CHAPTER XXX.

THE NAVÁNNA

How often have I blest the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed,
And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground,
And slights of hand and feats of strength went round.

The Desolate Village

It was on a bright, sunny morn of the pleasant month of November—so different from the "chill November" and its "surly blast" of which the Scottish poet speaks—that the joyous festival of the Navánna, or the new rice, took place. This festival, in which the first-fruits of the paddy-field are offered to the gods before they are used by human beings, must not be confounded with the general harvest, which does not take place till a month after. The paddy that is now cut is from early sowings, intended purposely for this festival. While the bulk of the paddy is still standing erect on the field loaded with golden grain, but not yet quite ripe for the sickle, the Navánna dhán is cut and husked and made ready for the festival. It is a merry day all over Bengal, especially with the peasantry. Govinda is not to go out to-day with the cows; neither his father nor his uncle is to work. All agricultural operations are suspended to.
twenty-four hours throughout the country. Early in the morning the peasants are lounging about in their houses and in the streets, talking and laughing, making a great deal. They bathe earlier than usual, for the astrologers have declared that after the pancha and half (that is, about half-past ten o'clock in the morning) is the most auspicious moment for offering and eating the new rice, and we may eat that rice unbathed. Alanga and Adi and Adur have made all the necessary preparations. There is in that basket in the corner of the big room a large quantity of the new rice, unboiled yet by man or beast, that large handa is filled with milk; in another basket are contained all the fruits and succulent roots of the season, cut into small pieces. Râm Dhan Chakravartti, the family priest, has just come into the house, as the propitiations for the gods is drawing near. In a large vessel he mixes the new rice (unboiled) with the milk and the fruit; the edible roots, repeats a lot of Sanskrit verses, blows the conch-shell with his mouth—each means, I suppose, a proclamation to the gods the effect that the feast is ready, and that they could come and partake of it—and offers the agreeable invitation to the invisible deities, who have doubtless come in crowds. The five elements, the great ancestors of mankind, the Munis and Rishis of a golden age, and Badan’s own forefathers, next to him for their share. But there are other guests to be attended to before Badan and his family can partake of the new rice. The cows and bullocks are presented with the rice, which but for their oracular co-operation man could hardly hope to obtain. The other beasts of the field, like the jackal, sacred
to the god Mahadeva, and even the birds of the air, must not go without their portion. Gonda, told by the priest to put a plateful of the rice in a neighbouring thicket for the former, and another on the top of a wall for the latter. A small quantity is thrown into the tank near the house for the fish, and another small quantity is put near a hole in a corner of a wall for rats, mice, ants, and all creatures that creep on the ground. When the gods of every description—celestial, terrestrial, and infernal—all living creatures of every species, have been thus feasted, Badan, Kalamanik, and Govinda squat on the floor, and partake with thankful hearts of the bounty of Providence; and woman, the Creator's last and best workmanship, comes in finally for her share. The religious part of the festival is now over.

We are more concerned, however, with what follows. That day the dinner is required to be unusually grand, and Alanga had made preparations on a magnificent scale. Animal food being prohibited to the class of Hindus to which Badan belonged, and wines being out of the question, the reader may easily imagine in what the magnificence of the dinner consists. There was in the first place boiled rice, without which no Bengali can exist; in the second place, dál, or boiled pulse; in the third place, two or three kinds of greens fried in mustard oil; in the fourth place, about half a dozen sorts of vegetables like the potato, brinjal, pátal, uchka, pániphal, and others, fried in the same fragrant oil; in the fifth place, a hodge-podge, called tarkári, of three or four sorts of vegetables; in the sixth place fish fried in the eternal mustard oil; in the seventh place, fish cooked in tamaund; and in the eighth or
place, *paramāṇna*, that is, rice *par excellence*, pudding made up of rice, milk, and sugar or
lasses. Such are the delicacies which serve to
ake up a first-rate dinner for a Bengal rāiyat; and
ough the English sybarite may laugh at the con-
ction till his sides burst, it must be acknowledged
every right-thinking person that the materials of
rāiyat's dinner, though perhaps less nutritive,
are more innocuous than the highly-seasoned dishes
and intoxicating beverage of the Luculluses of Europe.
us leave the ladies in the kitchen, and attend
to the gentlemen in the streets and the outskirts of
the village.

