Protectorate in a north-easterly direction, the object of my journey was now accomplished, and I returned to Chilomo by a route which, for a great part, lay through unexplored bush, having no particular features worthy of description.

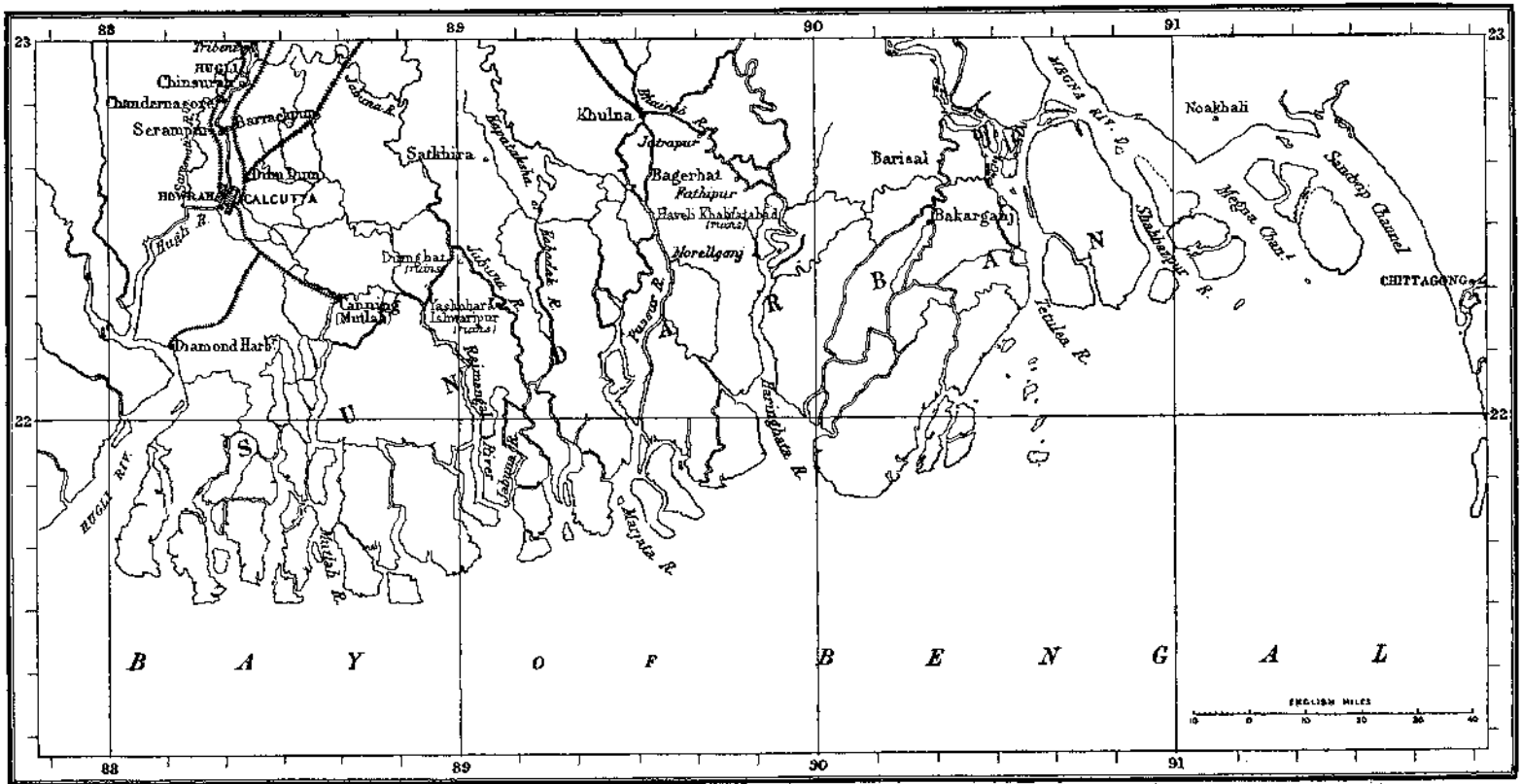
The Sundarban: its Physical Features and Ruins.

By JOHN RUDD RAINEY.

THE designation Sundarban, or Sundarbunds, as erroneously anglicised in the plural number, is bestowed upon the lower portion of the Gangetic Delta, which stretches in length about 170 miles, from the brackish waters of the wide estuary of the Húglí on the west, to the sweet waters of the still wider estuary of the Megná on the east, while it varies in width from 60 to 80 miles, from the turbid waters of the Bay of Bengal on the south to the limits of the flourishing permanently settled estates on the north. It comprises a superficial area of 7532·5 square miles, which exceeds in size the principality of Wales. This vast and excessively fertile low-lying alluvial plain may be termed the "gift of the Ganges," similarly as Lower Egypt has been termed the "gift of the Nile."

