



and respected of the gang to become his *gooroo*. This word appears to be derived from the *goor*, or "coarse sugar," which forms an important ingredient in the ceremonies of initiation; and the office of the person honoured with this title is, to introduce the aspirant to the actual exercise of his profession; to instruct him in the science of hangmanship; and to preside over the rites by which the pupil is to be consecrated to his diabolical work. Precautions are taken that the young beginner may not be embarrassed by difficulties. A victim is selected for his first essay in guilt, whose strength is below the average; and the chosen period of operation is at the moment when the senses of the traveller are bewildered by being suddenly roused from sleep. While the latter is reposing himself, the preparation takes place. The gooroo takes the pupil into a field, accompanied by three or four of the older members of the gang. The ceremonies commence by the whole party facing in the direction in which they intend to move. The gooroo then proceeds to take the auspices. Having invoked a favourable sign from the goddess, half an hour is allowed for the fulfilment of their wishes. If, in the course of that time, the required sign is obtained, all is well, and the goddess is believed to regard the attempt of the young Thug with benignity; but if no sign is obtained, or if it is of an unfavourable nature, the ambition of the novice is for that time disappointed, and



and the destined victim must fall by hands already practised in the murderous work.

If the sanction of the goddess be indicated, the group retire, in high spirits, to the place where the sleeping traveller awaits his death. The gooroo then, turning to the west, takes a handkerchief, and ties at one end a knot, in which he encloses a rupee. This knot is of a peculiar description, and the privilege of tying it confined to those who have been regularly introduced to their occupation. The clumsy intruder, who has not participated in the advantages derived from a regular apprenticeship to the art, leaves the end of the *roomal* exposed: the more accomplished practitioner manifests his science and elegance by concealing the end within the knot. This is the mark of his regular induction, and the ribbon of the order to which he has the honour to belong.

The knot being duly tied by the gooroo, the roomal is delivered to the incipient strangler, who receives it with all the reverence due to so precious a gift, bestowed by such venerated hands. The interest of the scene now increases. The executioner, attended by a *ghumgeea*, or holder of hands, stands before his victim, whose tranquil state is but an emblem of that deeper sleep which is about to seal his eyes for ever. His last earthly slumber is gradually interrupted—the victim is roused for slaughter—the fatal noose is cast over
his



his neck by the hand of the youthful assassin, and, with the aid of the attendant ruffian, the work is soon completed. One human being has passed into eternity ;—another has taken the last step in guilt and infamy !

The horrible work is over ; and, so far from being actuated by any sensations of pity or remorse, the wretch, who has attested the strength of his nerves and the weakness of his moral perceptions, knows no feeling but that of delight flowing from gratified ambition. To his instructor, guide, and priest, his gratitude is boundless : he bows before his gooroo, and touches his feet with both hands, in token of the deepest and most affectionate respect. But his gratitude, if confined to the person of his preceptor, would be felt to be inadequate and niggardly : the relations and friends of the reverend man are entitled to share the warm feelings of the now-accomplished assassin ; and to them he tenders the same homage which he has previously paid to his father in crime.

The *thibao*, or happy auspice, is once more anxiously looked for ; and as soon as it is afforded, the newly-admitted strangler opens the knot tied in the handkerchief by the hands of his tutor, and takes out the rupee which had been placed within it. This coin, with all the other silver which he has, the pupil presents to the preceptor : the latter adds his own stock of money to the offering, and, after



after setting apart one rupee and a quarter to the purchase of *goor* (coarse sugar) for the Tapoonee, the remainder is expended in sweatmeats.

The Tapoonee is a solemn sacrifice, performed after every murder. The goor (sugar) is placed upon a blanket or sheet, spread upon a clean spot. On the cloth near the goor is deposited the consecrated pickaxe, and a piece of silver for an offering. The Thug whose reputation for professional learning stands the highest, and who is supposed to enjoy the largest share of the favour of the goddess, also takes his place on the cloth, with his face to the west : the most accomplished and scientific stranglers are associated with him in this place of honour. The number of this select body must be an even one ; but its extent is limited only by the size of the cloth. Those of the higher grade, who are unable to find accommodation among their brethren, and the vulgar herd who have no claim to distinction, arrange themselves around the covering which bears the sacrifice, and those who preside over it. The leader then makes a hole in the ground, and, having poured into it a little of the goor, clasps his hands in the attitude of fervent devotion, and, raising them in harmony with his up-turned eyes to heaven, gives utterance to the following prayer :—" Great goddess ! as you vouchsafed one lac and sixty thousand rupees to Joora Naig and Koduck Bunwanee in their need, so we pray thee fulfil our desires !" The
enumera-



enumeration of the precise number of thousands bestowed by the goddess upon her favourites is not very poetical; but the petition is so entirely accordant with Thug feeling, that no doubt can be entertained as to the sincerity with which it is offered. All the assembled followers repeat the prayer after the leader; and the latter, after sprinkling water on the pit and pickaxe, puts a little of the goor upon the head of each Thug who has been so fortunate as to obtain a seat upon the carpet. The signal for strangling is now given, as if a murder were actually about to be committed; and the Thugs who have received the portions of goor, eat them in solemn silence. The most perfect stillness prevails, till these privileged persons have swallowed the precious morsels distributed to them, and diluted the repast by drinking some water. The goor is now given to all whose rank entitles them to partake of it; the greatest care being taken that no part shall fall to the ground. If, in spite of watchfulness, such a mischance should occur, the fallen fragments are punctiliously collected, and put into the pit. The misfortune is alleviated, as far as human prudence can go, by at least preserving the hapless relics of the sugar consecrated to murder, from contamination by the foot of man.

The sacred goor is not imparted to all Thugs indiscriminately: two conditions are necessary, to qualify



qualify them for a share of it. The participant must be in a state of freedom—servitude barring his admission to the privilege: the only remaining disqualification is found in innocence of murder, either actual or comparative. None but the practical assassin can be allowed to partake of the sacred goor: no one but he whose hands have performed the office of strangling is thought worthy of the food which derives its sanctity from the prayers of stranglers, aided, it is to be supposed, by the deglutition of the privileged, to which a portion of it has been submitted. For those who cannot boast the name of freemen, or whom youth or fear or ill-fortune has withheld from performing on any of their fellow men the honourable act of strangulation, some sugar is set apart, before it acquires its holy character. This the excluded eat, at the time when their more-favoured associates are gratified by the taste of the sanctified article.

On the performance of this ceremony, after the maiden effort of a newly-admitted strangler, the proselyte of course takes his place among the select, and receives his share of consecrated sugar. The sweetmeats which have been provided are distributed among the gang generally.

The expedition being closed, and the members of the community having retired to their quarters, the happy individual, who has passed from a state of pupilage into the maturity of a practised assassin,



assassin, entertains his gooroo at a feast as magnificent as his circumstances will afford. If he have the means of defraying the expense, not only the immediate members of the gooroo's family, but all his relations, are invited, and the grateful murderer equips his tutor, from head to foot, with a complete array of new vestments: the same compliment is paid to the gooroo's lady, and sometimes to all his relatives. The hospitality of the gooroo is exercised, in return, by inviting his pupil to a future meeting. The connexion between them is henceforward indissoluble; and the most intimate and sacred relations of nature are considered as nothing, in comparison with it. A Thug will rather betray his father, than the gooroo by whom he has been introduced to the honours of his profession.

The dignity and sanctity with which murder is invested by the creed of the Thugs—and a mode of murder, too, marked by cowardice and meanness no less than the blackest atrocity—afford lamentable proof of the inseparable connexion subsisting between the corruption of religion and the corruption of morals. To obliterate all religious feeling from the heart of man is a difficult, if not an impossible task: to substitute superstitious belief for reasonable faith, is, unhappily, a very easy one; and sound morals invariably disappear with sound religion. Indeed, between false religion and false morals there is a mutual action and re-action.



The wayward desires of man lead him to indulge in that which true religion forbids : he therefore seeks shelter in a false one. Again, superstition sanctions, and even commands, practices, against which pure morality revolts: hence the moral judgment is depraved, the restraints of conscience abolished, and that feeling, which should conduct men to all that is good and pure and excellent, becomes the pilot to every vice, and the prompter of the most horrible crimes.

