PART I
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL
P. 182, line 9, Rajendra Nath to be read as Rajendra Lal.
" 313, " 7, Lal Gopal " " 
" Joy Gopal.
CHAPTER 1

BIRTH, PARENTAL HOME, ANCESTRY, EARLY ENVIRONMENT

I was born on August 2, 1861. This year, it is interesting to note, is memorable in the annals of Chemistry for the discovery of thallium by Crookes. My native village is Raruli, in the district of Jessore (at present Khulna). It is situated on the banks of the river Kapotakshi, which follows a meandering course for forty miles (only 16 miles as the crow flies) till it reaches Sagardari, the birth place of our great poet Madhusudan Datta. And higher up lies the village of Polua Magura known of late years as Amrita-bazar, the birth place of Sisir Kumar Ghosh, the veteran journalist. The village adjoining Raruli on the north is Katipara, the residence of the Zemindars of the Ghosh family, from which came the mother of Madhusudan. ¹ These two villages are often hyphenated together and called Raruli-Katipara.

My father was born a little over a century ago (1826). He learned Persian, which was then the court language, under a Maulavi (a Moslem teacher of Arabic and Persian), acquiring considerable proficiency in this tongue and also picking up a smattering of Arabic. He often used to say that, though he was born and brought up in an orthodox Hindu family, it was the divan of Hafiz that completely changed his mental outlook. He even used to partake secretly of the savoury dish of chicken-curry. It is scarcely necessary here to add that if any member of the family had come to know of it, he would have

¹ Jambavi Dasi, the mother of Madhusudan, was the daughter of Gouricharan Ghosh, Zemindar of Katipara.
been shocked and scandalised at such conduct. After completing his education under the parental roof, my father was sent to Krishnagar (Nadia) about the year 1846, in order that he might have the benefit of an English education at the collegiate school, which had just been founded. While preparing for the junior scholarship examination he was among the fortunate ones who sat at the feet of the renowned and saintly teacher, Ramtanu Lahiri. As Captain D. L. Richardson was then Principal of Krishnagar College, my father, though not exactly a student of his, must have imbibed something of his spirit and fervour. I have still with me a copy of the Lives of British Poets by this pioneer educationist of Bengal. It is a book I have read over and over again and treasure as a priceless heirloom.

Had my father not been abruptly called away he would surely have made progress in the college department in due time and sat for the senior scholarship examination. He had to give up his studies prematurely because he was the only surviving son of my grandfather, who held a Serjadarship at Jessore, a lucrative post in those days; and there was no one at home to look after the family estates. Another reason seems to be that about this time Adhusudan Datta had embraced Christianity, which sent a thrill of horror into Hindu society. My grandfather feared that my father after imbibing the heretical notions then preached by the alumni of the old Hindu College might be led to renounce the faith of his ancestors.

Here I may allude for a moment to our family history in a setting of the political, social and economic conditions prevailing at the time. The Ray Choudhuris of Bodh-Khana, belong to a prosperous, enterprising, and adventurous stock. Many of its scions had held important appointments under the Nawabs

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2 These were pre-university days.
3 The curious reader may consult with advantage Prof. Satis Chandra Mitra's History of Jessore and Khulna (in Bengali).
of Bengal and got large grants of lands in the newly colonised abads (settlements) in the deltaic regions of Jessore.

The Muslim Pirs in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, with the zeal of the Pilgrim Fathers, carried the banner of Islam to these quarters and planted colonies; and the very names of the places round about bear eloquent testimony to their zeal and activities, e.g. Islamkhali, Mahmudkhali, Hoseinpur, Hasnabad (i.e. Hosein Abad). Conspicuous among those Islamic path-finders stands the name of Khanja Ali, who built the famous "Sat Gambuj" or "Sixty domes" near Bagerhat about 1450 A.D. Some ten miles down Raruli on the river Kapotakshi is another structure which is also attributed to the above-named pioneer coloniser.

When, during the extension of cultivation into the Sundarban forest, some people were clearing the jungle along the banks of the Kapotakshi river, at a point about six miles south of Chandakati, they came upon an ancient mosque, close by the river-bank and they called the village by the name of Masjid Kur—"the digging out a mosque." The building, thus found, proclaims at first glance that it owes its origin to the same hand that built the "Sat Gambuz".

My remote ancestor migrated to this village at the time of the Emperor Jahangir or it may be a little later and held grants of land in several of the adjoining villages. My great-grandfather, Manik Lal Ray, rose to the position of Dewan of the Collector of Nadia (Krishnagar) and Jessore. In the early days of British rule, the Dewans, the Nazirs and Seristadars

4 Kati (lit. a log of wood) is added as a suffix to many clearances, which had been colonized in the Sundarbans after the cutting down of the trees peculiar to the jungles.


"The Bengali landholder delights to trace his origin to some remote ancestor who came from the North and cut down the jungle. The eponymous village here is still the man who dug the tank and ploughed the adjacent fields".—England's Work in India (1880).
were the right-hand men of the British Collectors of land revenue and of Magistrates and Judges.

Lord Cornwallis, the author of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal, evidently prejudiced against the system of corruption and venality, which obtained under the Nawabs of Bengal and at the beginning of the East India Company’s rule up to the time of Warren Hastings, practically excluded Indians from all the higher and lucrative posts in the administration. No doubt he had apparent justification for the course he adopted. Navakrishna, afterwards Raja Navakrishna, and the founder of the Sovabazar Raj family, Munshi of Robert Clive, drawing a nominal monthly pay of Rs. 60/-, spent ninc lakhs of rupees on the occasion of his mother’s Sradh (funeral ceremony), and nine lakhs of rupees in those days would represent at least half a crore ($400,000) at the present day. The Dewan of Warren Hastings, Gangagobind Singh, who was the founder of the Paikpara Raj, accumulated immense wealth and acquired rich zemindaries by expropriating the older territorial magnates, while Kanta Mudi (Mudi—lit. a grocer), who harboured Warren Hastings in his petty shop at Cossimbazar at imminent risk of his own life, was not forgotten by his grateful protégé when he became the arbiter of the destiny of Bengal. Hastings sought out his old benefactor and showered rich rewards on him in the shape of escheated estates wrung out from the hapless owners who failed to meet the iniquitous exactions of the Company. It is unnecessary here to allude to the atrocities perpetrated by Gangagovind Singh and by Devi Singh, founder of the Nashipur Raj, at Kungpur, for they are familiar to the readers of Burke’s Impeachment of Warren Hastings.

One might suppose that I am making a laboured apology for the ostracism of Indians that is justly regarded as a blot on the otherwise beneficent rule of Cornwallis. Nothing can

5 Cf. “It has been the opprobrium of our administration ever since the days of Lord Cornwallis”, that “with the progress of our empire a blight comes over the prospects of the higher and more influential classes of native society”, that “there is no room for their aspirations
be farther from my object. In fact, the remedy adopted proved worse than the disease. The Civil Servants, utterly ignorant of the language, manners and customs of the people were often helpless tools in the hands of their unscrupulous Indian subordinates, who would have been more than human, had they failed to take advantage of the enviable position they held. There would be, say, a failure of the crops and the unlucky Zemindar, trembling lest the rigorous enforcement of the “Sunset Law” would reduce him to abject penury at one stroke of the auction hammer, would apply to the Collector who in exercising his discretionary power was often guided by the Seristadar or Dewan; the latter would throw his influence into the scale in proportion as his palm was greased. In criminal cases the decision of the Judge was also more or less coloured by the hints and suggestions of the Peshkar, and as there was no jury system, the importance of these underlings can well be

in our system of government; they sink down to one dead level of depression in their own land”.—Marshman: History of India.

“It would be difficult to discover in history another instance of this ostracism of a whole people. The grandsons of the Gauls, who resisted Caesar, became Roman senators. The grandsons of the Rajpoots, who opposed Babar in his attempt to establish the Mogul power and at the battle of Biana all but nipped his enterprise in the bud, were employed by his grandson, Akbar, in the government of provinces and the command of armies, and they fought valiantly for him on the shores of the Bay of Bengal and on the banks of the Oxus. They rewarded his confidence by unshaken loyalty to the throne, even when it was endangered by the conspiracies of his own Mahommedan satraps. But wherever our sovereignty was established in India the path of honourable ambition, and every prospect of fame, wealth and power, was at once closed on the natives of the country. This proscription was rendered the more galling by comparison with the practice of the native courts around where the highest prizes were open to universal competition”.

—Ibid.

“But we place the European beyond the reach of temptation. To the Native, a man whose ancestors perhaps bore high command, we assign some ministerial office, with a poor stipend of twenty or thirty rupees (£2 or £3) a month. Then we pronounce that the Indians are corrupt, and no race of men but the company’s European servants are fit to govern them”.—Sir Henry Strachey (1820).
guessed. Instances were by no means rare in which the conscience of the helpless Judge was in the safe custody of the Peshkar.

My great-grandfather, Manik Lal Ray was, as has already been said, a Dewan of the Collector of Krishnagar and later of Jessore a century ago, in which capacity his emoluments in the shape of douceur must have been enormous. When I was a child I used to hear fairy tales of the wealth amassed by him. Company's sicca rupees used to be periodically despatched home in big earthen pots swinging equipoised from the ends of a bamboo pole flung over the shoulders of trusty carriers. As the Nadia-Jessore Grand Trunk Road was infested with dacoits these pots were superficially covered with balasa (thin sugar puffs) to disarm all suspicion.

My grandfather Anandalal Ray was Seristadar of Jessore and added considerably to the family estates. He died suddenly of apoplexy at Jessore; my father hurried to the place from Raruli but was too late to receive from his lips his parting message.

My great-grandfather must have piled up what may be regarded as a fortune, but the landed property he purchased about the year 1800 represented only a fraction of his wealth.

6 The term Dewan was used in a somewhat loose and comprehensive sense. Thus Dwaraka Nath Tagore, grandfather of Rabindranath, was the Dewan of "Nimak Chonki" that is, the Salt Toll house. Mr. Digby in the account prefixed to Ram Mohan Ray's translation of Kena Upanishad and Abridgement of the Vedanta says, "He (Ram Mohan) was afterwards employed as Dewan or principal native officer in the collection of revenues, in the district of which I was for five years (1809-14) Collector in the East India Company's Civil Service".—Miss Collet's Life and Letters of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, London, 1900, pp. 10-11.

"In Settlement work in those days, the trusted native Seristadars were, as a rule, the chief agents employed by the Collectors, who were guided to a large extent by their decisions and counsels".—Sivanath Sastri's History of the Brahmo Samaj, p. 12.

See also an article in the Modern Review by B. N. Bannerji, May 1930, p. 572.
Several explanations have been offered to account for the disappearance of his surplus wealth. When a mere child I often used to hear from the lips of the oldest surviving ladies of the family that my great-grandfather was one day playing chess when a letter was delivered to him; he stopped for a moment, read it through and only heaved a deep sigh. There was, however, no visible manifestation on his countenance and he went on with the game as if nothing unusual had happened. It appears that the bank in which a considerable portion of his savings was deposited had failed. 7 He was, however, as I have indicated, too shrewd a man to have placed all his eggs in one basket and he seems to have followed the custom of the good old days of hoarding his wealth underground or secreting it in the vaults in the ground floor or inside the pucca brick walls. As a matter of fact, one such empty vault I came across when I was a child. 8 The family tradition is that my grand-

7 There is reason to believe that it was the banking house of Palmer & Co. the failure of which in 1829 involved in ruin several European and Indian depositors.

8 In England towards the end of the seventeenth century (1692) similar difficulties and risks existed as regards investments, hence the practice of hoarding was common. Cf. "We are told that the father of Pope, the poet, who retired from business in the city about the time of the Revolution, carried to a retreat in the country a strong box containing nearly twenty thousand pounds, and took out from time to time what was required for household expenses and it is highly probable that this was not a solitary case."

But, in the earlier part of the reign of William the Third, all the greatest writers on currency were of opinion that a very considerable mass of gold and silver was hidden in secret drawers and behind wainscots."—Macaulay: History of England (1896), vol. iv, p. 320.

In several villages in Bengal and Bihar and I believe in other parts of India as well, where the light of western "civilization" has not yet penetrated, the habit of hoarding savings underground still persists; even in enlightened France this practice is at present in vogue. Cf. "The French peasant is still, after his immemorial habit, hoarding money in the woollen stocking under the floor of the house or burying in the ground."—Daily Herald (quoted in the Calcutta dailies, Feb. 19, 1932).
father knew the secret, but the abrupt termination of his life prevented it from being communicated to my father.

The upper story of the inner quadrangle of our ancestral house, still existing, has its doors armour-plated, so to speak; i.e., coated with sheets of iron riveted with bolts, so that dacoits might not easily break open the doors, and a portion of it still goes by the traditional name—malkhana (lit. in Persian, treasure house). My father probed several places in the walls in search of the treasure, but to no purpose and patches can still be recognised here and there in which new bricks and mortars have been inserted. Years after, when my father was involved in pecuniary embarrassment and the family estates began to be sold one after another, my mother, though singularly free from superstitious notions, considering the time in which she lived, sought the help of a Guni (lit. Sans., an accomplished man, adept or diviner) and according to his indication dug open a place underneath the staircase but to no purpose and to no little merriment on my part as I never had any faith in such divinations.