There are various derivations assigned to the name Sundarban, some of which are rather fanciful, such as Sundarban literally signifying "beautiful forest," from *sundar*, "beautiful," and *ban*, "forest"; Sundarband signifying "beautiful embankment," from *sundar*, "beautiful," and *band*, "embankment; Sumudraban signifying "sea-side forest," from *sumudra*, "sea," and *ban*, "forest"; Sumudraband signifying "sea-side embankment," from *sumudra*, "sea," and *band*, "embankment"; Sundarbandar, the "beautiful harbour," from *sundar*, "beautiful," and *bandar*, "harbour"; but it is generally recognised, and correctly so, to be derived from "*sundri*," a well-known timber tree, so-called in the vernacular, abounding in the locality, known to botanists as *Heretiera littoralis*, and *lean* "forest." This designation is however a comparatively modern one, dating probably not farther back than the last century, for Mahommedan historians, and among them Abulfazl in his 'Akbarnamah' term this coast-line of the Bay of Bengal Bháti; which signifies "low lands overflowed with the tide;" it does not indicate that this tract was originally covered with dense forests, and when, of which there is definite evidence, the rivers on the west, as they still do on the east, carried fresh water down to the Bay, habitation and cultivation doubtless extended to the sea-board.

The Sundarban may be shortly described as a low, flat, alluvial plain, covered, where not cleared and cultivated, with impenetrable forests and jungle, and intersected from north to south with wide tidal



Forrest & Skinner

MAP OF THE SUNDARBAN AND ADJACENT COUNTRY.

rivers or estuaries, and from west to east with narrow tidal rivers or creeks. The main streams, during the inundation in the rainy season, have what is usually termed "double currents," that is, the surface down to a certain depth flows downward or southward, while below that depth the tide advances upward or northward. This is caused by the freshets sweeping down from a higher level and overtopping and passing above the flood tide from the sea. Even to skilful swimmers this treacherous double or under-current is most dangerous, for one falling accidentally and suddenly into a stream naturally sinks at first below the surface, when the under-current drags him in one direction, while the upper-current flowing in a contrary direction prevents his rising to the surface, and he soon gets asphyxiated or drowned, and the body is sometimes never found, as happened some years ago in the case of the late lamented Bishop Cotton, once head master of Marlborough School.

The names given by the natives to the larger rivers are rather expressive; and a few of them may be here stated. Meghná signifies "no cloud," which is significant as meaning that no one ought to venture out in it, unless there is no cloud visible in the horizon. Balishwar means "the power of God." Haringhata, or "deer-shore river," on account of the number of (wild) deer found on its banks. Mathábhánga, or "broken-head river," that is, he who braves it will come in for a broken head or some such dreadful calamity. Mutwali, or "the drunkard," from its being usually turbulent. Kabadek or Kapatáksha, "the dove-eyed river," on account of the general placidity of this stream.

Hugli is a designation given by us Britishers to the western branch of the Ganges from its passing the town of Hugli, which name is derived from a species of bulrush growing on the swampy banks of rivers, called by the natives Hoglá (*Typha elephantina*); it also gives its name to the ancient Pargána (revenue division) of Hoglá, which comprises my property, the "Khulná Estate."

Among the striking differences between the extreme eastern and western Sundarban may be noticed the height of the tide and rainfall. In the former, the tide rises, it is said, over 80 feet, while in the latter it barely exceeds 23 feet. The rainfall also varies considerably; it is said as much as from 200 to 300 inches in the former, and only 82·29 inches in the latter.

In the Sundarban, deltaic action may be seen in active progress; and such lands are continuously formed, not as some suppose merely by the annual inundation leaving deposits on the surface of the country submerged, which creates new land, but mainly by the various streams depositing the silt and sand they hold in suspension in their waters on their own beds, which gradually rise above the level of the adjacent lands. This necessarily causes the streams to change their channels

successively, for water cannot run along a raised embankment, as it were, and must seek its level, and thus new channels are created and filled up in turn, till the entire surface becomes raised, when deltaic action may be said to cease; but this last stage has not been reached as yet throughout the Sundarban.

It may be worth while mentioning, that the drainage system of alluvial formations, such as the Sundarban, differs diametrically from that of ordinary lands of a higher level. In the latter, as is well known, the water radiates from an elevated central point and flows outward; and this may be termed the centrifugal system of drainage. But in deltaic land, as in the Sundarban for example, the exact reverse is the case, as the water from the surrounding parts flows inward to a depressed central point, and this, in contradistinction to the other, may be termed the centripetal system of drainage. This is the chief cause of the unhealthiness of all deltaic lands, and sufficiently accounts for the insalubrity of the Sundarban, for such soil has a tendency to retain subsoil moisture, which is a prolific source of zymotic disease.