The effect of the consecrated sugar or goor is believed to be irresistible. Captain Sleeman, having reproached some of the fraternity on account of a murder marked by many ferocious and unmanly features, one of the party replied: "We all feel pity sometimes; but the goor of the Tuponee changes our nature: it would change the nature of a horse. Let any man once taste of that goor, and he will be a Thug, though he know all the trades and have all the wealth in the world. I never wanted food: my mother's family was opulent—her relations high in office. I have been high in office myself; and became so great a favourite wherever I went, that I was sure of promotion; yet I was always miserable when absent from my gang, and obliged to return to Thuggee. My father made me taste of that fatal goor when I was yet a mere boy: and if I were to live a thousand years, I should never be able to follow any other trade."

The



The Tuponee is not the only sacrifice offered by the Thugs to their patroness. Throughout India, another feast is observed; but to which, in Hindostan, no peculiar name appears to be allotted; it being called *Kurhae kurna*, or *Kurhahee dena*—terms indiscriminately applied, by all classes of persons, to a feast of any kind. In the Deccan it is honoured by the especial name of *Kote*. The requisites for the due celebration of this festival are goats—for the feast must be graced by an animal sacrifice—rice, ghee (butter), spices, and spirits. These being collected, the parties assemble in a room, the doors and windows of which must be so closed as to exclude all observation from without. The floor must be carefully cleaned, and then covered with an incrustation of cow-dung. In the centre, a square is drawn, with a mixture of turmeric and lime. Upon this square is spread a white sheet; and upon the sheet, the rice, after being boiled, is deposited. Upon the rice is placed the half of a cocoa-nut, filled with ghee; in which is inserted two wicks, lying across each other, each lighted at both ends, so as to afford four lights. If a cocoa-nut cannot be found, a vessel of dough of the same form will answer. This kind of lamp is occasionally made by all classes of people, and is called *chou mukh*: it is only in the Deccan, however, that the form of the lamp is an object of attention. In Hindostan they are less particular:



and there also the drawing of the square is omitted.

Upon the white sheet is now placed the consecrated pickaxe and the knife of the gang, with all the spirits brought for the feast. The selection of the goats is the next point; more than will be required are provided, in order that the goddess may have the advantage of a pick. Two are selected, black, and perfect in all their parts. They are bathed, washed, and made to face the west: and if they shake themselves lustily, to throw off the moisture from their bodies, this makes the Thugs happy, and seals the fate of the goats—they are immediately sacrificed, as having been accepted by Davy. If one only shakes himself, the omen is sufficient, and both are sacrificed—if neither of them, it is a sign that Davy has rejected both; and the party eat the rice and drink the spirits, but postpone the sacrifice to another day, regarding the feast in the light of a simple meal. This they do if any other bad omen is observed on that day, considering the goddess to be displeased with something.

The mode of sacrificing the goats varies; and the variations are not, like those affecting the square, and the form of the lamp, governed by locality: the custom is determined by the peculiar creed which the party of Thugs happen to profess. Mahometans cut the throats of the animals, during the



the repetition of a certain form of devotion: Hindoos strike off their heads. It has been mentioned, that the fate of these animals depends upon the receipt of a propitious sign from the goddess; and the duration of life in the rejected animals is involved in the same chance. If the desired sign be obtained by the honoured beasts shaking themselves with good will, not only are they sacrificed, but all the other goats purchased for the occasion, albeit unworthy of being devoted to the goddess, share the fate of their more illustrious fellows. They do not die with equal honour: the chosen pair ministers to the glory of the goddess of Destruction: the remainder die, but it is only to gratify the appetites of the Thug fraternity, by whom they are forthwith eaten. The withholding of the required sign, however, operates as a reprieve for the lives of all; and the meaner, as well as the nobler and more perfect animals, are permitted to live till a future day.

If the feast take place, a pit is dug, into which is thrown the skins, bones, and offal; for nothing brought in for this sacred feast must be seen by any living thing but a Thug eligible to partake of it. So important is care upon this point, and so fearful are the results which follow unfavourable omens at this sacrifice, that every part of the proceeding is watched with the most intense anxiety. If any man not a Thug see the lamps, or any part of the



the preparations; or if fire falls on the white sheet, and burns any part of it; or any animal touches the bones or offal; the leader of the gang must die within the year, and all the members be involved in some great calamity.

Secrecy is indispensable: when they are on an expedition, the Thugs must conceal themselves and their ceremonies by means of curtains, if they have not walls. After feasting, they must all wash their hands and faces over the pit, and then fill it up securely.

The expenses of this feast are defrayed commonly by subscription, when it is called the *Punchaetee Kote*. It is not confined to any particular season, but is most common during the Hooly or Dusera festivals, at which time it may take place on any day of the week; at other times, it is confined to Tuesdays and Fridays. Sometimes the feast is given by the leader or any individual member of a gang. No Thug is eligible to partake of it, in any part of India, till he has attained the rank of a Strangler; unless his family have been Thugs for at least two generations. The existence of contamination in the camp prevents its celebration at all.

The superstitions of the Thugs are all of Hindoo origin: yet Mahometans adopt them with a belief equally implicit, and a devotion equally ardent. The greater number of the Thugs in the South of
India



India are said to be Mahometans : not only do they profess to embrace the creed of Mecca, but, to a considerable extent, they follow it consistently. They marry, inherit, eat, and drink, according to the Koran : their devotions are statedly performed as the rule of Mahometan orthodoxy prescribes ; and the Paradise to which their hopes are directed, is that pourtrayed by the cold, unspiritual, and sensual imagination of the false prophet to whom they profess allegiance : yet they pay divine honours to the impersonation of Destruction, which, in the eyes of all sound Mahometans, must be idolatry—a crime severely denounced in the Koran, and held by all good Mussulmans in abhorrence. These inconsistencies they find it hard to reconcile : sometimes they deny the worship of the goddess—the fact, however, is indisputable. At other times they seek to identify the patroness of the Thugs with a heroine of their own creed, to the great scandal of their brethren not initiated in the mysteries of Thuggee. Their mode of escaping the difficulties, in which they are involved by the inconsistency of their creed with their practice, is illustrated by a conversation held by Captain Slemen with some Mahometan Thugs.

Q. (by Capt. S.) “ Has Bhowanee (the goddess) been anywhere named in the Koran ? ”

Sahib. “ No where.”

Here



Here (says Captain S.) a Mussulman Thug from Hindostan interposed; and said, he thought Bhowanee, and Fatima, the daughter of Mahommed, and wife of Alee, were one and the same person; and that it was Fatima who invented the use of the roomal, to strangle the great demon Rukut-beej-dana: which led to a discussion between him and some of my Mussulman native officers, who did not like to find the amiable Fatima made a goddess of Thuggee—an “Iphigenia in Tauris.” The Thug was a sturdy wrangler; and, in the estimation of his associate Thugs, had, I think, the best of the argument.

Q. “Then has Bhowanee any thing to do with your Paradise?”

Sahib. “Nothing.”

Q. “She has no influence upon your future state?”

Sahib. “None.”

Q. “Does Mahommed, your prophet, anywhere sanction crimes like yours;—the murder in cold blood of your fellow-creatures, for the sake of their money?”

Sahib. “No.”

Q. “Does he not say that such crimes will be punished by God in the next world?”

Sahib. “Yes.”

Q. “Then do you never feel any dread of punishment hereafter.”

Sahib.



Sahib. “Never; we never murder unless the omens are favourable; and we consider favourable omens as the mandates of the deity.”

Q. “What deity?”

Sahib. “Bhowanee.”

Q. “But Bhowanee, you say, has no influence upon the welfare, or otherwise, of your soul hereafter?”

Sahib. “None, we believe; but she influences our fates in this world; and what she orders in this world, we believe that God will not punish in the next.”