In a spacious lawn, between two mango groves,
we seen men and boys, about one hundred in number,
engaged in amusing themselves. Our hero, his father
and uncle, joined this merry group. Most of them
were husbandmen, though of different castes; and
the artisan class was well represented. All Govinda's
friends were there—Nanda the blacksmith, Kapula
the carpenter, Rasamaya the confectioner, Madan the
weaver, Chatura the barber, and Bokārām the weaver.
They all seem to be enjoying themselves, as ever and
then are heard gleesome shouts, clapping of hands,
and merry peals of laughter. One party is playing at
*lindaguli*, the cricket of Bengal. The *qinda* is a
stick stick of the babool wood, about two feet long;
and the *quli*, made of the same wood, but thicker,
measures about five inches: the former serves the
purpose of a bat, and the latter of a ball. Govinda
joined this party, as his *sāngit*, his *bandhu*, and his
unti were in it. He soon distinguished himself in
the sport, sending the *quli* to a greater distance than
the rest, and hitting it always on its return. Badan,
who, on account of his advanced age, did not join the party, and who sat under an adjacent tree smoking along with other old hus-bandmen, could not conceal the joy he felt in the display of his son’s vigour and activity. *Boom! boom! boom!* the guli went whizzing through the air. Lo! the forehead of a stalwart lad is struck. The old men sitting under the tree rush to his assistance; the blow has cut through the skin, and brought out blood. The lad is taken away by his relatives; and the play goes on merrily as before.

On a spot not far distant is a party playing at hādu-gūdu, sometimes called hādu-dudu in other districts. Why the play is so called I do not know, except it be from the circumstance that the lads engaged in that play keep muttering in a low voice the sounds, hādu-gūdu, hādu-gūdu. The game is a sort of battle between two juvenile armies. A line is drawn, on the opposite sides of which are ranged the hostile combatants. They have no weapons of any sort—no needle-gun, no chassepot, nor Henry-Martini, nor sword, nor spear, nor sabre, not even a stick—are they not Bengali heroes? The sport begins with a man of the one army crossing the boundary line and invading the ground of the other. If the man, while on the ground of the enemy succeeded in touching one of the enemy, and in escaping to his own side of the line without being caught, the man who is so touched is said in the language of the play to *die*, or to be disabled and must therefore be removed from the scene. But then this feat is to be accomplished in one breath—the continuity of the breath being ascertained by the player making a sound. Should he lose his breath
before returning to his own camp he too is said to be, that is, disabled from further playing. The death or disablement of the last combatant on either side concludes the sport.

Under yonder tree a wrestling match is going on. Not mere boys, but men in the prime of manhood are seen there. Our friend Kalamánik is distinguishing himself there. Look how he and another large-built man—no unworthy foe—are catching hold of each other's arms in the middle of the stadium, wrestling with all their might, each trying to bring his opponent to the ground. They are now struggling with all their strength; victory seems to be hanging in the balance; now Kalamánik, and now the other man seems to fall to the ground. At last a loud thud is heard. Kalamánik has left his opponent sprawling on the earth.

In these and other ways do the peasantry amuse themselves in the heat of the day, and in the cool of the afternoon, under umbrageous trees, on a common or by the side of a tank, on the day of the festival of the new rice. As it was drawing towards evening, the assembly dispersed, and went home to their dinner, which their mothers, wives, and sisters had prepared for them.
CHAPTER XXXI.

THE HARVEST.

There too he form'd the likeness of a field
Crowded with corn, in which the reapers toil'd
Each with a sharp-toothed sickle in his hand.
Along the furrow here, the harvest fell
In frequent handfuls, there they bound the sheaves,
Three binders of the sheaves their sultry task
All phleg meditators, and behind them boys
Attended, tilling with the corn their arms,
And offering still their bundles to be bound.
Amid them, staff in hand, the master stood
Enjoying mute the order of the field,
While, shaded by an oak apart, his train
Prepared the banquet, a well-thriven ox
New slain, and the attendant maidens mix'd
Large supper, for the hinds, of whitest wheat.