The soil of the Sundarban is entirely composed of alluvium, and as such there is nothing else than fluviatile accumulations. But there is ample evidence to establish the fact, that the Sundarban in a comparatively remote period sank from some cause, possibly due to submarine volcanic action, below the level of the sea. This is proved by the discovery at various depths below the surface of beds of peat, stumps of trees *in situ*, bones of birds and fishes, &c.

Before proceeding to describe the ruins in the Sundarban, which attest its former flourishing condition, if not grandeur, the larger fauna and flora of that littoral region demand at least a passing notice.

The rivers in the Sundarban are infested with two closely allied species of the genus *Crocodilus*, namely, *C. porosus et C. palustris*, both equally destructive to man and beast venturing into the stream. These crocodiles are most daring. As an instance of it, I may relate that on one occasion, some years ago, when the prisoners of the Khulná jail were drawn up on the banks of the river to be mustered before being sent to the Presidency jail, a crocodile suddenly swept one of them with its tail into the stream and carried him away. The women of Bengal, who constantly go to draw water from the river, are the chief victims, as is testified by the fact of long human hair and bangles being found in the stomachs of these species of crocodile when ripped open. There is also another and distinct genus and species of aquatic saurian to be occasionally seen in some of the fresh-water rivers of the northern Sundarban, which are not known, in these parts at least, to make man or beast their prey, but feed almost exclusively on fish, though they will seize and devour any dead or wounded bird that may drop into the stream on being shot. This species of crocodile has a long, slender muzzle, evidently of no great strength, and is known to naturalists as *Gavialis*

gangeticus. But besides these crocodiles, which, with only one exception, make man their food whenever they can get a chance of so doing, the rivers in the Sundarban produce numerous and abundant fish, which forms food, and excellent food too, for man. Among them may be mentioned the extremely rich *Hilsá* or so-called Indian salmon, properly Sard (*Clupea palasah*); the well-flavoured *Bhekti* or "cock-up" (*Lates calcarifer*); the delicious eating *Tapasi* or mango fish (*Polynemus paradiseus*), and the very curious and rather savoury *Kai* or climbing perch (*Anabas scandens*), which latter is sometimes found with its dorsal fins attached to the stem of the water-loving mangrove (*Rhizophora mucronata*).

The forests and jungles in the Sundarban are equally dangerous to man and beast, for in them are to be found the much-dreaded royal Bengal tiger and the destructive leopard (*Felis tigris et Felis leopardus*), which prey on the inhabitants and their cattle, respectively, whenever they can get a chance of so doing. A great number of the natives are annually slaughtered by the former, and they are even known to break through the matted walls of the dwelling houses at night, and carry off human beings, but it is a curious fact that they never carry their victims away through that side of the house by which they entered, but break through the opposite side to do so. The largest of the *feræ naturæ* is the one-horned rhinoceros, which is identical with that of Java, *Rh. sondaicus*, and differs from the other Indian one-horned species (*Rh. indicus*) in being shorter in height, but not in length, and the female only possessing the nasal protuberance, which is not really a bony structure, but merely agglutinated hair, that is, it is similar to the horns of hollow-horned ruminants. It rarely interferes with man unless attacked, or much disturbed when feeding on the tender branches of trees, especially if a female with her young in attendance. Next in size is the fierce buffalo (*Bos bubalus*), which will not brook being disturbed, and commits great damage on the ripening crop of rice. Still more destructive to such crop is the surly wild boar (*Sus indicus*), and if attempted to be driven away from its succulent repast by a single man, will charge at once, and with its long sharp tusks leaves gaping wounds, which, if inflicted on the head, thorax, or abdomen, generally prove fatal. There are four species of deer, properly so called, that is with solid deciduous horns, abounding in the Sundarban. They are:—the big and large-antlered swamp deer (*Cervus Duvaucelli*); the graceful and fine-antlered spotted deer (*Cervus axis*); the small and short-antlered hog deer (*Cervus porcinus*); and the still more diminutive and still shorter antlered barking deer (*Cervulus aureus*); all of which afford tolerable venison.

The serpent tribe is well represented in the Sundarban, both venomous and non-venomous. Among the former are included the deadly cobra (*Naia tripudians*); the scarcely less deadly carpet viper (*Echis carinata*); and the exceedingly venomous snake-eater (*Ophiophagus bun-*

garus), which is about the largest in size of poisonous snakes, and is remarkable for subsisting on nothing else than its own kind, devouring its smaller brethren without any mercy. It may be added that, as all salt-water snakes are venomous—all fresh-water snakes being innocuous—all such found in the Sundarban may be reckoned as poisonous. Of the non-venomous snakes, I need name one only, the huge rack-snake or python, erroneously called the Indian boa constrictor (*Python molurus*), which attains great length, and is capable of swallowing an entire deer or pig.

