

NOTE 5.—Gasparo Balbi (1579-1587) heard the like story of the Battas under Achin. True or false, the charge against them has come down to our times. The like is told by Herodotus of the Paddaei in India, of the Massagetae, and of the Issedonians; by Strabo of the Caspians and of the Derbices; by the Chinese of one of the wild tribes of Kwei-chau; and was told to Wallace of some of the Aru Island tribes near New Guinea, and to Bickmore of a tribe on the south coast of Floris, called *Rakka* (probably a form of Hindu *Rákshasa*, or ogre-goblin). Similar charges are made against sundry tribes of the New World, from Brazil to Vancouver Island. Odoric tells precisely Marco's story of a certain island called Dondin. And in "King Alisaunder," the custom is related of a people of India, called most inappropriately *Orphani*:—

“Another Folk woneth there beside;
Orphani he hatteth wide.
 When her eldrynges beth elde,
 And ne mowen hemselves welde
 Hy hem sleeth, and bidelve
 And,” etc., etc. —Weber, I. p. 206.

Benedetto Bordone, in his *Isolario* (1521 and 1547), makes the same charge against the *Irish*, but I am glad to say that this seems only copied from Strabo. Such stories are still rife in the East, like those of men with tails. I have myself heard the tale told, nearly as Raffles tells it of the Battas, of some of the wild tribes adjoining Arakan. (*Balbi*, f. 130; *Raffles*, Mem. p. 427; *Wallace*, *Malay Archip.* 281; *Bickmore's Travels*, p. 111; *Cathay*, pp. 25, 100).

The latest and most authentic statement of the kind refers to a small tribe called *Birhōrs*, existing in the wildest parts of Chota Nagpūr and Jashpūr, west of Bengal, and is given by an accomplished Indian ethnologist, Colonel Dalton. “They were wretched-looking objects . . . assuring me that they had themselves given up the practice, they admitted that their fathers were in the habit of disposing of their dead in the manner indicated, viz., by feasting on the bodies; but they declared that they never shortened life to provide such feast, and shrunk with horror at the idea of any bodies but those of their own blood relations being served up at them!” (*J. A. S. B.* XXXIV. Pt. II. 18.) The same practice has been attributed recently, but only on hearsay, to a tribe of N. Guinea called *Tarungares*.

The Battas now bury their dead, after keeping the body a considerable time. But the people of Nias and the Batu Islands, whom Junghuhn considers to be of common origin with the Battas, do not bury, but expose the bodies in coffins upon rocks by the sea. And the small and very peculiar people of the Paggi Islands expose their dead on bamboo platforms in the forest. It is quite probable that such customs existed in the north of Sumatra also; indeed they may still exist, for the interior seems unknown. We do hear of pagan hill-people inland from Pedir who make descents upon the coast. (*Junghuhn* II. 140; *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal*, etc., 2nd year, No. 4; *Nouv. Ann. des. V.* XVIII.)