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"No man, who hath tasted learning, but will confess the many ways of profiting by those, who, not contented with stale receipts, are able to manage and set forth new positions to the world: and, were they but as the dust and cinders of our feet, so long, as in that notion, they may yet serve to polish and brighten the armoury of truth, even for that respect, they were not utterly to be cast away."—MILTON.

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1858.

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- ART. V.—1. *Statistical and Geographical Report on the 24-Pergunnahs Districts.* BY MAJOR RALPH SMYTH. Calcutta. 1857.
2. *Report on the Calcutta and South-Eastern Railway from Calcutta to the River Mutlah.* BY JAMES A. LONGRIDGE. London. 1857.
3. *The Mutlah as an Auxiliary Port to Calcutta, its Progress and Prospects.* Calcutta. 1858.

PUBLIC attention has been recently turned to the Soonderbuns—those vast tracts of forest land, to their numberless rivers, and to their rich and varied soil. Since Calcutta has been the metropolis of India, the inland trade of the country, for several months in the year, has found its way to Calcutta through the intricate passages of the Soonderbuns. Its tidal rivers and creeks are alike known to the boatmen of the clinker-built crafts of Behar and the far North-west, and the *mangees* of Dacca, Sylhet, and Chittagong. Cultivation too has of late made rapid strides into the hitherto dense forest, now being reclaimed from the tiger and rhinoceros, which have held undisputed possession of them for centuries. The purchase of land on the Mutlah by the Government, for the foundation of a new city, which we observe has already been named in two maps as “Canning Town,” the disposal by Government officers of building sites; the appointment of a “superintendent of the port and town of Mutlah;” the deputation of custom house officers and of pilots to that river; the certainty that parts of the Soonderbuns will be cotton-producing districts, and the high prices which allotments of land have recently realized at public sales, all serve to shew that a short account of the Soonderbuns will not be uninteresting.

Every map of India, published since Major Rennell compiled his atlas, shews the Soonderbuns most conspicuously. We are all familiar with that patch of green at the “mouths of the Ganges,” intersected by numberless rivers; and we have all wondered how such dense forests have stood on the sea-coast of a country, correctly reckoned to be the most populous in the world; and how it comes to pass, that the teeming millions of Bengal have not long ago converted its jungle wastes into productive rice fields.

We believe it is generally allowed, that the flat plains of Bengal are alluvial formations;—that the sea once washed the hills of Singbhoom, Burrahbhoom, Beerbhoom, Rajmahal, the Garrows, Cherrah and Jyntea, and that the land has gradually

gained on the sea. Excavations and borings have established the fact, that at the depth of twenty or thirty feet below the present surface, the debris of ancient forests are found embedded in the earth, with shells similar to those now found on the shores of the bay. What we see at present going on in the Soonderbuns and on the sea margin, has been going on for ages. Those extensive sands or shoals are gradually covered with mould; the silt washed down in the rivers gradually raises their levels; shrubs and trees take root and flourish; generations of these decay, until their level is sufficiently raised, and in course of time, a dark forest stands in the place once covered by the sea; lastly man comes in, cuts down the forest, and by means of embankments and damming up water-courses, renders the soil habitable, and permanently occupies the land gained from the waters.

It is a subject of wonder to many, that traces of habitation are to be found in the midst of the forest, and several unsuccessful attempts have been made to account for the mystery. We believe it is easily explained. We would draw attention to the changes which have taken place in the country between the Hoogly river and the mouths of the Ganges and Megnah. Careful observation will shew, that several large branches of the Ganges have dried up. As observed by Lyell in his account of the Delta of the Ganges, "on the sea-coast, there are *eight* openings, each of which has 'evidently at some ancient period served in its turn as the 'principal channel of discharge." These eight openings commence east of the Hoogly river, and are to be traced in succession to the present mouth of the Ganges and Megna. It is evident, the "principal channel of discharge" has gradually moved eastward. This observation is borne out by the appearance of the country in the districts of Kishnagur, Jessore, and some parts of Backergunge. We find several insulated lakes which the natives call *jheels*, and which have no apparent connection with either the Ganges to the north, or the Bay of Bengal to the south. We also see a series of deep hollows, succeeding each other in a direction nearly parallel with the course of the Ganges. The tradition amongst the natives respecting these appearances is, that they once formed the beds of large rivers, through which the traffic of the country passed. These observations and traditions are supported by the appearance of the country during the rains. In this season of the year, these isolated hollows are connected, and the country is found to drain itself through them, and their communication with the Ganges, in some instances, is restored. It is evident then, that at some distant time, these

ivers were the channels through which the surplus waters of the Ganges were conveyed to the sea.

To judge of the effect which these great discharges of fresh water had on the western Soonderbuns, we have only to observe their present effect on the eastern Soonderbuns. There we find habitation and cultivation extend to the margin of the sea; man inhabits the country to the shores of the Bay of Bengal. The islands of Bara, and Chota Bass-deah, Dokin Shabazpore, Hattea, and Sundeeep, are proofs sufficient of this observation. The volume of fresh water is so large, that the salt water is confined in those parts to the Bay itself. The rivers and creeks have *fresh* water at certain seasons of the year to the sea board. As remarked by Lyell, "in those rivers ' when periodically swollen by tropical rains, the velocity ' of the stream counteracts the tidal current, so that, except ' very near the sea, the ebb and flow become insensible. ' During the flood season therefore, the Ganges almost assumes ' the character of a river entering a lake or inland sea; the ' movements of the ocean being subordinate to the force of ' the river, or only slightly disturbing its operations; so great ' is the quantity of mud and sand poured by the Ganges into ' the gulf in the flood season, that the sea only recovers its ' transparency at the distance of sixty miles from the coast."

With the Bengallee, we find, cultivation follows the course of *fresh* water; so long as the water is "*meeta*" or sweet, the indolent native will squat on the banks, plant his fruit-trees, raise his *Bheeta* or homestead, and dig his tank. This is also borne out by the fact, that grantees in the eastern Soonderbuns find it easier to procure tenants to occupy clearings, than the grantees in the western parts. We believe therefore, that at the period when the *fresh* waters of the Ganges found their way into the Bay of Bengal, through the western Soonderbuns, cultivation extended to its shores; and as the heads of the rivers silted and became dry, and the flow and ebb of the sea, and consequently *salt* water, extended further north, the country subject to its influence became deserted and jungle sprang up, until it gradually assumed the character of the Soonderbuns. This appears to us a natural and simple solution of the mystery attached to the traces of habitation found in the midst of the jungles. This will be still more evident, when we consider the character of the Bengallee ryots, whose proverbial indolence unfits them for contending against any great difficulties. The presence of *salt* water in parts of the country where it was formerly unknown, interferes so completely with their habits, that in place of modifying their system of agriculture to the altered state of things, they

deserted their homesteads; and the dense forest we now see gradually sprang up on the very sites that had been the abodes of men.

