

handkerchiefs and pockets with pears, &c., as food during their return journey. "There will not be much trouble for the valuer when he arrives," I remarked to the monks, "if you allow such wholesale robbery of your orchards."

"On the contrary," they replied, "the difficulty will be increased; we never sell the produce of the gardens, which is kept for the support of all those who visit us, but we have much trouble with the valuation of the fruits for taxation. It is hard that we shall have to pay for what the public consume at our expense, but it will be thus arranged. . . The valuer will arrive, and he will find some trees laden with unripe fruit, others that have been stripped by plunder; the potatoes, &c., will be still in the ground. We shall have a person to represent our interests in the valuation as a check upon the official; but in the end he will have his own way. We shall explain that certain trees are naked, as the fruit became ripe and was stolen by the boys. 'Then you ought to have taken more care of it,' he will reply; 'how many okes of plums were there upon those trees?' We shall have to guess the amount. 'Nonsense!' he will exclaim to whatever figure we may mention, 'there must have been double that quantity: I shall write down 1500 (if we declared 1000), which will split the difference.'<sup>1</sup>

"We shall protest," continued the monks, "and this kind of inquisitorial haggling will take place concerning every tree, until the valuer shall have concluded his labour, and about one-third more than the actual produce of the orchards will have been booked against

<sup>1</sup> "Splitting the difference" is the usual method of arranging an Oriental dispute, as instanced by Solomon's well-known suggestion of dividing the baby.