

BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

HOWRAH.

Evols. 1-7

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CHAPTER VII.

NATURAL CALAMITIES.

EARTHQUAKE shocks are felt occasionally, but as a rule do little damage. The severest shock in the memory of the present generation occurred on the 12th June 1897. It damaged many of the masonry buildings in Howrah town and brought down a number of the weakest. There are also records of earthquakes damaging houses in Howrah town in 1737, 1812 and 1857. EARTH-
QUAKES.

Howrah does not lie on the usual track of cyclones coming up from the Bay of Bengal, but occasionally it is visited by them. The earliest of which there appears to be any record occurred in 1737 at the same time as the earthquake mentioned above. An account published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of 1738 runs as follows:—"On the 30th September last happened a furious hurricane in the Bay of Bengal, attended with a very heavy rain, which raised 15 inches of water in five hours, and a violent earthquake which threw down abundance of houses, and, as the storm reached 60 leagues up the river, it is computed that 20,000 ships, barks, sloops, boats, canoes, etc., have been cast away. A prodigious quantity of cattle of all sorts, a great many tigers and several rhinoceroses were drowned: even a great many caymans were stifled by the furious agitation of the waters, and an innumerable quantity of birds were beat down into the river by the storm. Two English ships of 500 tons were thrown into a village about 200 fathoms from the bed of the river Ganges, broke to pieces, and all the people drowned pell-mell amongst the inhabitants and cattle. Barks of 60 tons were blown two leagues up the land over the tops of high trees. The water rose, in all, 40 feet higher than usual. The English ships which drove ashore and broke to pieces were the *Decker*, *Devonshire* and *Newcastle*, and the *Pelham* is missing. A French ship was drove on shore and bulged; after the wind and water abated they opened the hatches and took out several bales of merchandize, etc., but the man who was in the hold to sling the bales suddenly ceased working, nor by calling him could they get any reply, on which they sent down another but heard nothing of him, which very much added to their fear, so that for some time no one would venture down. At CYCLONES.