The conjoint adoration of the deities of different and discordant creeds is neither new nor uncommon in the East. In the Old Testament, various instances are recorded, in which nations, as well as individuals, paid a divided homage to the True God and to a multiplicity of idols: and in various parts of India, the Mahometans, from having long been surrounded by a Hindoo population, have been led to adopt many of their opinions and practices. The principle, indeed, upon which this approximation is formed, is not peculiar to the East. Everywhere, time not only abates the fervour both of religious and sectarian zeal, but causes many of the distinctive marks of original difference to disappear, and tinges the entire mass with the colour of the party which, either from numbers or activity, acquires an ascendant. The natural tendency of man to superstition



stition gives to that gloomy power, in any form, an extraordinary facility of access to his heart. The weak and the wicked alike flee to it for a refuge: the former, from a morbid apprehension of undefined evil; the latter, from the upbraidings of conscious guilt. To the one class, superstition presents the alluring prospect of perfect assurance, in place of the humble faith and hope which are the characteristics of genuine piety: to the other, she holds out the offer of peace of mind upon easier terms than true Religion proposes. It is not a subject for surprise, then, that, at all periods, the votaries of Superstition, in its multiform ramifications, should have far outnumbered the faithful adherents of Religious Truth: the errors of the understanding, and the depravity of the will, are continually furnishing their recruits to swell the myriad ranks of the army of Superstition.

The principle which assigns the distribution of good and evil, in this world, to an inferior divinity is not very dissimilar from one which, in Christian countries, has been maintained by grave writers;—which excludes the Superior Being from the ordinary course of human affairs, leaving them to chance and accident, and human passion; and confines His providence to an occasional interference in what are considered great emergencies in this life, and to the final retribution of good and evil in the life to come.



CHAP. V.

THE movements of the followers of Thuggee are invariably governed by omens, with which they believe their goddess favours them, for the guidance of their course. Nothing is undertaken without a careful consultation of these sources of knowledge; and the occurrence of an accidental and unlooked-for sign is, in some cases, sufficient to derange the most fixed plans, and even to lead to the abandonment of the richest booty, though almost in possession. These omens are numerous; and the learning of the Thugs consists in an acquaintance with them.

The manifestation of the auspice or omen on the right hand is called *Thibao*; on the left, *Pilhahoo*. If the *Pilhahoo* promises good, according to their rules of augury, it is always the better from being followed by the *Thibao* soon after. If it threatens evil, that evil is mitigated by the *Thibao*. Different casts and clans of Thugs have, in some few instances, different rules for interpreting these sounds and appearances; and what is considered to threaten evil by some, is thought to promise good



good by others. If members of sects, holding conflicting opinions, act in concert, they follow the rules of the leader who opens the expedition, or who leads the greatest number of the Thugs engaged. The Pilhadoo, or omen on the left, must be observed first, on opening an expedition; and it must be followed by the Thibadoo immediately after, or the expedition cannot be entered upon. The Pilhadoo perceived on leaving any stage during the expedition, or on preparing to leave it, promises good. The Thibadoo threatens evil, and the gang halts. On reaching the end of any stage, the Pilhadoo threatens evil, and the party must move on without resting. The Thibadoo promises good, and they rest securely. There are some few exceptions to the general rule, that, for the Pilhadoo, the omen must be on the left. Some animals must be heard or seen on the right to constitute the Pilhadoo, and *vice versa*; but these are very few. These are a few of the general rules of augury.

When preparing for an expedition, the auspices are solemnly taken. The most learned Pundit that can be procured is seated on a blanket with the leader, and four of the Thugs the most respectable in their vocation from birth and character: the rest of the gang sit around, outside. They then place before the Pundit, as an offering, a brass plate (*thalee*), with some rice, wheat, and two copper coins upon it. The leader asks the Pundit, respect-



respectfully, what day will be proper to open the expedition; and he, after due search and ceremony, pronounces the day, the hour, and the direction. Thus far the preliminaries. On the day appointed, they fill a brass jug with water; which the leader holds in his right hand, suspended by the mouth, at his side. In a clean white handkerchief they tie up five knots of turmeric, two copper coins, one silver coin, and the indispensable pickaxe. This pickaxe the leader holds upon his breast, with his left hand. He now turns in the direction indicated by the priest, and moves on slowly, followed by his gang, to a field or garden outside the village. On reaching the spot thought best adapted for the purpose, he stands with his face still in the direction indicated, his left hand on his breast, his right, with the jug, by his side; and, with his eyes lifted towards heaven, he says, "Great goddess! universal mother! if this our meditated expedition be fitting in thy sight, vouchsafe us help, and the signs of thy approbation!" All the Thugs present repeat this prayer after the leader, and join in the praises and worship of the goddess. If within half an hour they hear or see the Pilhadoo (or auspice on the left), it signifies that the deity has taken them by the left hand, to lead them on. If the Thibadoo (or omen on the right) follow, it signifies that the deity has vouchsafed to take them by the right hand also. The leader then puts the jug on the ground, and



and sits down with his face in the same direction. He keeps the silver and copper pice and turmeric during the whole expedition, and usually gives them, on his return, as an offering to some poor Brahman; but if the expedition has been very prosperous, he keeps them, to use again in opening others.

The leader remains seated, in the same spot, seven hours; while his followers bring him food, and make all necessary preparations for their journey. When all is ready, they advance a few paces, in the precise direction indicated; but afterwards they may turn to the right or left, as impediments or incentives present themselves. On arriving at the first stage, they must hear or see the Thibao first; and the omen is improved by the Pilhao afterwards. Having had the auspices favourable thus far, they proceed next morning to the nearest water; and there eat the goor and the dal, which the leader takes with him. Any bad omen after this can be averted by the usual sacrifices, offerings, and observance; but any bad omen before it, involves the necessity of returning, and opening the expedition anew. If the jug should drop from the Jemadar's hand, he must, they think, die within that or the following year, inevitably. If they hear any one weeping for the dead on leaving the village, it threatens great evil. If they meet the corpse of any one belonging to the village, it is a very bad omen: or if they meet an oil-vender, a carpenter, a potter,



a potter, a dancing-master, a blind or lame man, a fakeer with a brown waistband, or a jogee with long-traced hair—all threaten evil.

If, after eating the goor and dal, they get the Thibao, it assures them a rich booty within a month and a half. It is good, also, to see a fair in any village, but their own, on the road. A corpse from any village but their own is a good omen : so, also, is it good to see a party of friends weeping round a woman taking leave of her parental roof to go to that of her husband.

They must not open an expedition in July, September, nor December; nor on a Wednesday or Thursday.

But, however happily business may have been commenced, success is liable to be postponed by a multiplicity of ominous appearances; some of which are fatal, while others may be got over by sacrifices. The turban, being a covering of great honour, is invested in the catalogue of omens, with a due degree of importance. A Thug, except in Bengal, never moves out without his turban. If a turban is set on fire, it threatens great evil; and the gang must, if near home, return, and wait seven days: if at a distance, an offering of goor is made; and the individual, to whom the turban belonged, alone returns home. If the turban fall off, it is an omen almost as bad, and requires the same sacrifices.

It is a bad omen to meet, on the first day of an expedition,



expedition, any person who has lost a limb; and, happily for the maimed, it is equally bad to murder them. To sneeze is a fearful thing at setting out on an expedition; and the nasal enormity must be expiated by sacrifice. Bad as the omen is to the Thugs, it is unquestionably good for their intended victims. Sneezing entitles all the travellers within the gripe of the assassins to the privilege of an escape; and no one dare to put them to death.

If a party, on leaving home to enter on an expedition, meet a woman bearing a pitcher full of water on her head, it promises a prosperous journey and a safe return: the omen is still better if the female be in a state of pregnancy: but if the pitcher which she carries be empty, the tide of fate is reversed, and the indication is one of misfortune and calamity. An empty pitcher is, indeed, under any circumstances, regarded by Thugs with as much aversion as by tipplers.

Several practices, which among certain classes of Thugs are observed, in order to secure the favour of Fortune, are neglected by others. The Thugs of the Jumaldehee and Lodaha clans always make the youngest Thug kick the body of the first person they murder on an expedition, five times, on the back, thinking that it will bring them good luck. The Moteeas do the same; but the practice does not appear to be general.