The avi-fauna or the feathered tribe are not very numerous or important in the Sundarban, but among them may be noticed the red jungle fowl (*Gallus ferrugineus*); the larger grey or swamp partridge (*Ortigornis gularis*); Pallas's sea-eagle (*Haliaetus leucoryphus*); and the gigantic stork or adjutant (*Leptoptilus argala*), known to the natives as the *Hárgilá* or bone-swallower, on account of its ravenously swallowing its food, bone and meat together. The under-tail coverts of this last bird furnish those beautiful plumes known as "marabout feathers," but which correctly can only be obtained from the sides of the African adjutant or marabout (*Leptoptilus cruminiferus*).

The flora of the Sundarban is numerous and various, but neither of the two best Indian timber trees are to be found there, namely, the teak (*Tectonia grandis*) or *Sál* (*Shorea robusta*). The principal timber tree is the *Sundri*, which has been already noticed as giving its name to the Sundarban, and nearly all the boats plying on the rivers there and thereabouts are built of this strong wood, which is of rather close grain, but somewhat brittle, and not very durable. The other chief timber trees are the *Keorá* (*Sonneratia apetala*), which yields a soft wood of no great durability; the *Garan* (*Ceriops Roxburghianus*); the *Pasar* (*Carapa obovata*); and the *Uriya-Am* (*Mangofera oppositifolia*), which produces a close-grained and rather durable wood. The felling of trees for timber for planks and posts, and for fuel, employs a class—not caste, for they are both Hindus and Mohammedans—of professional wood-cutters, termed *baulis*, who proceed in boats to certain temporary locations in the Sundarban forests, called *sáis*, each one of which is presided over by a *fakir*, who is supposed to possess the occult power of charming away tigers, and who has undoubtedly some knowledge of woodcraft. Here the wood-cutters work six days in each week, one day in the week, but no particular day, being set apart for the worship of the local sylvan deity presiding over that particular forest, and the *fakir*, who is supposed to have some personal knowledge of this supernatural personage and his or her likes and dislikes—for such deities are not considered as confined to one sex—acts as high priest for the occasion, readily obtaining a consideration for his services in this and other respects.

There is no conservancy, properly so called, needed for preserving the Sundarban forests, but it has notwithstanding been handed over to the

Forest Department, who have charge of it, and do little more than realise the forest dues, and effectually obstruct the extension of cultivation in the Sundarban, for on any application being made to Government for the reclamation of such land, they are strenuous in their opposition to it as curtailing the area of their jurisdiction, and necessarily diminishing their profits. The transfer of the Sundarban forest from the control of the Commissioner in the Sundarban to the Forest Department appears to be altogether a retrograde policy, as it hinders the spread of cultivation in the Sundarban, which contains the finest rice-fields, not only in Bengal, but in the whole of India; and its potential granaries would be a good stand-by in cases of famine and scarcity, for they are not nearly so dependent upon rainfall for their cultivation as in other parts of Bengal.

There are numerous ruins of brick-built houses and temples, and extensive tanks scattered all over the Sundarban, which establish the fact that they were at some time or another inhabited and cultivated; but in the utter absence of all records regarding them — for no historian, Mahommedan or Hindu, has given us any information on the subject—it is well-nigh impossible to come to any definite idea regarding their importance. It is true we have some old maps of early European settlers or traders in Bengal, Portuguese and Dutch, such as that of Joao de Barros of A.D. 1540,* and Mattheus van den Broucke of A.D. 1660,† and in the former there are five towns distinctly placed within the area of the Sundarban, to wit, Tipuria, Pacakuli, Noldij, Cuipitavaz, and Dapara, but these maps have evidently not been prepared from actual surveys, so no absolute reliance can be placed on them. The places mentioned in them have been merely conjecturally identified, and inferences drawn from such material cannot be otherwise than vague and uncertain. Again, early European travellers have given us some information, and one of them, Ralph Fitch, who journeyed over this tract of country in A.D. 1586, describes it as being fertile, and the houses of the people as being very firm and lofty, doubtless to withstand the cyclones and storm-waves, which are almost of periodical occurrence in the Sundarban. But such information is not precise enough to enable us to identify the localities, hence their testimony has been characterised as unworthy of credit, although on altogether insufficient grounds.

Then, lastly, we have local traditions, which, in the absence of history, carry some weight undoubtedly, and these clearly point to the Sundarban being inhabited and cultivated at some more or less remote period. These tales are handed down from father to son, and though they no doubt become more or less exaggerated as they proceed from one generation to another, they are not devoid of substantial basis; and the times to which they refer are not so remote as for them to have

* Vide his 'Da Asia,' vol. iv. pt. 2.

† Vide François Valentyn's 'Beschryving van Choromandel,' pt. v.

altogether merged into the marvellous. Stripped of all exaggeration as to the past grandeur of what is now little more than a howling wilderness, they may be said to fairly establish the fact of its being peopled and the lands tilled and producing crops of edible grain.

