PREFACE.

EARLY in the year 1871 Baboo Joy Kissen-Mookerjea, of Uttarapara, a zemindar in Bengal, offered a prize of £50 for the best novel, to be written either in Bengali or in English, illustrating the "Social and Domestic Life of the Rural Population and Working Classes of Bengal." The essays were sent in to the adjudicators early in 1872; but, owing to the absence of two of the adjudicators in England, and to other causes, the award was not made till about the middle of 1874, when the following pages, written in English, obtained the prize. It is proper to state that the original book, to which the prize was adjudged, wanted the last three chapters; these chapters have now been added, in order to bring down the narrative to the present day.

I cannot let this book go to the world without
expressing the obligations I am under to several English gentlemen who have taken an interest in its publication. First of all, I have to thank Mr. Gordon Robb, of Messrs. G. C. Hay and Co., of Calcutta, for taking a kindly interest in the book, and putting me in the way of the publishers. I have to thank Dr. George Smith, lately editor of the Friend of India, and now editor of the Edinburgh Daily Review, for reading the book in manuscript, and expressing a favourable opinion of it. I have to thank the Honourable J. B. Phear, one of Her Majesty's Judges in the High Court of Judicature in Calcutta, for not only reading the manuscript, but proposing verbal alterations and suggesting other changes. And last of all, I have to thank Professor E. B. Cowell, of Cambridge, for revising the proof-sheets, and for bringing to bear upon the book his ripe scholarship, his sound judgment, and his fine taste.

Lal Behari Day.

Hooghly College, Chinsurah,
November 27th. 1876.