ART. XVIII.—*The Bhar Tribe*. By the Rev. M. A. SHERRING, LL.D., Benares. Communicated by C. HORNE, M.R.A.S., late B.C.S.

(Read December 4th, 1871.)

This race, variously known by the terms Rāj̄bhar, Bharat, Bharpatwa, and Bhar, once inhabited a wide tract of country extending from Gorakhpur in Northern India to Saugor in Central India. Other tribes, such as the Cherūs, the Majh-wārs, and the Kōls, were, in places, associated with them, or contiguous to them; but there is good reason to believe that the Bhars greatly outnumbered them all. They were very powerful in Oudh; and the country lying between Benares and Allahābād, on either side of the Ganges, a tract of about seventy miles in length, was almost exclusively in their possession. The entire district of Allahābād also was originally in their hands, and traces of them are still to be seen in every *pargannah*, more especially in those situated across the Ganges and Jamna. Their forts there, called Bhar-ḍīh, some of which are of vast size, are very numerous; and they have the credit of having excavated all the deep tanks which now exist. The *pargannah* of Khairogarh bears very abundant traces of their toil and enterprise. The stone fort of that name, of immense proportions, is said to have been their work.¹

In the district of Bandah, on its eastern side, are extensive hill forts, which Dr. Wilton Oldham, formerly Assistant Magistrate of that district, informs me are of Cyclopæan dimensions, and are attributed to the Bhars. In particular, he mentions Lukwa, situated in the Chībū *pargannah*.

Vestiges of this race are found in many places in the districts of Mirzāpur, Jaunpur, Azimgarh, Ghāzipur, Gorakhpur, and in the province of Oudh, where numerous embankments, tanks, subterraneous caverns, and stone forts, still exist, and

¹ Report of Revenue Settlement, Allahābād, vol. ii., part i.

testify to their energy and skill. The present inhabitants of Azimgarh have a tradition that their country, in the time of Râm, with whose kingdom, Ayodhya, it was formerly connected, was occupied by Râjbhars and Asûrs. The Bhars have left behind them large mud forts, of which specimens may be seen at Harbanspur and Unchgâon, near the town of Azimgarh, and also at Ghorî. The Kunwâr and Manghai rivers of the district seem to have been connected by a trench, called Asurâin, the work, it is said, of its primitive inhabitants. The Hari Bândh, or dam, at Amîn-nagar, in the Nizâmâbâd *pargannah*, is an embankment generally ascribed to them.¹ The Bhars once possessed the northern portion of the present district of Ghâzipur, now divided into the *pargannahs* of Shâdiâbâd, Pachotar, Zuhûrâbâd, while another occupied the fort of Laknesar-đih, the deserted village of Laknesar.²

Yet the race, in association with other aboriginal tribes, was not confined to this united tract, but was once spread abroad in various directions in that part of the country. "The Hindu land-owning tribes," says Dr. Oldham, "all agree in stating that at the time of the first immigration of their forefathers, the entire country—except a few tracts held by Brahmans so far as the forests had been cleared—was occupied by aborigines, not of the Aryan race, who were in the habit of eating the flesh of swine, and using intoxicating drinks, and were called Seorees, Bhars, and Cherûs."³ This tradition is current, says the same writer, throughout the Benares Province, Oudh, and Behar.

How far the extensive District of Gorakhpur was occupied by the Bhars is uncertain. We know that the Kansik tribe of Râjpoots ousted them from a portion of their territory, and retain possession of it to the present day.

Respecting the Bhars of Oudh, Mr. W. P. Carnegie, Deputy-Commissioner of Fyzâbâd, remarks that the ruins of their former masonry forts are to be traced by scores in

¹ Settlement Report of the Azimgarh District, vol. i., sec. 23, 24.

² Dr. Oldham's Memoir of the Ghâzipûr District, part i., p. 46.

³ Dr. Oldham's Memoir of the Ghâzipûr District, part i., p. 46.

our districts, and the name of their former capital, where they were finally overthrown by the Mahomedans, after being, according to popular tradition, artfully plied with spirits, was Kasbhawanpur, the modern town of Sultānpur, destroyed by us after the re-occupation of the province.”¹

The Bhar *rāj*, or dominion, included the whole of Eastern Oudh. Every great natural work or ancient relic there is attributed, says Mr. C. A. Elliott, in his *Chronicles of Oonao*, either to the Devil or the Bhars. He states, moreover, that “almost every town whose name does not end in *pur*, or *ābād*, or *mow*, or is not distinctly derivable from a proper name, is claimed by tradition, in the east of Oudh, as a Bhar town. The district of Bharaich is (if we may trust its traditions) their oldest abode, and the name of the town of Bharaich is said to be derived from them. From thence they spread southwards through the districts of Fyzābād and Sultānpur, and it is in the latter district that they maintained themselves latest, being only finally extirpated in the reign of Alamgīr. It is said that some of their number may be found there even now, living a wild gipsy life in the jungles.”²

The district of Mirzāpur exhibits traces and remains of this people to a greater extent than of any other tribe. The *pargannah* of Bhadohee, or more properly Bhardohī, is called after them. Mr. Duthoit, late deputy-superintendent of the family domains of the Maharaja of Benares, in his recent elaborate report on this *pargannah*, says that traces of the Bhars abound on all sides, in the form of old tanks and village forts. “One cannot go for three miles in any direction without coming upon some of the latter.” Their tanks are Suraj-bedi, that is, longer from east to west than from north to south; and thereby distinguishable from modern tanks, which are Chandr-bedi, and lie north and south. The bricks found in the Bhar-dīhs, or forts, are of enormous dimensions, and frequently measure nineteen inches in length, eleven in breadth, and two and a quarter in thickness. In

¹ Mr. P. Carnegy's *Races of Oudh*, p. 22.