At the age of 25 or so, my father undertook the management of his estates. His intellectual equipment was of a high order. He knew Persian well and as I have already said had also a smattering of Arabic and Sanskrit. He had a fair knowledge of classical English literature and it was from his

Although Postal Savings Bank as also the Co-operative Credit Society’s Bank is now available within easy reach of many villages, the old custom persists; as H. Sinha observes:

"The big Bengal mahajans are also financed by gucchits or deposits from people who know and trust them. Even in these days of Telegraphic transfers and Drafts issued by banks of undoubted status and of Remittance Transfer Receipts issued by the Government, considerable amounts are remitted through indigenous bankers. For one thing, organised banks have not penetrated to remote places where indigenous banking alone is carried on. Secondly, bank instruments written in English can appeal only to the very small percentage of the population who know that language. In short, the indigenous system survives in spite of its numerous defects because it fits in with the daily life of the people."—Early European Banking in India, p. 240.
Inner quadrangle of the ancestral house.
lips that I heard for the first time in my life, when a mere boy, of such works as Young's *Night Thoughts*, and Bacon's *Novum Organum*. He was a regular subscriber to *Tatwabodhini Patrika*, *Vividhartha Sangraha*, the journal conducted by Rajendra Lal Mitra, *Hindu Patrika*, and *Amrita Basar Patrika* and its fore-runner *Amrita Prabahini* and *Soma Prakasa*. Carey's translation of the *Holy Bible*, Mrityunjaya Vidyalankar's *Probodh-chandrika* and *Rajabali*, Lawson's *Pasawvali* (Tale of Animals) and Krishna Mohan Banerjee's *Encyclopædia Bengalis*⁹ were also on the shelves of his library. My great-grandfather was also evidently a man of a fair degree of culture, considering the age in which he lived, and a proof of it is afforded by the fact that he was a regular subscriber to *Samachar arpana*, almost the first Bengalee journal started by the Dwellpore missionaries in 1818, and during my boyhood I found (es of it rotting in the library). My father began his career like a country gentleman in the days of Fielding and he had many aits in common with Squire Allworthy. Being a man of means he could well afford to indulge his tastes; he was much of a cultivated man, and mixed in the refined society of that city, made the acquaintance of such leading men as Jatindra Mohan Tagore, Digambar Mitra, Kristo Das Pal, and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. My father was also enrolled as a member of the British Indian association in the early sixties of the last century. He was fond of music and could play on the violin with the skill of an *stadt* (adept). In the evenings he used to have regular musical parties and later he was naturally drawn towards Sourindra Mohan Tagore and his Sangicharyya (an expert teacher in music) Kshetra Mohan Goswami both of whom have done great service in the way of revival of Hindu music in Bengal. One of the first acts of my father, when he took up the management of his estates, was to dismantle the *sadar* (outer) quadrangle of his ancestral residence and build it anew. In architecture also

⁹ A bilingual reader in five parts (1843), dedicated to Lord Hardinge.
his aesthetic taste found ample scope. Digambar Mitra (afterwards Raja and C. S. I.), who purchased a Zemindari called Soladana adjacent to our village, partook of the hospitality of my father for a day or two and expressed his agreeable surprise at seeing a house with a furnished drawing room which might vie with any in Calcutta, though situated almost on the boundary of the Sundarbans.

As I have said above, my father settled down on his estates in the year 1850 i.e. eleven years before my birth. As he had imbibed the ideas of "Young Bengal", he was one of the pioneers of the educational movement in the district and almost the first girls' school was opened by him at Raruli; side by side with this a Middle English School was also started. Seventy five years ago such schools were rare in most parts of Bengal and were the pride of the villages in which they were located. At present the district of Khulna alone boasts of as many as forty-five High English Schools teaching up to the Matriculation standard as also of two first grade colleges and a Girls' High School.

The economic revolution during my lifetime, which is vivid and distinct to my mind's eye, should demand some attention here. But as it would break the thread of my narrative, a separate chapter has been reserved for it.

My father was heir to landed estates fetching an annual income of nearly Rs. 6000/- a year; but it was only a fraction of the actual income enjoyed by the family for the previous two generations; for my great-grandfather and grandfather had, as I have already said, held lucrative posts. As an instance of the additional property inherited by my father, it may be mentioned that on the occasion of his marriage my grandfather presented my mother with ornaments worth some ten thousand rupees; the silver plate in his possession was also worth a good round sum. I remember seeing in my childhood several guests of position, being served simultaneously on silver plates, dishes, and cups. My mother used to show me with conscious pride gold mohurs with the stamp of the Mogul Emperors.
portion of her ornaments was sold off with my mother’s consent so that it might be converted into a profitable investment. In fact, a Zemindary was purchased in her own name. My father, who was evidently familiar with the principles of political economy, often used to say that it was sheer folly to lock up savings in jewellery as they brought in no return. As he also had considerable cash in hand, he opened a money-lending business, which for several years was a profitable concern. In those days, there was no safe investment for people of limited income and it was a constant source of anxiety with them how to guard their life’s savings against theft or robbery. As a result it was the prevalent custom to bury ornaments and cash underground.

When, therefore, my father opened a loan office on his own account, his co-villagers flocked to him with their savings, to be deposited with him at a fixed rate of interest; the more so as he had a high reputation for probity. The amount of fluid money in my father’s hand was thus considerable. Years after he came to grief over this new venture. My father’s total income, all told, amounted to about ten thousand rupees a year; but on what may today appear to be an insignificant sum, he lived in almost regal splendour. There were several circumstances that contributed to this enviable position.

If a circle be drawn round our ancestral abode as the centre and with a radius of four miles, most of our estates would be found within it. Thus my father lived, moved and had his being in the midst of his own tenantry. The family mansions consisting of a pile of two quadrangles—one for the Andarmahal (zenana or inner-apartment) and the other for the Sadarmahal (buter quadrangle) and the Chandimandap (where Pujas are celebrated) with its double row of pillars, added not a little to his exterior grandeur.

I have already stated that my father’s income all told seldom exceeded Rs. 10,000 a year; but it is evident that Rs. 10,000 in those days represented at least Rs. 50,000 or half a lakh of the present times. The economic condition of
Ireland in the middle of the eighteenth century is no doubt fairly reflected in Goldsmith's village pastor "passing rich with forty pounds a year". It will also be thus easily understood why my father could live with the pomp and munificence of the English country squires in the 18th century living in the midst of their tenants. There were half-a-dozen pates and burhandaes carrying long, polished bamboo poles and clubs posted at the Sudsurdarwaza. The Kutchery over which my father presided from eight till noon bore a brisk and lively appearance. On one side sat the Munshi, on the other the Khajanchi and there were also Naibs and Gomastas receiving dues from or settling accounts with the ryots and borrowers.

The Kutchery was also a regular court for the administration of justice, which was dispensed in a rough and ready manner, but on the whole to the satisfaction of the parties, as the evidence of the plaintiff and the defendant was taken in open court so to speak and in an entourage which had local knowledge of the matter in dispute, any attempt to throw dust in the eyes of the deciding officer by bringing in false witnesses was seldom successful nor was there any such temptation to do so as is found in our modern law-courts. The system was no doubt open to reproach as even in those days there were not many resident zemindars and even these had to be approached often through corrupt and unscrupulous Naibs who were not above temptation, whose palms had often to be greased by the adversary or the defendant. The system in vogue had however one commendable feature, Justice (injustice) was dealt out in a rude and patriarchal but summar and expeditions manner. The matter at any rate ended there—and there—it had an aspect of finality. I have elaborated this point in a separate chapter.
CHAPTER II

ABSENTEE LANDLORDS—THE DESERTED VILLAGE—
WATER FAMINE—VILLAGES BREEDING GROUNDS OF
CHOLERA AND MALARIA

In those days most of the Zemindars were residents in the midst of their tenantry and even if they were sometimes oppressive there was the compensating virtue—they spent most of what they exacted and screwed out in the midst of their own ryots and thus a considerable portion flowed back into the pockets of the latter. Kalidas in his "Raghuvarasam" thus thilly puts it:

प्रामाणगृहस्वामीं च ताऽको विषयमहीनुः
चक्षुयुक्तसूक्ष्मपदस्य दिवस रथः॥

It was only for the good of the people that he collected taxes from them, just as the sun draws moisture from the earth only to give it back a thousand-fold."

From the middle of the sixties onwards the exodus of the Zemindars to Calcutta slowly commenced and at present most of that well-to-do fraternity are permanent residents of the town. Even in the early thirties of the last century some of the biggest Zemindaries in Rungpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Baridpur, Barisal and Noakhali had passed into the hands of Calcutta magnates. No wonder that James Mill, the historian, his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons of 1831-32 should observe in reply to the query:

"Are the greater portion of the Zemindars resident upon their zemindaries?—I believe a very considerable portion of them are non-sident; they are rich natives who live about Calcutta!"

Therefore the experiment of creating a landed gentry in India by means of the Zemindary settlement may be considered to have entirely failed?—I so consider it". As Sinha observes:

"Though apparently milder than the old method of realising revenue through imprisonment, the sale laws gave the last blow to the old
aristocracy of Bengal. In the course of the twenty-two years following
the Permanent Settlement, one-third or rather one-half of the landed
property in Bengal was transferred by public sale, mostly to absentee
landlords in Calcutta.”

The immense harm which this vicious custom has inflicted
upon the country can scarcely be over-estimated. In the pre-
British days it was the custom, religiously observed, to excavate
tanks or to construct bunds and also to build roads. I will
have occasion to refer to the miserable condition of the once
flourishing reservoirs of water both for drinking and irrigation
purposes in Bankura. I shall now give here a brief account
of similar beneficent arrangements in lower Bengal. Rani
Bhowani, of pious memory, excavated numerous tanks through-
out her big estates. In the 16th and 17th centuries those
Hindu feudal chiefs of Bengal, who for a time asserted their
supremacy and semi-independence even against the great Mogul,
excavated tanks of immense dimensions, practically lakes,
which even to-day extort our admiration. The early colonizers
of the lower delta of Bengal—the Mahommedan Pirs and Gazis
—were by no means behindhand in this respect and this is
perhaps the main reason why their pious acts are graven on
the tablets of the hearts of the Hindus. They not only pay
homage to their sacred memories by offers of cakes, etc., but
also by holding annual fairs. Speaking of the tank of Raja
Sitaram, Westland says:

“Though now 170 years old, it is still the noblest reservoir
of water in the district. Its area I would estimate by sight
at 450 to 500 yards from north to south, and 150 to 200 yards
from east to west; and it contains rarely less than 18 to 20 feet
of water. It is the greatest single work that Sitaram has left

1 “At first the Zemindaries were sold not in the districts to which
they belonged, but in Calcutta at the office of the Board of Revenue.
This gave rise to extensive frauds and intensified the rigours of
the measure.”

“The sale notification of revenue-paying estates took up the bulk of
the issues of the Calcutta Gazette of the time and in addition Extra-
ordinary issues had to be printed.”—Sinha: Econ. Ann., footnote, p. 272.
OLD ARISTOCRACY

1d him,—the only one to which he himself attached his name Ram." Westland: Jessore, p. 29.2

The erection of the residential quarters of the old landedocracy, sometimes of a palatial character, gave employ- : to skilled masons and excited the emulation of architects; partly on account of the decay of old aristocratic families, chiefly of the absenteeism of their descendants this class 1 but extinct; most of the old resident Zemindars again "Court" musicians but these latter too are fast dying out. old tanks are nearly all silted up and their beds have me rice fields. Water-famine during six to eight months the year is now a permanent feature and the muddy pools

Beveridge in his Bakerganj gives an account of similar big tanks. The digging cost nine lacs of rupees. * * * * *

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tank is no longer full of water, but Kamala's good deed has not unfruitful, for its bed now yields a rich harvest of rice, and its walls or sides support forty or fifty homesteads, luxuriant in mind-trees, gab-fruit trees, and bamboos. It is pleasant to see these steads raised high above the surrounding swamps, and to think that inhabitants owe their comforts to a forgotten Bengali princess. are reminded of the noble language used by Burke when speaking of tanks in the Carnatic: "These are the monuments of real kings, were the fathers of their people; testators to a posterity which they aced as their own. These are the grand sepulchres built by ambizia but by the ambition of an insatiable benevolence which, not uent with reigning in the dispensation of happiness during the tracted tenure of human life, had strained, with all the reachings and bings of a vivacious mind, to extend the domain of their bounty and the limits of nature, and to perpetuate themselves through rations of generations, the guardians, the protectors, the nourishers mankind."—Ibid., pp. 75-76.

... for Dakhin Shahbazpur and Hattia have many large s, which must have been constructed at much expense and labour. are surrounded by high walls of earth in order to keep out the ater.—Ibid., p. 22.

... the work for which Kamala is famous is the excavation of ge tank at a place not far from Kachua, and near the mouth of the a river. The tank is now in ruins, but enough remains to show it was larger than any tank, not excepting Durga Sagur, which has been dug in the district".—Ibid., p. 74.
supplying the drinking water are often no better than polluted sewage. Virulent epidemics of cholera pay their annual visit and levy heavy customary tolls. The village overgrown with jungles and choked with weeds breeds malarial fevers. Those who can afford, go away with their families and live in towns. The college-educated class, the only people with liberal education, have to earn their livelihood by seeking clerical jobs elsewhere and have become so many run-aways. Only the idlers and the parasites of the Bhadralog class and the peasantry are the dwellers in the village. The absentee landlords living in the Chowringhee quarter of Calcutta have imbibed up-to-date habits of modern "civilized" life.

In their furnished drawing rooms you seldom come across any furniture or articles of Swadeshi (home-made) manufacture. Their garage shelters a Rolls Royce or a Dodge; by a curious irony or coincidence as I am writing these lines, my eyes are turned towards a "nationalist" paper which devotes a full page to a motor car advertisement with the heading "the embodiment of elegance and luxury" which offers a tempting bait to our sybarites of the land-owning and barrister classes.

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3 Oudh was annexed so late as 1854 and the curse of absenteeism has already pervaded the land.

Cf. "What of the plea that the Talukdar is the elder brother of his tenants? I am bound to say that some of the older tenants we remembered a golden age when they were under protection of a good Talukdar, a man who lived on his estate, kept his eyes and ears open and allowed no one except himself to fleece his tenantry. But for last thirty years the Talukdars have been building fine houses in Lucknow and living there, leaving their estates to be managed by underlings or rent farmers."—Gwynn: Indian Politics, pp. 262-3.

The great novelist Sarat Chandra Chatterjee in his Palli Sam (Village Life) has in his inimitable style delineated the picture of typical modern Bengali village.

Another Bengali novel just out (বিকশিতাক্যা) depicts in vivid col to what depth of degradation the resident Bhadralogs of villages have sunk, how they resist tooth and nail any attempt at the amelioration of the condition of the so-called lower classes, or even re-excavation tanks, how the "reformer" with new ideas is hounded out of village.
DESERTED VILLAGES

The English merchant-princes or Marwaris, it is true, indulge in these luxuries, but then they are business men; as brokers or managing agents of, say, half-a-dozen jute mills, they have to run from Budge-Budge to Kankinara and, therefore, they might find it necessary to detail one or two motor-cars for their daily round. They earn a hundred, nay a thousand, times more than they spend and in many cases they are the producers of real wealth whereas our anglicised Zemindars and the "Lions of the Bar" are mere parasites—they do not add a single arthing to the country's wealth, but have become the chosen instruments for the draining away of the country's wealth—he life-blood of the peasants—to foreign lands.