Thus we find in Major Rennell's Atlas, published in 1781, a number of villages is shewn on the east bank of the Kaburtuk, and south of the Coirah rivers. The same villages are shewn in Morrison's map of 1811. We observe however, that when Mr. Dampier, Commissioner of the Soonderbuns, was deputed to mark off the forest boundary, he found that these villages were deserted; and in his proceedings dated the 3rd of February, 1829, he states "that some of the villages had been deserted twelve, ten, eight, and some so recently as three years; and in a journey of three hours along the river, he had seen but two hundred beegahs of land, under cultivation with ten or twelve houses." He ascertained from the neighbouring inhabitants, "*that the cause of this desertion was the salt water.*" The country now is perfect forest, and hardly distinguishable from the oldest Soonderbuns. The revenue survey last year found it impossible to penetrate the jungles to lay down the *old* forest boundary. In this tract of land amounting to about 8,400 acres, we find fruit trees, tanks, and other signs of habitation. We learn from the tradition of the natives, that the Kaburtuk river ceased to be a sweet water river, within the last thirty or forty years. The two branches of the river shewn in Rennell's map, the one joining the Jelinghee, and the other the Ganges near Commercolly, are now dry; and the waters which used to flow through them have found an outlet through the Goraie river into the Bulissur. Thus we find that the silting of the head of the river was followed by the desertion of the country. As the influence of the tides prevailed, the *salt* water found its way further *north*; and we find it is only as far as the influence of salt water is felt, that the country has become a desert, and trees peculiar to the Soonderbuns forest have sprung up. Further south, we observe the same changes to have taken place, only at an anterior period, and there the traces of habitation are neither so recent nor so numerous. In most places, there is an absence of fruit trees, but the more permanent marks of habitation are still to be found. In lot No. 211 of Hodges' map, we find the ruins of a palace and a fort, and the evident traces of a large and populous town. In lot No. 165, Major Smyth has already described the remains of the old city of Goomghur, and ancient Jessore. The tradition respecting Rajah Pertab Auditia, in connection with the city, is now a matter of Indian history.

These facts sufficiently illustrate our theory. A glance at

the map of the Soonderbuns shews that the boundary of the forest is not an even line. The cultivation we find has extended south on the banks of the Hoogly to within a short distance of the Bay of Bengal. Further east, on the borders of the Jaboonah and Kaburtuk rivers, the breadth of the Soonderbun forest is upwards of forty miles. The next sweet water river is the Bulissur, and the same fact is disclosed as on the banks of the Hoogly; cultivation there also makes a nearer approach to the Bay. From this point, there is another bend to the north, where the jungle advances in proportion to the influence of salt water. We again meet with a fresh water river (the Rabnabad), and rice fields and the abodes of men extend to the coast. This establishes beyond doubt, the *fact*, that there is the same proportion in the Soonderbuns between the salt-water and forest, as there is between fresh water and cultivation.

This natural history of the changes that have taken place fully accounts for the mystery, in the solution of which some recent writers have drawn so largely on their imagination. We are told of "sudden upheavals and sinkings of a large extent of the earth's surface;" and it has been conjectured, that the Soonderbuns have either suddenly or gradually sunk and become inundated. We are told of an immense storm-wave, caused by the influence of typhoons and cyphoons, which suddenly raised the waters of the sea, and dashed them over a fourth of the province of Bengal, sweeping away in its course all traces of habitation, and thus accounting for the existence of the forest, which however there is ample evidence to shew was of *gradual* growth and extension. This conjecture of a partial deluge is unsupported by tradition, and is, we believe, mainly built on the discovery of a ship's mast in the midst of the jungles at Saugur island, and on the solitary instance of a skeleton of a potter, with his wheel and pottery about him, dug out while excavating a tank in the Soonderbuns. The mast most likely floated up a *khal* or creek during a high inundation; and the single instance of the potter's skeleton certainly is no proof of so fanciful an explanation, having reference to such sudden and gigantic causes, to account for appearances which we have shewn, are the result of the imperceptible but even changes of nature. This unfortunate potter, the innocent cause of such direful ravages of the ocean in some prolific brain, was most likely the victim of the ordinary accidents of life. He may have been drowned with his goods and chattels about him, while changing his dwelling, and by the gradual filling up of the channel was found embedded in the earth;

or similar causes may account for his solitary appearance. If there had been so general a submersion of the country, surely during so great a lapse of time there would be no want of evidence to establish it. This fanciful chimera is entirely unsupported by fact, and is evidently as untenable "as the basless fabric of a vision." It will, we trust, be no longer regarded but as a bugbear, invented by some eccentric and excitable person, to frighten the quiet cultivators of land from carrying on their labors in these forests. It is opposed to the geological proof of the alluvial formation of the Soonderbuns, of the land gradually gaining on the sea. We are the more earnest to remove this mischievous impression, because we are aware there are individuals, who have been led to credit this theory, and who at every change of the moon, at certain seasons of the year, when southerly winds prevail, look with anxious eyes for this "vast tidal wave," which is again to sweep in its career the fruits of industry and labor into the remorseless sea! In fact, so late as 1853, when the Mutlah scheme was first proposed, we recollect a pamphlet was published, urging the recurrence of this same "terrific mass of salt water rolling in and rising up" at the head of the Mutlah, "and in a few minutes inundating the whole intended settlement," and warning the Government and the merchants to be on their guard, as nothing less than a twenty feet embankment could save them!

The extent of the Soonderbuns from west to east is 150 miles, and its breadth from north to south is about fifty-eight miles. It is bounded on the north by the zemindaree lands of the districts of 24-Pergunnahs, Kishnagur, Jessore and Backergunge; to the south is the Bay of Bengal; east, the mouths of the Ganges and Megnah; and west, the Hoogly river. The laying down of the north boundary has caused no little expense to Government, and has been the source of much litigation between the zemindars and the grantees.

The most ancient relics discovered in the Soonderbuns, relating to the grant of land, are two copper-plates, found, one in the 24-Pergunnahs in lot No. 55 of Hodges' map about twenty years ago; and the other in the Backergunge district in 1838. They both bear Sanskrit inscriptions, and bestow title to land. The one found in the 24-Pergunnahs evidently refers to land on the Mutlah river, and is supposed to have been granted about the eighth century of the Christian era. The Backergunge plate is of more recent date; it is supposed to have been granted about the eleventh century, and is minutely described in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*,

No. 73, January, 1838. There is nothing in the inscriptions to shew that the grants were for forest land; on the contrary they evidently refer to inhabited places.

The first attempt on the part of the East India Company to cultivate the Soonderbuns was made in 1790-91, through a Mr. Tilman Henckell, who was appointed "Superintendent of the Soonderbuns" in 1783, and who held his court in the old Town of Moorley, near modern Jessore. His scheme was a most comprehensive one, and we cannot do better than allow him to speak for himself, by giving extracts from his letter on the Soonderbuns, addressed to the Hon'ble Warren Hastings, Governor General of India, dated the 21st December 1783.

"The following plan is humbly submitted to your consideration, and not intruded on you as the thoughts of a day, but founded on local knowledge, acquired during a three years' residence at Jessore; and from a firm conviction in my own breast of its practicableness, should it be sanctioned by your approbation.

"The first object that struck me on my arrival at Jessore, and taking charge of the appointment of magistrate, was the adopting measures for the future security of the province, and the peace of the inhabitants, in a country so infested with decoits. A plan has suggested itself to me, which I am confident, if adopted, would not only eradicate these nests, of marauders, but in the course of a few years bring a great addition of revenue to Government, I mean the peopling that large tract of waste land, called the Soonderbuns, appertaining to Jessore, situated between the Roymungul and Horinguttah rivers.

