuate their arrogance towards them, but if haughty, the feeling at least is free from any mixture of cruelty. Though having no sentiments of martial independence, (indeed their virtues as well as vices have a tincture of effeminacy) they have the reputation of being brave, but their courage is of the usual Hindoo kind, rather apathetical than active. Life supported with patience is quitted without regret, and when forfeited to offended laws, is resigned with an unequalled degree of stoicism. Though capable of exertions, they are prone to indolence, a listless disposition satisfied with indigent care, supplying no stimulus for exertion, as in other parts of Malliallum; they must gradually give way at least in point of property, before the superior industry of some of the inferior ranks. All the servants of Government, are taken from this class, they are particularly solicitous of office, and it has been seen how well disposed they are to abuse it, in those cases, they are more profligate in acquisition, than lavish in consumption, and perhaps may generally deserve the character rather of economy than prodigality, except those on such occasions almost all live on their lands, the latter classes have the enjoyment of much leisure. If the business of agriculture require their attendance, their employment is more of inspection than aid.

The higher orders of Nairs, are known under the collective term of Maudumby, or Prubbukamars, designations under which are comprised various others; the most common are Kurtaos, Elluidum, Kymulla, Kurupu, Mainawen, Pulle (the two latter are also used as professional offices) in which there is a nice gradation of

* It bears except in the particular that requires the fidelity of the men very remarkable resemblance to that given of the Natchlez, a South American tribe.

pre-eminence, those denominations were originally allied to some authority, and still command respect, but serve now to distinguish rank, rather than influence or property, with regard to which they are pretty much on a level, they are hereditary, were often bestowed on merit, but more frequently obtained by purchase, they conferred some privileges amongst them, that of having a parasol borne over the head,* wearing a golden bracelet, being preceded by a particular kind of lamp, or having the writing instruments worn at the waist, made of gold, those were also ensigns of office, but a wider latitude being now allowed to their assumption, they have of course lost much of their value. Proprietors of land are always known by the title belonging to their estate, or rather its designation is invariably used as a prenomem.

The state of society on part of this coast is in some measure peculiar to it, at least the economy of a Nair family differs from that of almost any other race of Hindoos. The uncle, or as he is styled Taruwuttee Kurnaven, is the head of it, his eldest sister the mistress. A family of brothers and sisters generally live together, and in most instances with a degree of harmony that might serve for imitation. The sons of the latter are invariably the heirs, and nepotism substitutes the place of parental attachment. The bastardy of the children, and ascendancy of the women, that in Malabar so offended the prejudices, and shocked the morality of the Sultan, would have here given equal room for his reprehension. They are less passive, have more influence in society than most other parts of India, and are infinitely less restrained in their intercourse with it, they have a quick understanding, are said to display great aptitude in acquirement, but a capability of reading the Ramayen, is in most instances the summit of their attainments, they are often rich, frequently possess landed property, the details of which they manage with great ability. The commerce of the sex, is regulated by a singular system whose cause is effaced in the antiquity that has sanctioned the practice. Its real nature and remote consequences is too intricate a labyrinth to be readily developed, but the subject is sufficiently curious to deserve mention, and such must be received as the reason of its introduction. The young Nair girl, at a very early age, undergoes the form of having the Tally tied, this with the wealthy is an expensive ceremony, (a crowd of guests being feasted for some days with rural

* The use of this article is common and necessary, but the honor consists in its being carried. Every Nair, of respectability is seen followed by a boy who performs this office and also bears his brass vessel and beetle apparatus.