² *Chronicles of Oonao*, p. 26.

quality and size they are similar to bricks often seen in ancient Buddhist buildings.¹

This *pargannah* stretches along the north bank of the Ganges; yet on the south side of that river, likewise, Bhar forts and towns are met with. One of their principal cities was situated about five miles to the west of the modern city of Mirzâpur, and was evidently of great extent. Its brick and stone *débris* is scattered over the fields for several miles. This old city is called Pampâpûrâ by the people now living in the neighbourhood. It is probable that the original name has been lost, and that this name was given to it by the Râjpoots who took the country from the Bhars. From its size, and the substantial nature of the buildings which, judging from the relics, it contained, the city must have been of sufficient importance to be the capital of the country. It included within its circuit the ancient town of Vindhychal, famous in the Purânas, and still celebrated throughout a great part of India for its shrine of the goddess Vindhyeswarî, which many thousands of pilgrims from every quarter visit yearly. To the east of the town are the remains of the fort, from which spot, in a westerly direction, *débris* is found in great abundance.

Tradition says that the city once possessed one hundred and fifty temples, all of which were destroyed by that indomitable enemy of idolatry, the Emperor Aurungzebe. This is perhaps an exaggeration; yet that there were formerly magnificent temples on this spot is indisputable. Below the Ashtbhûjî bungalow, a sanatorium erected on a spur of the ridge immediately above the site of the ancient city, by a public-spirited native gentleman of Mirzâpur, for the especial benefit of its European residents, is a massive square building, having the appearance of a fort. It is, however, a Hindu monastery, with a temple on its summit, reputed to be of some sanctity. This edifice has in its walls, breastworks, and foundations, a multitude of carved stones and figures, while many more cover the ground in its vicinity. The sculptures found here, and elsewhere in many

¹ Report on the Bhadohee Pargannah, p. 2.

places among the outlying fields for a great distance, are not of modern Hindu style; indeed, in point of design and skilfulness of execution, are far superior to the productions of Hindus of later times. Some of the figures are of that curious type described, hesitatingly, by Mr. Fergusson, in his "Tree and Serpent Worship in India," as Dasyas, or aborigines, in contradistinction to the immigrant tribes of Hindus. They are readily distinguishable by their peculiar head-dress and long pointed beards. They constitute, however, but a small portion of the figures, which are for the most part representations of Hindu men and women, with most elaborate turbans and head-dresses, while exceedingly few apparently are of a sacred character. It is probable that nearly all these relics point to a later period of Bhar history, when Hindus had come and settled among them. The contrast between the long-bearded figures and the Hindu figures is very striking. It is questionable whether at the date of most of these sculptures the Bhars were still in possession of the country; indeed, I am inclined to the supposition that it had in part, or in whole, already passed from them into the hands of the Rājpoos, who are known to have been the rulers over this tract for a period of five hundred years. At the same time, the position and attitude of the Bhar figures on these sculptures indicate that at the time of their execution the Bhars were still a people of importance. It is right to add, however, that a few of the sculptures, yet only a few, represent the Bhars as the superior race, and attached to the Buddhist or Jain religion.

My friend C. J. Sibold, Esq., of Mirzāpur, has made an excellent collection of sculptures from the numerous remains at Pampāpūrā, from which a few admirable drawings by a native artist have been selected for description. I have chiefly chosen those which exhibit the bearded figures. Some of these are evidently of a sacred character. It will be observed that the cast of countenance of all the bearded figures is of a peculiar type, differing considerably from the Hindu countenances, with which, in some instances, they are associated, and also from Hindu faces of the present day.

W. Briggs, Del. & Lith.

BEARDED BHAR TRIBES

4

3

W. Griggs, Del. & Lith.

BEARDED BHAR TRIBES

6

5

BEARDED BHAR TRIBES

8

7

H. Briggs, Ind. & Lib.

BEARDED BHAR TRIBES

W. Griggs, Del. & Lith.

BEARDED BHAR TRIBES

10.

Fig. 10.
H. 10.
W. 10.

W. Griggs, Del. & Lith.

BEARDED BHAR TRIBES

$10\frac{1}{2}$ inches from lower edge of chin to middle of forehead;
 1 foot 5 inches from inner point of one ear, across the bridge
 of the nose, to inner part of the other ear;
 1 foot $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches from lower part of head-dress to the apex;
 2 feet 2 inches from lower edge of chin to the apex of the
 head-dress.

Figures Nos. 1 and 2 are probably Bhar Râjas; the same may be said of the bearded figure No. 3: the other figures in which are of a Hindu cast. Moreover, while the Bhar is seated, and occupies an honourable position, the Hindu to the left is standing, and is probably an attendant. The sharply-pointed beards of the Bhars in most of these sketches are very curious, being altogether unlike anything seen among the natives of India of modern times; their head-dresses, too, are singular—the lower part of that of No. 1 looks like a crown.

The bearded figure in No. 4—judging from his elaborate turban and long earrings—is a person of some distinction. His short beard has the appearance of a neckerchief. The artist has, I suspect, hardly caught its true expression; the Hindu attendant is presenting something kneeling. In the compartment to the left, the figure with a Hindu countenance is seated cross-legged; it is four-armed, and therefore a deity, perhaps the household god of the Bhar chief. If this be so, it shows that the sketch represents a period when the Bhars worshipped Hindu idols.