The brute creation afford a vast fund of instruction



struction upon every point of proceeding; and the Thugs are assiduous in consulting, and availing themselves of it. The ass is an adviser, to whom extraordinary deference is paid. The Thugs deem the omen of the ass the most important of all, whether it threatens evil or promises good. "*Sou puk, heroo ek Dunteroo*—The ass is equal to a hundred birds," is a maxim in augury. The omen of the ass is also superior to that of all quadrupeds. If they hear one bray on the left (Pilhaoo), on opening an expedition, and it is soon after repeated on the right (Thibao), they believe that nothing on earth can prevent their success during that expedition, though it should last for years. In the progress of an expedition, the ass is still a most valuable and respected guide. If, on reaching any stage, or while halting at any stage, it is heard on the left, the party must leave the place and go on: for such situations the omen is good on the right. If the ass approaches the gang, braying from the front, it is a very bad omen, and is called *Mathaphore*, "the head-breaker."

The jackal plays a great part in the code of signals in use for communicating the intentions of the goddess to her followers. A pair of jackals crossing the road in front of the gang, either from the right or from the left, is a very bad omen, indicating imprisonment and chains; but a single jackal, passing from right to left, promises good fortune. The Thugs have



a proverb, "*Bacan Geedee Sona Leedee*—A jackal crossing from right to left, brings gold." If, however, the beast passes from left to right, the omen is somewhat untoward, but is not much regarded. The cries of the jackals afford a variety of omens. First, there is the ordinary cry of a single jackal, which they call *Bhalee*, or *Barhohee*; secondly, the general clamour of a number, termed *Raureen*; thirdly, the *Ehkareea*, or short call of the jackal, in the attempt to make which he seems as if suddenly checked. Any one of these calls, heard during the day, threatens great evil; and the gang quit the country in which they hear it, leaving untouched any persons they have inveigled, however wealthy. The first, when heard by night, must be interpreted according to the ordinary rules for the Thibao and Pilhao—right and left. The second, heard at night, is good on the left, and of little or no importance on the right, except on the day of opening the expedition. Heard then on the right, it threatens evil; and the expedition must be suspended. The third is invariably bad, whether heard by night or day. The noise of jackals fighting, called *Dant,hee*, is also a very bad omen, and involves the necessity of leaving the part of the country in which the gang hears it. The following, which appears to be an extract from a journal kept by Captain Sleeman, shews, not only the influence which a belief in augury has over these people,



people, but also how tenaciously they cling to their old faith, even when engaged in capturing their former associates.—“25th May, 1835, I had ordered a party of Sepahees, with some approvers, to proceed this morning towards Gwalior, in search of some Thugs who have lately found an asylum there. About nine o'clock last night, one of the native officers came to tell me that they could not move till afternoon to-day, as they had heard a bad omen. I have just been to the jail, and discovered that this bad omen was the Ekareea, heard about eight o'clock last night. Nunhooa, one of the approvers, declared, that on leaving Saugor, about three months ago, for Indore, he heard the Ekareea; and not attending to it, he got the wound, which he received from a sword, in arresting a noted Thug Bhyroo, the son of Himmuto, between Indore and Baroda. These men never go out to arrest their associates, or to take up the bodies of wounded travellers, without taking the auspices; though they rarely tell us of it.”

The wolf might be considered a not inappropriate pilot to guide the Thugs in their dark career. He does not, however, enjoy the reputation of being very friendly to his human brethren. If any of these animals cross their path from left to right, it is commonly admitted to be a bad omen; if from right to left, there seems to be some doubt whether it be good or bad—an unfortunate circumstance,



but not particularly discreditable to Thug learning, seeing that in almost all sciences there are disputable points to exercise the talents of the ingenious. The call of the wolf is, on the whole, an awkward symptom: if heard during the day, it is very bad, and the gang must immediately quit the country. If between midnight and day-light, it is also bad: if between evening and midnight, indifferent: between midday and sunset, it is not so bad as between sunrise and midday. They call it the weeping (*Chimmama*) of the wolf, and consider the sound mournful. A single wolf portends more than a pair, furnishing one of their most important omens.

The deer contributes his quota of telegraphic communication. If a single small deer crosses their road from right to left, it threatens evil. If from left to right, it promises good; but neither its promises nor threats are considered very important. A herd of small deer, at all times, and under all circumstances, promises a meeting with other Thugs, and is considered good. The Deccan Thugs consider the crossing of a single deer, either from left to right, or right to left, a bad omen.

The movements and cries of the hare are not unnoticed. The passing of a hare across the road in front of the gang is a bad omen, either from right to left, or left to right. The call of this animal at night, on the left, is a good omen: on the right,

it



it is a bad one, and the Thugs, on hearing it, suffer all travellers to escape: if they kill any one whom they have with them at the time, they will find no booty on him, or what they find will tend to their ruin. This is not all: it is perfectly well established, that they will perish in the jungles after hearing the fatal signal, and that the hare will drink water out of their skulls if they do not avert this awful fate by sacrifice.

The elegant antelope seems out of place when brought into association with Thugs; but he has, nevertheless, been pressed into the service. If either a single antelope, or a pair, are seen crossing the road from left to right, it is a good omen; if from right to the left, very bad.

The dog enjoys the prerogative of putting a veto on the proceedings of the Thugs; and the shaking of his head is fraught with more meaning than that of Lord Burleigh's. On witnessing this expression of canine dissent, the Thugs evince their deference to the sagacious beast who affords it, by abandoning the design in hand, whatever it may be.

The fighting of cats is a matter which receives especial regard; and as these miniature tigers are tolerably pugnacious, they furnish abundant food for observation. If the music, by which the combats of these animals is enlivened, be heard during the first watch of the night, it promises good; if after the first watch, it is called "*Kalee kee Maunj*,"
and



and threatens evil; but the evil may be averted in the morning, by gargling the mouth with a little sour milk, and then squirting it out. The fighting of cats during the day is a very bad omen, and threatens great evil: if the cats fall down from a height while fighting, it is still worse. These ills are beyond the healing influence of sour milk, and call for nothing less than sacrifice.

Birds, no less than the four-footed creation, figure in the mysteries of Thug augury: and the owl occupies a chief place; to which, indeed, it is justly entitled, by its proverbial gravity and wisdom. The loud full call of the large owl is interpreted according to the ordinary rules of right and left. A reciprocation of the cry, between two of these intelligent birds, is however a bad omen. This, by the Deccan Thugs, is termed *Raja* or *Mahee*; and by those of Hindostan, *Thakur*. To both it is a signal of ill; and to their intended victims, a passport of safety. The low gurgling sound made by the large owl, which resembles the bubbling of a *huka* or *goorgooree*, always threatens evil. If the Thugs hear it on first setting out, they must suspend their journey for some days. If they hear it on the left, after the expedition has been opened, they must advance far and fast, for danger pursues in the rear: if on the right, they must halt, as danger lies in front. The loud and continued chirping or calling of the small owl, if made by the bird while sitting, promises good;



good; if while flying, it threatens evil. The chatter or call, when sitting, is interpreted according to the rules of the Thibao or Pilhao. A low call of the small owl, called *Chireya*, always threatens evil.

The cry of the kite also affords tokens of good or ill fortune. Heard in the day-time, it is of little importance, and is interpreted according to their rules for the right and left hand signs; but heard during the *Kootub*, or interval between the first watch and day-break, it is called the *Kootub agasee*, a dreadful omen. If in camp, they get up and fly immediately, leaving untouched any person they may have inveigled, however wealthy. If they hear it after dark, but before the end of the first watch, they are not alarmed, as they consider the threatened evil to pass away in their sleep: in their own language, the "omen gets suffocated under their sides, as they turn in their sleep." It is the same with almost all bad omens that take place between evening and the end of the first watch.

The voice of the large mountain-crow is interpreted with some peculiarity. Contrary to the ordinary rules of augury, the Pilhao, in this omen, is the croaking on the right; and the Thibao the croaking on the left. If he croak from a tree either on the right or the left, it promises good; and if water be in sight, it is better. If heard from a tree while the gang are in camp, it promises a rich traveller on that spot; and the gang waits for him.



him. If he croak while on the back of a pig or buffalo, or from any dead body or skeleton, the omen is bad. If from the back of a cow, some Thugs think it a good, others a bad, omen. "Doctors differ" on this, as on many other points.