"That it is practicable to populate these wild and extensive forests, and not a mere speculative idea, we have only to recur to the times of the Mogul government, and we shall find, that prior to the invasion of the Mugs in the Bengal year 1128, these lands were in the finest state of cultivation, and the villages in general well populated. The number of mosques and other places of worship still remaining, fully demonstrate its former splendor and magnificence. Nature also has been particularly lavish and bountiful of her favors to this part of Bengal; the number of fine rivers with which it abounds, renders it so convenient for transportation of all kinds of merchandize, and its vicinity to Calcutta, the seat of Government, affords the merchant and manufacturer a sure prospect of receiving the reward of their labors by the speedy sale of their merchandize, the greatest encouragement to revenue. The quantity of wood and timber proper for constructing boats; the transportation of fire-wood to Cal-

‘ cutta; the furnishing of cattle of all kinds for the use of
 ‘ shipping; the quantity of wax that is everywhere found in
 ‘ the woods; and the preparation of shell-lime, will amply
 ‘ reward the ryot for the trouble and expense of clearing
 ‘ away the ground. All that he requires is an assurance of
 ‘ being protected by Government, in the quiet possession of the
 ‘ little spot that he has cleared away by the sweat of his brow.

“ The Soonderbuns once cultivated, the decoits will find no
 ‘ place of safety to fly to, or elude the vigilance of the magis-
 ‘ trate; imprint the minds of the ryots with a confidence in
 ‘ Government, and their attachment will be secured by the
 ‘ strongest tie of nature,—self-interest, and consequently in-
 ‘ stead of affording protection to the decoits by sharing with
 ‘ them in the spoil, will cheerfully exert themselves in their
 ‘ apprehension, and in time oblige these disturbers of the
 ‘ public peace to become useful members of society. Another
 ‘ great advantage arising from the adoption of the plan is,
 ‘ the assistance it will afford to the salt-manufacturer.

“ If Government entrust me with the management, and
 ‘ permit me to distribute the parcels of land in such propor-
 ‘ tions as may appear eligible, the ryot to hold possession
 ‘ free of all revenue for the space of three years, and having
 ‘ the firmest reliance on my engagements with him, to pay
 ‘ revenue in the following three years in such proportion, as
 ‘ the value of the land, and the state of cultivation, may appear
 ‘ advisable, I am assured of the good and salutary effects that
 ‘ will ensue, and at the end of five years be attended with the
 ‘ most forcible advantage to the country, maintenance to the
 ‘ ryot, protection to the individual, a very considerable in-
 ‘ crease of revenue to the Company and tend to the encourage-
 ‘ ment and augmentation of the manufactures in general.”

Such was the comprehensive proposal of a magistrate of the
 last century to the Honorable Warren Hastings. The ex-
 periment was sanctioned, and Tilman Henckell was directed
 to carry it into execution, and to consult on all points with
 what was then styled “ The Committee of Revenue.” It was
 proclaimed throughout the district of Jessore, that all applica-
 tions for waste lands should be made to the superintendent
 of the Soonderbuns, and that he had full power to grant
 leases. He has left a register of 130 grants in different parts
 of Jessore and Backergunge, for the latter was formed into a
 distinct district only in 1817, by the separation of certain
 mehals and pergunnahs (*i. e.* portions) from Dacca and Jessore.
 The boundaries of Henckell’s grants however cannot be de-
 pended upon; they were made on *exparte* representations,
 without measurement or local enquiry, and most of them were
 included subsequently within the limits of states permanently

settled. But still the old gentleman was right in the main; the decoits have disappeared from the Soonderbuns, and if he had not turned the attention of Government to those extensive forests, the decoitee commissioners would not have found it so easy to track them there. The manufacture of salt did prosper for a great number of years with great advantage to the salt revenue, and the trade of the country has greatly benefited even by the partial clearance of the jungles. But his proposal of three years' rent-free period has been extended to twenty years; and his five years' progressive rent to forty years!

Mr. Henckell described the Soonderbuns as having been "in the finest state of cultivation at the time of the Mogul Government," and ascribed its desertion to the ravages of the Mugs; but this is only true of the portion* shewn as "depopulated by Mugs," in Rennell's map of the Soonderbuns to the east of the Beeskhallee river in the eastern Soonderbuns; it is not true of any other part of the Soonderbuns. The fact that the Soonderbuns were inhabited, is stated in the "*Asia of De Barros*," who describes it as a populated country in the commencement of the sixteenth century (1510 to 1520) or nearly 350 years ago. He mentions the names of several towns and villages, particularly one which he calls Satigam on the east mouth of the Ganges, and Chatigam on the west. The latter evidently is meant for Chittagong; but Satigam which he describes as the place where "our countrymen carry on their barterings and trade," cannot be identified. It is conjectured that it was situated north of the present town of Hoogly, and the route between the two places he describes as being in "south-easterly direction" through the very heart of the Soonderbuns. We allude to this description of the great Portuguese writer, to shew that his allusion to the passage between the two places, supports our statement regarding the changes in the rivers.

*Satigam
near Hoogly*

In 1816, the Government appointed a special officer to attend to the Soonderbuns, and Regulation IX. of that year directs the appointment of an officer under the appellation of "Commissioner in the Soonderbuns" from the 1st of May 1816, subject to the control and superintendence of the Board of Revenue. We give in a note † the names of officers who have held

* Mr. Tilman Henckell's report refers only to the eastern Soonderbuns.

†1816	Mr. D. Scott.	1827	Mr. W. Dampier.
1817	" A. T. Lind.	1835	" C. Grant.
1820	" R. Hunter.	1836	" M. Gilmore.
1821	" L. Mills.	1837	" G. T. Shakespear.
1822	" D. Dale.	1839	" F. B. Kemp.
1823	" R. D. Mangles.	1841	" M. A. Shawe.
1825	" J. Lewis.	1842	Baboo Omakanth Sein.

this appointment. The most distinguished among them are Messrs. W. Dampier and R. D. Mangles, the one ruling the Board of Revenue, and the other, until lately, the East India Directors. In 1842, it was considered advisable from political considerations, to appoint a native as the first uncovenanted officer in the Revenue Department, and Baboo Omakanth Sein was selected. In 1842, Mr. J. Harvey, Revenue Commissioner of the Nuddeah division, recommended the appointment to be abolished, as unnecessary; and the Government acceded to his recommendation, and in the years 1843 and 1844, there was no Commissioner of the Soonderbuns. In 1845 it was found necessary to restore the office, the absurdity of the idea, that a distinct officer should be necessary for the management of a tract of country, while in jungle, and his services should be unnecessary just as it was being cultivated and inhabited, was at last apparent; and Mr. Davidson who had succeeded Mr. Harvey, an intelligent and liberal-minded man, had the satisfaction of restoring Baboo Omakanth Sein to the appointment, in spite of petty jealousies; the Baboo's appointment to a Commissionership, hitherto held by a covenanted civilian being regarded as an encroachment on class privileges. Mr. Davidson, in a masterly report on this subject, compared the result of the two years' administration of the Baboo, with that of the junior covenanted officers who had preceded him; and quietly remarked, "it will scarcely be expected, that I should anxiously desire the re-employment of a covenanted commissioner, whilst the services of so qualified an uncovenanted deputy collector are available; nor can I recommend he should be made subordinate to a young officer, who in all probability knows as much of settlement-making as the deputy does of Hebrew."