Lalit Madhab Sen-Gupta, M.A., writing in the Advance, July 6, 1930 on "Deserted Village" observes:—

"Whoever happens to go to a village in Bengal and stays there for couple of months will be simply amazed at the ways the people in village spend their days. In fact, the special feature of the village is its idleness. A villager may be seen sitting with his friends and gossiping for the better part of the day. Even in the harvest time

4 Cf. At the time of his death Lord Cable was the head of a concern (d Co.) controlling 11 jute mill companies with 13 mills.
Cf. also "Not one man in every ten who runs a motor-car to-day properly afford it if he looks to the future". Judge Crawford, who long been noted for his outspoken criticisms of modern extravagance, ecially as shown in the possession of a motor-car, made further thing remarks at Edmonton County, when he laid down the dictum noted above.

At Barnet, 12 months ago, he declared that "even a County Court he has no right to buy a car unless he has private means, because salary alone (£1,500 a year) is not sufficient.
"There is a gross extravagance all round now-a-days", he added, nd the great bulk of the people who come into court are living beyond ir means. As has been said, people marry on credit and live on ent summons."

He thought it "scandalous that a working girl should wear gloves ½. 11½d. a pair", and when told that her shoes cost over £1, her hat 11d., and her coat 5 guineas, he said he felt, "shocked to think the clothes of a working girl should cost so much".

If observations like these apply to a rich country like England, it be presumed that in a poor country like ours not one in a sand who owns a car, can afford such luxury.
he is not found to be as energetic as he ought to be. He follows mechanically the mode of cultivation of his grandfathers, and, as soon as the crop is cut he again idles away his time. He never cares to consider whether this process of cultivation, which he has been mechanically doing, can be improved upon.

**IDLENESS AND POVERTY.**

The special characteristic of the village is, therefore, idleness. Not idleness naturally brings poverty, quarrelling brings litigation and all other things with it. A man cannot always remain sitting idle. He must be engaged in doing something. An idle brain is the Devil's workshop. They [the villagers] quarrel with one another, set one person against another and try to do harm to persons who are seriously and sincerely trying to do good to them. Thus they waste their time and energy, their money which, if better utilised, could have removed some of the great social and economic evils which are eating into the vitals of village life."
CHAPTER III

EDUCATION IN VILLAGE—REMOVAL TO CALCUTTA—
DESCRIPTION OF CALCUTTA PAST AND PRESENT

To resume the thread of my narrative. My two
elder brothers and I received our early education at our
father’s village school and when my elder brother passed the
minor scholarship examination, a different situation was created,
which changed the entire course of my father’s future career,
which more hereafter. I was educated in that school till
was nine years of age.

In August 1870, I came to Calcutta for the first time. I
have a vivid recollection of the impressions produced on my
mind. My father took lodgings opposite Jhamapukur Lane
and the late Raja Digambar Mitra’s house and very near the
rahmo Samaj just then built by Keshab Chandra Sen when
he seceded from the Church of Devendranath Tagore (The Adi
rahmo Samaj). Digambar Mitra kept an open table at which
friends were always welcome and my father was almost a
constant guest for several years. He used to re-capitulate to
the table-talk of the host as also of Rajendralal Mitra,
emchandra Kar, Muralidhar Sen and other shining lights of
those days.

I spent the month of August in Calcutta, to my great joy,
most every day seeing new sights. I caught glimpses of a
new world. A panorama of gorgeous vistas was opened to me.
The new water-works had just been completed and the town
enjoyed the blessings of a liberal supply of filtered drinking
water; the orthodox Hindu still hesitated to make use of it
being impure; but the superior quality of the water carried
own recommendation; by slow degrees, reason and con-
tidence triumphed over prejudice, and its use became almost
universal. The construction of underground drains had just been taken in hand.

If any one were to present to the new generation the picture of the Calcutta of the early seventies, it would scarcely be recognisable. The long row of streets in northern Indian quarter had open drains on both sides in which sewage and abominable stench used to flow. The privies attached to the houses were veritable cess-pools of decomposing night-soil. The arrangement for its removal, which was left to house holders, was of a most primitive character. The citizens had to submit patiently to a plague of flies and mosquitoes.

The Suez Canal had just been opened; but there were only a few ocean-going steamers to be seen on the Hugli, the river was then dotted with sailing ships with a forest of masts. The High Court and the new Indian Museum buildings were approaching completion. There was then no Zoological Gardens but the menagerie of Raja Rajendra Mullick of the Marble House was a miniature Zoo and attracted large crowds of visitors. There were then only a few jute-mills on the Hugli—less than half-a-dozen.¹

The economic conquest of Bengal by the Marwaris had then scarcely begun to be perceptible. It should be noticed that it was not by means of a single pitched battle that this conquest was effected; on the contrary, it has been achieved by means of a slow, subtle and peaceful penetration.

A century ago Motilal Seal, Ramdulal Dey, Akroor Dutt and others had become millionaires as export and import merchants; later on Sibkrishna Daw and Prankrishna Law, ancestor of Raja Hrisihilkesa, did extensive business as importers of hardware and piecegoods respectively. Ram Gopal Ghosh, one of the most brilliant products of the old Hindu College, a pupil of Derozio, who, as an orator and political agitator, was named the Indian Demosthenes by a London paper, did

¹From 1860-70 "we have now got to five mills with about 950 looms at work".—Wallace: The Romance of Jute, 2nd ed., p. 26.
not care to seek employment under Government as was the custom of almost all his fellow-students. He commenced his career in the mercantile line and with an English partner opened the firm of Kelsall & Ghosh. His friend and classmate Pearychand Mitra preferred commerce to Government service and traded with America. Moreover from the early days of the British connection, Bengalis were banians of European houses, and in that capacity they amassed large fortunes. When I first came to Calcutta traditions of Gorachand Dutt, Ishan Bose and others were fresh in the memory of persons then living. But these early Bengali merchant-princes and banians took care to sow the seed of ruin and dissolution of their own descendants or families. The Permanent Settlement has always offered rich temptation to invest money in zemindaries, which often go a-begging for sale—thanks to the rigidity of the “Sunset Law” and the indolent and extravagant habits of their possessors. The founder of a Zemindary was usually a self-made man of active habits and not generally given to dissipation. But his successors born with silver spoons in their mouths found everything ready at hand and were often surrounded by a swarm of parasites and sycophants. No wonder that they should go wrong; they neglected to cultivate their minds and gave themselves up to a life of ease and self-indulgence. The idle brain is the Devil’s workshop. When Doctor Johnson was asked what the effect of primogeniture was, he coolly replied “It had the merit of perpetuating but one fool in the family”. But the law of inheritance among the Hindus and still more among the Moslems being

2 “While continuing his studies, in his spare time he [Ghosh] specially directed his attention to the study of the markets and the rural produce of the country. Before he was 20 he wrote a series of articles on the Inland Transit Duties. After gaining experience, first as banian and later as partner in a European firm, he started business on his own account, under the style of R. G. Ghose and Co., established a branch firm at Akyab and another at Rangoon, and became a rich and successful merchant.”—Buckland: Bengal Under the Lieutenant-Governors, vol. ii, p. 1024.
more equitable leads to the endless partition of ancestral property, and hence any number of fools, idiots and extravagant debauchees are produced.

It was but natural that the descendants of those who were banians of European Firms, or who carried on commercial enterprises should be gradually elbowed out from their position of vantage by the hardy, adventurous, patient, toilsome sons of Marwar, Bikanir and Jodhpur. In the early seventies a considerable portion of Burrabazar was already in their grip, but there were still a good few, opulent Bengali families, whose ancestors had dealings with the East India Company.

But the opening of the Suez Canal brought about a revolution in the trade with the East and its effect can be best realised by comparing the table of exports and imports of Calcutta in 1870 with that in 1927-28. London, Liverpool, and Glasgow were brought within easy reach, so to speak, of Bombay and Calcutta and the rapid extension of the railways and connecting inland steamer services side by side co-operated in this direction. Burrabazar including Clive Street is now a bee-hive, swarming with Marwari and Bhatia businessmen and the Bengalis have been, or rather willingly and wantonly allowed themselves to be, completely ousted from the mercantile world. The southern adjunct of Burrabazar which represents the city proper, in that it locates the Royal Exchange, the

3 Value of the total imports of merchandise, exclusive of Govt. Stores into the port of Calcutta:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rupees</th>
<th>Rupees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870-71</td>
<td>16,93,98,180</td>
<td>83,59,24,734</td>
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Value of the total exports of merchandise exclusive of Govt. Stores from the port of Calcutta:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870-71</td>
<td></td>
<td>1927-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian merchandise</td>
<td>22,57,82,935</td>
<td>37,67,38,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign merchandise</td>
<td>19,38,553</td>
<td>70,95,84</td>
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Total 22,77,27,488 Total 138,38,34,6

It will thus be seen that the value of imports and exports increased almost six-fold.
Banks, and the Share Market, is no doubt dominated by the European element, but the Marwaris and Bhatias are active participants in the daily transactions of crores of rupees going on there. The very proprietorship of the land of this quarter as also of Burrobazar with the unearned increment of its value has practically passed out of the hands of the Bengali. Want has driven him to sell his patrimony. A golden opportunity which occurs but rarely in a nation’s life was allowed to be snatched away. Bengal has irretrievably lost her chance. Her sons of the old aristocratic families and middle Bhadralog classes have become homeless wanderers in the land of their birth, starving or at best eking out a miserable existence as ill-paid quill-drivers.

Now to continue my story. My eldest brother having passed the minor scholarship examination had to come to Calcutta to finish his education. My next elder brother and myself were approaching the M. E. standard. My father had now to face a serious situation. He was very much in advance of the average rural gentry in intellectual attainments and culture and had himself tasted and drunk of the Pierian Spring. He was therefore naturally anxious that his sons should have the benefit of the best education then available. In those days the journey by boat from our village to Calcutta took three to four days, but now the distance has been abridged owing to the combined railway and steamer communication and the journey occupies only 14 hours. There were then no palatial hostels or “attached” messes under University supervision. My father had only two alternatives to choose between. One was to keep a separate establishment in Calcutta under the supervision of a guardian-tutor; the other was that my parents should remove to Calcutta so that we might not be deprived of their personal care and healthy influence. But there were almost insuperable difficulties in the way of the latter plan. My father was by no means a big Zemindar and could not afford to leave the management of his estates to the care and direction of a well-paid and fairly honest agent. His estates
consisted of a cluster of small taluks and he had, moreover embarked on the career of a miniature banker and money lender in which capacity he had advanced money to several people on mortgage of their landed properties. It was, therefore, incumbent on him that he should be on the spot in order to conduct his own affairs and not be away in distant localities for any length of time. The question what course should be adopted now began to be debated in the family. I well remember that frequent consultations used to be held between my father and mother and it was by no means easy to decide between the conflicting claims. At last it was settled that they should themselves live in Calcutta with their children, since boys of tender age like ourselves could not be expected or relied upon to make arrangements for messing and boarding in a strange and distant town away from the tender care of parents.

My father, however, made no secret of one drawback incidental to his rural life at which he always chafed. He often used to complain bitterly of the society of the village gentry into which he was thrown. They lived in a world entirely different from his. One whose mind had been formed and character moulded on Hafiz and Sadi and some of the master-pieces of English literature—one who had sat at the feet of Ramtanu Lahiri and had already come into contact with the enlightened of the metropolis, could not be expected to enjoy the company of men who were half-a-century behind him in culture and who were steeped to the marrow in orthodoxy and superstition and old-world ideas. One or two incidents may be cited here to illustrate what I am labouring to bring out.

The widow-remarriage movement started by Vidyasagar had caught the imagination of young Bengal and my father was anxious to give a practical proof of his zeal for the cause. One Mohanlal Vidyabagis who was a Pandit in our school and who, though brought up in a tol, had thrown away the sacred thread of the Brahmin, was easily persuaded to marry a widow of our village. The news, however, of this projected sacrileg
spread like wildfire and was not long in reaching my grandfather at Jessore. He was an orthodox Hindu and was simply hocked at the enormity of the crime about to be perpetrated. He ran to Raruli post-haste with relays of palanquin bearers and peremptorily forbade the approaching nuptials. My father had to submit to the dictation and the programme fell through. On the occasion of the Sradh ceremony of my grandfather many people in the villages round about refused to join it on the score of my father having become a mlechchha.

was also given out that a neighbour's calf which was missing had been slaughtered and the veal made into cutlet and other kinds and served at the table. Umanath Roy, Zemindar of atkhira, composed a doggerel which was popular at the time, the first distich of which may be thus interpreted:

Oh my God! what are things coming to,
Raruli like Taki\(^4\) will hasten this land to perdition!

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1 Kalinath Munshi of Taki (dist. 24 Perganas) was a liberal supporter of Mohon Ray in his reform movement and had thus scandalised orthodox co-villagers.
CHAPTER IV

EDUCATION AT CALCUTTA

In December 1870 my parents permanently removed Calcutta and rented the house No. 132, Amherst Street as we resided here for about ten years. All the early associations of my boyhood are entwined round this dwelling and the quarter of the town known as Champatala. My father got and my elder brother admitted into the Hare School, located in the one-storey building facing Bhowanicharan Dutt Lane and this is now an adjunct of the Chemical Department of the Presidency College.

When my classmates came to know that I hailed from the district of Jessore, I at once became their laughing-stock and the butt of ridicule. I was nick-named Bangal because of various faults of omission and commission ascribed to the unfortunate people of East Bengal began to be laid at my door. A Scotch rustic or a Yorkshire lad with his peculiar brogue and queer manners, when he suddenly found himself in midst of cockney youngsters, a century ago, was I supposed somewhat in a similar predicament. At that time even the very germs of what is known as the national awakening did not exist, and very few people cared to know that my native district had begotten and sheltered in its bosom two great warriors, who had raised the standard of revolt against the Great Mogul, or his Viceroy, otherwise I could have silenced the idle prattlers at that tender age by reminding them that the scenes of the martial exploits of Raja Protopaditya almost within a stone's throw of my village; and that RajSitaram Ray's capital Mahmudpur was also located in my own native district; nor could I drive them into a corner reminding them that the greatest of the then living poets of the province, the father of blank-verse in our literature, the 'Milton of Bengal' was a grandson of our village; and that the

1 This house still bears the above number.
reatest of the then living dramatists, Dinabandhu Mitra, was born and nurtured in the bosom of the same district.

