thoſe of the Ganges, that they may die in its ſacred ſtreams, which they believe can wash away the guilt oſ their sins. @@But the maxims of the bramins, which have encouraged this practice, we are aſſured by Mr Hol well, are a corrup­tion of the doctrines of the Shaſtah, which poſitively forbid suicide under the ſeverest puniſhment. @@The practice which religion or affection has eſtabliſhed among the Gentoos for women at the death of their huſbands to burn themſelves alive on the funeral pile, we do not think ought to be con­ſidered as ſuicide, as we are not anxious to extend the mean­ing of the word; for were we to extend it thus far, it would be as proper to apply it to thoſe who chooſe rather to die in battle than make their escape at the expence of their ho­nour. Thus we ſhould condemn as ſuicides the brave Spar­tans who died at Thermopylæ in defence of their country : we ſhould alſo be obliged to apply the ſame diſgraceful epi­thet to all thoſe well-meaning but weak-minded Christians in this iſland, who in the laſt century choſe rather to die as martyrs than comply with commands which were not mo­rally wrong. According to the Gentoo laws, “ it is proper for a woman after her husband’s death to burn herſelf in the fire with his corpie. Every woman who thus burns ſhall remain in paradiſe with her husband three crore and fifty lacks of years. If ſhe cannot, ſhe muſt in that caſe preſerve an inviolable chaſtity. If ſhe remain chaſte, ſhe goes to paradiſe ; and if ſhe do not preſerve her chaſtity, ſhe goes to hell.”

A cuſtom ſimilar to this prevailed among many nations on the continent of America@@. When a chief died, a cer­tain number of his wives, of his favourites, and of his ſlaves, were put to death, and interred together with him, that he might appear with the ſame dignity in his future ſtation, and be waited upon by the ſame attendants. This perſuaſion is ſo deeply rooted, that many of their retainers offer themſelves as victims; and the ſame cuſtom prevails in many of the negro nations in Africa.

If we can believe the hiſtorians oſ Japan, voluntary death is common in that empire. The devotees of the idol Amida drown themſelves in his preſence, attended by their re­lations and friends, and ſeveral of the prieſts, who all conſider the devoted perſon as a ſaint who is gone to everlaſting happineſs. Such being the ſuppoſed honours appro­priated to a voluntary death, it is not ſurprising that the Japaneſe anxiouſly cheriſh a contempt of life. @@Accordingly it is a part of the education of their children “ to repeat poems in which the virtues of their anceſtors are celebrated, an utter contempt of life is inculcated, and ſuicide is ſet up as the moſt heroic oſ actions.”

A notion ſeems alſo to have prevailed among the an­cient Scythian tribes, that it was pusillanimous and ig­noble for a man whoſe ſtrength was wasted with diſeaſe or infirmity, ſo as to be uſeleſs to the community, to con­tinue to live. It was reckoned an heroic action volun­tarily to ſeek that death which he had not the good for­tune to meet in the field of battle. Perversion of moral feeling does not ſpring up, we hope, ſpontaneouſly in any nation, but is produced by ſome peculiarities of ſituation. A wandering people like the Scythians, who roamed about from place to place, might often find it impoſſible to attend the ſick, or to ſupply from theſe precarious ſtore the wants of the aged and infirm. The aged and infirm themſelves, no longer able to ſupport the character of warriors, would find themſelves unhappy. In this way the practice of putting to death ſuch perſons as were uſeleſs to the community might originate, and afterwards be inculcated as honourable ; but he who put an end to his infirmities by his own hand, ob­tained a character ſtill more illuſtrious.

The tribes of Scandinavia, which worſhipped Odin the “ father of ſlaughter,” were taught, that dying in the field of battle was the moſt glorious event that could befal them. This was a maxim ſuited to a warlike nation. In order to eſtabliſh it more firmly in the mind, all were excluded from Odin’s feaſt of heroes who died a natural death. In Aſgardſk ſtood the hall of Odin ; where, ſeated on a throne, he received the souls of his departed heroes. This place was called V*alhalla,* signifying “ the hall of thoſe who died by violence.” Natural death being thus deemed inglorious, and puniſhed with excluſion from Valhalla the paradiſe of Odin, he who could not enjoy death in the field of battle was led to ſeek it by his own hands when ſickneſs or old age began to aſſail him. In ſuch a nation ſuicide muſt have been very common.

As ſuicide prevailed much in the decline of the Roman empire, when luxury, licentiouſneſs, profligacy, and falſe philoſophy, pervaded the world, ſo it continued to prevail even after Chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed. The Romans, when they became converts to Chriſtianity, did not renounce their ancient prejudices and falſe opinions, but blended them with the new religion which they embraced. The Gothic na­tions also, who ſubverted the Roman empire, while they re­ceived the Chriſtian religion, adhered to many of their for­mer opinions and manners. Among other criminal practices which were retained by the Romans and their conquerors, that of suicide was one ; but the principles from which it proceeded were explained, ſo as to appear more agreeable to the new ſyſtem which they had eſpouſed. It was com­mitted, either to ſecure from the danger of apoſtacy, to procure the honour of martyrdom, or to preſerve the crown of virginity.

When we deſcend to modern times, we lament to find ſo many inſtances of ſuicide among the moſt poliſhed nations, who have the best opportunities of knowing the atrocity of that un­natural crime. The Engliſh have long been reproached by fo­reigners for the frequent commiſſion of it ; and the “ gloomy month of November” has been ſtigmatized as the ſeaſon when it is moſt common. But this diſgraceful imputation, we think, may be juſtly attributed, not to the greater fre­quency of the crime in England than in other places, but to the cuſtom of publiſhing in the newspapers every inſtance of ſuicide which is known. Mr Moore, who lately publiſhed a full inquiry into this ſubject, was at great pains to ob­tain accurate information concerning the perpetration of this crime in different countries.@@ Mercier, who wrote in 1782, ſays, that the annual number of ſuicides in Paris was then about 150. He does not tell us how he came by the information ; but we have the authority of the Abbé Fonta­na for asserting, that more perſons put an end to their lives in Paris than in London. The Abbé had this information from the lieutenant of the police. Mr Moore was informed by one of the principal magiſtrates of Geneva, that in that city, which contains about 25,000 inhabitants, the average number of ſuicides is about eight. The average number of ſuicides, from what cauſe ſoever, for the laſt 28 years, has been 32 each year for London, Southwark, and Weſtminſter. In Edinburgh, which contains 80,000 inhabitants, we are convinced the average number of ſuicides does not exceed *four.* Mr Moore found, from the accounts with which he was favoured by the ſeveral coroners of the coun­ty of Kent, that for the laſt 18 years the number has been upwards of 32 each year. Kent is ſuppoſed to contain 200,000 inhabitants, and London 800,000. It is eaſy therefore to see, that in the metropolis many inſtances of ſuicide muſt occur which are never the ſubject of legal in­quiry, and conſequently never made known to the world. Whereas in the country towns and villages of Kent it is ſcarcely poſſible to conceal ſuch an action as ſelf-murder

@@@[mu] Sullivan's Phil. Rhap. vol. ii.

@@@[mu] Holwell's Interesting Events, &c. vol. i.

@@@[mu] Robertson's America.

@@@[mu] Raynal's History of the East and West Indies, vol. i.

@@@[mu] Mercier Tableau Paris.