Figures Nos. 5 and 6 seem to be at their devotions: one has his hands united together open, according to the fashion adopted by Hindus now-a-days, as expressive of adoration or obeisance; the other has one elbow resting on hand. But we are not left in the dark either as to the act of worship or as to the object revered. No. 5 occupies a lower niche of a series of sculptures, the most prominent of which is a large and well-defined figure of Buddha seated. The head of this figure, which has not been figured, is manifestly of a genuine Buddhist type, with curly hair and nimbus. Moreover, it has the conventional elephant depicted to the right above, so frequently found in ancient Buddhist sculptures. An interesting question is thus incidentally started, namely, what was the primitive religion of the Bhars? In the instance before us, Buddha is the object being worshipped. If such is the case, we are carried back to a period before the Râjpoots had arrived with their Hindu deities, and had induced the Bhars, whether by fair means or foul, to

embrace Hinduism, as, from information derived from some of the sculptures, we have every reason to suppose they subsequently did.

Figure No. 6 is in contemplation. He is not a devotee, as some might perhaps be inclined to imagine; for he has several bracelets and armlets on his wrist and arm; nevertheless, it is probable that he is religiously employed. Figures Nos. 7 and 8, display a considerable difference of head-dress. Their physiognomies are not of a Hindu type; the second has his beard closely cut, though still well defined. The head, No. 7, is remarkable for the size of its earrings. The small figure, No. 8²,* has a head-dress, and what seem to be side-ornaments, different from all the rest. In appearance he is worshipping a round object before him on a low altar. Is it a relic casket?

The central figure in No. 9, compared with the remaining figures, is of colossal proportions. Being headless, it is impossible to speak about it with precision. The stumps of its four arms indicate that it was a divinity, but of what religion? The elephant and deer were sacred animals with the Buddhists, and are very frequently found on their sculptures. The four arms, however, seem to point to a Hindu deity. Of the thirteen subordinate human figures, the three upper ones are beardless, and most likely represent Hindus. Two of these are worshipping the central figure; the ten lower figures have all pointed beards, and present a great similarity of physiognomy. Those in an erect posture are perhaps intended to represent priests, or, it may be, men of rank in attendance on the god; one of them holds in his hand a flag, and another grasps a kind of club. All have on their heads a high conical cap or turban. The four-headed personages seated below display a very different style of head-dress, and seem to be of a humbler position in life. It is remarkable that the erect figures and the divinity also are adorned with what has the appearance of the sacred thread, while the sitting figures above and below are destitute of it. The Bhar figures, Nos. 1 and 4, have the thread also; but Nos. 2 and 3

* Not figured.

are without it. I am at a loss to explain this very singular circumstance. My own impression is, that the Bhars learnt the custom of wearing the thread from the Rājpoos who came amongst them. But this must have been done before the Bhars were subdued, and while the Rājpoos were mere servants to them; for it is hardly likely that the Rājpoos, after they had subjugated the Bhars, would have suffered them to wear a sacred badge which only Hindus of good caste were permitted to assume.

Figures Nos. 10 and 10½* are four-armed divinities, yet they exhibit the Bhar type of countenance, seen in Nos. 8 and 9; their conical caps and pointed beards are much like those observed in the erect figure of No. 12. Both are decorated with the sacred cord. The figure to the left is four feet four inches in height. The other has a massive jewelled ornament on the upper part of one of his left arms.

The sitting figure, No. 10⅔,* with four hands, is, I suppose, either intended for Buddha, or for one of the twenty-four subordinate divinities of the Jain religion. The hair is gathered up into a knot and tied by a fold. The double-beaded garland over the chest, passing round the waist, must not be confounded with the sacred thread.

No. 10⅔* presents the head of Buddha, already referred to. The entire figure seated, together with various emblematical figures on the sides and base, is a beautiful specimen of ancient sculpture. From the circumstance that one of the Bhar bearded figures of this series occupies a niche at the base of this sculpture, there is good ground for supposition, as already remarked, that the ancient Bhars were, to some extent, Buddhists.

It will be readily perceived that the beautiful figure No. 11 displays a very different countenance from any of the Bhar figures described above. I believe it to be a likeness of a Gaharwār Rājpoos, probably of a chief of the family that took possession of the Bhar territory of Kantit. The conical head-dress is of the same description as that worn by Bhar chiefs in the sketches already noticed, but is more ornamented

* Not figured.

and magnificent. The figure is a divinity, as is manifest from the third eye set in the middle of the forehead, and represents, very probably, Sheva as Trilochau, or the Three-eyed. As a specimen of art the relic is worthy of study. It is of colossal size, and originally belonged to a statue some ten or twelve feet in height.

Mr. Woodburn, Settlement Officer in Oudh, in his Report on the Mangalsi *pargannah* of the Fyzâbâd District, has some interesting, though somewhat fanciful, observations on the nature and use of the Bhar forts in that part of Oudh. "Bhar forts, as they are called, are common in the *pargannah*. They are in general simple rounded mounds, more or less lofty, strewn with broken brick. The mounds appear to be in the main artificial, and their area is never large. If the dwellings of the Bhars were confined to the mound, the population of that day must have been very scanty. This is hardly consistent with the revenue returns of Akbar's reign for the neighbourhood; and yet, according to the corroborative accounts of the Râjpoot tribes, the Bhars were dominant till Akbar's time. Impressed, however, with that idea, and feeling it hard to believe that a small population, living on an exuberant soil, could have lived in a state of constant strife, I conceived that the mounds were possibly constructed as a sanitary precaution against the malaria of a region of marshes and forests. The theory is scarcely justified by the position of some of the mounds with which I became acquainted. But, however this may be, there can be no doubt a great change has taken place in the habits of the people since the days of the mound-makers. Brick strongholds have been succeeded by clay huts; and, as in the case of Kalâparpur (where there is a Bhar fort), the people have formed the notion that evil and misfortune haunt the dwelling-places of their forerunners. It is strange how the name of the Bhars should have adhered to places that now know them no more."