Then the question naturally arises, if the Sundarban was once a flourishing colony, why is it not so *now*? This interrogatory is often put with a half-suppressed triumphant smile, as if the question could not be satisfactorily answered by those who consider that the Sundarban was always in the state of utter desolation they now find it. A clear and conclusive reply to it can, however, be given, and has been before now given. Putting aside all comparatively minor considerations, such as the incursions of pirates, Portuguese, and natives, devastations from cyclones and storm-waves, which have doubtless contributed to some extent in depopulating this tract of low-lying and exposed country, it is merely necessary to point to an acknowledged physical change to adequately account for its being abandoned and overrun with forest and jungle.

Before describing this change it is necessary to premise that, wherever there is sweet water in the rivers there the natives will be found residing on its banks, and cultivating the fields around them, while the exact reverse is the case, as a rule, where the streams contain brackish water. This will not, and in fact cannot be gainsaid, for in such parts of the Sundarban—the eastern portions—where there are fresh-water rivers, habitation and cultivation are now found to exist almost if not quite down to the sea-board.

Now the physical change, discussed at length by Dr. T. Oldham, when President of the Bengal Asiatic Society, in Pro. As. Soc. B., 1870, pp. 46–51, was the shifting of the bed of the lower portion of the mighty Ganges from the west to the east, and its junction in the latter direction with the still mightier Brahmaputra. This event is estimated to have occurred a few centuries back, and it is an admitted fact that the rivers in this tract since then having no considerable bulk of fresh water poured into their upper channels, have been mainly fed by the tide coming up from the sea, which of course renders these streams more or less impregnated with brine, and quite unfit for human beings to drink.

To turn to the extreme west, we find that the Ganges formerly, at a place called Tribeni, which signifies three streams, separated into three branches, one of which only now exists as a broad navigable river right through, and is known to us as the Hugli; another, called the Saraswati, which joined the Hugli lower down; and the third, the Jabuná, which has now only a width of 100 yards or so when it enters the southern district of the Twenty-four Pargánás, and though it widens lower down, it is not from fresh water thrown into it from its source,

but merely from receiving the local drainage of the country it passes through and from the flood coming up from the sea, for it flows into the Ráimangal estuary, close to where it merges into the sea. This river flows through the centre of the Sundarban, and the ancient city of Yashohara-Ishwaripur is situated on its banks, but it no longer carries sweet water down its entire length, as it no doubt did at one time, hence there is little of habitation and cultivation along the course of this river in the Sundarban. And as with this river, narrowing from want of ample supply of fresh water at its source, so it is with other rivers, such as the Bhairab, the Kabadak, &c.

The ruins in the Sundarban now demand attention. Taking them in chronological order, it is necessary to begin with those situated close to the Government subdivision of Bagerhat, at Háveli-Khálifatábád, which dates from the beginning of the fifteenth century, or more than 400 years ago.

The most prominent and imposing of these ruins is, what is commonly called the *Satgumbaz*, but as this designation signifies "a mansion of sixty domes," whilst it has in reality no less than seventy-seven domes, the correct name ought to be, as it doubtless originally was, *Sathattargumbaz*, or "a mansion of seventy-seven domes." This edifice is of peculiar structure, and has no less than six-and-twenty arched doors on the four sides, which open into a vast hall, the dimensions of which are quoted as 140 feet in length by 96 feet in width, or having a superficial area of 13,440 square feet. This most spacious hall is, however, not very lofty, which detracts from its appearance; its many-domed roof is supported by six rows of pillars of ten pillars in each row, or sixty pillars in all, which are of grey sandstone encased in brickwork, but this less substantial addition has given way more or less everywhere, leaving the stone almost bare. The façade of the building is to the east, which has eleven doors, that is, one large central door and five small doors on each side, and on the opposite side, the west, there are also an equal number of doors of similar size and shape, which would permit of the building being used by Musalmans as a place of worship as well as business, as they would face the west on entering the building from the front, and could kneel down and pray in the supposed direction of Mecca, as they always do; and tradition says it was utilised for this double purpose. The remaining fourteen doors are equally divided on the north and south sides of the building, and on the four corners thereof there are circular towers, two of which, those facing the front or east, have spiral staircases leading to the roof. There is little of ornamentation on either the exterior or interior of this curious edifice, but there are conspicuously placed over each of the doorways five small circles, one in the centre and four round it, which are evidently significant, and apparently represent the arms of the then reigning monarch of Bengal, Mahmud Shah, the twelfth of

the so-called independent kings of Bengal, as the coins struck by this sovereign bear similar circles on them.