In this country, the partridge is of use only to afford amusement to the sportsman, and food to the epicure. The Thugs find in its cry an intimation of coming events. If heard while they are travelling, the call on the left promises good, and on the right threatens evil. If they are halting at the time, the call on the right is good; that on the left, bad. The Thugs have a proverb, and which gives the cry of the partridge another condition—*"Ratee bolee Teetura, Din ko bolee seear, Tuj chulee wa deysra, nuheen puree achanuk Dhar"*—If the partridge call at night, or the jackal during the day, quit that country, or you will be seized."

The blue jay is also a soothsayer, but of a minor order. If seen to the right, or crossing from the left to right, it promises good: if to the left, or crossing from the right to left, it promises no good, but threatens no evil; it is "a chip in porridge." The cry of the jay is altogether disregarded.

Meaner animals than either birds or quadrupeds are also instruments of auguring. If a snake crosses the road before or behind the gang, it is a bad omen; and they dare not go on, unless they can



can kill it. If they see it in any situation, it involves a sacrifice, unless killed.

With regard to the lizard, his voice is much more acceptable than his personal visitation. At whatever time and place Thugs hear the call of the lizard, they consider it a good omen; but the fall of a lizard upon a Thug, is a very bad one; and if it fall upon any garment, that garment must be given away in charity: if it fall upon the ground, it threatens nothing.

A careful attention to these and similar omens is regarded as indispensable to success. There are various rules, also, which no regular and consistent Thugs neglect. During the first seven days of an expedition, the families of those engaged in one expedition admit, or should admit, no visits from the families of Thugs who are absent on another expedition, lest the travellers destined for the one should go over to the other gang; neither should they eat any thing that has belonged to the families of such other Thugs. The Thugs engaged, ought not, till the seventh day, to dress any food in ghee, nor eat any animal food except fish. But abstinence alone is not sufficient to propitiate the favour of the goddess: habits of neatness and cleanliness must be, for the time, observed; and the indulgence of benevolent feeling is a deadly offence. At this period, the Thugs must not shave, nor allow their clothes to be washed by a dhoby,
nor



nor give in charity. Even charity to the brute creation, a prime virtue in the code of Eastern ethics, is suspended; for it is forbidden to bestow any food upon a dog, cat, or jackal. None of the party must bathe, nor eat sugar, except what the leader may have brought with him on setting out. Formerly, they never ate any salt or turmeric; but this regulation is obsolete. After this preparatory mortification, they, on the seventh day, indulge in a good meal; but it is necessary that greens of some kind should be a component part of it. During the whole time the expedition lasts, if within one year, they must take no milk, nor clean their teeth with a brush.

If the *Sonrka*, or first murder, takes place within the first seven days, or *Sathā*, they consider themselves relieved from all restraints. They ought not to murder, as the *Sonrka* (or first victim), any Brahman or Syad, nor any very poor man, nor any man with gold upon him, nor any man who has a quadruped with him, nor a dhobee, nor a sweeper, nor a teylee (oil-vender), nor a bhaut (bard), nor a kaet (a writer), nor a blind man, nor maimed persons, nor a leper, nor a dancing-woman, nor a pilgrim or devotee. Some of these descriptions of persons ought not, indeed, to be murdered at all; and none but the incorrigibly heterodox would think of opening an expedition by a professional operation upon any of them: but all sects recede from their
first



first principles. Some classes and individuals neglect these rules; and their misfortunes are attributed, principally, to this cause.

Captain Sleeman says, "Even the most sensible approvers, who have been with me for many years, as well Mussulmans as Hindoos, believe that their good or ill success always depended upon the skill with which the omens were discovered and interpreted, and the strictness with which they were observed and obeyed. One of the old Sindouse stock told me, in presence of twelve others from Hyderabad, Behar, the Dooab, Oude, Rajpootana, and Bundelcund, that had they not attended to these omens they could never have thrived as they did; and that, in ordinary cases of murder, a man seldom escaped after one of them; while they and their families had, for ten generations, thrived, though they had murdered hundreds of people. 'This,' said he, 'could never have been the case, had we not attended to omens, and had not omens been intended for us. There were always signs around us, to guide us to rich booty, and warn us of danger, had we been always wise enough to discern them, and religious enough to attend to them.'—Every Thug present concurred with him, from his soul."

The following colloquy, also contributed by Capt. Sleeman, will illustrate the opinions entertained by Thugs generally, as to the danger of associating with



with those who have not been regularly educated, the importance of attending to rules and omens, and the value and excellence of Thug learning.

Q. "You consider that a Borka (a leader) is capable of forming a gang, in any part of India to which he may be obliged to flee?"

Sahib and Nasir. "Certainly; in any part that we have seen of it."

Q. "Do you know any instance of it?"

Sahib and Nasir. "A great number. Mudee Khan was from the old Sindouse stock, and was obliged to emigrate after the attack upon that place. Many years afterwards, we met him in the Deccan; and he had then a gang of fifty Thugs, of all castes and descriptions. I asked him who they were: he told me that they were weavers, braziers, bracelet-makers, and all kinds of ragamuffins, whom he had scraped together about his new abode on the banks of the Herun and Nurbudda rivers, in the districts of Jebulpore and Nursingpore. He was a Mussulman; and so were Lal Khan, Kalee Khan, who formed gangs, after the Sindouse dispersion, along the same rivers."

Q. "Did they find the same patrons among the landholders and other heads of villages?"

Sahib and Nasir. "They everywhere made friends, by the same means; and without patrons they could not have thrived. They were obliged,
of



of course, to give them a liberal share of the booty."

Q. "But these men have all been punished; which does not indicate the protection of Davy?"

Sahib and Nasir. "It indicates the danger of scraping together such a set of fellows for Thuggee. They killed all people indiscriminately, women and men, of all castes and professions; and knew so little about omens, that they entered upon their expeditions, and killed people, in spite of such as the most ignorant ought to have known were prohibitive. They were punished in consequence, as we all knew that they would be; and we always used to think it dangerous to be associated with them, for even a few days. Ask many of them who are now here—Kureem Khan, Sheikh Kureem, Rumzanee, and others, whether this is not true; and whether they ever let go even a sweeper, if he appeared to have a rupee about him."

Q. "And you think, that if they had been well instructed in the signs and rules, and attended to them, they would have thrived?"

Sahib and Nasir. "Undoubtedly! so should we all."

Q. "You think that a Kuboola, or tyro, could not anywhere form a gang of Thugs of himself?"

Sahib and Nasir. "Never: he could know nothing of our rules of augury, or proceedings; and how could he possibly succeed? Does not all our
success



success depend upon knowing and observing omens and rules?"

Q. "It would therefore never be very dangerous to release such a man as a Kuboola?"

Sahib and Nasir. "Never; unless he could join men better instructed than himself. Every one must be convinced, that it is by knowing and attending to omens and rules that Thuggee has thrived."

Q. "I am not convinced, nor are any of the native officers present: on the contrary, we do all we can to put down what you call an institution of the deity, and without dreading at all the effects of her resentment?"

Sahib and Nasir. "They may say so; but they all know that no man's family can survive a murder committed in any other way; and yet Thugs have thrived through a long series of generations. We have all children, like other men; and we are never visited by any extraordinary affliction."

In another interview, one of the approvers was asked—"And do you never feel sympathy for the persons murdered—never pity or compunction?"

Sahib. "Never."

Q. "How can you murder old men and young children without some emotions of pity—calmly and deliberately as they sit with you and converse with you,—and tell you of their private affairs—

of



of their hopes and fears—and of the wives and children they are going to meet, after years of absence, toil, and suffering?”

Sahib. “From the time that the omens have been favourable, we consider them as victims thrown into our hands by the deity to be killed, and that we are the mere instrument in her hands to destroy them: that if we do not kill them, she will never be again propitious to us, and we and our families will be involved in misery and want.”

Q. “And you can sleep as soundly, by the bodies or over the graves of those you have murdered, and eat your meals with as much appetite, as ever?”

Sahib. “Just the same: we sleep and eat just the same, unless we are afraid of being discovered.”

Q. “And when you see or hear a bad omen, you think it is the order of the deity not to kill the travellers you have with you, or are in pursuit of?”

Sahib. “Yes: it is the order not to kill them, and we dare not disobey.”

This last point of doctrine, like the rest, is universally received; but some knotty questions arise as to occurrences which present a conjunction of a very poor victim and a very good omen. Some Thugs let the traveller escape, in the hopes of finding better game: others hold, that “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”; and regard forbearance, in such a case, as an act of abominable impiety.



impiety. A further extract will shew the respective views of these conflicting sects, and the reasoning by which they are supported.