That the Bhars were not a barbarous race, but were partially civilized, is sufficiently proved by the numerous works of skill which they have left. Their massive forts, found

throughout the country which they once inhabited, testify to their warlike propensities; yet they were probably erected chiefly as means of defence and as places of refuge: for in their later history it is certain they were exposed to fierce attacks from their Rājput neighbours. The same energy and talent which they exhibited in defending themselves against their enemies they also displayed in more peaceful pursuits. Whence this people obtained their civilization, which placed them much above the condition of many other aboriginal tribes, it is hard to say, unless we suppose that it had its origin in themselves. I know not why we should be so ready always to ascribe all the ancient civilization of India to successive troops of Hindu immigrants. The more I investigate the matter, the stronger do my convictions become, that the Hindu tribes have learnt much from the aboriginal races: but that, in the course of ages, these races have been so completely subdued, and have been so ground down by oppression, and treated with such extreme rigour and scorn, that, in the present condition of abject debasement in which we find them, we have no adequate means for judging of their original genius and power. Mr. Thomason, late Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, in his Report on the Ceded Portion of the District of Azimgarh, says of the Bhars and the tribes associated with them, "The inhabitants of the country, by whatever name they are distinguished, were a powerful and industrious people, as is evident by the large works they have left behind them."¹

How long prior to the Rājput invasions the Bhars had occupied this tract of country cannot be ascertained; yet the prosperity to which they had attained and the civilization they had acquired are sound reasons for thinking that they had held possession of it for a protracted period. Six, or at the most seven, hundred years ago, the whole of the Benares Provinces, a large portion of the Province of Oudh, and perhaps a considerable portion of outlying territories, were beyond all dispute chiefly in the hands of the Bhars and other aboriginal non-Aryan tribes. The fall of Kanouj and

¹ Mr. Thomason's Report on the Ceded Portion of the District of Azimgarh, p. 13.

Delhi at the end of the twelfth century set free the great Rājput families, and sent them wandering all over the country in quest of new homes. These came in contact with the aboriginal tribes, and either subdued them at once, or, as was probably more frequently the case, obtained employment and lands from them in the first instance, and afterwards, as opportunity served, by degrees seized their possessions, overthrew their owners, and expelled them. This process was a long or short one, according to circumstances. In some instances, several hundred years elapsed before the end was gained. Yet finally the same conclusion was attained everywhere.

The traditions of all the land-owning tribes of the tracts referred to accord with these statements, bearing united testimony to the fact, that a few hundred years ago the middle Ganges valley was occupied by non-Aryan aboriginal races. The history of the period preceding the Rājput immigrations is partly historical and partly conjectural. During the prevalence of Buddhism in Northern India, the Aryan races appear to have been everywhere dominant. Some of the aboriginal tribes blended with them, though to what extent is uncertain. As Hinduism began to re-assert its authority and claims, on the decay of Buddhism, a fierce struggle seems to have arisen between the two religious factions. Yet how far the Aryans had cultivated the soil and spread themselves out into villages and towns is, strictly speaking, unknown. Whether, indeed, the country was well or only scantily populated is equally uncertain; most probably the latter supposition is the correct one. This, however, is tolerably clear, that the aboriginal tribes were in a subject condition. We have trustworthy information respecting the kingdom of Benares and a portion of that country of which Ayodhya was the capital. They were governed by Hindus. Both were originally chief seats of Hinduism; afterwards, in both places, Buddhism was very powerful; and, lastly, in both kingdoms Hinduism became once more in the ascendant. Nevertheless, the Aryan race, in its tremendous efforts to shake off the Buddhist creed, greatly

enfeebled itself, and was consequently unable to cope with the aboriginal tribes, which, taking advantage of the religious and political strife which was destroying the life of the Hindu nation, endeavoured to regain their ancient lands, from which, ages before, they had been driven away into the forests and mountains.

The remarks of Dr. Oldham respecting the district known by the modern name of Ghâzipur are equally applicable to the whole of the Benares Provinces. "On the downfall of Buddhism in this part of India, the distinction between the Aryans and the aborigines became as marked as ever. The former, weakened by their internecine war, were unable to hold the country; the latter, removed from the civilizing influences to which they had been subjected, relapsed wholly or partially into barbarism; and hence it was that this district, which thirteen hundred years ago formed an important part of a civilized Aryan monarchy, eight hundred years ago was under the sway of a number of petty semi-barbarous aboriginal chiefs, and had a very small Aryan population; while, on the other hand, the upper valley of the Ganges was filled with a teeming population of Hindus, who were in a position to send out colonies even before the coming of the Mussulmans, but who on their coming were compelled to do so."¹ In this passage Dr. Oldham, I think, somewhat under-rates the civilization of the aboriginal tribes, which, as before remarked, judging from existing remains, was considerable.

To the same purport are the observations of Mr. C. A. Elliott respecting the changes in the distribution of the races of Oudh. The two periods in the history of that country, namely, Aryan and post-Aryan, he describes as follows: "When the Aryan race," he says, "invaded the Gangetic valley and the Surajbansis settled in Ayodhya, the natural resource for the aborigines would be to fly to the hills, and find refuge in their impenetrable fastnesses, girded about with the deathly Terai. When the curtain rises again, we find Ayodhya destroyed, the Surajbansis utterly vanished,

¹ Dr. Oldham's Statistical Memoir of the Ghâzipûr District, p. 49.

and a great extent of country ruled over by aborigines, called Cherûs in the far east, Bhars in the centre, and Rajpusis in the west. This great revolution seems to be satisfactorily explained by the conjecture, that the Bhars, Cherûs, etc., were the aborigines whom the Aryans had driven to the hills, and who, swarming down from thence not long after the beginning of our era, overwhelmed the Aryan civilization, not only in Sahetan and the other northern towns, but in Ayodhya itself, drove the Surajbansis under Kanak Sen to emigrate into distant Gujerat, and spread over all the plain between the Himalayas and that spur of the Vindhya Range which passes through the south of Mirzâpur."¹

These aboriginal races, having once re-entered the tracts of country which they had wrested from the Aryan tribes, settled upon them, and remained comparatively unmolested for a long period extending over hundreds of years. All this is plain when it is considered how firm was the hold which they had on the country when the wave of Râjpoot immigration began to flow in upon them. Their cities and towns, their industrial arts, their huge earthworks, their canals and trenches, connecting rivers, and so forth, are irrefragable proofs of their permanence and prosperity.