Here I must pause a while to give an idea of my intellectual equipment previous to my coming to Calcutta. The relations between my father and ourselves (i.e. myself and my brothers) were most frank and cordial. We picked up more information on very conceivable subject by direct conversation with him than through mere book learning. We were allowed the utmost latitude in approaching him and cross-questioning him. I have often found that there is sometimes an impenetrable wall interposed between father and son; the father is held in terror—a sort of frigid reserve is maintained between the two. The brother or the family friend has to intercede on behalf of the son as a go-between whenever the latter has to approach the prmer. My father fortunately outdid the sage Chanakya, whose advice is that up till the completion of the 5th year son should be nursed; up till the 10th year he should be held (for misbehaviour); but as soon as he reaches the 11th year he should be treated as a friend. Before my coming to Calcutta—when I was reading in our village school and was only nine years of age—I had shown a predilection for history and geography. One day I felt curious to test the geographical knowledge of my father and asked him where Sevastopol was. The answer at once silenced me. "What"! he exclaimed, "You speak of Sevastopol! I almost see with my own eyes the edge of the city by the English."

On another occasion in drawing attention to the sense of duty and patriotism of an Englishman, he referred to a remarkable incident which our young men would do well to lay to heart. The mutiny had broken out and Sir Colin Campbell (later Lord Clyde) then on furlough was reading newspapers at the Edinburgh Philosophical Institute. He was interrogated by wire from the India Office if he was prepared to go out to India. He at once answered, "Yes". Within a few minutes he was again asked when he would be ready to go. The answer was, "Immediately".
It was again from my father's lips I first learned that almost a child that beef-eating was quite in vogue in ancient India and that the very word for "guest" in Sanskrit "Goghna" (one in whose honour the fat cow is killed). I also remember having heard from him the names of two books, namely Young's Night Thoughts and Bacon's Novum Organum, which I confess sounded to me as unmeaning jargon. By a strange coincidence, Night Thoughts was one of the prize books awarded to me at the Albert School several years afterwards. Being of an inquisitive turn of mind and studious habits I used to ransack the shelves of my father's library, Johnson's Dictionary in two quarto volumes, edited by Todd and published in 1816, if my memory serves me right, caught my fancy and the many apt quotations from classical authors were my delight. I used to turn over its pages and commit to memory passages though I could not make out what the abbreviations "Shak", "Beau and Fl" stood for; one day repeated from memory:

"Ignorance is the curse of God,
Knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to Heaven."—Shakespeare

to the agreeable surprise of my eldest brother.

My acquaintance with Shakespeare ripened into close friendship and my appetite for the dramas, especially the tragedies of the immortal bard grew by what it fed upon even during my boyhood. I vividly recollect some incidents of my school-days. At the annual examination for promotion from the lower form to the higher, the Professors of the Presidency College used to be our examiners. Peary Charan Sarkar was our examiner in Geography and Moheschandra Bannerjee in History. These being my favourite subjects I always scored over my class-mates. For two years in succession I got from Bannerjee full marks in the oral examination. Scarcely were the questions put when I answered each of them to his full satisfaction.

2 Several articles by Rajendra Lal Mitra have been published in a collected form entitled: Beef-Eating in Ancient India (Chuckerberry & Co.).
occasion he asked me where I came from. I replied that hailed from Jessore; the answer evidently satisfied him.

The site now occupied by the Presidency College buildings was then an open maiden (meadow) and it was our play-bund. In 1872 the accommodation being insufficient for the growing needs, the Hare School was removed to the commodious buildings now occupied by it. The tablet on the wall of one of the class rooms bearing the significant lines in memory ofavid Hare, composed by D. L. Richardson, deeply moved and I can even now repeat them word for word.

"Ah! warm philanthropist, faithful friend,
Thy life devoted to one generous end:
To bless the Hindu mind with British lore
And truth's and nature's faded lights restore"!

Sirischandra Deb was then the Headmaster of Hare School. Bholanath Pal of the rival Hindu School. These two-tributions, both under Government management, were then and ded as the premier ones in Bengal and there was a keen eye competition going on between them as to which would be the highest place in the Calcutta University Entrance (riculation) Examination. There were then very few private schools in Calcutta, or for the matter of that in Bengal. James Hiffe, as Principal of Presidency College, was the Head of and he used regularly to visit our school every Saturday.

always of studious habits but by no means a book-worm. prescribed text-books never satisfied my craving. I was a voracious devourer of books and, when I was barely 12 years I sometimes used to get up at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning that I might pore over the contents of a favourite author but disturbance. Afterwards I gave up this habit, as it is prejudicial to health and in the long run does not pay. History Biography have even now a fascination for me. I read members' Biography right through several times. The lives Newton, Galileo—although at that time I did not understand the value of their contributions—interested me much.

Beck, Jones, John Leyden and their linguistic attainments
deeply impressed me as also the life of Franklin. The answer of Jones’ mother to his interrogations “Read and you will know” also was not lost upon me. Benjamin Franklin has been my special favourite ever since my boyhood and in 1905 while on my second visit to England I procured a copy of his Autobiography which I have read and re-read any number of times. The career of this great Pennsylvanian—how he beg his life as an ill-paid compositor and by sheer perseverance and indomitable energy rose to be a leading man in his country—has ever been an object-lesson to me.

Strange as it may appear, from my boyhood I was unconsciously drawn towards the Brahmo Samaj. Various were the circumstances contributing to it. My father, though outwardly conforming to the current Hindu faith, was at heart liberal to the core. The Tatwa Bodhini Patrika, the organ of Adi Brahmo Samaj, adorned the shelves of my father’s library. The writings and sermons of Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen, Rajnarain Bose, Ayodhyanath Pakrasi, and Akshay Kumar Datta and others imperceptibly prepared the groundwork of my faith. I was not under the influence of any particular dominating personality in the shaping of my religious bias. Revealed religion I have had an innate disbelief in. Selected extracts from the writings of Francis William Newman in the Tatwabodhini, as also the correspondence between Frances Power Cobbe and Rajnarain Bose, published in the same journal, appealed to me much; especially the results of the German school of Biblical criticism as represented by Strauss, whose Life of Christ the Man, divested of the accretions of miracles and supernaturalism, which had grown round him, were much welcomed by the early leaders of the Brahma Somaj. Renan’s Life of Jesus also must be placed in the same category. In my maturer years Martineau’s Endeavours after the Christian Life and Hours of Thought, Theodore Parker’s and Channing’s writings have been my favourite companions. Bishop Colenso’s The Pentateuch critically examined I have not had an opportunity of reading
THE BRAHMO SAMAJ

I was fully aware of its purport by references in other works. Later on the discrepancy between the Mosaic Chronology and the geological age of this habitable globe of ours further shook my faith in the so-called revelations. Moreover, the caste-system, as it is in vogue in the existing Hindu Society, with its pernicious appendage of untouchability, appeared to me the very negation of the relation existing between man and man. Enforced widowhood, child-marriage and other customs were equally my abomination. My father often used to say that at least one of his sons should marry a widow and he often singled me out for this purpose. It was the social aspect of the Brahmno Samaj that specially appealed to me.

Keshab Chandra Sen, on his return from England in 1871, started the Sulava Samachar (lit. cheap news), a pice weekly, which was brimful of novel ideas, and I was also regular attendant at his Sunday evening sermons, at his new church, the Bharatbarshiya Brahma Samaj, which he founded after the schism with the Adi Brahma Samaj. The sonorous voice of the silver-tongued preacher is still ringing in my ears. I would never let slip an opportunity of hearing his addresses at the Town Hall and at the open-air meetings or on Saturday afternoons at the Albert Hall.

The year 1874 was an eventful one in my life. I was passing in the 4th class when in August I got a bad attack of dysentery, which proved to be obstinate and my attendance at school had thus to be discontinued. Hitherto I had enjoyed splendid health, sound digestion and a good appetite. From my parents, I had inherited a robust constitution and I was together of strong build. But my disease proved to be ironic and although its acute stage disappeared after seven months, I became a permanent valetudinarian and my digestive organs were impaired. I grew weaker day by day and my natural growth during the period of adolescence was thus arrested. I had to submit myself to a strict dietary regimen and discipline.
In one respect however this malady turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I have always noticed that progress made in a class room is of a slow nature—some boys are dull, others mediocre and a very few of superior intellectual endowments. All these are harnessed together as in a team and the actual progress made represents the resultant of these factors. An hour technically represents a period of 45 minutes, the roll-calling function usurps 5 minutes or more. An English residential school like Eton, Rugby or Harrow has no doubt advantages which more than make up for the drawback just pointed out. There the boy learns many things which are invaluable, in that they contribute to the making of character. There he learns lessons which cannot be had from book-lore. There is much force in the well-known dictum of Wellington that the battle of Waterloo was fought on the fields of Eton. Headmasterships of such public schools are often the stepping-stones to bishoprics or masterships of colleges at Oxford and Cambridge. Such schools can boast of an Arnold or at any rate of a Butler. But an average school such as a Bengali boy is blessed with, has no such recommendation; here he has to con his dull lessons in a language which is not his mother-tongue and it is itself a serious handicap to his progress.

A boy’s progress in a school is apt to be slow even if he is far and away the best boy in the class. He is unconsciously liable to be filled with pride and sometimes he grows to be conceited prig. But after all how much does he learn? Precious little indeed! He often thinks all that he has to master is confined within the narrow limits of prescribed textbooks. His world of information is of a circumscribed nature. Moreover, a bright lad has the trick of knowing as much as will do for him. It is by no means the case that a boy who is known as the dux of his class is really the most promising boy.

As delegates of the Calcutta University at the first Congress of the Universities of the Empire, myself and my friend Sarvadhikary were the guests of Dr. Butler, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.
though an ordinary teacher with his narrow vision may pronounce him to be such.

Lord Byron and our Rabindranath were hopelessly deficient in Mathematics precluding their success at the University. Sir Walter Scott's teacher no doubt foretold his future greatness when he gave out his deliberate opinion: "Dunce he was—once he would remain." Edison's teacher sent Edison home with a note saying that he was a hopeless blockhead. He went higher up the educational ladder: the lives of some 150 minor wranglers have been studied and it has been found that most of them were never heard of in their subsequent careers. They simply vegetated as teachers in secondary schools.

Being, however, thus set free from the tyranny of the dull and dreary routine method followed in the schools, I could now indulge in my passion for studies without let or hindrance. My eldest brother, who was now at the Presidency College, added greatly to the stock of books already in my father's library, Ethbridge's *Selections from Modern English Literature*, which has then used as a text-book for the Matriculation Standard, was my delight and I read it right through several times. The *Selections* did not satisfy my craving, but they served as a stepping stone to my further acquaintance with the classics of English literature. Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* I read and reread, and the characters portrayed in it were soon familiar to me. Squire Thornhill, Mr. Burchell, Olivia, Sophia, and the inimitable ballad—*the Hermit* and the pathetic, strite lamentation of Olivia beginning with—"when lovely man stoops to folly" are as fresh in my recollection today they were more than half a century ago. This is all the more remarkable, seeing that I had had no experience of the daily life of an English parson. Years after while in England George Eliot's *Scenes from Clerical Life* equally fascinated me. But all, one touch of nature makes the whole world kin and man nature is much the same irrespective of clime, creed and our. I also read several essays from the *Spectator* as also Johnson's *Rasselas*, the first part of the latter beginning with.
"Ye, who listen with credulity"—I can even now repeat word for word from memory. Coming into close and intimate contact with the masterpieces, I soon contracted a taste for the rich and copious English literature. Knight's _Half-Hours with the best Authors_ also helped me much in this direction. _Julius Caesar, Merchant of Venice_, and selected portions from _Hamlet_, e.g. the _Soliloquy_ opened up a new world to me and I was fired with the ambition of reading as many productions of the great poet as I possibly could in my later life.

It was about this time that the _Bangadarsan_, the periodical which was destined to usher in a new era in Bengali literature, began to appear as a monthly. Bankim Chandra's _Visabriksha_ (poison tree) was then coming out in it serially. Although this tender age I could not comprehend the intricacies of human foibles delineated with exquisite skill, I followed this masterpiece with intense and breathless interest simply for the story. The writings of Prafulla Chandra Bannerji _Valmiki and his age_ and of Ramdas Sen on the _Age of Kalidasa_ etc., helped to give me an antiquarian bent. It should, however, be mentioned here that the articles in the _Vividhath Samgraha_ by Rajendralal Mitra on the "Sen Rajas of Bengal" and the like were precursors in this line. Little did I then dream that the taste for antiquarian studies thus acquired though lying dormant for more than a quarter of a century would stand me in good stead in writing the _History of Hindu Chemistry_. The _Aryadarsan_ under the editorship of Jogendranath Vidyabhushan also followed in the wake of _Bangadarsan_ and the translation of the autobiography of John Stuart Mill which was a prominent feature of this monthly periodical made a very deep impression on me. One thing specially struck James Mill had taken the precaution of not sending his gift son to any public school and himself acted as his friend, guide and philosopher. The precocious intellectual attainments of John Stuart Mill are thus easily accounted for. When but ten years old he had learnt Latin, Greek, besides _Arithmetic_ and histories of England, Spain and Rome.
I was also a regular reader of the three leading weekly newspapers of those days,—the Somaparakasa (Bengali) under the able editorship of Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan, maternal uncle of the late Pandit Sivanath Sastri; the Amritabazar Patrika then a bilingual), whose trenchant criticism and ruthless exposure of official vagaries I relished much; and last but not least the Hindu Patriot edited by the famous Krishnadas Pal. The Indian Mirror under the joint editorship of Narendranath Sen and Krishna Behary Sen was then the only English daily in this side of India under purely Indian control, and so great was my eagerness to read it that I used to go to the Albert Hall an hour before the classes began.

Here I must relate an incident which not only gave a colour to but was destined to be a turning point in my future career. One day looking over the shelves of our library, I chance upon a copy of Smith's Principia Latina; evidently it had been picked up by my eldest brother, who was a book-hunter at a second hand book-shop but was lying unused. On turning over the first few pages, I was filled with an agreeable surprise. At the bottom of the declension of each substantive commencing with e.g. mensa, mensae, dominus, domini and so forth, was given a list of nouns of masculine or feminine gender the case may be coming under the same category and one or two verbs of unknown (to beginners) conjunction, but with the meaning attached, thus habet (he, she, it) has, occidit (he killed). The formation of the sentences and their meanings now became clear; e.g. aquila alas habet (the eagle has wings), dominus hastâ primum occidit (the lord killed the slave with the spear). Since I had already gone through Vyakarana Upakramanika (the first step to Sanskrit grammar) of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar I could not be struck with the wonderful similarity between the two dead languages. The sentence: Recuperatâ pace, artes rescunt (peace being restored, the arts flourish) given as illustration of the ablative absolute, which has its exact counterpart in Sanskrit, simply filled me with wonder. At an early age I could not, of course, be expected to know
all about the remarkable affinity between the two languages derived from the same parent stock as explained in, say, "Grimm's Law," or Bopp's *Comparative Grammar of the Indic Aryan Languages*. The die was cast. The determination we made and no sooner made than was carried into execution. Here was a golden opportunity of learning Latin without the help of a teacher. I began to con the lessons in the *Principia* with renewed interest and it did not take me long to finish part first of the *Principia*, which in due course was followed by part second of the series as also the companion grammar.