profusion) but indispensable with all, he who personates the bridegroom receives a certain recompense, any of equal or superior rank are eligible, but a number and variety of minute combinations† of which the detail may be postponed are required in the selection. The astrologer decides those points, and fixes the auspicious moment for performance; receiving the Tally though a requisite, is a mere form, and conveys no claim to a more intimate connection, altho' on the death of either, the survivor practises those ceremonies that would be observed, were the union of a more material nature. Such is the premature ripeness of the climate, that at the age of eleven or twelve years a girl has reached maturity, the moment of its attainment is announced to the neighbourhood by a loud chorus of the women, who have collected to celebrate the occasion, a rude minstrelsy, repeated at intervals for several successive days, suitors early present themselves, and the acceptance of a lover is signified by receiving from him a Moondoo, some brass utensils and other furniture, also annually clothes, oil, &c. &c. amounting in ordinary cases to about forty or fifty Rupees, four times that sum would be a handsome establishment, which scarcely five in a hundred could afford, and among the lower classes half of it may be considered near the medium. This union is termed *Vissivassum*, a great misnomer, as it in no measure binds either party, and perhaps we should overrate their morality in supposing that one such union in ten continued for life, and where the connection is of such stability, it is a matter of understanding more than enactment. The mistress of a Nair, generally resides in her brother's house, having no authority in that of her paramour, by whom she is visited at intervals, but he in the mean time, must not be too scrupulous in guarding her against the encroachments of interloping competitors. Hearts equally capacious as susceptible, are not always engrossed by one lover, if too fastidious in admitting an associate, he is discarded, as the female enjoys in some measure the power of repudiating, a tempting prerogative, that the levity with which they bestow or transfer their favors, would prove was too often exercised, but prompted by grosser seductions, and indefatigable in their loves, they are represented as inviting or enduring from mercenary motives, an endless succession of paramours, but the imputation appears too exclusive in its obloquy, as they would seem to be the sport of the same caprice, with which they are re-

† The parties must have been born under the same Planet. The astrologer with the high orders of the village Register with careful accuracy the moment of birth.

proached. Held by so loose a tenure, it might be supposed their frailties would not create much domestic confusion, but jealousy is by no means unknown, that amiable passion producing even here tragical events, although it must be allowed they do not often permit it to trouble their harmony. Chastity not necessary to reputation is but lightly valued; its infraction is regarded more as a failing than a fault, and only as a crime, when the intercourse has been beyond the pale of their own particular cast, both sexes, must confine their amours within this limit, the severest penalties being announced against its infringements; except as has been seen in instances of the higher classes, who on this occasion readily sacrifice their scruples; cast sanctifies every immorality. The bramins of all descriptions are courted with a caressing homage, the most obdurate virtue could scarcely resist, nor do previous engagements oppose any barriers to their success, as the Nair compelled to resign his mistress to more holy embraces, retires on their approach, not venturing however, strong his claim, or forcible his attachment, to interpose between their enjoyments.

This system though more particularly belonging to the manners of the Nairs, serves as a precedent in some measure to most of the other classes, at least marriage in the ordinary acceptation of the term, is nearly unknown amongst them; their union is regulated by the inclination of the parties, and a mistaken choice soon rectified, leaves Hymen here no scope for the exercise of his malice. Amongst some of the classes of Shewans it is not uncommon for the female, to confine her favors to the brothers of a family; this practice which is regarded as strengthening the ties of fraternity, is also common amongst the cast of Artisans, in the southern parts it is however decried, by the superior orders, whose practice it may have been observed, is of a still more reprehensible complexion, indeed they, but particularly the bramins, are represented as displaying an ingenuity of licentiousness difficult to relate, or amplify, the lower classes, cooled by poverty into comparative continence, are in some measure shielded from the contagion of their profligate example, but the intercourse amongst all ranks, is too promiscuous, and the feeling that leads to it (here more an appetite than a passion) less restrained than in the neighbouring countries is productive of great irregularities, but it is at least a decorous vice, that never obtrudes itself on the observation, and is by no means accompanied by any corresponding corruption of manners, however repugnant to our ideas of propriety there are not wanting circumstances of extenuation,

nor should we be too readily disposed severely to arraign their immoralities, at least our reprobation will be mitigated by knowing that they are rather ascribable to the institutions, than any particular vice of the people. The Nair women cannot be said to be prolific, although it has been seen that the chance is not confined to one. On the birth of a child, if a boy, the same musical celebration that has been noticed is repeated, the enumeration of the various subsequent ceremonies, and those observed on particular occasions during its early years may be postponed. The uncle charges himself with their performance, he alone is regarded as protector of his sister's progeny. The father rarely contributes to their support, shares but little of their regard, and if known is soon forgotten, the mother however enjoys a more than ordinary share of veneration and influence. The Nair should burn their dead, but when poor they are necessitated to bury them, the corpse or ashes are always entombed within the garden, south of, but contiguous to the house; they do not exhibit that scenick sorrow displayed by their eastern neighbours, but if their grief is less unruly, its sobriety must not be ascribed to any coldness of domestic affection; it were tedious as unnecessary further to pursue the detail of their other customs and ceremonies, which only differ in some minute particulars from those common to the other portions of the population.