But it must not be imagined that the land was cleared and cultivated to the extent in which we now see it. On the contrary, it is likely that not only during this period of non-Aryan occupation of this portion of India, but also during the preceding period of Aryan occupation, the country had not been largely brought under cultivation, and that immense forests abounded, extending over many miles. My own conviction is, that only in comparatively recent times, especially since the reign of Akbar, have the vast plains of Northern India been subjected to the plough and the harrow. The Emperor Baber, the grandfather of Akbar, in his Memoirs, says that while at Chunar, a lion, a rhinoceros, and a wild buffalo were seen close on the edge of his camp, and that many elephants roamed in the jungle around Chunar, and

¹ Mr. C. A. Elliott's *Chronicles of Oonao*, p. 27.

apparently even as far as and beyond Benares. Elephants are known to have frequented the jungle between Chunar and Allahâbâd in the sixteenth century; and the hills to the south of the Ganges must at that time have been almost unapproachable.

It is certain, therefore, that at the time when the Bhars and other industrious aboriginal races planted their villages and cultivated the lands around them, vast tracts infested by wild beasts remained uncleared. They inhabited, in short, an illimitable forest, which they cleared in places and cultivated, subduing the untamed land, providing against dearth by digging splendid tanks, banking up morasses, utilizing water-courses, and thus laying the foundations of social happiness and comfort. "All inquiry," says Mr. G. Ricketts, "shows that the civilization of this district, namely, Allahâbâd, and its reclamation from the primitive jungle, was of comparatively recent date, that is, within four hundred and fifty years. Very few of the Mahomedans claim descent from the followers of Shahab-ud-din; but few Hindus date back beyond the reign of Jai-Chand, of Kanouj, whose followers, when defeated by Shahab-ud-din, populated a portion of this district; but almost all state that their ancestors took possession of those jungle tracts which form their present estates within this period."¹ If our own remarks respecting the social condition of the Bhars be correct, the estimate Mr. Ricketts forms of the cultivation of this tribe, and of others in this neighbourhood, is altogether unsatisfactory.

Sir Henry Elliot considers it strange that so little notice is taken of the Bhars in the Purânas. The fact may be accounted for in two ways: in the first place, Brahmanical writers generally speak of the Dasyas and Asuryas, and all other non-Hindu races, with superciliousness and contempt, and consequently rarely exhibit a particle of interest in their welfare; and in the second place, the abandonment of a considerable tract of country on the part of the Aryans, who

¹ Census Report of the North-Western Provinces for 1865, vol. i., Appendix B., p. 127.

occupied them, or their expulsion therefrom by aboriginal races, was an act of such little honour that it was natural not only that the circumstance should not be referred to in records devoted to the purposes of the Hindu tribes, but also that the aborigines themselves who had profited by it should be unnoticed. Sir H. Elliot conjectures, however, that an obscure reference to the Bhars is to be found in the Brahma Purâna, where it is said, among "the descendants of Jayadhwaja are the Bharats, who, it is added, are not commonly specified *from their great number*. So also the Harivansa says of the Bharats, i. p. 157, 'They form an immense family, whose numbers it is impossible to mention.' Or they may, perhaps, be the Bhargas of the Mahâbhârata, subdued by Bhim Sen, on his eastern expedition."¹

With all this industry and capacity, the Bhars were destined to perish. The chief cause of their destruction was, doubtless, as already stated, the success of the Mahomedan invasions of India, whereby the great Râjpoot rulers of Kanouj and Delhi were overthrown, and the Râjpoot tribes generally of Upper India coming into collision with a foe stronger than themselves, were compelled to surrender their old possessions and to seek out new homes. Being driven from their own countries, they fled into the more secure regions of the east, where, coming in contact with aboriginal tribes, they gradually subdued them.

In the Ghâzipur and Azimgarh districts a fierce and prolonged contest was carried on between the Bhars and the Sengarh Râjpoots, from Phaphund in the District of Etawah. These latter first entered the northern part of Ghâzipur, in the employment of the Bhar Raja who resided there. After a time, receiving some provocation from the Raja, they killed him, and endeavoured to seize his territory. The Bhars, however, bravely defended their lands; but the superior military skill of their enemies was more than a match for their courage and numbers, and they were obliged to submit to the yoke of the conqueror. The Sengarhs had two chiefs, Hari Thakur and Bir Thakur. The descendants of the former

¹ Elliot's Supplemental Glossary, p. 83.

occupy the Laknesar *pargannah*, while those of the latter are found partly in the Zuhûrâbâd *pargannah* of the Ghâzipur District, and partly in a portion of Sikandarpur, in the Azimgarh District. They reckon fifteen generations since their arrival in these parts, which shows that the Bhar rule lasted until a comparatively recent period.¹