We have already remarked, that the definition of the north boundary of the Soonderbuns has been a source of great expense to the Government. In 1822, Captain Thomas Prinsep was deputed to demarcate and survey the boundary of the Soonderbuns with the district of the Twenty-four pergunnahs. He accordingly surveyed the boundary from the Hoogly river at Belpookoreah to the Bedeadhurree river; and subsequently on the petition of certain zemindars, the boundary between the Bedeadhurree and Parapnore, also dividing the Soonderbuns to the west of the Kaburtuk river, into allotments, and numbering them. In 1811 and 1812, Lieut. Morrison had surveyed portions of the Soonderbuns adjoining the Jessore district, and after much labor and exposure divided that portion into allotments. This officer and his brother fell a sacrifice to their zeal, having lost their lives in the Soonderbuns.

In 1829 Lieut. Hodges demarcated and surveyed the forest boundary as it existed at that time under the orders of Mr. W. Dampier, who was appointed specially to this duty, and who laid down the boundary from Parapore to the island of Rungaballee on the mouths of the Ganges and Megnah. Captain Prinsep's boundary, as it is called, has been re-surveyed, and is shewn in Major Smyth's map of the 24-Pergunnahs, published in 1852; and Captain Gastrell is now engaged in defining the boundary of Capt. Hodges, in the revenue survey in progress, in the districts of Jessore and Backergunge. In 1831 Capt. Hodges published a map of the Soonderbuns, compiled from Major Rennell's, Captains Prinsep's and Morrison's, and his own surveys, and also shewing the different routes through the Soonderbuns. This map, a most valuable document, is now out of print, only a few copies are to be found in the public offices, and in the hands of the older grantees. A new map compiled from recent surveys is much needed.

On comparing Major Rennell's map of the Soonderbuns, published in 1781 A. D., with Lieut. Hodges' map published in 1831, it will be evident that the forest boundary extended further north in 1781. The space between the two lines shews the encroachments of the adjoining landholders on the forest; these encroachments being subsequent to the perpetual settlement were not assessed at that period. The lands were surreptitiously brought into cultivation by neighbouring landholders, and as soon as discovered, they are assessed, after investigation under the provisions of Reg. II. of 1819, and Reg. III. of 1828. In the 24-pergunnahs the encroachments have been assessed and incorporated in the estates of the usurping landholders, and are known as "*potheet abadee*" or recent cultivations. We would direct attention to the jungles near Calcutta south-east of the salt water lakes, known as the Tardah jungles. This jungle is shewn in Major Rennell's map as forming a part of the Soonderbun forest, and Major Smyth in his report alludes to it, and states "that it comprises about eighteen square miles, and that private enterprise would soon redeem these lands from the state in which they have been lying perhaps for centuries." The canals from Calcutta to the eastern districts run through this jungle tract; and there is no doubt, it is the chief cause of the unhealthiness of the suburbs of Calcutta, and of the great mortality amongst the native boatmen who visit this port, yet it has always appeared to us a mystery why the jungle is permitted to stand within sight of the city. We learn that the landholders of Pergunnah Calcutta claim it as included in the permanent settlement of that Pergunnah, if so,

Major Rennell's map and Major Smyth's statement must both be false. It is clear, Lord Dalhousie, when writing his minute on the Soonderbuns, took it for granted that the Tardah jungles, formed a part of the Soonderbuns, and alludes to it as a nuisance almost within sight of the capital of the empire; and yet the landholders of Pergunnah Calcutta are permitted to claim a jungle of eighteen square miles as dense as any part of the Soonderbuns, and to perpetuate a nuisance felt by every merchant and boatman throughout Bengal and Behar! Allowing the statement of the landholders be true, it surely is the duty of the local Government to move the Legislature to have such a nuisance removed, by distributing the land to persons who will cultivate it within a reasonable period.

The conditions on which the Soonderbuns lands were to be leased, formed the subject of discussion between the Board of Revenue and the Government from 1816 to 1825. The terms fixed for the grant of these waste lands or lots by the orders of 1825 were; one-fourth of the grant to be held rent-free in perpetuity, the other three-fourths rent-free for seven years, and, after that, subject to a rent of two annas a beegah (3,025 square yards) for the eighth year; four annas the ninth year; six annas the tenth year; and eight annas the eleventh year, and in perpetuity.

No one would take grants on such terms, and the rules were accordingly modified in 1829 as follows. One-fourth of the grant rent-free in perpetuity; the other three-fourths rent-free for twenty years; and after that, subject to a rent of two annas a beegah of eighty cubits (1,600 square yards) for the twenty-first year; four annas a beegah for the twenty-second year; six annas a beegah for the twenty-third year; and eight annas a beegah for the twenty-fourth year, and in perpetuity. One-fourth of the grant to be brought into cultivation in five years, or the whole liable to resumption.

Twenty-three years after the passing of the rules of 1829, it was remarked by the Board of Revenue, that the scheme had proved a failure. The clearances were less than was anticipated; the rents derived were next to nothing, and applications for increased rent-free tenures had been numerous; also there had been repeated instances of grants resumed from failure to cultivate; and there was an evident disinclination to take up fresh grants. After an experiment of nearly thirty years, it was found that one-half only of the whole area of the Soonderbuns had been included in grants, though the rent-free period had been twenty years. Of the 173 grants that had been made, the rent-free period in sixty-eight had not expired. But of the remaining 105, only thirteen had been entirely, and

six partially assessed. The assessed area was found to be only 4·61 per cent. of the whole area of the Soonderbuns.

The failure was attributed partly to the great expense of clearing the lands, and protecting them from the influence of the salt tides ; but chiefly to the fact that the rates of permanent assessment on the grants were higher than those prevailing in the neighbouring zemindaries, and that the abundance of waste land in every direction created a demand for labor greatly in excess of the supply. The high assessment forced on the grantee to demand higher rates from the cultivators. The cultivators consequently migrated, and the lands no sooner became liable to assessment than they lapsed into jungle.

Lord Dalhousie considered that the paramount object of Government in devising rules for the disposal of lands in the Soonderbuns should be to effect a clearance of that " pestilent jungle, in the shortest possible period, and to remove the stigma which most justly attaches to the existence of such a nuisance almost within sight of the capital of the empire. Lying between the Bay of Bengal," his Lordship remarked, " and the inhabited parts of the Delta, this dense forest with its accumulated and perpetually exhaling malaria, urged by the south-west monsoon, spread disease and death over the whole country ; the tract swarms with tigers and other wild beasts whose ravages cause wide destruction of life and property ; it affords convenient shelter for smugglers and river pirates, and it presents to the sea-ward a line of coast upon which those who are ship-wrecked, are sure, or nearly sure, of death by hunger, thirst, and exposure. To remove or abate this source of so much material suffering, and to afford employment for hundreds of thousands of cultivators is undoubtedly the first object of Government." " The improvement of the revenue," his Lordship further remarked, " is an object of secondary importance, and not to be thought of in so far as it sensibly hinders the accomplishment of the former. Heretofore it has been thought that improvement of the revenue might keep pace with the clearance of the jungle, without materially impeding it ; but this opinion is now proved to be fallacious. That increase of revenue will ultimately follow the clearance of the jungle is certain ; but the mistake has been in looking for a return too soon. It seemed then to his Lordship that the principles upon which the Government had acted should be abandoned, and that such measures should be adopted as would tend in the first instance to the speedy clearance of the Soonderbuns, leaving the Government free to impose a moderate assessment at some future time. Ninety-nine years was the period proposed by his Lordship after which the Go-

‘vernment of the day should impose re-assessment on such moderate terms as may then seem proper.”