Various Classes of Shooders of the race common to the other Coast—It will be seen that the Paundee Shooders, (for such is their general designation) constitute a large portion of the population, indeed they may be considered as forming an original portion of the permanent inhabitants of Shenkotta, and the more southern districts, but those found in the more southern parts of the country, contribute greatly to swell their amount, in the latter instance they are chiefly emigrants, (or their descendants) from the eastern coast.—Numbers possess lands and permanently remain, as indeed do all that can obtain a livelihood, a large portion are seen as traders, artificers, peons, or servants &c. &c. The character of this class is too familiarly known to require here any illustration, Those composing it retain here all their ancient habits, and continue to form a distinct body.

Mussulmen—As do the few Pautan Mussulmen found in the country; they chiefly reside in the southern districts, and are for the most part the descendants of a body of Pautan sepoy, that swelled the military rabble retained by the latter princes of Travancore;

rather disposed to arms, than arts, a more peaceful rule has reduced them to a considerable degree of indigence.

Lubbees—The Jona, Mapulay or Lubbees, inferior classes of Mahomedans, constitute a more important and valuable part of the population, the former nearly double in point of number, are found generally in the vicinity of the coast, the latter of whom numbers are emigrant from Paundy are more in the interior. Many of the last class lead a sort of migratory life, sharing their residence between this and the other coast, with which their mercantile habits lead them to keep up a constant intercourse. The Jona Mapulay, (or as they are known in the southern parts Maiters) though of foreign lineage being descended from the first Arabs, whom commerce attracted to Malliallum, must be considered as more particularly belonging to it. Maslins in creed, they are almost Hindoos in person, and in point of character unite many, nearly all the vices of both. To the violence that too often characterizes the professors of their faith, they add a patient inveteracy and dissimulation, ready to conceal, prompt to execute its purpose. They are much disposed to traffic, but not averse to agriculture, are intelligent, indefatigable, unscrupulous, possess some wealth, have considerable landed property, and are gradually rising on the supineness of the other classes. Stubborn and turbulent, they require to be held with a strong hand, but though troublesome, their superior perseverance in industry renders them productive subjects.

Concanies—Which may also be said of the Concanies, who have all their habits of unwearied diligence without any of their vices. This class came originally from Goa, having fled on the conquest of that place, first to Callicut, thence here, where they found a toleration denied them by the bigotry of the Portuguese, and escaped the rapacity of the Zazorine. They possess some lands, but are devoted to commerce in all its shapes, and deserve the merit of at least a very tolerable share of integrity and fair dealing. A series of centuries has in no measure altered their character, or diminished the force of the institution. They are divided into three classes, the two first are separated only by some trifling distinctions, the latter the Jeedeenmars are the servants or slaves of both.

Christians—The origin of those ancient believers, who appear to have existed from the earliest ages of the church, is a subject, that might deserve enquiry; and the singularity of so large a population of christians unadulterated by proselytism, is sufficient to attract the attention, but so much is already known, or rather so