The extensive *pargannah* of Kantit, in the Mirzâpur District, derives its name, according to tradition, from the famous Râja Karn, who, it is said, came on a *tirth*, or pilgrimage, to the island of Ram Gyah, in the Ganges, near Vindhyachal. Karn-tirth has been contracted into Kantit. Formerly this tract was in the possession of the Bhars, but was wrested from them by the Gaharwâr Râjpoots, under their chief, Gûdhan Deo, of the family of Râja Jai-Chand, of Kanouj, who massacred the Bhar ruler, together with his relations and attendants. The capital of the Bhar kingdom in these parts was, I conjecture, the extensive city of Pampâpûrâ, from which the sculptures were brought which have already been described. Gûdhan Deo built forts on his domains, portions of which are still standing. This chief also took from the Bhars the lands of Khairâgarh—now a *pargannah* in the Allahâbâd District—which afterwards fell to one of his sons. The number *chaurâsî*, or eighty-four, was applied to so many villages. Hence there is a Tuppeh Chaurâsî, or sub-division, consisting of eighty-four villages, both in the *pargannah* of Kantit and Khairâgarh. This family became very powerful, and spread over a wide extent of country, occupying large tracts in the districts of Allahâbâd, Mirzâpur, Jaunpur, and Benares. The present Râja of Manda, one of Gûdhan Deo's descendants, possesses a small portion only of this territory; yet it consists of six hundred and seventy-five square miles.² It has been said that the Gaharwâr Râjpoots once ruled from old Kanouj to Allahâbâd and Mirzâpur; but this, perhaps, is only conjecture.

To the north of the Ganges, in what is now the Badohî

¹ Dr. Oldham's Statistical Memoir of the Ghâzipûr District, chap. iii. sec. ix.

² Mr. C. Raikes' Settlement Records of Kantit Pargannah, sec. 4. Report of Revenue Settlement, Allahâbâd, vol. ii., part i. sec. 29.

pargannah, the Bhar principality was destroyed by the Monus Râjpoots, who came from Amber, or old Jaipur, where the elder branch of the clan still exists. The tradition of the circumstance—universally believed in the neighbourhood—is as follows:—Five persons of the Mon race undertook to perform a pilgrimage from their own country to Benares. Passing through the Bhar territory, they were attracted by its advantages, and determined to remain there, and to settle among its inhabitants. They were joined by other members of their tribe, whom they invited over. As they increased in numbers and importance, the Bhars sought to make alliances with them; but their overtures being discountenanced, disputes at length arose on the subject of intermarriage which increased to blows. This seems to have been the signal for a general attack upon the Bhars, and in the struggle which ensued the Monus people were so successful that they not only completely subjugated the aborigines, but utterly destroyed them. At the present day scarcely a Bhar is to be found from one extremity of the *pargannah* to the other, so absolute and entire has been their extermination.

Fortune, however, is a fickle goddess, and the fate of the Monus Râjpoots of Bhadohi, and also of the Gaharwâr Râjpoots of Kantit, affords a notable instance of her inconsistency. The former, calling in the aid of Pirthipat Singh, Râja of Partâbgarh, to settle their family disputes, fell into his power; and, in the year 1751, the *pargannah* passed from his hands into those of Balwant Singh, Râja of Benares, with whose descendants it still remains. This powerful and ambitious chieftain also obtained possession of the Kantit lands, driving out the Gaharwâr Râja, Vikramajit, who, with his attendants, sought safety in flight. For nearly five hundred years the Râja and his predecessors had occupied the country. On the rebellion of Râja Cheit Singh, of Benares, Warren Hastings sent for Râja Gobindjit, son of Vikramajit, from his hiding-place, for the purpose of restoring to him his patrimonial estate of Kantit. The new Râja of Benares, however, had sufficient influence with the British Government to hinder its restoration; and he only received

a tenth part of its original receipts. His successors now reside in the old Gaharwâr Fort of Bijaipur, the domains of which were afterwards given as a commutation of the tenth. The prestige of the ancient Gaharwâr family in the flourishing commercial city of Mirzâpur is very great; and when the Mutiny was at its height, the Government wisely availed themselves of it in preserving order among the people.¹

It is greatly to the credit of the Râja of Benares, that during the time of his occupancy of the Kantit estate, he exerted himself most energetically in promoting the prosperity of the new and rising city of Mirzâpur. He sent over traders of various kinds from Benares, and a detachment of horse and foot was stationed there for the security of its inhabitants. The trade of the city rapidly increased, and it is not too much to say that its present important position as one of the chief centres of trade in this province is mainly the result of the Râja's enterprise.²

Again, in the district of Allahâbâd several tribes of Râjpoots at various times ejected the Bhars. For instance, the Bais Râjpoots are found in Jhansa *pargannah*; the Monus Râjpoots, in Kawai; the Sonak, in Meh; the Tessyal, in Sikandra; and the Nauwak, in Nawab Gunj. The Bisen Râjpoots have settled in Karra, and Atharban in the Doab.³

The Bais Râjpoots of Oudh were very ruthless in their treatment of these industrious aborigines. Mr. Patrick Carnegy, in his "Historical Sketch of Fyzâbâd," gives a particular account of the successful raids by members of the Bais tribe in that part of Oudh now known as the district of Fyzâbâd. The Bais of Malethu overthrew and dispossessed the Bhars only two hundred years ago; whilst the Bhars of Sohwal and Rârû aided in the suppression of the Bhars four hundred years since. The Bais of Uchhâpali did the same about the same period. The Bais of Râmpûr Bhagun Tikvî fought the Bhars in the time of the Emperor Jehângir. The

¹ Report of the Bhadohî Pargannah, pp. 4, 5, 8.

² The same.

³ Report of Revenue Settlement, Allahâbâd, vol. ii., part i., sec. 45. Settlement Report of the Azimgarh District, vol. i., sec. 24.

Bais of Gonda took service under the Bhar chief some three hundred years back, embraced the opportunity of killing him, and seized his estates. The great Bais families holding lands in the *pargannah* of Mangalsi expelled the Bhars from two to three hundred years ago. The Mahomedans residing there state that Mangal Sen, from whose name the word Mangalsi is derived, was a Bhar.