Such were the liberal views worthy of a great statesman, with which the present rules for the grant of waste lands in the Soonderbuns were passed on the 24th of September, 1853. We proceed to give an abstract of the rules—

1st. All applications for grants to be ordinarily made to the Soonderbuns' Commissioner, and in his absence from Allipore, to the Revenue Commissioner of the Nuddeah Division, or the Board of Revenue.

2nd. In case there be more than one application for the same grant, it shall be put up to sale after advertisement in the Government *Gazette* for fifteen days, and the application of the highest bidder shall be submitted for the orders of the Board of Revenue.

3rd. When an application has received the sanction of the Board, a pottah or lease shall be granted after registry at the Board's office.

4th. The lease is granted to heirs, executors, and assigns, as well as to the grantee for a period of ninety-nine years, after which period occupation is not to be interfered with, on condition the occupier pays such moderate assessment as the Government of the day may demand. The boundaries are to be distinctly recorded in the lease. One-fourth of the entire grant is declared free of assessment for ever, in lieu of allowances for tanks, roads, embankments, dams, &c. The remaining three-fourths to be held rent-free for twenty years; and afterwards subject to pay, from the twenty-first to the thirtieth year, half an anna the beegah of sixteen hundred square yards.

From the thirty-first to the fortieth year, one anna the beegah.

From the forty-first to the fiftieth year, one anna and a half the beegah.

From the fifty-first to the ninety-ninth year, two annas the beegah.

One-eighth of the grant to be cleared in five years.

One-fourth to be cleared in ten years, one-half in twenty years, and three-fourths in thirty years. On failure of all or any of these four conditions, the grant shall be resumed, and the grantee shall forfeit all right and interest in the lands, both cleared and uncleared.

These terms are favorable in the extreme; applications for grants are numerous, and the allotments when sold realize high prices, when we consider that the purchaser only buys the right to cultivate. The sum already realized by these

sales amounts to more than a lac of rupees, and should be formed into a fund for the improvement of the Soonderbuns. No mere speculator can exist under the rules ; the clearance of one-eighth and one-fourth of the lands within five and ten years is imperative, under penalty of resumption ; and considering that the object of the state is to have the jungle cleared, the conditions cannot be regarded as hard to an honest grantee, who has the same object in view ; but these penalties are seldom enforced, save in cases of gross neglect. There is much truth in the complaint, that it is difficult to procure ryots or tenants to occupy the cleared lands, and this is particularly the case in the Soonderbuns adjoining the district of Jessore ; but at the same time we must remark, that though the Government rate is very low, and grantees can well afford to be liberal to their tenants, they are seldom so. Unfortunately grantees who are paying half an anna, or one anna the beegah to Government, insist on receiving ten and twelve, and in some grants so high as one rupee, and one rupee eight annas, the beegah. They make the same mistake the Government did under the old rules, they are looking for a return too soon, or rather for an extravagant return ; a moderate return the ryot is always willing to give. A new class of grantees, however are entering into the speculation,—men who “ by buying and selling,” as Lord Ellenborough expresses himself, have amassed fortunes, but who do not possess an acre of land ; men in fact with money but no lands. These men finding the cultivated tracts occupied by the landed aristocracy or the zemindars, and feeling their inferiority in society to them, naturally turn to the unoccupied land in the Soonderbuns. They are liberal in expending capital to improve their grants, and in securing a body of tenants to give them a status in society as landed proprietors ; such, we think, will be fair in the rates they impose on their tenants. We fear it is only to natives we must look for a permanent occupation of the Soonderbuns ; but the Europeans were the first to develop the resources of the Soonderbuns, and to shew the way in which they were to be developed. To them, the natives are indebted for the extensive system of embankments, the introduction of sluices, and the plan of drainage at present in use. The most flourishing grants belong to them, and we have not the least doubt, that the energy and enterprise of Europeans will yet introduce the cotton plant into the Soonderbuns. But we regret to find, there is hardly a grantee who attends personally to his grant, the majority trust to agents. These men, it is true, draw large sums of money, and make a great show ; but at the end, the grantee finds no

real progress has been made, and is discouraged. The remedy is obvious; the grantees must not trust so entirely to agents, they must attend to their own estates, or leave the field open to others who will do so. In the cold season the Soonderbuns are not unhealthy; from November to June they are as healthy as any part of Bengal.

In the majority of instances there is a want of care in the selection of sites for villages, and in locating tenants. We generally find the lowest swamp is selected; sanitary purposes are not attended to; not even the most common precautions are taken against disease. The miserably housed tenant digs a hole within a few feet of the sleeping apartment of his family, which soon fills with stagnant water, and is the fruitful source of unhealthiness; he sleeps with his children on the damp bare earth. It is true these are the habits of Bengallees throughout the province, but surely a benevolent and wise grantee would instruct his tenants in such matters. It is easy to raise the *bheeta* or homestead with earth obtained from the bank of the nearest creek, to supply them with planks to sleep upon, or to raise a *machan* or platform for this purpose. We know a colony of Mugs in the Soonderbuns, who have lived in the midst of the jungles for three generations. The patriarchs, in fact, the Pilgrim fathers who left the shores of Burmah, and sought their present asylum from oppression and tyranny, are still living surrounded by their grand children, a numerous and flourishing colony. We attribute their health and longevity simply to their custom of living on *machans* raised eight and ten feet above the ground. Could not the grantees induce their tenants to do the same? The Bengallee ryot is an observing shrewd creature; we once asked some tenants in the Soonderbuns, why they built such miserable huts when a little labor would render them so much more comfortable. They told us, to look at the houses put up by the grantee, and remarked that if he did not consider it worth his while to erect more permanent structures, it was clear he had but a poor idea of the grant, and would soon dispose of it to another, who would not respect the engagements entered into by the present occupant, but would assess the clearances at full rates, and then they would be forced to decamp. At another well-known grant in the Backergunge district, where the grantees reside throughout the year, and have built a substantial pukka or brick house, the tenants are constructing comfortable habitations, and have evidently made up their minds to reside in them for good.

The clearance of the jungle has been steadily progressing since the passing of the new rules. Out of 178 grants

already made, thirty belong to Europeans, one to an Armenian, two to native Christians, thirty to Mohammedans, and one hundred and five to Hindoos. Out of the thirty belonging to Europeans, twelve have been cultivated; the Armenian has very nearly cultivated his; the two native Christians have been equally successful. Six out of the thirty belonging to Mohammedans are under cultivation, but then they were purchased, when cleared, from Europeans; out of the one hundred and five belonging to Hindoos, twenty-seven have been cleared. The amount of collections at present realized from the Soonderbuns is rupees three lacs and thirty-three thousand; and the ultimate collections on completion of the progressive rates of assessment will be six lacs and forty-four thousand. In a revenue point of view the Soonderbuns are profitable to the state, the cost of the present agency for the management, not exceeding nine per cent. of the collections.