Q. "When you have a poor traveller with you, or a party of travellers who appear to have little property about them, and you hear or see a very good omen, do you not let them go, in the hope that the return of the omen will guide you to better prey?"

Dorgha (Mussulman). "Let them go! Never, never!—*Kubhee nuheen, kubhee nuneen.*"

Nasir (Mussulman, of Telingana). "How could we let them go? Is not the good omen the order from Heaven to kill them? and would it not be disobedience to let them go? If we did not kill them, should we ever get any more travellers?"

Feringeea (Brahmin). "I have known the experiment tried with good effect. I have known travellers, who promised little, let go; and the virtue of the omen brought better."

Inaent (Mussulman). "Yes; the virtue of the omen remains; and the traveller who has little should be let go; for you are sure to get a better."

Sahib Khan (of Telingana). "Never, never! This is one of your Hindostanee heresies. You could never let him go, without losing all the fruits of your expedition: you might get property, but it could never do you any good. No success could result from your disobedience."



Morlee (Rajpoot). "Certainly not: the travellers who are in our hands, when we have a good omen, must never be let go, whether they promise little or much: the omen is unquestionably the order, as *Nasir* says."

Nasir. "The idea of securing the good-will of Davy by disobeying her order, is quite monstrous. We Deccan Thugs do not understand how you got hold of it. Our ancestors never were guilty of such folly."

Feringeea. "You do not mean to say, that we of Murnae and Sindouse were not as well instructed as you of Telingana?"

Nasir and *Sahib Khan*. "We only mean to say, that you have clearly mistaken the nature of a good omen in this case. It is the order of Davy to take what she has put in our way; at least, so we in the Deccan understand it."

Although there are some differences in the interpretation of omens and of rules, all are agreed that the neglect of either is followed by the most fearful consequences. To this dereliction they attribute all the reverses which have of late years befallen them.—Thus, in the recent indulgence of the practice of killing females and maimed persons:—

Q. "And you think killing women has been one of the chief causes of your misfortunes?"

Feringeea. "Yes."

H

Q. "And



Q. "And of our success against you?"

Kulean Sing. "Yes; I and my gang were arrested after the murder of Newul Sing and his daughters, at Biseynee, in 1820."

Q. "But Newul Sing had lost an arm; and you before told me that you suffered because you there infringed a good old rule, and murdered a maimed person?"

Kuleean. "Yes; it was partly that: but was not the great gang seized by Mr. Molony after the murder of Monshee Bunda Alee, and his wife and daughter, at Lucknadow, three years after?"

In another conversation, the same opinions were advanced. The Behar and Doali Thugs having vehemently disclaimed any participation in the murder of women, Captain Sleeman said—

"But you Bundelcund men murdered abundance."

Zolfukar. "Yes; and was not the greater part of Feringeea's and my gang seized, after we had murdered the two women and little girl at Manora, in 1830, near Saugor? And were we not ourselves both seized soon after? How could we survive things like that? Our ancestors never did such things."

Feringeea. "We had no sooner buried their bodies, than I heard the *chireya*; and on leaving the ground, we saw the *loharburheya*: these were signs that Davy was displeased; and we gave ourselves up for lost."

Again,



Again, at a subsequent period, the murder of a girl being adverted to, the following dialogue occurred:—

Q. “I thought Hindoos never strangled women. How came Punchum to strangle this girl?”

Feringeea. “Punchum was my mother’s brother, and he never strangled her.”

Q. “Who did?”

Feringeea. “I have heard that it was Bhugwan Kachee, a slave or disciple of his.”

Punna. “But is not the act of the slave the act of the master? And did not Bhugwan strangle her by Punchum’s order?”

Feringeea. “Well, but how was Punchum punished! Did he not die before he could reach home? And was not his son Bughola hung the November following, with twenty others whom Jacob Sahib strung up at Kalapahavee in Gwalior? And was not Bhugwan hung with him? And what a horrid death did Himmud die! He was eaten alive by worms.”

This view of the subject was continually recurring in the conversations held by Captain Sleeman with the approvers.

Q. “And you think that much of your misfortunes have arisen from the murder of women?”

Lalmun. “We all knew that they would come



upon us some day, for this and other great sins. We were often admonished; but we did not take warning; and we deserve our fates."

Similar visitations, according to the Thug creed, attend those who oppose or punish these ruffians. No opinion appears more deeply seated in their minds than this, which was repeatedly advanced by those with whom Captain Sleeman conversed.

Q. "Above the Nurbudda, Chiefs have never had the same dread of punishing Thugs as below it; have they?"

Feringeea. "They had formerly; and have still, in many parts."

Q. "Why should they fear? Have there been any instances of suffering from it?"

Feringeea. "A great many. Was not Nanha, the Rajah of Jhalone, made leprous by Davy for putting to death Bodhoo and his brother Khumolee, two of the most noted Thugs of their day. He had them trampled under the feet of elephants; but the leprosy broke out upon his body the very next day."

Q. "Did he believe that this punishment was inflicted by Davy for putting them to death?"

Dorgha Mussulman. "He was quite sensible of it."

Q. "Did he do any thing to appease her?"

Dorgha. "Every thing. Bodhoo had begun a well



well in Jhalone; the Rajah built it up in a magnificent style: he had a chubootra (tomb) raised to their name, fed Brahmins, and consecrated it; had worship instituted upon it;—but all in vain; the disease was incurable, and the Rajah died, in a few months, a miserable death. The tomb and well are both kept up, and visited by hundreds to this day; and no one doubts that the Rajah was punished for putting these two Thugs to death.”

Q. “But Bodhoo had his nose and hands cut off before, and could have been no favourite of Davy’s?”

Feringeea. “But he was a Thug of great repute: for sagacity we have never seen his equal: people who had been robbed used to go to him as an oracle.”

Q. “But he had turned informer; and was sent to Jhalone, by Mr. Stockwell, to arrest his associates.”

Dorgha. “He went to Mr. Stockwell in a passion; his heart was not fully turned away from us then.”

Q. “Have you any other instances?”

Inaent. “Hundreds! When Madhajee Scinde-hea caused seventy Thugs to be executed at Muthura, was he not warned in a dream, by Davy, that he should release them? and did he not the very day after their execution begin to spit blood? and did he not die within three months?”

Feringeea.



Feringeea. "When Dureear the Rathore, and Komere and Patore, the Kuchwaha Rajpoots, Zemindars, arrested eighty of the Thugs who had settled at Nodha after the murder of Lieutenant Monsell, they had many warnings to let them go; but they persisted, and kept them till some thirty died. They collected fourteen thousand rupees, at the rate of one hundred and twenty-five rupees from every Thug. What became of their families? Have they not all perished? They have not a child left. Rae Sing Havildar, the Gwalior Subah of Nodha, took the money; but that very day his only son, *and the best horse in his stable*, died; and he was himself taken ill; and died soon after, a miserable death."

Nasir. "Ah, Davy took care of you, then! And why? Was it not because you were more attentive to her orders?"

Zolfukar. "Yes; we had then some regard for religion. We have lost it since. All kinds of men have been made Thugs, and all classes of people murdered without distinction; and little attention has been paid to omens. How, after this, could we expect to escape?"

Nasir. "Be assured that Davy never forsook us, till we neglected her."

Q. "Do you know of any instance of her punishing a man for annoying Thugs in the Deccan?"

Sahib



Sahib Khan. "A great many. The Rajah of Kundul, some ninety cose east from Hydrabad, arrested all the Thugs in his Raj for some murders they had committed. For three successive nights the voice of Davy was heard from the top of every temple in the capital, warning the Rajah to release them. The whole town heard her, and urged the Rajah to comply. He was obstinate; and the third night, the bed on which he and his Ranees were sleeping was taken up by Davy and dashed violently against the ground."

Q. "Were they killed?"

Nasir. "They were not killed, but they were dreadfully bruised; and had they not released the Thugs, they would certainly have been killed the next night."

Q. "Were any of you present?"

Sahib Khan. "Our fathers were; and we heard it from them. It occurred sixty years ago."