After suffering from dysentery for some seven months, I got rid of it in its acute form but in its milder aspect it has been my life-long companion ever since 1875. I became a victim of indigestion, diarrhoea and later on of insomnia. I had to submit to the most rigid observance of the rules of diet and regimen and for the sake of sharpening my appetite I have always to follow a regular routine of walking in the mornings and evenings and, while living in the countryside, the turning up of sods of earth with the spade in the garden; also swimming and rowing have been my favourite health-giving recreations.

It will now be understood why I characterised my being prey to an obstinate malady as a blessing in disguise. I have often noticed our young men of robust health boasting of lion's appetite, devouring big quantities of rich viands. Apparently they seem to get on all right for a time. But nature, kind and benign to all who obey her laws, is equal unsparing in exacting her dues from those who frequent violate them. These people, again, full of conceit, neglect the ordinary laws of health with the result that obesity creeps in with the concomitant complaints,—diabetes, rheumatic pains, gouty joints. Recently I had occasion to go the rounds of several Zemindar families in Calcutta; although it was 6 o'clock in the morning, some of them had not yet left the beds; others again unable to support their heavy corpor
weight in a sitting posture were lying stretched on the carpet the floor like so many pythons or boa constrictors. I told them to their face that I would not exchange all their wealth my simple and active habits. But why blame such people lone? Some of our best men—men of whom the whole of India is proud—have gone to premature graves because of their neglect of the fundamental laws of health. Overwork of the brain, coupled with sedentary habits, cut short the lives of Beshab Chandra Sen, Kristodas Paul, Justice Telang, Vivekananda, Gokhale, and other victims of diabetes. They were carried off between 44 and 46 and even earlier i.e. at a age when an Englishman considers himself almost in the prime vigour of life. This represents a loss to the country which it is impossible to overestimate. Just imagine what the country could have gained if Gokhale had been spared another ten years. The Compulsory Elementary Education Bill which he produced could not have been given a short shrift by an unsympathetic Government; it would have been by this time on Statute Book.

Readers of Froude's Life of Carlyle will remember that the great philosopher and sage while a student at Edinburgh had suffered excruciating pain in the stomach and was also a lifelong victim of insomnia and yet by strict observance of the laws of health and by taking regular exercises he not only lived an advanced age but could labour prodigiously in the intellectual field. Herbert Spencer was even a worse sufferer. I need only quote several other instances, but I must stop here for fear of being guilty of digression. After having picked up an elementary knowledge of Latin, I found I could easily go through Smith's French Principia (parts I & II) without having recourse to anybody's help. French, Italian and Spanish are all offsprings of Latin, admit of easy mastery by one who is conversant with the parent tongue.

It will thus be noticed that I have special reason to look back to this period of my life with mingled joy and delight. When you learn a new language, you have a new world
revealed to you as it were. But the charms of English Literature had almost a seductive influence on me. K. M. Banerji Encyclopaedia Bengalensis, which evidently my father had gone through in his younger days, contained selections from Arnold’s Lectures on Roman History, Rollin’s Ancient History and Gibbon’s Roman Empire, which deeply impressed Several years later the Meditations of the Roman Emperor as a Gibbon’s masterly portraiture of the illustrious trio, who as by divine ordination, followed each other in succession—Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius—often soothe my over-wrought brain. Even in my advanced age, after day’s hard toil at the Laboratory, I compose my nerves by stealing to my study so as to indulge in an hour’s recreation of reading a few pages of a biography or history preliminary to my evening perambulations on the maidan.

Besides Chamber’s Biography referred to above Mauder’s Treasury of Biography was also my delight; I used to open random any portion of the latter and go right through it page after page. One day I came across the article on Ram Moho Ray and discovered that it had been borrowed verbatim without acknowledgment in the Reader No. IV of the School Book Society’s publication, which was the English text-book in the fourth class of the Hare School. It was with feelings of anguish I found that among the thousands of lives in the Treasury, only one Bengali name was deemed worthy of a place.

When I had sufficiently recovered from the effects of the attack of dysentery, I thought of going on with the prescribed academic course. With that view I consulted my eldest brother as to the institution in which I should take my admission. My father scarcely troubled himself over such matters and gave me carte blanche so to speak in making my choice. He repudiated the fullest confidence in me and had ample reason to believe that it was well deserved. Technically I had fallen behind class-mates at the Hare School as I had stayed away for nearly a couple of years. The session was then also far advanced and for the broken period of the academic year I got mys...
tered on the roll of the Albert School in the 3rd class. This institution had lately been founded by Keshab Chandra Sen and his co-workers and naturally it had a great attraction for Keshab's younger brother, Krishna Behary, was its Rector (practically Headmaster), but he was away at Jeypur for a short as Principal of the Maharaja's College. His *locum tenens* as Srinath Dutt, who had lately returned from England after completing a course of studies in London and in the Agricultural College at Cirencester. Here I found myself in congenial atmosphere. The teachers were all members of the Brahmo Samaj; they had rallied round the banner of Keshab Chandra when he seceded from the Adi Samaj, discarding the caste-stem. Our young men of the present day can scarcely form adequate conception of the social persecution and excommunica tion which these pioneers of reforms had to undergo. loved sons in whom their parents had reposed their fondest hes had to leave their paternal roof and shift for thems as best they could. Manfully and cheerfully and without word of complaint did they submit to their lot. Scarcely I been a couple of months here, when the presence of the dy-admitted boy began to be whispered about. My teachers overed to their agreeable surprise that I stood head and ulders above my class-fellows in every subject taught there my precocity struck them as remarkable. Whenever there a question on etymology, I could at once come forward the radical meaning. For instance, there was the term *disification* in a passage in a selection from White's *Natural tory of Selborne*. From my smattering of Latin I had ady noticed the striking affinity between this language and skit and the many words which can be identified as common both e.g.:

Nidus = Nidas (Sans.)
Decem = Dasam (Sans.)

I cherished however a secret desire all along to return to the School from the beginning of the next academic session;
it had glorious associations connected with the name of the Founder and had built up traditions round it. The Albert School on the other hand had been recently started on its career and it could not boast of any brilliant alumni, who had shed lustre on it. I did not therefore appear at the annual examination held for the purpose of class-promotion. I was fairly confident that I would win the first prize; but then it would be unfair to leave the institution which would award it. These were the considerations that swayed my decision. I went home to my native village and enjoyed a much longer vacation and having set myself free from the stress and strain of competitive brain-work, I could indulge to my heart's content my passion for reading as also for agricultural pursuits.

From my childhood I was of a shy disposition and did not much mix with companions of my own age; but my favourite recreation was reading and arboriculture combined with physical exercise. I have always held that children brought up in towns imbibe all the vices of cockneydom. Nursed in a kind of hot-house and brought up under artificial conditions, they arrogate to themselves the airs of a superior being, heap ridicule on the queer ways, manners and brogue of the country-bred and seldom feel sympathy for village folk. The English poet, who was evidently watching with regret the tendency in his days to despise country-life, pathetically sings,

Let not ambition mock their useful toil
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

Now-a-days the shibboleth of life-long dwellers in the town is "back to the village", but this is merely a parrot-cry, which comes with bad grace from people who go into hysterics and are frightened out of their wits if they have to accommodate themselves even for twenty-four hours to the primitive condition of village life. My close contact with the peasantry and masses in general was no doubt the key-note to the alacrity with
which I could throw myself heart and soul into the Famine and Flood Relief Work in 1921 and 1922 respectively.\textsuperscript{4}

My migrations to my ancestral home twice every year had a sobering effect on me. These periodical visits to rural spots considerably neutralised the disadvantage of urban upbringing. Even in my old age, I am never happier than when I am in the surroundings of my childhood.

Although I instinctively avoided the society of those who used to frequent my father's drawing-room, I threw off reserve when in the company of the unsophisticated rural folk. I often would visit them in their thatched homes. In those days there were scarcely any grocer's shops in the village. Sago, arrow-root, and sugar-candy which have so largely entered into the dietary of the sick could not be had for love or money and I always took particular pleasure in distributing these and laying my mother's stores under heavy contribution, but she gladly used to second me in my ministrations.

On my return to Calcutta some time about the beginning of January 1876, I asked for a certificate from the authorities of the Albert School stating the standard up to which I had read there so as to enable me to get admission into the corresponding class at the Hare School. But my teachers almost in a body headed by Kali Krishna Bhattacharyya (teacher of Sanskrit who died lately) dissuaded me from this purpose and as Krishna Bihary Sen was about to return from Jeypur to join his own school, I changed my mind. This was another fortunate event in my future career. At the Hare School our relations with the teachers were mechanical. Outside the class-

\textsuperscript{4} The complaints made by the so-called depressed classes, some of whom gladly pay subscription towards the expenses of the District Conferences, namely, "that the Babus (i.e. the educated and cultured classes) only come to us when they are in need of money but they never care to look to our interests or to mix with us on terms of equality" are, unfortunately, well-grounded. In fact, it is the haughty aloofness, born of the feelings of caste superiority and culture which has driven a wedge between the classes and the masses. In this respect the Chinese students are an example to us.
rooms we had nothing to do with them; to all intents and purposes they were strangers to us.

Our senior tutor of the 4th class (Hare School) was Chandi Charan Bannerji. He used to make faces; his grinning and grimaces were terrible, which spread a shiver among his pupils. He was massive in bulk; his mustachios looked bushy and also because of his rotund facial contour he had a feline appearance. He was nicknamed Baghachandi (Chandi the Tiger). At the Albert School, on the other hand, our teachers were models of gentleness and suavity. Aditya Kumar Chatterji was a personification of all the noble qualities that contribute to the making of an ideal teacher. I see him before my eye with smiles playing on his lips and a benign influence radiating from his countenance. Equally beloved was Mahendranath Dan. Both of them had joined the Brahma Samaj braving cheerfully social excommunication. Myself and one or two of my fellow students used often to visit them at their lodgings and we had conversations on all manner of subjects without reserve or restraint. The tenets of the Brahma Samaj were explained to us—how it differed from other forms of faith in that it was not based upon revelation, but had to draw more or less on rationalism and intuition (for the first time in my life I tried to grasp the meaning of the word intuition). I unconsciously felt what personal contact with an ideal teacher meant. Long afterwards when I read Tom Brown's School Days I was reminded of my old teacher and did not fail to realise why successive generations of pupils should cherish the memory of Arnold of Rugby.

Looking half a century back I recollect with grateful feelings the obligations I am under to my Albert School teachers and the cordial and happy relations in which I stood with them. When the prize-day came I could not of course claim one as I had absented myself from the examination. But the authorities realising the awkwardness of the situation took counsel and awarded me a special prize of general all-round proficiency. Next year at the annual class-examination,
stood first and won a basket-load of prize books. Hazlitt's edition of a complete set of Shakespeare's works, Young's *Night Thoughts*, Thackeray's *English Humorists* were among them.

Krishna Behari Sen, on his return from Jeypur, took up his duties as Rector. He was an erudite scholar, well-versed in the English classics. As a public speaker he was a failure and he suffered in comparison with his illustrious brother Keshab Chandra whose oratorical gifts had profoundly stirred many a British auditorium. Krishna Behary's *forte* lay in his pen, which he wielded with effect. His style was simple and facile. He was joint editor of the *Indian Mirror*, his colleague being his cousin Narendranath Sen. Krishna Behary was also the sole editor of the Sunday issue of the *Mirror* which was voted almost exclusively to religious matters. It was in fact organ of the Brahmo Samaj.

The Albert Hall had just been founded by the exertions of Keshab and his co-workers. The school was located on its ground floor and it also occupied some rooms on the first floor and about the Hall and the reading-room. In the latter were to be found, on the table, leading journals and dailies and was in the habit of going there an hour before the classes commenced so that I might go through as many of them as I could.

The Russo-Turkish War had broken out at this period and the heroic defence of Plevna by the grave Osman Pasha and that of Kars by Ahmed Mukhtar Pasha was being watched with keen interest by the world, specially by the Asians. I used to follow day by day the fortunes of the war. Needless to say that my sympathy was enlisted entirely on the side of the Turks, who were the only Asian people holding sway in Europe. I well remember that I sometimes had controversies bordering on acrimony with my eldest brother about the moral aspect of the War. He had evidently got his cue from Gladstone, who would have nothing to do with the "unspeak-
able" Turk but would have been glad to see him packed off Europe, "bag and baggage."

My love of English literature grew under the teachings of Krishna Behary. He was not a teacher of the average type, who simply contents himself with paraphrasing certain passages and giving some synonyms of words. His mode of teaching was of a different order; he could invest the subject with new interest and bring in a wealth of information. One day he told us incidentally that Byron had nicknamed Scott Apollo's venal son. This set me on the track of Byron. I had already committed to memory his perfervid appeal to the Greeks to shake off the Turkish yoke. I had read also the celebrated chapter in Ivanhoe describing the trial by combat. I now took up one after the other Byron's and Scott's poetical works from our library shelves. Although my juvenile attempt may be compared to that of "a pigmy rummaging the armoury of a giant", yet I enjoyed heartily Byron's biting sarcasm directed against the Edinburgh Reviewers in his English Bards and Scotch Reviewers!

I refer at some length to this period of my life and to the taste I acquired for English literature, including history and biography, because within the next two or three years I was called upon to make my choice between literature and science and had to forego the claims of my first love and vow allegiance to a jealous goddess who cannot brook half-hearted devotion in her votary.