many conjectures already offered regarding them, that little of novelty can be added; however curious a very minute investigation would necessarily be difficult, as the people know but little of their own history, and possess few documents that could illustrate it. Agreeably to the loose tradition, that still holds amongst the Nazarenes, christianity owes its introduction into this part of the Peninsula to the Apostle Saint Thomas, who entered Malliallum in 52 A. D. He established seven churches, ordained two persons of consideration from Nomboorie families, and took other measures to promote the practice of the divine doctrines he preached; returning towards the eastern coast, from this successful mission, he underwent the last honors of christianity. The martyrdom of the Apostle first relaxed, and then almost extinguished, the zeal of his converts, who rapidly sunk into their old superstitions, their numbers and hopes were after a lapse of nearly two centuries reduced to eight families. At this eventful period A. D. 345 the Patriarchs of Antioch, who exercised a nominal sway over this distant congregation, despatched under the guidance of Kennai Thomay, a wealthy merchant, a bishop, some clergymen; and four hundred and seventy two christian families to its relief; they were viewed with kindness by the reigning prince Sharum Permaul, who established them at Kodungaloor, readily protected their belief, and conferred on them some valuable immunities, and honorary privileges. So reasonable a succour raised the drooping spirits of the remnants of the faithful, thus patronized they rapidly increased in power and number. Antioch supplied an uninterrupted succession of bishops, who governed in spiritual concerns, till the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498. This people, who without the excuse, emulated the fanaticism of the early Mahomedans, tried every means of intimidation and persuasion to restore those heretics to the true faith, when their eloquence failed, force carried the necessary conviction, and the synod of Uddiumpayroor, under the guidance of A. Lexis de Menzes, Archbishop of Goa, dictated the faith of the Syrians. The union of the churches continued from 1598 to 1653 when it was dissolved: an event partly hastened by the violence of the Portuguese to their unwilling converts, who no longer able to endure such a domination, vindicated the ancient creed, assembled a council at Aullungaad, and elevated an archdeacon (a descendant of one of the earliest ones consecrated by Saint Thomas) to the dignity of bishop. We shall not be surprised at the Syrians revolting from a faith that had been imposed by violence, but it is curious that amidst the persecutions to which they were subject, we never find

them rising above remonstrance. The largest body of the Syrians however still remained attached to their new faith, nor was the discord that reigned at this period amongst the Syrian pastors, calculated to reclaim the remainder of the apostate flock, now so completely alienated that it seems most improbable they will ever return to their ancient belief. The people however are of a temper that might without much difficulty, be brought to acquiesce in the reunion, but their priests who view the most distant approach to it with alarm, would oppose with all their influence such a reformation.* A Code drawn up by the Syrians in 985 A. D. still continues to regulate the religious affairs of the Syrians, which their Metropolitan superintends. The connection with Antioch having ceased, this dignity has become hereditary, the nephew succeeds, celebrity being a necessary observance. The vicar of Veerapolly, or rather vicar general de propoganda fide at Rome, holds jurisdiction over a part of the Romo Syrian and Latin christians, another portion but more particularly the Catholic christians of the coast, are under the spiritual controul of the bishop of Cranganore, or as he is often styled vicar general of Malabar. This prelate is nominated by the archbishop of Goa, but his jurisdiction in no way extends to the other congregations. The Syrians may amount to about thirty or thirty five thousand souls,† the Romo Syrians may be estimated at perhaps double that amount, the Roman catholics composing the remainder, the rites of the Syrian creed are performed in 55 churches, 64 are dedicated to the Romo Syrians' form of worship; 182 consecrated to that of the Roman catholic, (Latin Ritual) making a total of 301‡ churches, a proportion greater probably than in most European countries, and one that would indicate a wealth and devotion now unknown; the numbers belonging to each church are of course various, on the average each congregation would amount to 372 souls. Christianity is fully acknowledged by the chief autho-

* The Raneer not long since directed the restoration of some churches originally Syrian to that congregation, however just the measure may have been, it created some alarm amongst the Romo Syrians, some of whose pastors being rather turbulent on the occasion, it was found necessary to admonish.

† It has not been found possible to ascertain the number belonging to each particular sect.—The total amount of the christian population in Travancore and Cochin is 155693, to this amount may be added about 10,000 as the probable number of the christians in the Company's territory south of the Punnany.