The ruin next deserving of notice is the mosque, the exterior of which represents a square of about 50 feet, but the interior is octagonal, with a large single domed roof, on the summit of which stands an ornamental pinnacle. Within this building is the tomb of its founder, Khán Jáhán Ali; it is a massive stone sarcophagus of six feet in length, slightly raised above the level of the floor, and literally covered with Arabic and Persian inscriptions; there are four in the former language and only one in the latter. The first Arabic inscription states that here died a slave of God who prays for His mercy, and that his name was Alagh Khán Jáhán Ali, "who left this world for a better one on the night of Wednesday, 26th Ze'l Higgah, 863 Hijra," = 24th October, 1459 A.D., and not "about the end of March or beginning of April A.D. 1458," as vaguely stated by a native chronicler, Bábu Gaur Dás Baisakh, in Jour. As. Soc. B., by Mr. James Westland in his 'Report on the District of Jessore; its antiquities, its history, and its commerce.' The floor of this building is paved with pretty encaustic tiles, which gives it a pleasing aspect.

Adjacent to this mosque is the tomb of Khán Jáhán Ali's chief servant or deputy, Muhammad Tahir, who was a high caste Brahman and became a co-religionist of his master by a curious stratagem devised by the latter to pay off an ingenious joke perpetrated by the former. The tale is rather interesting and will bear repetition.

During the fast of the Rámján, when devout Musalmans refrain from tasting any food whatever from sunrise to sunset, Khán Jáhán Ali was taking an evening promenade in his beautiful garden, well stocked with highly scented flowers, when a poor but high caste Brahman from the ancient city Vikrámpúr in the Dháká district approached him, and after a low salutation presented him with an exquisite bouquet of flowers of the exceedingly odorous *Ganda-ráj*, or "king of scents" (*Gardenia florida*).

The Khán, who had a great liking for strongly perfumed flowers, as most Mahommedans of refined taste have, naturally lifted the flowers to his nose and inhaled its sweet odour. The wily Brahman then interposed and said, his august master ought not to have done so, and that was his, the slave's misfortune, not to have been able to have prevented it, for the Khán had now irretrievably broken his fast, for "smelling was half eating," according to the Sanskrit saying, *Grahan ordhek bhojan*. The Moslem warrior saint said not a word in reply, but looked grim, and inwardly determined to effectually revenge himself upon this perfidious Hindu. Some time after he held a grand reception in his hall of audience, and the Brahman with many others was invited to attend. At the back of the building a savoury broth of beef was being prepared, which is strictly forbidden the Hindus to taste, but the closed doors in that direction effectually prevented the scent

from being wafted inside the building, When, however, the Brahman came forward to offer his obeisance to the Khán, on a pre-concerted signal the servants flung open the doors, when the overpowering odour of the soup immediately streamed in the hall, and the Brahman at once lifted a corner of his flowing chudder or muslin robe to close his nostrils, but it was too late. The Khán said he must have inhaled the odour of the forbidden meat, or he would not have attempted to close his olfactory organ, and as according to the Brahman himself, "smelling was half eating," he must be pronounced to have tasted the prohibited meat, and thereby effectually lost his caste; there was now no other alternative left for him but to become a follower of the prophet, which was after all his good fortune. Thus he became a Mahommedan, assuming the Moslem name of Muhammad Taher; and the descendants of his sons, who were born previous to his loss of caste, are reputed to belong to a family who are now the wealthiest and most honoured of the nobles of Bengal, but are nevertheless reckoned in the Hindu marriage market as tainted Brahmans, termed Pir Ali Brahmans, from their aforesaid ancestor, who is generally known as Pir Ali.

There are numerous other mosques erected by Khán Jáhán Ali and his followers, reputed to be no less than 360 in number in this locality alone, and one of them is of rather large dimensions, with a broad tank facing it, and is said to have been built by one Sádat Khán, a disciple of the warrior saint.

The ruins of a brick-built bridge remain to show that the stream which flows past this place, called the Mágrá Nadi or river, which was evidently of much larger size four or five hundred years ago, was at that time spanned by a substantial masonry bridge. On the banks of this stream is a landing-place, or rather the ruins of it, designated Pátharer-ghât, or the "stone ghât.

A description of these ruins would be incomplete without an account of the tame crocodiles in a large tank, where Khán Jáhán Ali is said to have kept two pet crocodiles who answered to their respective names, Kálá-par, or "Blackside," and Dholá-par or "Whiteside," and from whom those now there are said to be descended. Like them, too, they come on being called by the Fáqir, and are reckoned in somewise sacred. They, no doubt, come readily on being called, because generally some food, in the shape of a kid or fowl, is thrown to them, for the possession of which there is always a grand scramble, and sometimes a good fight when the opponents are well matched in point of size. They do not appear to have abundant food given to them, except at one particular time of the year, reckoned to be the anniversary of the death of Khán Jáhán Ali, though it is not so in reality, when barren Mahommedan wives from all parts flock to the spot, and offer fowls to these saurian monsters, who, on their hunger being appeased, are considered to possess alike the inclination and power of conferring on their donors

their hearts' desire of becoming mothers. What charm these crocodiles exercise over them I cannot say, but the belief is general as to their potency in this respect. Elsewhere, too, where tame crocodiles are kept, the same practice prevails, namely Panduah in the Hugli district, and at Karachi in the Bombay Presidency.