In due course I appeared at the Entrance Examination; my teachers who had built high hopes on me were rather disappointed because my name was not to be found in the list

6 Let such forego the poet's sacred name,
   Who rack their brains for lucre, not for fame:
Still for stern Mammon may they toil in vain!
And sadly gaze on gold they cannot gain.
Such be their meed, such still the just reward
Of prostituted muse and hireling bard!
For this we spurn Apollo's venal son,
And bid a long "good night to Marmion".
of the scholarship-holders. I myself took the matter coolly and have always laughed in my sleeves at the brilliant products of the University, who sparkle for a moment and disappear in the mist—who to-day are but to-morrow are cast into the oven.

A volume can be written on examination as a test of merit and during my career as a teacher extending over the last 41 years, it has been my lot to come across scores, nay hundreds of "Scholars" in the competitive list who have failed miserably in later life. Even the holders of the Premchand Roychand Scholarship (the blue ribbon of our university) of the older regime have been nowhere—have sunk into oblivion, unwept, unsung. Of course I shall be told that so and so got a high appointment due to his brilliant academic career. But an accountant-general is at best a glorified clerk. Newton as a master of the mint might have been a success in view of his knowledge of physical science—he might have introduced a reform of the debased coinage. Would Queen Anne have made a right choice if she had offered the portfolio of Finance to the inventor of Calculus? I am afraid as Lord of the Treasury, Newton would have been a hopeless failure. Those who have shone as brilliant luminaries at the Calcutta Bar during the last half-a-century seldom wore feathers in their academic caps. W. C. Bonnerji, Monmohon Ghosh, Taraknath Palit, Satisranjan Das and a host of others have got on splendidly well despite their poor academic qualifications. Anandamohan Bose, the first Indian Wrangler and Premchand Roychand Scholar to boot, was by no means conspicuous by his success at the bar.

It is the steady, lifelong devotion to a subject or cause which counts. Moreover a scholar who is "square" in all subjects generally tops the list in competitive tests. But as Pope rightly observes:

"One science only will one genius fit."

However I shall not labour this theme further at this stage. My father was now becoming involved in serious pecuniary embarrassments. His estates began to be sold one
after another. From a creditor to a debtor is but one step. It is a source of gratification and pride to me that his debts were debts of honour and he scrupulously paid them off. 6 I well remember the pathetic scene of my mother sobbing and with tears in her eyes, signing away the landed property which was purchased in her name with the proceeds of the sale of her ornaments and which really belonged to her as stridhana. 7 It now became necessary to curtail our household expenses and the first step towards it was to break up the Calcutta establishment. My parents went home and resided there while my brothers and I went into lodgings.

I took my admission into the Metropolitan Institution of Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, the college department of

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6 Mr. Akshay Kumar Chatterji has lately drawn my attention to the following reference to one particular transaction evidently from his own pen:

"Ramratan Chatterji, who was divisional officer (in the Eastern Canal Division) in the district of Khulna, was posted at Surkhali: he made the acquaintance of the Deputy Magistrates of Khulna, namely Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Gourdas Basak, Iswarchandra Mitra and Munsiff Balaram Mallick as also of the Zemindar of Raruli-Katipara the late Harishchandra Ray, father of Dr. P. C. Ray. In early age his only son Akshay Kumar while at Calcutta for education used to reside in the house of Harishchandra. With the help and advice of Harishchandra Ramratan took mawasi lease of a large tract of land in the Sunderbans, which has now turned out to be a profitable transaction. Relying on the honesty of Harishchandra he advanced a large sum to him without any documentary evidence. Harishchandra was the worthy father of a worthy son... When he felt unable to pay off his debt of honour to Ramratan, he executed a registered deed of sale of a valuable property near his home in favour of Ramratan who however was kept in the dark about the matter till long afterwards. One day when Ramratan met Harishchandra, the latter put the deed into the former's hands and begged to be exempted from cash payment of the debt".—Extracts from "Vansa-Parichaya" (annals of families), vol. ii p. 366.

7 What constitutes stridhana (lit. married woman's property) is a topic regarding which Kamalakar says in the Vivada Tandava, "the lawyers fight tooth and nail". The curious reader may consult Gooroo das Bannariji's The Hindu Law of Marriage and Stridhana, Lect. VII, p. 275.
which had recently been opened. This was the first bold experiment in India of making high education as cheap as secondary education. The fee in the college was the same as in the school, namely rupees three. More than one reason determined my choice of Vidyasagar's college. In the first place the Metropolitan Institution was a national institution and something we could look upon as our own; in the second place Surendranath Bannerji, who was almost the god of our idolatory, was Professor of English prose literature and Prasanna Kumar Lahiri, a distinguished pupil of Tawney (of the Presidency College, a learned Shakesperian scholar) was Professor of poetry. I took care, however, to attend lectures on Chemistry in the First Arts Course and on both Chemistry and Physics in the Bachelor of Arts Course at the Presidency College as an external student. Chemistry was then a compulsory branch in the F.A. Course. Mr. (afterwards Sir Alexander) Pedler was a first-rate hand in experiments; his manipulative skill was of a high order. I began almost unconsciously to be attracted to this branch of science.

Not content with merely seeing the experiments performed in the class-room, myself and a fellow student set up a miniature laboratory in the lodgings of the latter and we took delight in reproducing some of them. Once we improvised an oxy-hydrogen blow-pipe out of an ordinary thin tinned sheet of iron with the aid of a tinker. With such crude apparatus the leakage of oxygen into the hydrogen tube could not be prevented and a terrible explosion took place when the mixture was lighted. Fortunately, we escaped unhurt. Although Roscoe's Elementary Lessons was the text, I took care to have about me and go through as many works on Chemistry as I could lay my hands on.

My predilection for Chemistry induced me to choose the 'B' Course. For the B.A. examination English was then a compulsory subject. Morley's Burke and Burke's Reflections in the French Revolution were the prose texts among others and Surendranath Banerji's exposition of both was as masterly
as attractive. At this period of my college life I had to suppress my passion for literature as my attention was much distracted by some rival pursuits. I had gained as I have already said a passable acquaintance with Latin and French by my own unaided efforts and Sanskrit I learnt as a matter of course—the first seven cantos of Raghuvamsam and the first five of Bhattikavyam were texts for the F.A., and also in my private capacity with the aid of a Pandit I tasted the beauties of some cantos of another peerless production of Kalidasa, the Kumarasambhavam. I had by now begun to cherish the hope of competing for the Gilchrist scholarship examination, the standard for which was the same as that of the London University Matriculation and for which a fair acquaintance with Latin, Greek or Sanskrit, French, or German, was essential. My preparation for this competitive ordeal went on secretly, my eldest brother and a cousin of mine being alone taken into confidence. I was particularly careful in maintaining privacy lest in case of failure I should bring down on me the sneers and ridicule of my fellow-students. By and by the secret however leaked out and a class-fellow, who stood very high in the University examinations, in my hearing taunted me with the remark that my name will appear in a special edition of the London University Calendar. I did not build high hopes of coming out successful and as several months elapsed before the result was out, I gave up all hopes. One day while at the college, and before the lectures had commenced, I was shown a paragraph in the Statesman announcing that I was one of the two winners, the other being Bahadurji, a Bombay Parsee. The Principal soon after sent for me and offered me his congratulations and the Hindu Patriot then under the editorship of Krishnadas Pal wrote that "I had added a new feather to the cap of the Institution". I could not, however, make out how much my instructions at the particular college had to do with the affair.

My father was then at Jessore negotiating for the sale of the Pattani Taluk Dhapakhola, near Jessore, where there
now a railway station, to meet the demands of his exacting creditors; he was informed of my intention to proceed to England and readily assented. I also wrote to a cousin of mine at Raruli enclosing the cutting from the Statesman in the letter which concluded with these words, which are still engraven on my memory. "Be so good as to convey this news to my mother who, though disconsolate at first, will doubtless be prevailed upon to consent to my temporary exile for four years". I may add here that in those days it was considered quite the fashion among college-educated youngmen to write in English. Now-a-days this would bring derision on the writer, and he would be regarded as a prig or pedant.

My mother did not raise any objection to my going to England. She had imbibed enlightened ideas from my father and did not set much store by the notion prevailing in those days that by undertaking a distant voyage across the seas one lost his caste. I went home to bid her farewell—I was deeply attached to her and the parting scene was exceedingly painful and it was with a heavy heart that I took leave of her. I consoled her by assuring her that if I were successful in life am speaking of "success" here in the ordinary accepted sense) my first duty should be to restore the family estates and repair the ancestral residence, portions of which were fast falling into a dilapidated condition. I confess my outlook of life in those days was circumscribed by the mental horizon of my blurred vision. Providence had, however, ordained otherwise and by and by I learned that there are other and better ways of spending or utilising one's earnings than by investing them in landed properties.
CHAPTER V

DEPARTURE FOR EUROPE—EDUCATIONAL CAREER IN ENGLAND—“ESSAY ON INDIA”—TOUR IN THE HIGHLANDS

I now began to prepare myself for the voyage and made purchases for the outfit with the help of Devaprasa Sarvadhikary, my former classmate at the Hare School. The change in the mode of life was to be so abrupt that for a time I became almost bewildered. As a preliminary training began to frequent some cheap restaurants so as to learn the art of dining à la européenne. The Khansamar (waiters), to whom I paid some tips, gladly gave me hints as to how to use the fork and the knife and how to put the two together almost parallel when a particular course was finished and to keep them at a re-entrant angle when you do not wish your dish to be removed. Soon I came to learn that Dwarka Nath Ray, younger brother of Dr. P. K. Ray, was about to proceed to England for studying medicine and I sought him out and we agreed that we should be fellow-passengers.

We booked our berths for Rs. 400/- each, first class saloon per S.S. California, Anchor Line, Captain Young. As was the height of the monsoon season and as we sailed direct from Calcutta to London there were only a limited number of passengers. When my friends saw me off and I was on board the steamer I was in good spirits and I remember how I at once entered into a lively conversation with an English passenger. He hinted at my using bombastic terms. I confess, in those days, I was a little fond of the Johnsonian style. Our steamer began its outward journey cautiously under the guidance of the pilot and, when it had proceeded a few miles off Putech a peculiar, uneasy sensation began to creep over me. I felt a vomiting tendency; in fact, the much dreaded sea-sick
was on me. D. N. Ray who had already learned the European mode of living under his brother's roof was quite at home throughout the voyage and was proof against sea-sickness. His appetite was voracious and he did ample justice to the dishes. Soup, boiled and fried potatoes, and pudding were my main support. The Head Steward taking pity on me used to give me condensed milk and a roll in my cabin when I could not sit at the table on account of sickness.

Our steamer at the end of 5 or 6 days called at Colombo. The sight of land gladdened us and we got on shore and saw the sights. Here we learned, if my memory serves me right, that the Battle of Tel-el-Kebir had been fought and Arabi Pasha taken captive and that the passage through the Suez Canal would not be in danger. I remember a line or two in a Ceylonaper taking Sir William Gregory, ex-Governor of Ceylon, to ask for championing Arabi as a leader of Egyptian nationalism with a chivalrous pertinacity, worthy of a better cause”.

From Colombo to Aden was another sore trial to me, theessel at times rocking violently and appearing at every turn go underneath the deep. The most remarkable thing was that as soon as the sea became calm the nausea disappeared and at once and I forgot that I ever was the victim of sickness. When the steamer called at Aden, Arab urchins sieged it and began to swim about crying: “Have a dive”, have a dive” ; passengers began to throw small coins into water and they were readily picked up by the expert divers. We went ashore and found the bazar shops mainly kept by Bombay people.

Our progress through the Red Sea and Suez Canal was safe. We learned at Ismailia to our relief that there was danger of our steamer being the target of sharp-shooters on shore. When we got on shore at Port Said we found there mixed population and the Egyptians speaking French freely. But there were certain things which quite disgusted us. I have a faint recollection of Malta and our last halt was at altar. Here grapes were being hawked about—a penny for a
bunch weighing a pound. When we were rounding the cape we were told that the Bay of Biscay was dangerous for navigation. Little did I then dream that another steamer of this line under the same Captain would come to grief several years later (1892) on that very spot and be wrecked with a precious load of passengers including Mrs. Boutflower, wife of the Professor of Muir Central College, and her children; the professor, I believe, was a brother-in-law of Mr. Paul Knight of the Statesman.

During a voyage, to lounge in a deck-chair and indulge in day-dreams is a favourite way of whiling away time.¹ Some passengers borrowed books from the library attached to the saloon, but these were generally of a frivolous, trashy character. Fortunately, I had provided myself with a stock of books of my own. Smile's Thrift, I well remember, was a boon companion; from my boyhood almost instinctively I was of thrifty habits and the perusal of this book further confirmed them. Spencer's Introduction to the Study of Sociology was another

¹ In the days of the sailing ships when it was also necessary to double the Cape the voyage often took several months and the dreary tediousness was whiled away in other ways. Macaulay’s description may be quoted here:

“There are very few people who do not find a voyage which lasts several months insupportably dull. Anything is welcome which may break that long monotony, a sail, a shark, an albatross, a man overboard. Most passengers find some resource in eating twice as many meals as on land. But the great devices in killing the time are quarrelling and flirting. The facilities for both these exciting pursuits are great. The inmates of the ship are thrown together far more than in any country-seat or boarding house. None can escape from the rest except by imprisoning himself in a cell in which he can hardly turn. All food, all exercise is taken in company. Ceremony is to a great extent banished. It is every day in the power of a mischievous person to inflict innumerable annoyances; it is every day in the power of an amiable person to confer little services. It not seldom happens that serious distress and danger call forth in genuine beauty and deformity heroic virtues and abject vices which, in the ordinary intercourse of good society, might remain during many years unknown even to intimate associates.”
work which made a deep impression on me—I have the copy still with me. I had also Kaliprasanna Ghosh’s (Morning Thoughts). Rabindranath was then scarcely known. He had been to England a couple of years in advance of me and had published his Letters from a tourist in Europe in Bengali which I also provided myself with. A copy of Boswell’s Life of Johnson in the saloon library almost captivated me.

We reached Gravesend in due course, the voyage occupying 33 days. From thence we went to the Fenchurch Street Station, London, and were received by Jagadish Chandra Bose and Satyaranjan Das, elder brother of Mr. S. R. Das, the late Law Member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council. D. N. Ray, and I stayed with them a week or more seeing a good many noteworthy sights including the Tower of London and Madame Tussaud’s. The Sinha brothers (the late Col. N. P. Sinha, I.M.S. and the late Lord Sinha) very kindly undertook to be our cicerones.