‡ The total number of Syrian churches including Cochin, some within the Company's boundary, is fifty nine, those belonging to the Romo Syrians including ten in the Company's district of Chowkad amount to 101 churches, while the churches belonging to the Latin Ritual are enumerated 250, making a total of 410 churches scattered over that portion of the western coast south of the Punnany river.

rites in those countries, or whether from their justice or indifference does not appear to have been exposed to persecution. This liberal spirit seems to have been communicated to the christians (not always so much disposed to allow as require toleration) as in some instances we find the same church, belonging to different sects. It will be quite unnecessary to enumerate the articles constituting the creed, of those who here profess christianity, that of the Syrians coincides in the most material points with the tenets of the church of England; the other classes adhere to all the romish absurdities; but the ancient faith and practice of all is corrupted and disfigured by endless superstitions, of which they have borrowed largely from their pagan neighbours; external objects are necessary to kindle their devotion, the whole Pantheon of Saints and Martyrs (and they share too much of their homage) pictured in grim disorder over the walls of their churches stimulates their fancy or enlivens their zeal, and pleases (the Syrians are less indiscriminate in their devotion) a taste gratified with every sort of mummery. Their church festivals are regarded from temporal as well as religious motives and attract the devotion of numbers; many churches and shrines have a local privilege. and a pilgrimage to them is considered of great efficacy, amongst them may be particularly remarked that of St. Thomas at Mulliapur, its festival occurs at Witsuntide, when innumerable votaries crowd to present their adorations and offerings. The christians are scrupulous in observing the outward forms of worship, are constant in their attendance at church, where they display a piety, at least an attendance and decorum, that might teach a lesson to the more enlightened. The women too partake equally in this feeling, and display a similar concern in spiritual matters. Yet though interesting, religion sits lightly on them, as with the Hindoos, it is in some measure interwoven with the business of life, yet like them also it would appear to have but little influence on their morality, which cannot be rated at a very high standard. The religious establishments are still in Apostolic poverty, at least the state of depopulation* in which many of the churches are observed, would bespeak the insufficiency of the funds (sometimes diminished by the speculation of the elders) for the support of public worship. The revenue fluctuates with the condition of the flock, arising from voluntary contributions, fees on marriages, christenings, interments, &c. and Paudarum or per centage (seven and a half) on all dow-

* The religious buildings of the Syrians are observed almost always to be in a worse condition than those of the other sects, a circumstance difficult to say whether arising from a greater poverty or less active zeal.

ries—The priests have no regular salaries, but participate in those fees, and their income increased by less direct means gives them enjoyments greater than most of their parishioners; real estate cannot be devised or made over to churches, but they may purchase lands, they however possess but little of this kind of riches, have no plate or valuables whatever, or indeed in most cases other property, than the few tawdry ornaments belonging to them.

However numerous the body of christians are, the other portion of the people evince no taste for their religion, although in its present state differing more in theory than practice from their own; at an earlier period it is said that the eloquence of St. Thomas, overcame even the bigotry of the bramins: a story, the truth of which their present opinions might lead us to suspect, was it not that many families are still pointed out and retain amongst them the tradition of being their descendants. With the apostle however has vanished the power of persuasion, as in other parts of India conversion and humiliation have much the same meaning, the indolence or prudence of the Syrians, leads them rather to avoid than seek proselytes, but even the more active zeal of the catholics, fond of increasing their numbers, meets here a scanty harvest, some few of the lower classes might be allured or persuaded, (not convinced) into conversion (as a spontaneous act it scarcely ever occurs) among the higher orders it would require an infinitely greater sacrifice, in consequence their scruple is almost insuperable.

The number connected with the church has not been ascertained, but they are tolerably numerous. The clergy are at present generally ignorant, some are taught Syriac, others Latin, (the language in which the liturgy of the different sects is performed) but so imperfectly as scarcely to comprehend what they read, and dreaming over the missal or legends of the saints, they display but little inclination to enlarge the circle of their accomplishments. They have few books, the laity none, and they require first to be taught to read before their distribution could be useful. But from this state of declension, the Syrians at least have a prospect of being raised, as a college (there was previously no seminary) has lately been founded at Kotium, for their instruction; this establishment owes its origin to the liberality of the Ranee, who has handsomely endowed* it. The metropolitan is at present aided or rather directed in his superintendence of this institution by some English gentle-