I have already referred to the territory in the Gorakhpur District, now occupied by the Kansik Rājpoos, and formerly occupied by the Bhars, who were driven out from their lands or destroyed, like the rest of their race.

The Rājpoos tribes, although the principal, were not the only enemies of the Bhars. The Mahomedans also at various times settled in many places on their lands. In the Allahâbâd District the *pargannahs* of Chail and Karâli are almost entirely in the occupation of Mahomedan proprietors. Being near the city itself in which the Nazim, or chief local officer, and his underlings resided, it is not remarkable that these *pargannahs* should have fallen a prey to their cupidity. When the kingdom of Jaunpur was established, in the fourteenth century, all this part of the country formed a portion of the King of Jaunpur's dominions, and remained so until the downfall of the last king, Hussain Khan, towards the end of the fifteenth century.

If the dates given above be correct, it is plain that the Bhars, not a great while ago, were the lords of the soil over a considerable portion of the Benares Province and the Province of Oudh. It does not appear that at any time they possessed sovereign power; it is probable that they peacefully acknowledged the supremacy of the reigning monarch in these provinces for the time being, first of the Kings of Kanouj; then of the early Mahomedan Emperors; then of the Kings of Jaunpur, and lastly of the Mogul Emperors. Whether in the dark middle ages of Indian history, prior to the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni and his hosts, and after the fall and expulsion of the Buddhists, the Bhars were ever independent rulers, is a problem which cannot be solved.

Yet what has become of the old Bhar race? Their fate

has been most disastrous, inasmuch as they have not only been robbed of their lands, and of all authority incident to wealth and rank, but their conquerors have plunged them in the lowest depth of humiliation. Their present condition proves conclusively that they were ever regarded by their oppressors as fair game, to be hunted down and destroyed. Not content with doing their utmost to exterminate the Bhars during long centuries of grinding tyranny, they have degraded the survivors of the race to the most abject condition in the social scale. Here and there, in many places, as will presently be shown, Bhars are still found; but, with few exceptions, their state is one of great social ignominy. They are largely employed to tend swine, an office which in India only the most despised and disreputable classes will undertake. Perhaps this office is a remnant of the old habits of the Bhars, and indicates, as it is indeed almost certain, that their ancestors ate pork and the flesh of other animals. By some persons the Bhars are included in the caste of Pâsis, one of the most ignoble of the non-Hindu castes.

It would be interesting to learn the history of the degradation of a race of people, of enterprise and skill, of originality and singular practical ability, which it is evident once characterized them in no ordinary degree. Their supplanters, whether Rājapoots, Brahmans, or Mahomedans, though more civilized and refined, are not to be compared with the nobler aborigines, whom they have ruined, in regard to the great works of public utility which have been executed in the land. In default of such historical information—which, indeed, there is little probability of our ever acquiring—the only explanation of the circumstance that I can give is, that their present miserable condition is the result of the pride and intolerance of their conquerors. As a non-Aryan tribe they were considered impure, and altogether unfit to be the companions of the twice-born and their associates. Their industry, their natural gifts, their energy and perseverance, constituted, in the judgment of these high-caste intolerants, no claim to their consideration; on the contrary, may have furnished a reason, in addition to their religious uncleanness,

for depressing them as low as possible. The mental superiority of the Aryan races over the Bhars, and other similar aboriginal tribes, admits of no dispute; and it is equally certain that, in industry and practical sagacity, they were barely equal to them. This is proved by the fact, patent to all residing in those parts of India to which special reference has been made in this essay, that there are more numerous remains of their mechanical ability and scientific attainments in that tract than of all the Rājputs and other Aryan tribes that have succeeded them. In the view of the writer, special measures should be adopted by philanthropists for the social and political regeneration of the Bhar, the Seorî—which has suffered a like degradation—and other aboriginal tribes. Well-informed and generous Hindus, who are deriving incalculable benefits from British rule in India—aspirants for political distinctions and favours, men animated, or professing to be animated, with noble desires for the enlightenment of their fellow-countrymen—may fairly be called upon to render efficient aid in this great enterprise. Nor should the Government withhold a helping hand. It has paid little practical attention to these despised classes hitherto. This is a grave though unintentional error. Why should not the Bhar and Seorî have a chance to recover their lost social position? The Government has it in its power to afford them this chance. Has it yet the will?

A few of the Bhar tribe, although they may not have saved themselves from social contempt, are still in possession of property and comparative independence. While not a single Bhar landed proprietor exists in the Bhadohî *pargannah* of the Mirzāpur District, there are two Bhar land-holders, or were not long since, in the neighbouring *pargannah* of Kantit, in the same district. But these men, disloyal to their tribe, though wise in their generation, feeling the grievous burden of their social position, affect a Rājput title, notwithstanding that it is well known they are directly descended from the Bhars. The extensive tract in the Vindhya Hills, known as the Tallūqâ of Koindih, belongs to a Bhar clan.

In the Allahābād District this unfortunate race seems to

have been well nigh extinguished. There are, however, three Bhar villages in the Khairâgarh *pargannah*, namely, Majera, Kalyânpur, and Omraicha, the families of which are said to have right to six others, although in reality only occupying these three. It is probable that the Bhars, driven away from more civilized regions, retreated into the wild jungle of Khariâgarh, and remained there long after multitudes of their race in other places had been destroyed. But they were finally expelled by the present Râja of Mândâ, to whom reference has been already made. The Arail and Barraha *pargannahs* have also Bhars residing in them. They are likewise met with in every village of *pargannah* Salimpûr, Majhohî in the Gorakhpur District. In Shâhâbâd they still hold a portion of the extensive domains formerly in the possession of the tribe. A *pargannah* of Chotâ Nâgpur is called Bharwa.