My imagination had conjured up gorgeous visions of the metropolis of the British Empire on the Thames; the stupendous area it covered simply bewildered me. We put up at Gloucester Road, N.W., near Regent’s Park—a quarter free from bustle and the din of vehicular traffic. All the houses in one block in this thoroughfare as also in the adjoining ones are built on the same pattern and look exactly alike. The landlady furnishes you with a latch key, but if you are a newcomer and if you are returning to your lodgings late at night and by mischance forget the number, then woe betide you! If you have to go to a distant part in the city proper you must consult the indispensable vade-mecum, the map of London, ascertain the longitude and latitude of the place and then take the right bus or the underground railway, otherwise you are apt to lose yourself in the labyrinthian maze. In the early eighties there were no “tubes”. Men who have spent the best portion of their lives in London, even those who have been born and bred there, cannot manage without the aid of a map.
Fortunately, the London policeman is always at your service and to a foreigner he is particularly courteous and obliging. He is a master of topography of the locality and has the map in his pocket. Every possible information you require is at his finger's end. "Go up, please, then take the third turn to the left and proceed straight on and then you are at the destination" and so forth. Launcelot Gobbo's description naturally comes to our mind.\(^2\)

Sometimes the 'bobby' will ask you to wait a minute two till the particular 'bus arrives and then he will direct the driver to see that you get out at the proper stop. In my student days, London had a population of four millions, the same as that of Scotland. During my fourth visit (1920) I learned that the population had increased to seven million and the area also proportionately. Several of the ports and harbours in the United Kingdom have also made astonishing gigantic progress, e.g., Liverpool, Glasgow, and Greenock.

I need not pursue further. During my first week's stay in London I had shaken off to a certain extent the nervousness which overtakes one in coming to a strange land and in being placed suddenly in the midst of odd surroundings. I now started for Edinburgh, which had then a time-honoured reputation as a seat of learning. Metaphysics and medicine, especially the latter, attracted pupils from far and near. Physical Science as represented by Chemistry and Physics found also eminent exponents. I was provided with introductions to some of the Indian students of medicine of whom there was even then a small colony. Miss E. A. Manning who used to take much interest in the welfare of Indian students residing in London and other seats of learning also kindly furnished me with introductions to some Edinburgh families.

Edinburgh is four hundred miles due north of London.

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\(^2\) "Turn up on your right hand at the next turning, but at the turning of all, on your left; marry, at the very next turning, turn no hand, but turn down indirectly to the Jew's house".
and necessarily a much colder place. My London friends who new all about the caprices of the climate of the northern city had taken good care to get me a plentiful supply of warm under-clothing and a "New Market" overcoat. One amusing incident in connection with my sartorial experience is vivid in my memory. For my ordinary suit of clothes I was taken to Charles Baker & Co., practical tailors, Tottenham Court Road. For evening parties, dinner and balls etc., I was advised to have a special dress-suit made. I confess I could not reconcile myself to the ugly, hideous-looking tail-coat. It has always been a puzzle to me how the English people so very full of shrewd common sense have not seen their way to discard this barbarous fashion. Equally inexplicable seems to be the obstinacy of their Gallic neighbours. *La belle France*, the cradle of æsthetic culture, the fountain-head of fashion since the days of Louis XIV and earlier, should certainly have done better in this respect. At any rate the English have always appeared to me to be rather stupid in the slavish imitation of modes *à la Parisienne*.

But to resume my narrative. The Indian flowing robe consisting of a *choga* and *chapkan*—such as the illustrious Raja Rammohun Ray wore while in England,—is very suitable to the purpose. I was taken to Charles Keane & Co. (as far as I remember) Oxford Street, with a sample suit borrowed from a friend. They took my measurements and I was asked to give second fitting. When the dress-suit was ready they sent me information and I called at their shop. When I put it on, it was noticeable that, although there was no misfit, both the *hoga* and *chapkan* dangled rather loosely in some places. The "fitter" himself was the first to point out the defect and anticipated the criticism that might be made by saying: "Sir, you are so very thin and lank that it requires lots of padding to make any suit fit you properly". Perhaps some reader will enjoy a hearty laugh at my expense. Possibly I somewhat resembled Ichabod Crane.

A disciple of Epictetus, and admirer of Diogenes in the
tub and of the Gymnosophists of the land of the five water as described by Arrian and lately of Mahatma Gandhi in his loin-cloth, one whose motto in life has been plain living and high thinking must needs apologise for having to digress on such a trivial subject.

I reached my destination in the second week of October a few days before the commencement of the winter session. Edinburgh is a pretty city and the atmosphere is free from mists or the thick heavy fog which often overhangs London. There being no industries here as at Glasgow the smoke nuisance is not so oppressive, nor is there such heavy vehicular traffic in the streets. It is surrounded by picturesque scenes and the sea (Firth of Forth) is quite near. I took my lodgings near the meadows and within a few minutes' walk of Arthur's Seat, which was my favourite resort during my holidays. On Sundays I used to take long rural walks to the distant hills and climb their tops: In those days for 12 6d. per week one could get a fairly comfortable furnished sitting room and a bed-room. No extra charge was made for coal, which was piled up in the scuttle and could be burned in the fire-place ad libitum. A substantial penny breakfast was by no means uncommon, consisting of oatmeal porridge ("the wholesome porritch, chief of Scotia's food") and milk.

I was singularly fortunate in my landlady. She with her husband and children occupied the back of the flat while the front rooms with windows facing the quiet street were reserved for lodgers. Like other Scotch landladies she was scrupulous honest and never charged me a farthing extra. Her daughters used to darn the socks each time they returned from the laundry.

The Scotch broth with its marvellous nutriment made of the pith and marrow of bones, oatmeal, and chopped carrot and turnips is simply unrivalled both in quality and cheapness. I well remember an incident in connection with the Scotch broth. I happened to spend one Christmas week on the Border at Berwick-upon-Tweed and I made an excursion to Jedburgh.
the remains of the old abbeys. I trudged along the pavement covered with snow. After seeing the monuments of piety of a by-gone age, I was on the look out for a restaurant.

was directed to a rather unpretentious house and I entered there with some degree of hesitation. The place was homely and very neat and tidy, and I had a plate of Scotch broth and big slice of loaf served. This was quite enough for my inch and only a penny was charged for the meal. In my days there were traditions of the students of the past generation, farmer's sons, walking all the way from their homes or driving carts to the university and bringing with them a supply of oatmeal, eggs and butter and then getting their stock replenished now and then. Readers of Carlyle's Life need not told how cheaply and economically the student managed at Edinburgh in his college days. The following extract giving vivid description may prove interesting in view of the rapid usformations which student life has undergone not only in Edinburgh but even in Calcutta during the last half century.

"To English ears university life suggests splendid buildings, curious rooms, rich endowments as the reward of successful industry; students, young men between nineteen and twenty-three with hand-owe allowances, spending each of them on an average double the gest income which James Carlyle had earned in any year of his life. Universities north of the Tweed had in those days no money prizes offer, no fellowships and scholarships, nothing at all but an education d a discipline in poverty and self-denial. The lads who went to them are the children, most of them, of parents as poor as Carlyle's father. hey knew at what a cost the expense of sending them to college, atively small as it was, could be afforded; and they went with the ed purpose of making the very utmost of their time. Five months ly of each year they could remain in their classes; for the rest of it ey taught pupils themselves, or worked on the farm at home to y for their own learning".

"Each student, as a rule, was the most promising member of the nily to which he belonged, and extraordinary confidence was placed them. They were sent to Edinburgh, Glasgow, or wherever it ight be, when they were mere boys of fourteen. They had no one ook after them either on their journey or when they came to the end. ey walked from their homes, being unable to pay coach-hire. They
entered their own names at the college. They found their own humble lodgings, and were left entirely to their own capacity for self-conduct. The carriers brought them oatmeal, potatoes, and salt butter from the home farm, with a few eggs occasionally as a luxury. With their thrifty habits they required no other food. In the return cart their linen went back to their mothers to be washed and mended. Poverty protected them from the temptations to vicious amusements. The formed their economical friendships; they shared their breakfasts and their thoughts, and had their clubs for conversation or discussion. When term was over they walked home in parties, each district having its little knot belonging to it; and known along the roads as University scholars, they were assured of entertainment on the way.

As a training in self-dependence no better education could have been found in these islands”.

I have been to Edinburgh and to other Scotch cities several times since then; but the aspect of city life has undergone material changes. The Highlands are no longer sequestered nooks. Thanks to the halo of romance cast about them by Scott and also to the weird scenery and the railways and motor buses ploughing them, swarms of tourists now flock there including American millionaires. The latter also rent shooting lodges for the season. However, the Scotch are the most industrious and adventurous people on earth. Dundee has practically a monopoly of jute and the mills—some three scores in number on the Hughli—are almost all managed by the canny Scotch. Glasgow bids fair to be second only to London. Within the last fifty years there has been an immense accession of wealth in Scotland. Edinburgh itself has undergone rapid and material transformation. Although not a centre of commerce or industry, retired Anglo-Indians drawing fat pensions and merchants who have made their piles abroad choose to live here.

Beautiful villas have sprung up all round. The new Edinburgh is extending fast. The simple, frugal habits of the people have almost disappeared and they have not been slow to adopt the luxurious habits of the modern sybarites. Burns’s admonition has been forgotten:

“And O’ may Heaven their simple lives prevent From luxury’s contagion, weak and vile!”
At the commencement of the winter session I enrolled myself as *Civis academia Edinburgensis* and joined the classes in preparing for the First B.Sc. examination, namely Chemistry, Physics and Zoology; Botany was reserved for the summer session (May, June and July) since towards the close of autumn "leaves have their time to fall and flowers to fade". In winter the trees are denuded of their leaves and their bare skeletons and frost-beaten twigs are often snow-clad. Tait's exposition of the general properties of matter was illuminating admirable; but I confess the text-book suggested for reference—Tait and Thomson's (Kelvin's) *Natural Philosophy* was a bit stiff and a hard nut for me to crack. I attended two courses of his lectures in two consecutive sessions, but it did not take me long to discover that I was born for Chemistry. Even at Calcutta I felt attracted towards her and now I began to pay her assiduous court, not that I neglected other branches.

My teacher of Chemistry, Alexander Crum Brown, was then forty-four years of age. The junior class consisted of 400 to 500 students, almost all of them meant for the medical career. Scotch boys coming fresh from homes full of life and animal spirits, like so many colts, begin with a demonstration of welcome when the Professor enters the class-room; before he puts in an appearance they generally sing snatches of songs. Crum Brown was a bit fidgety in such a big class and it was not an easy thing to maintain order; his pupils were not long discovering his weakness and dramatic or pathetic scenes used to occur now and then. Whenever the former betrayed his nervousness his pupils took advantage of it. They used rub their boots on the floor or even to stamp upon it or make some such demonstration; this had the effect of intensifying his fidgetiness. "Oh! gentlemen, if you go on this way, can't proceed with my lectures". This appeal had its effect and the students were pacified. Crum Brown was full of *bonhommie*; there was in him a large dose of *noblesse oblige*—in a word he was a perfect type of a gentleman. His erudition was vast and he was also a linguist. He even learned a
bit of Chinese. His capacious mind could conceive abstruse mathematical problems and he even made some contribution to the physiology of the ear. Along with his colleague (in the department of Materia Medica), Thomas Fraser, he may be reckoned as one of the founders of that branch of Pharmacology which deals with the relation between constitution and the therapeutical properties of drugs. It was, however, in the advanced classes, and notably in any course of special lectures e.g., on Crystallography, that his thorough grasp of the subject and his best acquirements shone forth brilliantly. The emoluments of the Professors in those days were almost princely compared with those of similar occupants of the chairs in the sister British Universities, including Cambridge and Oxford. All the fees (four guineas for the systematic and three guineas for the practical classes) went directly into their pockets.

Crum Brown was now growing indolent and fat. He revelled in speculation and every student of organic chemistry must be grateful to him for the graphic formula which he introduced and which considerably helped the progress of our science. Although he took no part in the practical or laboratory work, it must be said to his credit that he took care to secure the services of able demonstrators and assistants—Dr. John Gibson and Dr. Leonard Dobbin, both of whom had rounded off their education in German Universities, were among them. Gibson was at Heidelberg under Bunsen and the manipulations and methods of analysis which he taught us were those of the great German chemist. I got on splendidly and was on terms of personal intimacy with both. Even after a lapse of more than forty seven years I recollect with pleasure the joy and enthusiasm with which I pursued my favourite studies. I learnt German sufficiently well to enable me to go through the literature on the chemical subject. One of my fellow-students was James (Now Sir James) Walker who hailed from Dundee and who succeeded Crum Brown on his retirement. Two other junior contemporaries who made their mark were Alexander Smith, who afterwards became Professor of Chemistry at
Chicago and later at Columbia University and Hugh Marshall, well-known for his discovery of cobalt alum and his researches on persulphuric acid. Marshall was cut off in the prime of life (b. 1868; d. 1913) and Smith died in 1922 when he was only 57 years of age.

I was going on with my usual studies when an incident occurred which to a certain extent coloured my future career and which therefore demands attention here. Sometime in 1885 Lord Iddesleigh who as Sir Stafford Northcote had been Secretary of State for India in 1867-68, as Lord Rector of the University, announced that a prize would be awarded for the best essay on "India before and after the Mutiny." Although I was busy working in the laboratory and preparing for the B.Sc. examination, I felt tempted to enter the list of competitors. My latent, almost innate love of historical studies now woke up and for a time at any rate got the upper-hand of chemistry. I borrowed a large number of works relating to India from the University library and began to devour their contents and to make copious notes. French works were also aid under contribution, e.g., Rousselet's "L' Inde des Rajas", Banoye's "L' Inde contemporaine" as also articles on India in the "Revue des deux Mondes". I soon found that it was necessary to know a little of political economy in order to be able to follow budget discussions, as also questions involving finance, exchange etc. I therefore took the bold course to go sight through Fawcett's Political Economy as also his Essays on Indian Finance. As member for Hackney, the blind economist had entered Parliament and there made his mark by his thorough grasp of Indian problems and almost in my boyhood I had read in the columns of the Hindu Patriot the services he had rendered to our unhappy land and how he had won the hearts of our educated countrymen and also the title Member for India. It is enough to say that I went through almost a library of authorities on India. Articles by experts in the Fortnightly and Contemporary Reviews and Nineteenth Century did not escape my notice. I read also details of
Parliamentary debates on certain burning historic problems, e.g., Rendition of Mysore in the Hansard (1867).