The new rules do not protect the rights of under-tenants, nor provide for cases where a grantee encroaches on the lands of another. The judge of the 24-pergunnahs has endeavoured to remedy these defects in one or two decisions. He is of opinion "that the benefits conferred on the grantees by the rules must necessarily be extended to the tenants, or the object of Government will be entirely defeated. He argues that when the grantees told the Government that eight annas a beegah was ruinous to them, and on that assertion obtained an abatement of revenue equal to three-fourths; they are not in a position to say, that the payment of twelve annas a beegah is not oppressive to the tenant. If eight annas a beegah prevented the cultivation of the Soonderbuns by the grantees, the exaction of twelve annas rent will be equally prejudicial. When the grantees went up to Government on these terms, I do not go too far in saying that there was an implied contract on their part to extend the benefits to their tenants. It was to the prosperity of the sub-tenants, the Government had to look, for the creation of those rents, out of which they were to pay the Government revenue, and the tenant is the actual party who by his labor and industry brings the land into cultivation, he is the working bee, the grantees being in a sense the drones. A remission confined to the grantee only would advance in no sense whatever the objects of Government." The judge therefore is of opinion that "the case is one to be disposed of on principles of equity and good conscience," and he accordingly reduced the amount covenanted to be paid by the tenant, extending Lord Dalhousie's rules to him. We believe the judge has argued the case very ingeniously, and whatever we may say about the

legality of the decision, no one can question its benevolence. In the case of the Government, however, it voluntarily released the grantee from his covenant to pay the rate of eight annas a beegah ; in the case before the judge, the grantee refuses to be equally liberal. Does it necessarily follow, because the Government was liberal, the grantee must be coerced to be liberal? The motives which actuated the Government are not equally potent to the grantee, so long as he acts up to his conditions, the grant is his property, and he is at liberty to do as he pleases with his own. It is the large profits left to the grantee, by the introduction of the new rules, that induce him to lay out capital in cultivation. If those profits be reduced to what was obtained under the old rules, the inducement will no longer exist to take lands in the Soonderbuns ; and the object of Government will thus be defeated. Have the new rules altered the rates of under-tenants in grants obtained since they were passed? We believe not ; the same rates with very slight variation prevail in the new grants as in the old, consequently it is evident, the old rates are based on the actual value of the land, and are not affected by the proceedings of Government. We believe the Government, to use a slang phrase, was rather done in the matter of rates, but we think it has acted wisely in leaving the question of the rate to be paid by the sub-tenants to be settled between them and the grantee, according to the interests of the parties concerned. Some grants are valuable from their position, others are not, and it would be absurd to fix a common rate for both. If a grantee demands too high a rate, his grant will soon be deserted, and he will find it his interest to lower the rate, and in this manner the demand will regulate the value of land in the Soonderbuns.

In a case where a grantee has ignorantly encroached on the lands of another, the rule in America we believe is to compensate the cultivator for the labor and capital expended by him ; the claimant paying the amount of compensation which is fixed by arbitration. The judge of the 24-pergunnahs " has set the claim for mesne profits of the grantee, against the claim for improvement set up by the party who has encroached." The judge observes " the first must forego one, the second must forego the other," and he has decided that, that " the encroaching cultivator shall pay rent to the grantee at a rate double the rate the latter is to pay the Government, and the former on such payment shall not be deprived of his possession of the land." This decision as far as the case itself is concerned, we believe, to be just and proper ; but in cases where the encroachment has been intentional, or where the person encroaching had ample means of ascertaining and fixing the boundary, it is obvious the

judge's decision will be a premium to encroach. If the principle is adopted, in such cases, that the trespasser shall only pay double the Government rate, and retain possession of the land, there will be no end of encroachments, and affrays and litigation will be the result; for a man will find it advantageous to obtain land on such easy terms. We prefer the ruling of the Sudder Dewanny Adawlut in a similar case, where both mesne profits and possession were awarded to the grantee.

We now proceed to consider the Mutlah scheme. There is no doubt the Mutlah is a safer river for commercial purposes than the Hoogly; it has greater depth, the navigation is easier; it has more accommodation for ships, and there are no shifting sands, bores or freshes. No large vessels can come up the Hoogly save during spring tides, and these recur every fortnight and last but five days. At certain seasons of the year, no vessel drawing more than twenty-two feet of water can come up the Hoogly with safety. The Mutlah on the other hand, it has been shewn after professional survey, will admit and accommodate the Leviathan steamer. Another great advantage the Mutlah possesses over the Hoogly is, that for several months in the year all the inland trade of the country must pass the head of the Mutlah, and the produce of the eastern districts pass it throughout the year; that trade to reach Calcutta must pass through the canals, and the delay, inconvenience, danger, and heavy taxes of that passage are proverbial all over India. If this trade can be intercepted at the head of the Mutlah, and transported with safety and cheapness to Calcutta, there is not the least doubt the proposed railway to the Mutlah will prove a great blessing to the inland trade,—a blessing felt and appreciated by every petty mahajan, and in fact, by every ryot or cultivator, throughout Bengal and Behar. We think it has been clearly shewn in Mr. Longridge's report, that both cheapness and safety will be ensured to the inland trade by the proposed railway; such being the case, we have no doubt of its success. The great mahajans in Calcutta, to whom more or less the produce of the country is consigned, would soon perceive the manifest advantages of the railway, and those little epistles on colored paper, peculiar to our Indian post bags, will soon spread the news to every bazar and market in the country, with instructions to unload at the Mutlah, and consign the goods to the care of the *challandar*, who mounted on the iron-horse carriage, would in an hour's time find his way to the mahajan with the goods all safe and sound ready to be stored in his godowns. Then adieu to the circuitous route of the canals, to its obstructions and dangers, so disgraceful to a

Government like ours. A native boatman is fortunate if he can at present accomplish two trips during the cold season from Dacca, Serajgunge, or Backergunge to Calcutta ; such are the delays in the canal, and the risks in the Hoogly even after he clears the canal ; but when the railway comes into operation, unloading at the head of the Mutlah, he will accomplish with ease four trips where he can now make but two. This boon, when we come to consider it, is of incalculable benefit to a poor man.

We have purposely considered the scheme simply as an auxiliary to the Calcutta port, but there is no doubt ships will soon find their way to the Mutlah, when the produce of the country is to be obtained there *cheaper* than at Calcutta, which it must be, as the cost of transport to Calcutta will be saved. Trade will increase, and then the passenger traffic will be an item not to be despised. We are so certain of the success of the Mutlah scheme, that we have no doubt it must sooner or later be an "accomplished fact." The unhealthiness of the Mutlah is a bug-bear ; the only wonder is, that it has not proved more unhealthy during the last two years, when we take into account, the vast quantity of jungle which has been cut by the Government, and allowed to rot and decay in lots 54 and 50. Ellengunge on the opposite side is as healthy as Calcutta. Drain the land, burn the jungle, throw the land into cultivation, and the head of the Mutlah will be as healthy as Calcutta. The scarcity of fresh water is the great want at present ; one tank just finished on lot 54 holds fresh water ; another pukka tank is progressing, and no doubt the Civil Engineer in charge will soon find ways and means to supply the deficiency. The railway company propose to have an aqueduct in connection with the railway. This great want supplied, we hope to see the head of the Mutlah yet a port.