The Iliad

About a month after the Navánna, or the new rice came the harvest, a time of joy to the peasantry, As it is of great importance to cut all the paddy at once, Badan obtained the help of his friends, and of those whose fields lay near his own, on condition that he would render to them the like assistance. Of these associates, the foremost was Padma Lochan Pál, who, ever since the murder of his second daughter, Yádumani, whose dead body was first discovered by Govinda, and brought up from the water by Kálamánik, had been greatly drawn towards Badan and his family. On the appointed day, they all repaired to the field with sickles, bullocks, ropes, &c., and commenced operations. The reapers were three
number—Badan, Kālamānik, and Padma. Squatting on the ground on their heels, they incessantly dealt the "sharp-toothed sickle" to the cluster of paddy held by the left hand. The paddy stalks were cut into sheaves by the assistants; the sheaves were made into loads, put on pack-saddles, and carried home on the backs of bullocks. Kālamānik, on account of his prodigious strength, was the most successful of all the three reapers. With his huge hand he caught hold each time of a large quantity of the paddy stalks; pressed his hips together, putting them fairly inside the mouth; and cut the corn away with great force. Mash! mash! mash! the paddy fell rapidly before the sickle; and this music was greatly enlivened by the sounds of umph! umph! which ever and anon issued from Kālamānik's wide nostrils as from two subterranean caves. As soon as the pack-saddles were ready, they were put on the bullocks; and it was Govinda's business to see them safely landed at home, where other husbandmen were waiting to stack them. Many a trudge Govinda had on these harvest days, with the loaded bullocks, from the paddy-field to the house, and from the house back to the paddy-field. He had, however, more leisure than the others, for his work began only when the paddy-loads were ready. During the interval he smoked and dabbled merrily with the little boys and girls who had come for the gleanings; for it is a rule amongst Ben- tii Hindu husbandmen, as it was amongst the Jews, not to take up any little paddy stalk that falls from the pack-saddles either in the fields or on the roadside, but allow it to be gleaned by boys and girls who usually exchange the gleanings of the
day in the grocer's shop for parboiled peas fried in oil—a delicacy which makes its appearance in village shops at the harvest. There was one bright housegirl there with whom Govinda talked oftener than with the rest; and she was the eldest daughter, Padma Lochan Pál, Dhanamani by name, the elder sister, though herself only eleven years old, of the lamented Yádumani. He gave her quantities of the mudi and munđki tied in his gímchha, and handfuls of which he was every now and then putting into his mouth; and he often filled her little gleanings-basket—and it is not reckoned dishonourable for children of prosperous husbandmen to glean—with paddy-stalks from the bundles. The reapers, sheaf-binders, and other assistants, took their noon-day meal, which had been brought by Govinda, under a tree, not far from the field; and though no ox was killed and no bread of the "whitest flour" baked, as in the days of Homer, there was as much joy in the hearts of these vegetable-eating and water-drinking peasants of Bengal as in those of the beef-eating and wine-bibbing swains of old Hellas. On such occasions Dhanamani sat beside her father and partook of the dinner, and went home when Govinda returned next with the laden bullocks.

After gathering in the harvest, and arranging it in the open yard of his house in stacks, Badan agreeably to previous arrangement, helped his neighbours in cutting their paddy. This being done the process of threshing commenced. No flails or threshing machines of any sort are known to the peasantry of the Vardhamána district. They place on the ground a simple plank on an inclined plane, the thresher stands at the head of the plane, take-
a sheaf of paddy by both his hands, and strikes it against the plank with all his force. Thump succeeds thump, till all the corn is beaten out of the paddy stalk. Should some grains of paddy, after the operation, remain on the stalk, the whole of the straw is laid out on the yard, and some oxen tied in a line to a post are made to tread it; and on such occasions, contrary to the Moslem rule, the oxen are invariably muzzled, to prevent them from munching straw. The straw thus trodden upon is tied in wisps, and is called loṭ—so named from the circumstance that the straw has been tumbled about. This loṭ is sold dearer than the ordinary straw, and is used for thatching huts. The paddy is then stored up in the granary, and the straw stacked.

The harvest is followed by a festival, greatly enjoyed by the peasantry, and called pūśa sankrānti, or the feast of cakes. It is so called from pūśa, cake, and sankrānti, the last day of a month, as it always takes place at the end of the month Vaṣpha, which comprises half of December and half of January. The festival lasts three days. Early in the morning of the first day of the feast, Alanga, Sundari, and Aduari bathed, and boiled different kinds of pulse-like grain, kālai, barbatī (Embelia balsaal), vign (Phaseolus aureus), which they formed into a sort of thick paste. They next extracted the kernel of the cocoa-nut, mixed it with treacle, and fried it. They then took out a large quantity of rice, which had been previously pounded, made it into a paste, and formed it into innumerable small cups, which they filled with either various kinds of the prepared pulse, or the prepared kernel of the cocoa-nut, or cream, and covered them up. These rice balls were
then put in a hāndi of boiling water; and in a few minutes the pīṭā was fit to be eaten. These cakes are usually eaten with treacle. A larger sort of cakes is usually prepared, called askes, which are of two kinds, the dry and the wet; the former being eaten along with treacle, and the latter soaked in milk. A thinner species, called saruchaklis, is very much esteemed. Alanga made heaps of these rice cakes; and they were greedily devoured by the members of the little household. On one of the festival days Alanga made a pīṭā of a monstrous size in the shape of a cat, which was offered to Shashti, the protectress of children. These rude and somewhat unwholesome cakes may not suit the taste of refined palates, but they are vastly enjoyed by the peasantry, who get no harm by them. The feast of cakes is attended with games and sports similar to those which take place during the festival of the new rice. I had almost forgotten to mention that in the evening of the first day of the feast, the peasant boys of Kānchannāpur sang in chorus some doggerel verses addressed to the harvest month, describing its unnumbered blessings, and praying for its annual return.
CHAPTER XXXII.