The ruins we have just described at some length, clearly indicate that Háveli-Khálifatábád must have been a place of no little importance in days gone by, and if further proof were wanting to establish this point, it is supplied by the fact that it was a mint town in 922 A.H. = 1615 A.D. A silver coin is figured in Jour. As. Soc. B., vol. xlii., pl. ix., No. 10, and the Persian inscription on the reverse relates that it was struck by "Nucrat Shah, the king, son of Hosain Shah, the king, the Husaini. May God perpetuate his kingdom and his reign. Khálifatábád, 922."

Not very far from this place, in a north-westerly direction, on the right bank of the Bhairab river, are two places named Fathipúr and Játrápúr, villages in my estate, which are supposed by my brother, Mr. H. James Rainey, to be identical with "Fattapoer" and "Sjathrapoer," mentioned in Van den Broucke's map of Bengal of 1660 A.D.*

The ruins of Yashohara-Ishwaripúr next claim attention, and they belong to a period a century later. They are situated, as before stated, on the banks of the Jabuna river, within the Government subdivision of Satkhirá, in the district of the Twenty-four Pargánás. These buildings were erected by Hindu Rajas, who appear to have dwelt here during the reign of the Emperor Akbar, and it is necessary to relate, by way of preface, some historical facts regarding them before proceeding to describe some of the many ruins there.

Rájá Pratápádityá was one and the chief of the *Barah Bhuyas* or twelve great landholders, who held sway over Bengal during the sixteenth century, and a history of him, where he is grandiloquently designated "King of the Sagar Island," was written by Bábu Ram Rám Bosa, one of the earliest prose works in the Bengalai language, which, it may be added, is a comparatively modern language, dating no farther back than a few centuries. It sets forth that one Sivananda Ráy journeyed from Sátgáon, during the reign of the King Sulaiman, to seek his fortune in the royal court then held in Gaur, where he obtained honourable and lucrative employment. That on the demise of the King Sulaiman, his son Daud succeeded to the throne, but refusing to do homage to the Emperor of Dilhi, an imperial force was sent against him, and he was defeated and slain in battle. When the army of the Emperor was marching against him, he entrusted much of his wealth to two sons of Sivananda, named Vikrámádityá and Vasanta Ráy, to carry to some place of safety. They proceeded in boats down the river, and established themselves on a spot far away southward on the banks of

* Vide his paper in Pro. As. Soc. B., 1884, pp. 19 and 20.

the Jabuna, which thence became known as Yashohara, that is, "glory depriving," signifying that Gaur had been stripped of its wealth to enrich this place. Afterwards Vikrámádityá appears to have attained, or assumed the rank of Rájá, and a son was born to him in this his new habitation, who was named Pratápádityá, and of whom it was predicted at his birth by an astrological Brahman who cast his horoscope, that he would supplant his father. He was well educated and trained, became a good scholar and excelled in all manly exercises, and fulfilled the prophecy regarding him by usurping the authority of his father and obtaining, it is said from the Emperor of Dilhi, the status of Rájá, when he removed the seat of his government to Dhumghát, where he built many fine buildings. He prospered exceedingly for some time, but becoming arrogant in his ever increasing prosperity, he refused to pay tribute to the Emperor Akbar, who sent his renowned Hindu general, Rájá Man Singh (the ancestor of the present rulers of the Jaipur State) to overthrow him, as several attempts made by other and inferior generals were unsuccessful, their armies being routed and the leaders killed. Man Singh with his superior army, after a toilsome march, arrived before the city, which appears to have been fairly fortified, carried it by assault and captured the rebellious Rájá. He was imprisoned in an iron cage, and despatched to Dilhi, but died *en route* at Benares, it is said by swallowing some deadly poison concealed in a ring he wore, rather than suffer the ignominy of being paraded through the imperial city shut up like a wild beast. This episode of the march of General Man Singh and his army to subdue Rájá Pratápádityá is referred to in the opening lines of the charming Bengali poem of Bharat Chandrá Ráy, entitled *Vidyá-Sundar*.

The two capitals, old and new, of Rájá Pratapádityá's dominions, namely, Yashohara-Ishwaripúr and Dhumghát, are situated about 12 miles apart, but the remains of brick walls and moats show that they were fortified cities, capable of standing a siege of some duration against an army not possessed of artillery, if resolutely defended by the garrison.

Among the ruins the most conspicuous is the palace, known as the Bára-dwari, or the "Mansion of Twelve Doors," which was apparently a capacious and rather imposing dwelling-house; and in front of it is to be seen what was originally, no doubt, a fine piece of water, or a magnificent tank.

The next building deserving of notice is the Hafiz-Kháná, to wit, the jail, also a rather imposing brick-built structure, the roof of which, despite the neglect of centuries in a country where edifices soon fall to decay, owing to unfavourable atmospheric conditions, if not repaired periodically, remains intact; and tradition says it was originally three stories high, two of which have sunk below the surface of the ground,

but no excavation has been made to verify it. If it was merely used to confine malefactors, they must have been both numerous and daring, but it was used probably as a guard-house or arsenal as well.

