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**Askot.**—Estate in Almorā District, United Provinces, situated along the Kālt river, comprising 142 villages with an area of 400 square miles. The land revenue payable to Government is Rs. 1,450, and the cesses amount to Rs. 232, while the rent-roll is about Rs. 4,200. The estate belongs to a Surajbanst Rājput, claiming descent from a younger branch of the Katyūri Rājās who once ruled Kumaun, and the head of the family bears the title of Rajwār. The Rajwārs of Askot were conquered by the Chands, but were left in possession of their estate on payment of tribute. In 1845 the estate was settled with the village occupants as a *samindāri* in the plains; but subsequently the whole estate was settled with the Rajwār, who may now extend cultivation to his own profit, but cannot interfere with the possessions of the permanent tenants, as recorded in the village papers.

**Assam**<sup>1</sup>.—The Province of Assam, which lies on the north-eastern border of Bengal, and is one of the frontier Provinces of the Indian Empire, is situated between 22° 19' and 28° 16' N. and 89° 42' and 97° 12' E. It is bounded on the north by the eastern section of the great Himalayan range, the frontier tribes from west to east being successively the Bhotiās of Bhutān, the Bhotiās of Towang—a province subject to Lhāsa—Akāls, Daflās, Miris, Abors, and Mishmis; on the north-east by the Mishmi Hills, which sweep round the head of the Brahmaputra Valley; on the east by the mountains which are inhabited by Khamtis, Singphos, and various Nāgā tribes, and by the Burmese frontier where it marches with that of the State of Manipur; on the south by the Chin Hills, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and the State of Hill Tippera; and on the west by the Bengal Districts of Tippera, Mymensingh, and Rangpur, the State of Cooch Behār, and Jalpaiguri District. The total area of the Province, including the Native State of Manipur (8,456 square miles), is 61,682 square miles.

The name 'Assam' is, according to some, derived from the Sanskrit *asama*, which means 'peerless' or 'unequalled.' It has been suggested that this title was applied to the Shan invaders, now called Ahoms, and was transferred from them to the country that they conquered. This derivation is, however, open to the serious objection that in Assamese *s* is softened into *h*, as in the name of the tribe; and there is no apparent reason why it should have been retained in the name of the country.

<sup>1</sup> Since the following article was written the small Province of Assam has ceased to exist as a separate unit, and has been amalgamated with fifteen Districts of Northern and Eastern Bengal to form the larger Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, which is ruled by a Lieutenant-Governor, with a Legislative Council. The account of the general administrative staff, the various departments, and the system of legislation is thus obsolete; and the arrangements which are now in force will be found described in the article on EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM. The remainder of the article affords a generally correct account of that portion of the new Province which was once known as Assam.

territory there are no lakes of any considerable importance during the dry season. In Manipur the LOKTAK, a sheet of water covering about 27 square miles, lies to the south of Imphal, the capital town. The only island of any size is the MĀJULI, a tract of land covering 485 square miles in Sibsāgar District, which is surrounded by the waters of the Brahmaputra and the Subansiri.

The Surmā Valley is an alluvial tract, in which the process of deltaic formation has not proceeded so rapidly as in the rest of the Gangetic plain. Disastrous floods were more common at the end of the eighteenth century than they are at the present day, and it seems possible that the general level may have been appreciably raised within the last hundred years, by the silting up of depressions and the sediment deposited by the rivers in their annual inundations. Low ranges of hills, which for the most part consist of Upper Tertiary sandstones, project into the valley from the south; and its surface is dotted with isolated hills called *hilas*, from 50 to 200 feet high, composed of layers of sand, clay, and gravel, often highly indurated with ferruginous cement. In the centre of the Assam Valley the soil consists of a light layer of clay superimposed upon beds of sand. Farther back from the Brahmaputra the alluvium is more consolidated, and here and there are to be found the remains of an older alluvium of a closer and heavier texture, which corresponds to the high land of the Gangetic plain. Outliers of gneissic rock from the Assam Range are common between Gaôlpāra and Gauhāti, and are found as far east as Tezpur.