* It possesses a small tract of land near, Quilon.

men Missionaries : an advantage that promises the most important results. Indeed this appears the only manner in which their disinterested exertions could be useful. Travancore and Cochin present a fair field for their pastoral labours, but it is the business of education, not conversion, inculcating a more exalted devotion that shall unite morality with christianity, must be the best mode of promoting its interests, extending their ministration by communicating instruction (the arts of superior industry would be at present the most desirable lesson) cannot fail materially to advance those of the community. The formation of some parochial school, is one step towards the attainment of so desirable an end, but to render them of any efficacy, it is necessary that the same philanthropy to which they owe their establishment, charge itself with guarding over and urging their progress.

There is a seminary at Verraupooly that educates the clergy of the Romo Syrian and latin churches, several schools are also scattered through the country, Pullypoorum, Pullingcoon, &c. &c, the establishment is under the superintendence of the vicar of the former place; but the instruction of this portion of the christian population was more particularly entrusted to missionaries of the Carmalite order, from de propaganda fide at Rome. That congregation however would appear indifferent as to the interest of this distant flock : a coldness of zeal with which it is not often chargeable. The clergy under the bishop of Cochin, have still less chance of improvement, there can scarcely be said to be any regular seminary for their education, which is in a great measure trusted to the parish priests, each of whom have one or two disciples, but no good can be hoped from such a tuition. The influence of the pastor, being often in proportion, to the ignorance of his flock, that of the Kuttanars is infinitely greater than their merits could deserve. To their spiritual, they join a limited temporal authority, arbitrating in temporal disputes, transgressions against the church are punished by reproof, or excommunication, but the road to reconciliation is not closed, this bar being removed on repentance. The practice of their pastors, however holds out a bad model for example. It must be confessed however, they have but few clerical honours to stimulate their exertions, to their ignorance they add a listless indolence, and a relaxed and pliant morality, difficult to reconcile with their precepts. They do not marry, the Syrians however are not enjoined celibacy, although they have observed it since the union of the churches, Menzes having denounced so uncanonical a custom on which (however encouraged to it) they have begun to infringe. The prohibition is pro-

ductive here of its usual irregularities, and the priesthood have the reputation of indemnifying themselves liberally for the restraint imposed on them; they are not however diverted by those pursuits from the regular observance of their religious offices; but they adhere more to the minutiae than spirit of religion, and hope to atone by the repetition of puerile ceremonies for the sacrifice of important virtues. The Syrian priests better educated, and not so turbulent, are either less dissipated or more prudent, and (though not deserving the praise of any great purity,) enjoy a higher reputation. Their garment a loose white gown or shirt, reaching to the knees; clerical tonsure and flowing beard (this only with the Syrians) distinguishes them from the people; their ceremonial vestments display a good deal of tinselled finery.

The christians it has been seen, constitute about one eighth* of the population, but they are of so varied a character, that it may be desirable to discriminate the materials of which this body is composed. The Syrian† share is split into two parts, the Pootuncoort or Syrians, Piencoor or Romo Syrians, both these classes are found scattered in the tract lying between the northern limits and Quilon, and constitute infinitely the most valuable share of the christian population. That portion of it who chiefly belong to the latin church inhabiting the coast must be ranked greatly below the Syrians; they consist in a great measure of Moocoos, or fishermen, whose ancestors, the Portuguese extending their religion with their power, have forced or persuaded into christianity. The Dutch may have been more judicious in its promotion, they at least have been less violent or less zealous, having made but few converts, and it is only in the district of Agust Eshwur, that we find a large protestant congregation: converts from the Shanours. They are under the spiritual direction of an English Missionary, as also are the few of that particular creed found in the vicinity of Allepey.

The Nassarenes (the Syrians claim and deserve the high rank) are superior to any natives of India who profess christianity, they are of a mild tractable disposition, ignorant but susceptible of improvement, and free from prejudice, might perhaps in time be taught (could such an object be desirable) to adopt our manners, to which however theirs at present does not make the slightest approximation.

* But with reference to the extent of country, in which they are found they bear a much larger proportion.