Of the remaining buildings one only need be mentioned, and that is the temple dedicated to the bloody goddess Káli, of the Hindu pantheon, who bestowed her name upon the city—Ishwaripúr signifying "City of the Goddess," she being reckoned among her votaries as the goddess *par excellence*—and was considered the tutelary goddess of the place. This magnificent brick structure rises high in the air, and appears to have been subsequently converted, doubtless immediately after the overthrow of Pratápádityá by the Mahommedan conquerors, though led by a Hindu general, into a mosque. The goddess is now worshipped by the Hindus in another and very inferior temple, where she dwells as a trunkless image, covered with much swaddling clothes to hide the defect of her lower extremities. A legend, well worth narrating, explains how the Rájá came to possess this image, and how the so-called spirit of the goddess that dwelt therein passed away from it. It runs in this wise:—

Pratápadityá having beheld a bright light emerge fron the depth of a stream, fasted and prayed for three days to discover its meaning, at the end of which it was revealed to him in a vision by the goddess Káli, who appeared before him and told him that her stone image below the water produced the resplendent rays issuing therefrom, and if he dammed the river, and emptied it of water at that part, he would find it. She also told him, if the image was placed in a fitting temple erected for its habitation, she would consent to dwell there and become the protecting goddess of his family. Of course the Rájá forthwith did as he was directed to do, and came across this trunkless stone image, for which he built a magnificent temple. It is said that, through the blessing of the goddess, he prospered exceedingly, and he became the most powerful man in the province, but continuous prosperity made him arrogant and tyrannical, and he perpetrated much cruelty. One day, on committing an act of greater cruelty than was his wont, the goddess appeared to him in the guise of his daughter, with a sad look on her face. Pratápádityá thinking it was in reality his daughter and displeased with her for appearing in public, in great wrath commanded her to be gone. She gave him a reproachful look, disappeared, and utterly abandoned him; and the stone image in the temple, which faced the south, as such images always do, was found to have turned its face to the east; and shortly after the occurrence of this event the invasion of Man Sing followed, with its dire consequences to the boastful and cruel tyrant.

No article on the Sundarban would be complete without at least a passing allusion to its vast agricultural capabilities. The rice crop, the staple commodity of Bengal, flourishes there better than anywhere else

in British India, and if its cultivation were encouraged by the Government, instead of being in a manner interdicted by handing the Sundarban over to the Forest Department, who desire to preserve it as a forest and nothing else, it would lessen the price of this food-grain at all times by greatly increasing the supply. This would render the cost of living of the poorer classes cheaper than it is now, and prove highly beneficial. While in cases of famine in India—which calamity is unfortunately of periodical occurrence, owing to deficiency and irregularity of rainfall—the Sundarban would be an inexhaustible granary to draw supplies from, as the rice crop there does not depend so much on rain for its growth as it does in other less favoured and less fertile parts of India. This subject was brought forward prominently to the attention of the Government in an article by Mr. H. James Rainey, entitled "Famines in Bengal, and the reclamation of the Sundarban as a means of mitigating them," published in the 'Calcutta Review' so far back as 1874, but no heed appears to have been given to the plan there advocated for the speedy reclamation of the Sundarban.

Note on the Kur River in Fârs, its Sources and Dams, and the Districts it irrigates.

By A. Houtum-Schindler, F.R.G.S.

In No. 274 of the *Teherân Ittelâ'* appeared a note on some recently executed repairs to the dam of the Kâmfîrûz river, one of the tributaries of the Kur, the Araxes of the Ancients. The note contains some interesting information on the little-known sources of the river, gives a list of the villages in the Râmjird district, and is illustrated by an intelligible sketch-map with latitudes and Greenwich longitudes. The note is, somewhat abridged, as follows:—

The sources of the Kâmfîrûz river are the Chashmeh i Shîrîn and the Chashmeh i Shahîdân, in the neighbourhood of Dizgird,* and the Chashmeh i Durdaneh, the Chashmeh i Gûr i Bahrâm, and the Chashmeh i Bâlangân in the Chahârdângeh district. The three last form the Asupâs † river, and join the river formed by the two first in the Borâq Pass. After this junction the river is called the Kâmfîrûz; but before entering the Kâmfîrûz district it is joined from the west by the Chashmeh i Zardkhânî, rising in the Mamasenî hills, and some distance lower down, near the village Saghâd,‡ in the Kâmfîrûz district, it receives

* Dizgird is a village in the Someiram district.

† Asupâs is a village in the Chahârdângeh district, on the summer road between Shîrâz and Isfahan.

‡ The Athâr i J'aferi calls this village Qal'ah i Chaghâd, and places Saghâd in the Abâdeh-Iqlîd district.