A ship canal between the Mutlah and the Hoogly will be too expensive an undertaking, and demand too much time, and will neither be so expeditious, nor so extensively useful as a railway, and, if finished, will be continually liable to be silted. In fact, there is no comparison between the two as regards the question, which will sooner and at less cost develop the advantages of the Mutlah ; the comparison is without any doubt in favor of the railway. We must recollect Calcutta owes its greatness to a state of things which has since changed. In days of yore, when the Bhagiruttee, the Jellinghee, and the Matabangah, brought down the inland trade at all seasons of the year, Calcutta from its situation became the metropolis of India ; for at this point, the ships which were required to carry that produce to other countries, and the boats which brought

that produce down met, and *vice versa*; but when these rivers are useless for several months during the year, unless railroads are established to bring that produce down, there is a danger of Calcutta in time ceasing to be a place of trade; all water communications from the change in the course of the Ganges must fail, and therefore we must trust to railways in preference to water communications. This will be found true in spite of all engineering efforts to the contrary. There are other rivers in the Soonderbuns besides the Mutlah, deserving the attention of the mercantile community and of the Government. The Sibsah, for instance, has six and seven fathoms of water throughout its course from Khoolnah to the Bay. The water of this river to within ten miles of the Bay is *fresh*, and the whole of the inland trade of the country crosses this river *en route* to Calcutta. The Balissur is open to ships of a thousand tons, and some of the largest rice markets in the Backergunge district are on its banks. The entrances to these two rivers from the sea should be surveyed.

The possibility of growing cotton to a great extent in the Soonderbuns has given an additional stimulus to the cultivation of its jungle wastes. The experiment has been tried in several grants, and though it is still in its infancy, it has been ascertained that cotton will not thrive during the rains on low lands. If sown at this season of the year, it must be sown on high *bheetah* lands, or ridges well drained. The plant from American seed, and that from the South Sea islands, thrive luxuriantly in the Soonderbuns if sown on ridges, and yield cotton of a superior description, which has already been valued in the London market at two shillings and six pence the pound; the most experienced grantees, however, are of opinion, that lands on the sea-coast are best adapted for the cultivation of this kind of cotton, and we believe this will be found to be the case. It is not generally known, however, that the Mugs in the island of Bara Bass-deah, have grown cotton as an annual for the last twenty years. They sow the seed in October and gather the cotton in March. The plant thrives on the island, and is very productive. The Mug women spin it into thread and make their own cloth. This cotton, though grown from common Bengal cotton seed, produces plentifully. We think it is on the islands in the eastern Soonderbuns that cotton will grow best, and next on the coast of the Soonderbuns open to the sea-breeze.

The grantees have not hitherto examined the timber of the Soonderbuns; their object has been to get rid of the jungle as speedily as possible, and clear the lands. There is no doubt the forests contain excellent timber, which may be put to a

great many uses. They would supply, for instance, sleepers for the railway. We would recommend the erection of a saw-mill in some central spot in the Soonderbuns, to be worked by the force of the tides; a great quantity of the wood would meet with ready sale in the Calcutta market. We give a list of the different kinds of wood with the uses to which they are put by the natives :—

Names of trees.	Diameter.	Uses to which they are put.	Remarks.
Soondree.....	2 feet.	{Boats, beams, buggy shafts, posts. Boats, posts, bark for tanning. Doors, small Dinghees, posts.}	{The Soonderbuns named after this tree.}
Pussur.....	Ditto.		
Kawrah.....	3 feet 6 in.		
Kirphur.....	2 feet.	Small Dinghees, posts.	A hollow tree adapted for sluices. Hard-wood fit for cabinet work. Resembles <i>jarool</i> wood. Bark for tanning and dyeing. Spreading over acres of land. A very hard wood.
Byne.....	3 feet.	Sluices, Mug rice-mills.	
Quorey.....	2 feet.	Dinghees.	
Aumoor.....	1 foot.	Paddles, hooka-pipes.	
Gelran.....	8 inches.	Posts, fire-wood.	
Bhylee.....	1 foot.	Posts, hooka-pipes.	
Jein.....	6 inches.	Ashes used for washing.	
Loha Kolrah.....	1 foot 6 in.	Not used.	
Pholsee.....	1 foot.	Posts.	
Naringah.....	2 feet.	{Handles of bill hooks and spades.}	
Sonalee.....	Ditto.	Bark for tanning.	A fine shady tree. Outer bark holds tanning.
Singrah.....	1 foot.	Charooal.	
Boley.....	6 inches.	Inner bark is a strong fiber.	
Haital.....	Ditto.	Wild date.	
Golepatha or sea coccanut }	Ditto.	{Leaves for thatching houses.}	
Ooriam ..	3 feet.	Small Dinghees.	Light wood, in general useful.

The wood-cutters in the Soonderbuns are a useful and hardy race of men, who have traversed every part of the forest, and are deserving of encouragement, but unfortunately they have been harshly treated of late. They are subject to the payment of a ruinous tax in the canals, and it appears to be the object of the collector of tolls to discourage this class of men as much as possible. The rules have been purposely altered to enable him to tax heavily a peculiar description of boat these men had constructed, which enabled them under the old form of rules to import a few tons of untaxed wood into the market. We believe this is a mistaken policy; it discourages the cultivation of the Soonderbuns by removing one of the inducements to cut down the forest, and it raises the price of fire-wood in the city—a tax pressing heavily on the poorer classes, for fire-wood is a necessary of life. We also regret to see the

golepatha and *hay* also the produce of the Soonderbuns, subject to a heavy tax in the canals.

The wood-cutters are to be found in the most unfrequented parts of the jungle, the finest timber being now scarce in the frequented parts; many of them fall a sacrifice to tigers and to fever, two of their greatest enemies. They are superstitious in the extreme, and believe in the existence of *jins* or spirits of the woods, and fairies. They are invariably accompanied by a fakeer or *geanee*, who is believed to possess a charm, or by certain cabalistic words to have power over tigers; the power being conferred on him by the presiding forest deity whom he propitiates by offerings, sacrifices, &c. It is strange that all castes of Hindoos and Mahommedans believe in these spirits, and have firm faith in the *geanees*. They have different ways of performing their ceremonies; they generally place the right hand on the earth, and looking into the air, repeat certain incantations and mystical names. After this repetition they pretend, if the tiger is any where near, that the ground under their feet feels warm, and the head is involuntarily turned, by the spirit invoked, in the direction in which the tiger is. The spirit best known amongst them, and in whom they appear to have most faith, is *Roongazee*; they represent him as king of the forest riding on a tiger. After invoking this spirit they will lead the way unarmed into the thickest jungles, and a party of wood-cutters will follow them in the blindest faith. It is in this manner that cane-cutters, wax and honey collectors, timber fellers, &c., penetrate the forest; in fact were it not for these fakers or *geanees*, the Soonderbuns would not be entered by Bengallees.

Sometimes the wood-cutters assemble where an "*aurrung*" has been established—an "*aurrung*" in the Soonderbuns signifies a depôt, or head-quarters, or place of gathering;—and the man who sets up the *aurrung* must be regarded as a first-rate *geanee*. He marks out a certain boundary, and then clears away a little spot about a hundred yards square, and in the centre erects two or three little huts about the size of a dog-kennel, in which are placed images of the various forest deities. Then offerings are made, sacrifices offered, and the place is pronounced free of tigers. The *bowlees* or wood-cutters then collect in the *aurrung*, making offerings for the privilege of enjoying the protection of the place; these offerings are the perquisites of the *aurrungdar*, who also receives a share of the timber felled. The *bowlees* have a great many peculiarities about them, for instance they will not use the word "*cholo*," to move, but invariably use the word "*shoro*." They will never mention the word *baug* a tiger while in the jun-

gles ; they will not work on Thursdays ; and in some parts the Sunday is a day of rest. They are firmly impressed with the idea that a tiger of his own accord will never attack a man, but when he does so, he is led on by a fairy, who rides on the tiger and urges him on.