<sup>1</sup> The basis of the Assam Range is a gneissic rock. At its western end sandstones and conglomerates, which are referable to the Cretaceous system, are superimposed upon the gneiss, and are themselves overlaid by limestone and sandstone of the Nummulitic age. Farther eastwards what is known as the Shillong plateau rises steeply from the Surmā Valley, but on its northern face falls away in a series of low hills towards the Brahmaputra. The gneiss is here succeeded by the Shillong or transition series, which consists of quartzites, conglomerates, phyllites, and schists, through which appear granite and dioritic rocks. Upon this series have been superimposed sandstones and conglomerates of the Cretaceous age, which contain occasional coal seams, and which are in their turn overlaid by beds of the Nummulitic or Lower Tertiary period, consisting of limestone and sandstone with interstratified shales and coal deposits. Along the southern edge of the plateau in the neighbourhood of Cherrapunji, a group of bedded basaltic rocks, known as the Sylhet trap, has been forced up between the Cretaceous and the older formations. The Mymensingh border is

<sup>2</sup> This section has been compiled from notes furnished by Mr. P. N. Bose, of the Geological Survey of India, and from an account of Assam by Sir Charles Lyall, published in the *General Administration Report* of the Province for 1882-3.

The most noteworthy wild animals are elephants, rhinoceros, tigers, leopards, bears, wild dogs, wild hog, deer, buffaloes, and bison (*Bos gaurus*). The *mithan* or *gayāl* (*Bos frontalis*) has been domesticated by the wild tribes, but it is doubtful whether it is now found in Assam in a wild state. Rhinoceros are of three kinds: the large variety (*unicornis*), which lives in the swamps that fringe the Brahmaputra; the smaller variety (*sondaicus*), which is occasionally met with in the same locality; and the small two-horned rhinoceros (*sumatrensis*), which is now and again seen in the hills south of the Surmā Valley, though its ordinary habitat is Sumatra, Borneo, and the Malay Peninsula. The ordinary varieties of deer found in the Province are the *sāmbar* (*Cervus unicolor*), the *bārasingha* or swamp deer (*Cervus duvauceli*), the hog deer (*Cervus porcinus*), and the barking-deer (*Cervus muntiac*). Goat-antelopes (*Nemorhaedus bubalinus* and *Cemas goral*) are occasionally met with on the higher hills, but are scarce and shy. Elephants are found in considerable numbers in the Assam Valley and in the lower slopes of the Assam Range. They are also occasionally hunted with success in South Cāchār and in South-eastern Sylhet. Extensive operations have been undertaken by the Government Khedda department; and *mahāls*, or the right of hunting within certain areas not reserved for that department, are leased by auction sale to the highest bidder, who pays a royalty of Rs. 100 on each animal captured. During the period when the Government *kheddas* were working in the Gāro Hills about 400 elephants were annually captured in the Province. Small game include florican, partridges, pheasants, pea- and jungle-fowl, wild geese and ducks, snipe, and hares. Excellent mahseer fishing is also obtained in some of the rivers.

The climate of Assam is characterized by coolness and extreme humidity, the natural result of the great water surface and extensive forests over which evaporation and condensation proceed, and the close proximity of the hill ranges, on which an excessive precipitation takes place. Its most distinguishing feature is the copious rainfall between March and May, at a time when precipitation over Upper India is at its minimum. The year is thus roughly divided into two seasons, the cold season and the rains, the hot season of the rest of India being completely absent. From the beginning of November till the end of February the climate is cool and extremely pleasant, and at no period of the year is the heat excessive. Table I, appended to this article, shows the mean temperature and diurnal range in January, May, July, and November at Silchar, Sibsāgar, and Dhubri, the only stations in the Province at which observations have been systematically recorded for any considerable period. Except in the height of the rains, the mean temperature is appreciably lower at Sibsāgar than at Dhubri.