In fact, the Bhars still cling with pertinacity to the country in which their more fortunate ancestors flourished for so many generations. In most of the cities and towns, and in not a few of the villages likewise, scattered members of the tribe are found. They exhibit little tribal cohesiveness or *esprit de corps*, and are utterly destitute of spirit and enterprise. In the Ghâzipur District alone there are fifty-six thousand Bhars; in Gorakhpur, sixty-three thousand; in Azimgarh, sixty-nine thousand; in Benares, thirty-three thousand, and many more in other places. Bhars are commonly employed as village policemen, and also as ploughmen. It is said that there are properly two divisions of them, the Bhars and the Râjbhars, the latter differing from the former in not eating swines' flesh, and being regarded, consequently, as more honourable than the latter. It is not improbable that they may be descended from the old Bhar nobility. Râjpoots are in the habit of purchasing female children from the Râjbhars and marrying them to their sons; this arises from the habit of infanticide which has existed for so long among some of the Râjpoot tribes.

In spite of the pertinacity with which, if tradition is correct, the higher castes kept aloof from Bhar alliances, they

were not always successful in doing so. In the Allahâbâd District, for instance, three examples are found of unions with Bhar families. Mr. G. Ricketts in his memorandum states that three influential castes or clans claim an admixture of Bhar blood. These are the Bharors, Garhors, and Tikaits. The two former are not numerous; they are landed proprietors in the southern portion of this district, and appear to be a connecting link between the higher castes, who are generally landed proprietors, and those inferior castes, whose lot is servitude. The Tikaits are numerous and possess much influence. A Chauhân leader carried off his Bhar chief's daughter. The descendants are still proprietors of a portion of that Bhar chief's possessions.¹

Mr. P. Carnegy, in his "Notes on the Races of Oudh," indulges the strange notion that the Bhars are of Râjpoot origin, and the Cherûs also, "and such like." And yet he acknowledges that the "weight of opinion seems to be in favour of the belief that the Bhars may have been the so-called aborigines of Eastern Oudh, which formerly included Azimgarh and Gorakhpur." This view he dissents from, holding that if they were "not the aborigines of Eastern Oudh, they were at any rate Râjpoots in Râma's time, or long before the Christian era."

It is a question of considerable ethnological interest whether the Bhars were originally connected with the Cherûs, Seorîs, and other ancient races of Northern India. The Cherûs are sometimes spoken of as a branch of the Bhars; and as to the Seorîs, it was the opinion of Sir H. Elliot that there was great reason to suppose that Cherûs and Seorîs were formerly one and the same; yet he says it is very difficult to trace the connexion between these tribes. It is certainly remarkable that the *pargannah* of Barhar, in the Mirzâpur District—which I have no doubt should be Bharhar; the second syllable, "har," being the reduplication of the "har" of the first syllable—is at the present time partly inhabited by a race of Seorîs.

My own belief is, that many of the aboriginal tribes of

¹ Mr. Ricketts' Report, p. 128.

India were originally blended together. All investigation into the races of India goes to prove that at various epochs separate tribes have spread over the land, one pushing forward another, the weaker and less civilized retreating to the jungles and hilly fastnesses; and the stronger, in their turn, giving place to fresh and more vigorous clans. It may be impossible to prove, therefore, what is nevertheless highly probable, that in very ancient times most of these tribes were exceedingly few in number; for it is a singular circumstance, opposed, indeed, when regarded superficially, to the assumption I am making, that the races of India, whether Aryan or non-Aryan, for a long succession of ages, have largely maintained their distinctive individuality, notwithstanding the fluctuations in their respective histories. Still, to some extent, they have united with one another, and it is indisputable that a large number of the low castes of India have sprung from unions between the races. In many instances a careful scrutiny can detect in these castes, not only their special differences, but also the very names by which the clans they represent were primarily designated.

This scattering of tribes over the country has produced a result which perhaps is not found on the same scale in any other part of the world, namely, that every district in India has its peculiar clans, with their own traditions and annals; and has, in addition, a host of fragmentary and isolated remnants of lost or vanquished tribes, like the Bhars, of which, in some cases, scarcely more than their bare names can now be traced.

But the subject of the history of the aboriginal races of India is one which, although material is being gradually collected for its elucidation, is nevertheless so intricate and involved that it will require long and patient research before satisfactory conclusions are attained. The unravelling of the tangled skein of Indian history is necessarily a work of time, and of great difficulty. Yet something has been already accomplished by earnest, conscientious, and painstaking labourers. Exceedingly harassing as the task undoubtedly is, still knot after knot of the disordered thread is being gradually

unloosed. The enterprise is one demanding perseverance and industry, which will achieve in this, as in most pursuits, far greater and more brilliant results than the sudden efforts of an intense and fitful enthusiasm.

In addition to my own independent investigations on the subject of this essay, I have received considerable assistance in its preparation from the following works :—Mr. Plowden's General Report of the Census of the North-West Provinces, for 1865; Mr. G. Ricketts' Memorandum on the Castes of Allahâbâd, in the General Report; Report on the Bhadohee Pargannah of the Family Domains of the Mahârâja of Benares, by Mr. Duthoit, Deputy Superintendent; Settlement Records of the Kantit Pargannah, Mirzâpûr, by Mr. C. Raikes; Revenue Settlement Reports of Gorahkpûr, Allahâbâd, and Azimgarh; Benares Magazine, Vol. II.; Dr. Wilton Oldham's Report on the Ghazîpûr District; Sir H. Elliot's Supplemental Glossary; Memoirs of the Emperor Baber; Mr. C. A. Elliott's Chronicles of Oonao, a District in Oudh; and Mr. P. Carnegy's Races, Tribes, and Castes of the Province of Oudh.