I was a novice in the art of writing a book, especially of the description now required, but being an Indian I thought the opportunity should not be flung away and having accumulated a vast mass of materials I now made bold to put ink to paper. Brevity is the soul of wit. To be able to compress the essentials—the pith of the matter—within a prescribed limit constitutes the merit of the essayist. Verbosity and prolixity are to be avoided. I divided the subject matter into two parts; part I again being subdivided into four chapters and part II into three. My thoughts flowed quickly enough and I discovered to my infinite amazement and delight that I could wield the pen with some degree of facility, at least with as much facility as I could handle the test-tube.

In due course I submitted my essay with a motto on the title-page and the name of the writer in a sealed envelope as was the custom in such cases. When the result (or award) was announced I received it with mixed satisfaction. The prize was awarded to a rival competitor, but my essay as well as another's was bracketed together as proxime accesserunt.

My hand-writing is bad and in those days typewriting was unknown and I had not kept a copy of my essay. I now applied for its return so that I might publish it at my own cost. The application was readily granted and when I had it back I found the opinion of one of the adjudicators affixed to it. I transcribe a few words from it, which are engraved on the tablet of my memory.

"Another remarkable essay is that bearing the motto......is full of bitter diatribes against British rule". I came to learn afterwards that Sir William Muir and Professor Masson were the adjudicators. Muir was a distinguished Anglo-Indian administrator and rose to be Lieutenant-Governor of the U.P. On his retirement he served for a time as a member of the Secretary of State's Council. On the death of Sir Alexander Grant he was invited to succeed him as Principal of Edinburgh.
Muir had made his mark in the literary world by
*Life of Mahomet* from original sources, showing profound
rabic scholarship.

In his inaugural address delivered to the students of the
iversity on the opening of the session (1885), Principal
uir referred to my essay along with the other two as "bearing
arks of rare excellence". I got it printed for private circula-
on chiefly among the university students with an appeal
dressed to them and subsequently a new edition was published
the general public. I was a believer in those days in the
rine of mendicancy and with child-like simplicity held that
the wrongs and the grievances under which our country
ed could be brought home to the British people, they
uld be remedied. The disillusionment was not long in
ing. There is not in the history of the world a single
tance of a dominant race granting concession to a subject
ple of its own free will and accord. Even in a free country
England the Barons making common cause with the
omany extorted the great Magna Charta from the reluctant
ks of King John and in the great Civil War the English
ple had to wade through pools of blood before they could
ablish the constitutional principle: *No taxation without
resentation*. I quote here a few lines from the appeal in the
inted edition to the "Students of the University".

"The lamentable condition of India at present is due to
ngland's culpable neglect of, and gross apathy to, the affairs
that Empire. England has hitherto failed—grievously failed
in the discharge of her sacred duties to India. It is to you,
rising generation of Great Britain and Ireland, that we
k for the inauguration of a more just, generous and humane
licy as to India—a policy which will not seek a justification
uch platitudes as "inevitable course", "non-possimus",nernal fitness of things"; but one whose sole issue will be a
er union between India and England. In you are centred
our hopes. The time is near at hand when you may be
ed upon to assume civic functions, and to exercise a potent
influence in the affairs of the Empire over which the sun never sets, and of which we glory in being citizens. Tomorrow you will be arbiters of the destinies of 250 millions of human beings, your own fellow-subjects. We fervently hope your advent to power will be a death-knell to the existing un-English regime, and the dawn of a brighter and happier era for India."

I took care to send a copy of my essay to John Bright with a covering letter drawing his attention to the annexation of Burma and the additional cost thrown upon the Indian taxpayer in the shape of increased duty on salt. Bright acknowledged it in a handsome letter with a slip enclosed containing the significant words, "you may make any use of it you please." I at once sent copies of it to the press including the "London Times" and one fine morning I awoke and found myself a bit famous: the posters in thick type announcing "Mr. Bright's letter to an Indian student". Reuter also flashed the substance of the letter to India which is quoted below.

"I regret with you and condemn the course of Lord Dufferin in Burma. It is a renewal of the old system of crime and guilt, which, we had hoped, had been for ever abandoned. There is an ignorance on the part of the public in this country and great selfishness here and in India as to our true interests in India. The departures from morality and true statesmanship will bring about calamity and perhaps ruin, which our children may witness and deplore".

"Now it will not be out of place to quote a few extracts from my Essay on India written nearly half a century ago. The essay was printed and published in 1886. I am afraid my penmanship has deteriorated of late years. Fifty years ago my style had evidently an ease and flow which I can now scarcely command. Possibly my being immersed in the labour and toil of chemical research has much to account for it.

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Extracts from India:

"The part played by England in the furtherance of the intellectual progress of the Indians forms one of the brightest chapters in Anglo-Indian history. While Russia now and then closes the gates of the home universities against her own sons
England had for more than half a century unhesitatingly prescribed the works of Locke, Burke, Hallam and Macaulay as text-books in the state colleges. The minds of the educated classes have thus been steeped in principles of constitutionalism. Each and every one of them now becomes a focus of political intelligence, from which emanate and radiate principles and doctrines which, we have reason to believe, are gratefully accepted by his less advanced countrymen. The English public has yet to be roused to an adequate sense of the importance of events which are now taking place in India. Thoughts and ideas, which pervade the upper strata of society, are now percolating through the lower; even the masses are now beginning to be moved and influenced. This latter element it will no longer do to treat as "une quantité négligeable". England unfortunately now refuses to recognise the hard and irresistible logic of facts, and does her best to strangle and smother the nascent aspirations of a rising nationality. The selfish, and therefore, harsh and cruel exigencies of an alien rule have imposed various disqualifications and disabilities upon the children of the soil. From the moment an Indian begins to think for himself, he probably begins to be ashamed of himself. Betwixt the ideal and the actual he sees a gulf intervening; he finds it difficult to reconcile the practice of British statesmen with their profession. Sound statesmanship consists in foreseeing, or at least in reading the signs of the times, and acting accordingly. It has been well remarked that the French Revolution was so mighty in its consequences because it was an intellectual upheaval. Voltaire, an exile from his native land, and dependent for his daily bread upon the smiles of a foreign potentate, thereby wielded more influence than he otherwise would have done; and what of Rousseau, the genial current of whose soul even chill penury could not freeze? "Banished into Paris garrets" says Carlyle, "in the gloomy company of his thoughts and necessities there; driven from post to pillar; fretted, exasperated, till the heart of him went mad, he had grown to feel deeply that the world was not his friend, nor
the world's law...... He could be cooped into garrets, laughed at as a maniac, left to starve like a wild beast in the cage;—but he could not be hindered from setting the world on fire. The French Revolution found its evangelist in Rousseau". Is there no golden mean between stout and stubborn denial on the hand and humiliating surrender on the other? These strange times we live in. An institution seven centuries old becomes in the course of as many days branded as a "nest of sinecurists". Who knows, tomorrow another Howorth will have to denounce in equally unmeasured terms the India Council and a dozen other obnoxious bureaus? Compromises, and half measures and halting policies have been tried elsewhere with signal failure. "Fifty years of concession to Ireland" have only served to embitter her feelings against Great Britain. Will the lesson which the sister island has taught us be lost upon India?"

"We find there is a tendency among a certain class of writers to single out some of the worst types of Mahommedan despots and bigots, and institute a comparison between the India under them and the India of to-day. This is very fair, no doubt; but will the Mahommedan rule suffer by comparison with ours? It is forgotten that at the time when a Queen of England was flinging into flames and hurling into dungeons those of her own subjects who had the misfortune to differ from her on dogmatic niceties, the great Mogul Akbar had proclaimed the principles of universal toleration, had invited the moulvie, the pandit, the rabbi, and the missionary to his court, and had held philosophical disquisitions with them on the merits of their various religions. It might be said that the case of Akbar is only exceptional, and therefore he cannot be cited as a representative Mogul. Nothing would be a greater mistake than this: 'Religious toleration, backed by a policy dictated no less by generosity than by prudence, was the rule and not the exception with the Mogul emperors'.

The Scotsman, the leading journal of the North is reviewing the essay observed, "It is a most interesting lit
book. It contains information in reference to India which will not be found elsewhere and it is deserving of the utmost notice". My fervour in this direction had, however, to be suppressed. I was soon to appear for the B.Sc. examination and the superior and more pressing calls of Chemistry could not be subordinated to those of political agitation. Assiduously I took to the pursuit of my favourite science. After taking my bachelor's degree had to get ready for the doctorate, for which it was necessary to sumbit a thesis based upon my own original investigation. My time was now almost exclusively devoted to research at the laboratory and to serious studies of chemical literature in English, French and German and from 1885 till 1920 Chemistry claimed me almost exclusively as her own.

In the cold, salubrious climate of Edinburgh one can work much harder than in our own without feeling exhausted and after the day's work in the laboratory I always used to take a long brisk walk before returning to my lodgings.

I confess I did not mix much with society; I was intimate with a few chosen families; but somehow or other I always got on much better with the elderly male members than with the young ladies. With the former I could enter into conversation on various topics, but whenever in any party I was introduced to the latter, I became shy and nervous and the conversational stock-in-trade consisting of the condition of the weather, the climate or some such thing was soon exhausted and I had toumble about for a new subject. Some of my Indian friends, however, were experts in the art of mixing with the fair sex. I could never cultivate the art of catching the tone of any society into which chance might throw me. It should not however be understood that I was a misogynist or insensible to the charms of the amiable sex; in fact, I congratulate myself that I was much luckier in this respect than the great Cavendish— one of the illustrious makers of our science.

Dr. and Mrs. Kelly of Campo Verde, Tipperlairn Road, used to hold regular receptions on Saturdays for Indian and foreign students and I was on friendly terms with the old couple. I
gratefully remember how, on one occasion, when I was ill and suffering from an attack of diarrhoea, my life-long complaint, they called on me with some especially prepared light, easily digestible but at the same time palatable dishes. I was introduced also to some of the fashionable ("swell") or aristocratic people and on rare occasions I made bold to attend even balls. My Indian costume was very much in request. Once a Moslem friend hailing from Upper India took particular care to arrange me in his gorgeous robes and turban. Naturally I was "the observed of all observers". Very likely they took me for an Indian prince. I went through some such ordeals as I wanted to have a glimpse of fashionable life.

In due course I presented my thesis and I also had to go through a practical examination consisting of a complex analysis of a complex ore. My examiners were satisfied and I was recommended for the Doctorate. Of course I knew it would be a foregone conclusion. I was the only candidate for the year and was in close touch with my teachers. They knew well the progress I had made and the quality of the research which was going on under their eyes and guidance.

By this time I had become so passionately fond of Chemistry that I made up my mind to protract my stay for at least another year and pursue my studies uninterruptedly to my heart's content. I was awarded the Hope Prize Scholarship and the trustees of the Gilchrist Endowment also gladly made a grant of £50 on the expiry of my scholarship. Doctorates in science in those days were few and far between—not plentiful like black berries as at present. I began to feel that I had got something like a position in social circles. I was elected a Vice-President of the University Chemical Society and in the absence of the President (Prof. Crum Brown) I had to preside at the meetings. Walker had taken his Doctorate some six months...
rlier. He had already imbibed a taste for Physical Chemistry, which was just then coming into vogue. He proceeded to Germany and worked under Ostwald, one of the three pioneers this branch of Chemistry, the other two being Van't Hoff and Arrhenius. On his return he was instrumental in giving impetus to the pursuit of Physical Chemistry in England. Once I asked Prof. Dittmar of Glasgow, who often used to visit the laboratory,—he being Crum Brown's assistant at one time as to whether I too should take up Physical Chemistry. His reply was characteristic, "Be a chemical chemist first."

A striking incident may be worth relating here as showing that accidents often play a conspicuous part in the history of

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**SYLLABUS 1887-88.**

**1887.**

w. 23. Cryohydrolates and Eutectic Alloys—Professor A. Crum Brown, M.D., D.Sc., F.R.S.

**c. 7.** The Thermal Conductivity of Metals—A. Crichton Mitchell.


**c. 20.** Professor E. J. Mills' Theory of the Genesis of the Elements—W. Peddie, B.Sc., F.R.S.E.

**Cobalt Alums—Hugh Marshall, B.Sc.**

**1888.**

**a. 5.** The Chemical Theory of the Formation of Coral Islands—H. R. MILL, D.Sc., F.R.S.E.

William Cullen: A Biographical Sketch—Leonard Dobbin, Ph.D., F.R.S.E., F.I.C.

**18.** The Periodic Law—J. Gibson, Ph.D., F.R.S.E., F.I.C.
science; but that they can be taken advantage of only by those whose minds are predisposed, as Pasteur very aptly remarks: "Dans les champs de l'observation le hasard ne favorise que les esprits préparés".

As Hope Prize Scholar it was incumbent on me to assist the Professor in conducting the practical work in the laboratory; this in itself is considered a privilege as it enables one to take part in actual teaching work. Hugh Marshall was a junior student and I had often to give him hints on methods of analysis. Once I gave him some samples of salt which I had prepared for my doctorate thesis in order to test his analytical skill and also to have confirmations of my own analysis. One such contained the double sulphate of cobalt, copper and potassium (vide Proc. Roy. Soc. Edinb. vol. 127, 1888, pp. 267-83). Marshall used the electrolytical method as elaborated by Claisen. Copper was deposited at one pole as was quite expected, but to his infinite amazement he noticed beautiful octahedrals deposited in the solution and analysis proved them to be cobalt alum (oxidation of cobalt salts by electrolysis, J. C. S., 1891, vol. 59, p. 760). One of the products of the re-action was also persulphuric acid. Thus at one bound, young Marshall became famous as a discoverer of a new, but long-expected, compound and left his contemporaries and his seniors far behind.

Feb. 1. The Alkaloids—D. B. Dott, F.R.S.E.
   The Heat of Chemical Combination and its Applications—
   C. E. Day.
   
   15. Spectroscopic Analysis—J. Gibson, Ph.D., F.R.S.E., F.I.C.
       Fractionation as a means of obtaining pure Beryllium Com-
       Note on the Atomic Weight of Beryllium—A. King.
   
   22. Dissociation—Professor W. Dittmar, LLD., F.R.S.
   
   29. Bodies found in the Urine after the Ingestion of certain
       Essential Oils—Ralph Stockman, M.D.
       Analytical Note—D. B. Dott, F.R.S.E.

Mar. 7. Nitrification—Professor A. P. Aitken, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S.E.
   
   14. The Carbo-ketonic Ethers of Frankland and Duppa—P. C. Ray,
       D.Sc.