Q. "And do you think the Chiefs have still the same dread of punishing Thugs, in all parts of India?"

Sahib. "Certainly not in all parts; because, in many, they have been suffered to punish them with impunity, on account of their neglect of rules and omens."

Morlee. "There is no fear now. They are everywhere seized and punished with impunity; there is no resisting your *ikbal* (good fortune)."

Dorgha.



Dorgha. "The Company's *ikbal* is such, that before the sound of your drums, sorcerers, witches, and demons take flight; and how can Thuggee stand?"

Davey Deen. "Thuggee! why, it is gone! there are not fifty Aseel Thugs (Thugs of good birth) left between the Ganges and Jumna."

Chotee Brahman. "And not more than that number of our old clans of Gwalior and Bundelcund; but the Sooseeas of Rajpootana have been untouched, and much is to be done about Delhi and Puteeala."

Q. "But Nasir and Sahib Khan think that it can never be suppressed in the Deccan?"

Nasir. "I think it never can."

Sahib Khan. "I do not say it never can. I say only, that the country is very large; that in every one of the five districts there are hundreds of Aseel Thugs, who are staunch to their oath, and attentive to their usages; that the country is everywhere intersected by the jurisdiction of Native Chiefs, who cannot be easily persuaded to assist."

Nasir. "Assist! why, when we go into their districts after a Thug, we are every instant in danger of our lives. I got nearly killed, with all the guard, lately, when close upon the heels of a gang: and when I complained to Captain Reynolds, he told me that we must consent to bear these drubbings on account of the Company, or I
could



could be of no use to him in such a country as that."

Q. "And you think that all these obstacles are not to be overcome?"

Nasir. "I think not."

Q. "That is, you think an institution formed by Davy, the goddess, cannot be suppressed by the hand of man?"

Nasir. "Certainly, I think so."

Q. "But you think that no man is killed by man's killing — '*Admeeke marne se kove murta nuheen*'; that all who are strangled are strangled, in effect, by God."

Nasir. "Certainly."

Q. "Then by whose killing have all the Thugs, who have been hung at Saugor and Jubulpore, been killed?"

Nasir. "God's, of course."

Q. "You think that we could never have caught and executed them, but by the aid of God?"

Nasir. "Certainly not."

Q. "Then you think, that so far we have been assisted by God in what we have done?"

Nasir. "Yes."

Q. "And you are satisfied that we should not have ventured to do what we have done, unless we were assured that our God was working with us; or rather, that we were the mere instruments in His hands?"

Nasir.



Nasir. "Yes, I am."

Q. "Then do you not think that we may go on with the same assurance, till the work we have in hand is done; till, in short, the system of Thuggee is suppressed?"

Nasir. "God is almighty."

Q. "And there is but one God?"

Nasir. "One God above all gods."

Q. "And if that God above all gods supports us, we shall succeed?"

Nasir. "Certainly."

Q. "Then we are all satisfied that He is assisting us; and therefore hope to succeed, even in the Deccan?"

Nasir. "God only knows."

Sahib Khan. "If God assists, you will succeed; but the country is large and favourable, and the gangs are numerous and well organized."

Q. "So was the country we have already gone over. How many Thug leaders from Sindouse, after Mr. Halhed and Mr. Stockwell's attacks, came and settled in the Saugor and Nurbudda districts?"

Sheikh Inayat. "My father, Hinga Jemadar, and his three sons, two of whom were hung at Saugor the year before last, came to Lowa, a village between Dhamonee and Khimlassa, in Saugor: my younger brother, Dhurum Khan, was born after my father's death; his mother could not, and my wife nursed him. We were joined by Monowur Mus-sulman,



sulman, Niddee and Mungoa Brahmans, Lulloo, and his sons." [Here followed the names of sixty-one Thugs of note, that came from the great Sindouse stock, and settled in different parts of these territories, and formed new gangs.]

Q. "And how many of these noted Thugs, and the gangs they formed, are still at large?"

Sheikh Inayat. "Since I was taken in 1829, these have all been seized, and have been hung or transported, or are now in jail. Two of my brothers have been hung. My youngest is now here. The men whom they made Thugs have also all be taken; and there are only five or six, that we know of. There are, Bahadur Chabukaswur, Kuseea Kirar, and Bodhooa, son of another Bahadur: these are new Thugs, but they proved themselves good ones. There are, Kadir and Poosoo, adopted sons of Imamee, the son of Mirja Mussulman. These Thugs are at large in the district of Seonee or Nursingpore. We know of no others."

Q. "Do you not think, that, if we persevere, we shall be able to do in the Deccan what we have done here, and in the Dooab?"

Inaent. "No doubt."

Sahib Khan. "It will be a work of greater difficulty. Half or three-quarters of these gangs were Kuboolas. In the Deccan, they are almost all composed entirely of *Burkas*—men well born, staunch and able, above all the men of Arcot."

Feringeea.



Feringeea. "And the Hindoo Thugs of Talghat upon the Krishna river?"

Sahib Khan. "Yes; they are extraordinary men."

The subject was renewed in other conversations, and the same impressions avowed by the Thug approvers. They appear, however, to have regarded themselves as exempt from the penalties which ordinarily followed any act of hostility to the Thugs. Indeed, from the low state of moral feeling, and the imperfect developement of the reasoning powers in the East, much consistency could hardly be expected.

Q. "If Davy's displeasure visits all who punish Thugs, how is it that you all escape so well?"

Moradun. "Davy's anger visited us, when we were seized. That was the effect of her resentment: she cast us off then, and takes no notice of us now."

Q. "And if you were to return to Thuggee, she would still guide and protect you?"

Moradun. "Yes; but what gang would now receive us?"

Q. "And you are not afraid to assist in suppressing Thuggee?"

Moradun. "No; we see God is assisting you, and that Davy has withdrawn her protection on account of our transgressions. We have sadly neglected her worship. God knows in what it will end!"

Q. "True!



Q. " True! God only knows ; but we hope it will end in the entire suppression of this wicked and foolish system ; and in the conviction, on your part, that Davy has really had nothing to do with it."

Nasir. " That Davy instituted Thuggee, and supported it, as long as we attended to her omens, and observed the rules framed by the wisdom of our ancestors, nothing in the world can ever make us doubt."

The conviction of the divine origin of Thuggee is strengthened in the minds of its followers by the belief that its mysteries are exhibited in the Caves of Ellora. These gigantic witnesses to human infatuation and folly are confidently appealed to, as affording proof, not only of the antiquity of the practice, but of the divine sanction and operation.

Q. " You told Mr. Johnstone the traveller, while he was at Saugor, that the operations of your trade were to be seen in the Caves of Ellora?"

Feringeea. " All! Every one of the operations is to be seen there. In one place, you see men strangling : in another, burying the bodies : in another, carrying them off to the graves. There is not an operation in Thuggee that is not exhibited in the Caves of Ellora."

Dorgha. " In those caves are to be seen the operations of every trade in the world."

Chotee.



Chotee. "Whenever we passed near, we used to go and see these caves. Every man will there find his trade described, however secret he may think it; and they were all made in one night."

Q. "Does any person beside yourselves consider that any of these figures represent Thugs?"

Feringeea. "Nobody else; but all Thugs know that they do. We never told any body else what we thought about them. Every body there can see the secret operations of his trade, but he does not tell others of them; and no other person can understand what they mean. They are the works of God. No human hands were employed upon them. That every body admits."

Q. "What particular operations are there described in figures?"

Sahib Khan. "I have seen the Sotha (inveigler) sitting upon the same carpet with the traveller, and in close conversation with him, just as we are when we are worming out their secrets. In another place, the strangler has got his roomal over his neck, and is strangling him; while another, the Chumoochee, is holding him by the legs. These are the only two operations that I have seen described."

Nasir. "These I have also seen; and there is no mistaking them. The Chumoochee has close hold of the legs, and is pulling at them *thus* while the Bhurtote is tightening the roomal round his neck, *thus*!"

Q. "Have



Q. "Have you seen no others?"

Feringeea. "I have seen these two; and also the Lughas carrying away the bodies to the grave, in this manner, and the sextons digging the grave with the sacred pickaxe: all is done just as if we had ourselves done it; nothing could be more exact."

