

the fruit of a tree, is a violent poison, with which the Malagese exercise what we might call the judgement of God. Thus, when any one, either through malice or in good faith, has been accused of a crime or of sorcery, it is necessary that he should clear himself from this imputation; without doing so he would be dishonored before the whole world; even his parents would have to separate from him. Indeed, should he hesitate to submit to this trial, the head of the family places before him a little of every thing necessary for life—a saucepan, a knife, a spoon, rice—and says to him: “Take these, my friend, you have your arms, you are very well, you can earn your bread; go where you please, since you accept the accusation.” The fear of being thus dishonored and rejected causes the greater number, especially of those who know themselves to be innocent, to accept the ordeal voluntarily, and they are the first to demand it. Lately, three persons at Nossi-bé a man and two women, were accused of having caused the death of one of their family. “Very well! we will take the tanquin,” they said, “and we shall see if we are guilty.” But as the operation could not be prudently carried out at Nossi-bé they went away to the large island with their accusers. They retired to a place particularly reserved for these trials, where the bounds are marked by the numerous tombs of those who have succumbed. There a large fire is lighted, and a large pan of rice is boiled into broth. The patients are seated on a mat. When all is ready, the administrator of the tanquin takes the poison, weighs it, and shows it to the witnesses, so that they may convince themselves that he gives the same quantity to each. The accused swallow it without hesitation for ordinarily the sikily has told them to have confidence. The great object for them is to vomit. To cause this effect, they are made to eat a great quantity of boiled rice, so as to force the stomach to reject it. But it often happens that the stomach resists all efforts and retains the fatal poison, and thus it happened to two of these accused, the man and a woman. The tanquin was not slow to produce its effect. Their bodies were swollen out of all proportion, the hair stood on end upon their heads, they uttered cries of pain and fear, which was taken by others as proof of their crime. Then the trial is finished, in the opinion of the Malagese they are evidently guilty. They are placed on the scaffold prepared beforehand, and the poor creatures are soon reduced to ashes. As to the woman who