† They are collectively known by the term Maapulays or Nassarene (Nazarines).

‡ In allusion to some distinction as to the elements used in taking the sacrament.

Partially at least free from the prevarications that characterizes the Nairs, they have an infinitely franker deportment, and seem capable of a more lasting attachment than them, if they have less capacity their greater integrity might argue the possession of superior virtues. Peaceable and valuable subjects, they return obedience for toleration and protection, nor would it appear they ever evinced symptoms of uneasiness at the control of the Nairs; accustomed to their pretensions, they willingly submit to their ascendancy: a passiveness that does not accord with the martial spirit they are said to have possessed, but of which the character now exhibits as few remains, as their condition does traces of the higher consideration they are represented to have held at a remoter date. Whatever may have been their former situation, they at present rank below the Nairs, in estimation, but they are not subject to the humiliation that so often attaches to the profession of christianity in Asiatic countries. The Syrians are much disposed to commerce, but they are generally seen as cultivators, some possess considerable property, they are laborious from necessity, and to their industry many of the finest districts owe their fertility. There is little to indicate the gradations of society amongst them. Turragan is a distinction conferred on a few of the principal men, but the rank carries with it no authority, and but little influence. Their domestic ceremony need only be incidentally noticed, unlike the Nairs, the rights of filiation are fully acknowledged amongst them. The women are free from any sort of restraint, a singularity belonging almost peculiarly to this part of India. Marrying if possible at an early age, they are not chargeable with the dissolute manners of the Nairs, as regards the commerce of the sexes. Like the Nombories the bride must bring a dower, which as also with them always forms an important preliminary in every connubial treaty, for passion has but little influence in dictating the union, this custom however has not the effect of frequently imposing celibacy on the females, whose relations consider it a duty to promote their marriage; the solemnities common to this occasion are performed in the church, always on sunday, and particular periods of the year are considered propitious. It is unnecessary to describe the ceremonies as they do not materially differ from those observed by Europeans, except only that the Tally is the symbol of union. The different sects do not often intermarry; divorces are unknown, as the church interposes its authority to reconcile family feuds—widows are permitted to remarry after the lapse of a year—children are baptized (all have scriptural names) on the 13th day. They lay great stress on consecra-

ted burial. This feeling leads them to make charnel houses of their churches, almost all of which exhale a sepulchral odour, nor is the practice likely to be abolished as it is found profitable. The cost of interment is graduated by the distance from the altar, and the solicitude evinced to be laid near this sanctuary, would indicate that they thought it their best chance for salvation.

The exterior distinctions, amongst the Syrians, are subject to much variety, but carry with them few traces of the mixture of a foreign origin. They are generally of a better stature, and a more coarse and robust form than the Nairs, nor do we scarcely ever among the women, observe the delicate features and flexible figure common to them; some few of the more opulent however, are extremely fair, have a fine and more than ordinary marked expression of countenance. Cleanliness does not hold a place amongst their virtues, the dress of the men has nothing peculiar in it, they generally go bare headed, their black luxuriant but greasy locks floating to the wind, or tied in a knot behind. The female costume is more decorous than that of the Nairs, altho' they display no reluctance to copy their nudity. It consists of a cloth (white is the invariable colour) wound round the middle, fixed in several folds at the hip, and reaching to the knees forms a petticoat; the person is concealed by a jacket on which some finery is occasionally lavished by embroidering the seams; it falls loosely below the waist, the sleeves covering the arm to the wrist. They often however dispense with this garment for a less cumbersome vesture; necklaces of venetians, a cross, and silver rings round the ancle compose the ornaments of the more wealthy.

It will not be desired further to pursue the detail of their manners, which bear in much of their minutiae a resemblance to those of the Nairs, to whom (more especially the Syrians) in the aggregate of personal qualities they are not perhaps inferior; ameliorating the condition of the christian population generally is an object of enlightened benevolence, and it might be expected equally from our sympathy, generosity and interest. They of course have shared in the equal justice which a better government has dispensed during later times to the other classes, and since a judicious policy has within the past few years, peculiarly distinguished them, they have been introduced to office. This innovation has contributed greatly to soften the prejudices of the higher orders, may be attended with still more important results, and as uniting their interests, must fix their attachment to a domination that has raised them from the oppression

which they shared in common with lower classes of the community to a respectable rank in it. Of the other portion of the inhabitants who profess christianity, it is superfluous to speak, they belong to the very lower orders, and present no peculiarities to discriminate them.