Q. "And who do you think could have executed this work?"

Feringeea. "It could not have been done by Thugs, because they would never have exposed the secret of their trade; and no other human being could have done it. It must be the work of the gods: human hands could never have performed it."

Q. "And supposing so, you go and worship it?"

Sahib Khan. "No. We go to gratify curiosity, and not to worship: we look upon it as a Mausoleum, a collection of curious figures, cut by some demons, who knew the secrets of all mankind, and amused themselves here in describing them."

Hurnagur. "We Hindoos go for the same purpose. We never go to worship. We consider it as a Pantheon of unknown gods."

The word "Pantheon" is, perhaps, rather a free translation of that used by the Thug witness; and the assertion that the Hindoos visit it only from motives of curiosity seems consistent neither with the belief of its being a temple of the gods, nor
with



with former reports upon the subject; nor probably do the Mussulmans, notwithstanding their assertions, regard the mysterious hieroglyphics of Ellora with as much indifference as they represent. They have adopted no small share of the customs and superstitions of the Hindoos; and the Thug formula of fraternization seems to have obliterated most of the distinctive marks which remained.

“In the Caves of Ellora,” says one approver, “are to be seen the operations of every trade in the world.” “Every man,” says another, “will there find his trade discovered, however secret he may think it.” “Every body,” adds a third, in confirmation, “can there see the secret operations of his trade;”—and Thuggee is held to be a trade as regular and lawful as any other.

The Gentleman, by whom the conversation just quoted is reported, relates another, in which a Thug leader, who is stated to have been possessed of most polished manners and great eloquence, being asked by a native whether he never felt compunction in murdering innocent people, answered with a smile, “Does any man feel compunction in following his trade? and are not all our trades assigned us by Providence?” The Native Gentleman said, “How many people have you, in the course of your life, killed with your own hands, at a rough guess?” “I have killed none!”—“Have you not been just describing to me
a num-



a number of murders?" "Yes; but do you suppose I could have committed them? Is any man killed from man's killing? *Admeeke marne se koe murta*. Is it not the hand of God that kills him? and are we not mere instruments in the hand of God?"

Fatalism is a prominent dogma of the creed of the Thugs. The old lady's doctrine, that "what is to be, shall be," is theirs; and they consider themselves, in the exercise of their trade, to be as exempt from moral responsibility, as the saw or the axe employed in cutting down a tree. Yet, in attention to omens, or in neglect of these instructions, they strangely enough appear to regard themselves as free-agents, who may expect reward for obedience, and punishment for the want of it. In their view, to commit murder is inevitable, and of necessity: to murder according to rule, is an act of choice; and to choose aright, is meritorious!

But the belief in fatalism is not peculiar to the Thugs: it is a doctrine pretty current in the East. One very extraordinary instance of its effects is related in the conversation of the Thug approvers:—

"Bura Sahib Jemadar, of Madura," said the narrator, "had several hundred followers; and used to make valuable presents to Nawab Dollee Khan, who knew how he got them, and offered him a high post, with rent-free lands, if he would leave off the trade. He would not."



Q. "What became of him at last?"

Sahib and *Nasir*. "There was a great Decoit leader of the same name, who had committed great ravages; and orders were sent by the Nawab, to the local officers, to blow him away from a gun, as soon as they could seize him. They seized *Sahib Khan Thug*; and blew him away by mistake, before the Nawab got information of the arrest. In a few hours after his death, a message came from the Nawab, to say that he feared there might be a mistake; and when he heard that *Sahib Khan Thug* had been blown away, he was much grieved, but said that God must have ordained it, and the fault was not his."

This mode of settling the matter would have afforded small consolation to the man blown from the gun, could his last moments have been gratified by a communication of it; but it was amply sufficient to satisfy the conscience of the Nawab, and thus answered its purpose.



CHAP. VI.

THE outline which has been given of the general character and habits of the Thugs will now be best illustrated by reference to some of the details elicited by the inquiries of the European Authorities.

In 1833, several Thugs were put on trial, and convicted, before the Zillah-Court in Benares.

The following are extracts from the report of the Session Judge to the Court of Nizamut Adawlut:—

“ The prisoners are Thugs, and were concerned in three expeditions, during the month of Jeit 1240 Fuslee; corresponding to part of June and July, 1833, in which six persons were murdered.

“ The Thanadar of Juggut Gunge, with the Foujdaree Nazis, and the spies Goplah and Bhuggoo, went to Rajah-ka-Tullao, described as a halting-place of the prisoners and others, who were proved to have purchased various articles of food from the grocers' shops, and to have slept there. Towards morning they took their departure, accompanied by



a Mussulman traveller, and, leaving the high road at Sarai Mohun to the right, followed a pathway for about a mile, where, having found a convenient place, they strangled the traveller, and threw his body into a well. The Thanadar and his party proceeded to the well which was pointed out; and on examining the Goraitis of the neighbouring village, it appeared that there had been a body taken out in the month of Jeit, which had been concealed by the Zemindar's orders all day in some sugar-canes, and at night thrown into the Sambhar Nullah: some bones were found in the nullah, which were declared to be human, and supposed to be those of the murdered traveller.

“The second Thuggee expedition occurred in the jurisdiction of the Kilia-Khonah Thannah. The shopkeepers there sold spices, &c. to some of the Thugs who passed the night at the Dhurm Salah of Bukt-Pooree at Kupuldhara. There were about five-and-twenty Thugs, and two Mussulmen travellers with them, with three bullocks. They all left before day-break; and having proceeded about a mile towards the Ganges, the two travellers were strangled, and their bodies thrown into the river.

“The third Thuggee excursion took place in Hurroah Thannah's jurisdiction. Three persons were strangled, and the bodies thrown into Hurdoo Dhobey's well; in searching which, three skulls, several



several human bones, and a pair of shoes, the latter evidently a sepoy's, were discovered.

“As the atrocious crime of Phansigare, or Thuggee, is fortunately very uncommon in this district, and no instance has occurred during the periods I have been resident at Benares, I shall submit, for the Court's consideration, the evidence of two of the witnesses, and likewise the confession of the prisoner Shumsherah; which last was given before the magistrate, and affords, perhaps, a clearer insight into their proceedings.

“The first witness to the fact, in each of these cases, is Bhuggoo: his evidence, however, is so contradictory, and agrees so baldly with the deposition given before the magistrate, that I prefer sending the examination of the second witness, Kadir Khan, a Patan, son of Jumum Khan, inhabitant of Moujah Punnah, purgunah Moneah, Zillah Patna, aged forty-three years, formerly a cultivator, but for the last twenty-one years a Thug by profession.

“In the month of Aghun, 1240, he says, Fuslee, Shumsherah, Oozerah, Moradun, Bukus, Asmut, Mehar Ali, and myself, went on a Thuggee expedition to the westward, and reached the Oude territory. At Chand Pertaubpoor we met Chuta Thug, in company with a traveller who was afterwards strangled, and eleven rupees with two or four cloths found on him. We journeyed onto Allahabad, and thence



thence eastward. Near Burount we met Goplah Beekah, and nine other Thugs, and they accompanied us to Mirza Morad's Serai. There we found Mohur Singh, a Jemadar of Thugs, with ten others, whose names I do not remember. We all went on together, and rested at night near the temple at Rajah-ka-Tullao. On the road we met a traveller, whom Mohur Singh entered into conversation with, and persuaded to join our party. At the last quarter of the night we renewed our march, and, quitting the high road near Serai, Mohur followed a pathway for about half a cose, and strangled the traveller. Seven rupees, with two or four cloths, were taken, and Goury and Mehar Ali threw the corpse into a well.

“ “ After walking some distance in the direction of Benares, we overtook two Mussulmen travellers with three bullocks. They went in with us to our halting-place, the Dhurm Salah, at Kupuldharah. Towards daybreak we departed ; and about a mile off, near the banks of the Ganges, Mohur Singh and Goury strangled the travellers. We found on them five rupees, a sword, and two or three pieces of cloths. Mohur Singh took all, and drove the bullocks on before us. Our people threw the bodies into the river. After taking some refreshment, we proceeded to Sydpoor : there Salaroo, a Burkundaz, recognised Mohur Singh, who, in consequence, gave him five rupees. The three bullocks