The fakeers or *geanees* are easily distinguished in the Soonderbuns ; they are invariably quick intelligent men, with sharp eyes and a wild look about the face. They have great influence ; not a man will step out of his boat and enter the jungle, unless preceded by a *geanee* or fakeer, not a follower or beater will attend a sportsman in the forest, unless he engages the services of one of these men to scare the tigers away, or to shut their mouths. We have sometimes thought they are the followers of some man who had discovered the secret of taming, or terrifying tigers, similar to the art or power possessed by Mr. Rarey over horses. These men do not even pretend to have the least influence over rhinoceros or buffaloes, but only over tigers, and certainly their faith in their supposed power is very strong.

To the sportsman, the Soonderbuns during the cold season is a great treat. It is true there are no elephants there to shoot from, and even if there were, they would be useless in the forest ; but it is a pleasure to roam the pathless woods, to trust to your own skill and to your own daring, and not to be indebted for sport to the skill of your *mahout*. There, as every one knows, we have the royal Bengal tiger in his native home, lord of the forest, with none to dispute with him a fat hog or a fat deer. There is the huge rhinoceros with his single horn, a veritable unicorn, lazily feeding all night on the young branches of the *kawrah* and *null*, and lying all day in great pits full of water, hollowed out by these monsters. There the spotted deer bound past you "a thing of life and light," at every open glade. At early dawn or sun-set, they are to be seen in herds of twenty and thirty, feeding on the sea shore, with the dark wood on one side and the open blue sea on the other. There too, in the deep forest, where hardly a single ray of light penetrates the mass of foliage over head, suddenly from under your feet starts the barking deer, with his tiny tusks, and the woods re-echo with his wild and startling bark. In the more open parts, where stand short stumps of *null*, the fat hog-deer bounds before you ; there are the monkeys chattering away on the trees ; and where the *null* jungle is heavy, with the help of a few beaters, outleaps with a strong and mighty bound the great red-deer (the *gouse* of Bengal) with his antlered head and surpassing speed. There, in every direction, we see

the wild hog at his everlasting work busily digging away at the roots of the old trees and saluting you with a grunt, and a great rush of the unseen herd as they hurry away to the darker forest. There too, last but not least, is the monster buffalo, with carcass near as huge as that of the rhinoceros, but with short round horns. There also in the slime and mud, on the banks of nullah or river, is seen the great crocodile with his ugly head, frightful jaws, lizard-shaped body, and tough, hard skin, almost impervious to ball,—lazily gliding into the water and disappearing with a splash. These are the principal fauna of the Soonderbuns, and right good sport do they afford to a sportsman, who has a stout pair of legs, a good rifle on his shoulder, and a compass in his pocket. On the sea-side, particularly in the eastern Soonderbuns, where the virgin forest stands as planted by the hand of nature, the towering trees prevent in a great measure the growth of under-wood, and the sportsman may roam for miles with comparative ease; it is where the larger trees have been felled, and under-wood has sprung up, that it is difficult to penetrate the woods. There too, at times, the sportsman comes across a great opening in the heart of the forest, where huge trunks are lying rotting; and the sun is shining brightly down, dazzling the eyes with the sudden change from the twilight of the woods to the blazing light of the open glade. The natives call these openings *bageparahs*, and attribute them to the agency of their *Jins*, and mighty spirits of the woods. But from the manner in which the huge trunks are lying, some snapped off, others rooted up, and all as if beaten down by the agency of some wondrous force, there is no doubt the spirits of the wind and tempest have been at work, and the typhoon has spent his force there, the whirlwind twisting and contorting the great trees as if they had been so many reeds. There are several of these *bageparahs* in the woods, and they are well-known to the woodcutters. We have remarked that they are invariably within ten or twelve miles of the sea. They are the favorite haunts of the deer. There are sand hills to be seen on the shores of the Bay at the points of Barabassdea, Chaplee and Tiger Point, and these places are perfect sanitarium for health. The scenery also is beautiful, after the flat plains of Bengal. The country assumes somewhat the character of hill and dale, the trees seem purposely planted as in a park, the woods grow to the water's edge, and the blue expanse of the sea affords a pleasing variety to the view.

The feathered tribes of Bengal are to be met with in the Soonderbuns. The most common are the jungle fowl; the shrill clarion of the cock, and the cackling of the hen, with her

brood of chickens, domestic sounds common to a village, sound strange in the dense and lonely forest, without any human habitation for miles and miles. Wild geese and ducks of various kinds are to be found in abundance on the sea coast, and on the banks of the larger streams. The snipe we believe breed in the Soonderbuns, for they are to be found at all seasons of the year. Quail are also found in the cultivated parts, in the stumps of the *dhan*; and the strong, clear whistle or call of the grey-curlew is a familiar sound in all the rivers and creeks during the cold season. There is a bird which the natives call *mudduntak*, it stands about four feet high, and is precisely like the common *hargelah* or adjutant, so common in Calcutta, but without the bag—it has about eight or ten long white feathers or plumes below the tail, each feather is about ten or twelve inches long, and the finest are to be gathered in February and March. This bird is greatly sought after by native *shikaries*; it is only met with in the deep forest, and never beyond twenty miles from the sea; the plumes sell for their weight in silver. We are not aware that these birds are to be found in other parts of Bengal, and even in the Soonderbuns they are becoming scarce from the numbers shot by the *shikaries* for their plumes. The name of the bird is *Leptoptilos Argula*, and the plumes are known as Marabón plumes.

The Soonderbuns, though almost within sight of Calcutta, is an unknown land to the generality of our readers; we have therefore been purposely minute in our descriptions. We anticipate bright things for that land of flood and forest. Lord Dalhousie's rules, we have no doubt, will accomplish the purpose for which they were passed; the allotments bordering on the district of the 24-pergunnahs, those on the Mutlah and in its vicinity, and the lands in the eastern Soonderbuns, will in the course of a few years be brought into cultivation; we despair only of the forest bordering on the Jessore district, on account of the desertion of the zemindarree lands adjoining that part of the jungles, and we believe other measures must be adopted before the Jessore Soonderbuns will be reclaimed. The forest in this direction is *yearly* gaining on the cultivation. It has already extended to the Coirah river, and even villages to the north of that river are being deserted. Three-fourths of Pergunah Jameerah which borders on the forest, is already under jungle. The proposed Railway to the head of the Mutlah, and the cultivation of cotton, are already acting as stimulants to the clearing of the jungles. Nor must we forget that the Soonderbuns may be regarded as the granary of Bengal. Hundreds of reapers come from different parts of Bengal to assist in reaping and gathering the rich harvest, and carry away boats loaded with

rice, receiving in some parts a fifth and in others even a fourth of the quantity reaped, in return for their labor. The country is in a great measure independent of rain, the rice crop seldom fails, and an acre of land yields five times as much as it yields in the cultivated districts. The Lieut. Governor of Bengal has turned his attention to the improvement of the great traffic channels of the Soonderbuns; towing paths and bridges are being constructed in different parts, shorter and more convenient routes have been directed to be surveyed, and the entire passage has been placed under the superintendence of a civil engineer. Police boats patrol the rivers and creeks for the protection of the native craft, under the command of a European constable; a deputy magistrate has been located at Kallegunge, another at Khoolnah, and a third will be immediately stationed on the Bulissur river. A police station has been placed in the heart of the Soonderbuns, where river decoities were recently so frequent. These improvements we owe to the Lieut. Governor of Bengal, and we have no doubt as the resources of the Soonderbuns are developed, this tract of land will continue to attract the fostering care of the Bengal Government.