Shogamars—The Shogamars, or Eleevars, are not of the Shuder tribe. To the south this class is known as Shanars, to the north as Teeans: denominations carrying with them but slight shades of distinction, all may be considered as applicable to the same race; they are found throughout the country but in large numbers along the coast, performing in fact the chief horticultural labours of the cocoa-nut plantations, and employed in the various manufacture of the products. Always engaged in the more active operations of rural economy, they never hold office except of the lowest kind, in fact are rarely seen in any character than ryots of some description or other, martyrs to the distinction of casts, the higher order treat them with supercilious scorn. Too poor to invite their rapacity, they hold them in bondage, at least their domineering temper awes them into a servitude mitigated to be sure when contrasted to that of the Prædial Slaves. During late years this class has been raised in some measure from the state of degradation in which they were held, the repeal of an oppressive poll tax from which the lowest poverty could not exempt, the abrogation of the Oologoo or forced labour, and many vexations inhibitions and restraints, may have taught them their own rights and given them confidence to claim them. There is of course considerable variety in their condition and character, towards the south, they draw their subsistence from the palmyra, and enjoy some local advantages. The Shanars, bear a resemblance to the people of the other coast, and are not distinguished by that passive ductility of temper, that marks the character of those belonging to the more northern part. In so large a body some will possess considerable property, but the numbers of even the moderately affluent are exceedingly limited. All are allowed to hold lands and gardens, but they labour not, possession constituting the principal share of the under tenantry, paying a rent that allows but little profit. In fact their soil rarely ensures them more than a hut, affording an insufficient shelter, and permits them to subsist or rather starve, throughout the year on cocoanut and fish. They are not remarkable as wanting intelligence, are indolent, harmless, tractable, and if deserving the charge of a timid pusillanimity, it must be ascribed to the state of vassalage in which they have been so long held. There are some distinctions of rank, each village has a Tundan, or principal of its

Eeluvan population. The office is hereditary attended by some privileges, and exercises a domestic authority, which is extended over all the lower classes—to it belongs the investigation and decision of all controversies connected with caste expelling from which, and imposing small fines, is the limit of its power. The Tundan presides at all ceremonies, but the Punniken, a character of subordinate dignity, is more particularly their priest, his spiritual aid being necessary on all such occasions, while his secular exertions are directed to the education of the village youth.

Kunneans and Panans—The Kunneans, and Panans, are merely divisions of the Elewur tribe, the former derive the appellation from the science of divination, which some of their sect profess. The Kunnean, fixes the propitious moment for every undertaking and hysterical affections being supposed the visitation of some troublesome spirit his incantations are believed alone able to subdue it. Numbers are employed in making the chattries or parasols so generally used here. The manufacture belonging peculiarly to them, but agriculture is their more ordinary pursuit. As it is also that of the Panans, this class claims equality with the former one, from it are taken the musicians of the inferior orders, but to this profession they add that of players, pretend to a knowledge of medicine and the occult sciences. The two latter accomplishments are here generally united. A doctor being necessarily a musician, and almost equally skilful in both characters. The Panans, differ from all the corresponding classes in being married, and the children in every instance belonging to the father.

II.—*An Account of the Island and Bridge of Sivasamudram in the Cúverí River. By Rámaswámí Múdeliar, Jáhírdár of the Island.* (Extracted from the Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society Vol. 3. Part 2d.)

(Communicated by the Madras Literary Society and Auxiliary Royal Asiatic Society.)

Read 17th December 1831.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE,

BY

JAMES S. LUSHINGTON, ESQ.

Secretary of the Asiatic Department of the Madras Literary Society and Auxiliary Royal Asiatic Society.

THE materials for the following account of the island of Sivasamudram