MATTERS HYMENEAL.

Thus ben theay wedded with solemnity
And atte feste sittith he and sche,
With other worthy folk upon the deys.
Al ful of joy and bliss is the paleys,
And ful of instruments, and of viyals,
The most demtevous of al Ysaile.

_The Marchaundes Tale._

The reader has already come to know from the women at the bathing ghāṭ of Kānchānāpur that there has been for some time past some talk about our hero getting married to the daughter of Pādra Pāl, and we may therefore not unnaturally have come to the conclusion that we purposely put Dhanamānu in the way of Govinda at the harvest-field, in order to wake up something like a courtship between the two. We solemnly declare that we had no such purpose. The fact is, neither the boy nor the girl knew anything of the affair. They had not the remotest idea that their parents were contemplating their union for life. Indeed, if Govinda had known it, he neither would have been seen in company of the girl, nor would he have spoken to her; and if Dhanamānu had known it, she would have always kept herself at a respectable distance from Govinda—such is the reserve maintained by Bengalis in matrimonial matters. This may appear odd to the English reader, but it is the simple fact. Not only is there no courtship in
Bengal, but if a boy and a girl, whom Prajápati and their parents had determined to unite together, were to be found walking together or speaking to each other, their conduct would be universally deemed unbecoming and indecent. Whether Govinda's interest in the girl was not something warmer than simple friendship, I will not take upon me to determine; but I have no hesitation in saying that Dhanamani was unconscious of any tender feelings towards Govinda. The truth is, they were both ignorant of the wishes of their parents regarding themselves.

Alanga, now that she had become an old woman, was anxious to see her grandson married before she left the world; and Sundari, like every Bengali woman, thought it the highest happiness of life to have a daughter-in-law beside her, and a grandchild on her knees. Nor was Buda unconcerned in the matter; like every parent, and especially every Hindu parent, he was anxious that his children should get settled in life before his own exit from the world. In casting about for a suitable wife for Govinda, their attention was naturally directed to the daughter of Padma Pal, who was by no means opposed to the alliance. Everything almost had been settled, except a formal betrothment, before the harvest—though neither Govinda nor Dhanamani had any inkling of the matter. After the harvest had been gathered, and the rice-cakes eaten, the actual betrothment took place with all its formalities; and an auspicious day was fixed in the month of Phálgun—the gemélion, or marriage-month of Bengal—for the celebration of the nuptials. The reader need not fear that we are about to inflict on him another description of a wedding, though if we
we could hardly be blamed, as Bengal is par
silence, the land of marriages. The same cer-
encess as at the marriage of Malati and Madhava
are gone through; the same exclamations of udh!
udh! were uttered; there were the same
ash use of turmeric, the same sort of musical,
rather unmusical tom-toms, the same gyrations
of the platanum-trees, the same blows on
ill-starred back of Govinda, the same prayers,
same jests of the women, the same kind of nuptial
scena; all the relations and friends of both the
field and the bridegroom, who were natives of the
village, were on the spot. All the relations
Govinda were there, and amongst them Malati
Dunganagar, her son, Yadava, and her sister-
brother, Kadambo. Next to Bhanu, Alanga and
Bhanu, what were, during the days of the
king, burdened with an innumerable amount of
work, the two persons who were excessively busy
Ganga the barber and Rama Dhan Misra the
secretary, the former doing all the manual and the latter
higher and more dignified sort of work. The
sage himself was not present, as he was
at the palace, where the king was present in his annual
visitations, but had sent his legate in the person of Premo-
atha Varagi, but who, as well appears afterwears,
more busy in accomplishing his own private
poses than in assisting at the wedding. It is
necessary to remark that the friends and com-
panions of Govinda—his singut, his bandhu, his mata,
and the rest, were in constant attendance every day,
and partook of the general festivity. Rama Rupa,
the pedagogue, also came with his crutch, to gratulate his pupil on his marriage, and receive rupée for his pains. Nor must we omit to mention the unsung joy of Rúpa’s mother, the venerable midwife of Kānchanchpur, on this occasion. In ten days she never went once to her own hut, ate and slept in Badan’s house, and was as busy as any member of the household, though being of inferior caste she was prevented from doing all that she could have wished. She blessed the bride and groom a thousand times, and often congratulated Alanga on her singular good fortune.

“You are blessed above most women,” said Rúpa’s mother to Alanga, “a woman is considered fortunate if she is blessed with a child, but your grandson now married; and you have also seen your granddaughter’s child! What a fortunate woman must you be! You must have been very holy in your former birth, otherwise, why this wonderful good fortune?” The saying is fulfilled in your case—

Nātir nātti,
Svarge bāti.

[That is, he who sees his grandchild’s grandchild lights a candle for himself in the heavens]

Alanga. “I have seen only my grandchild’s child, so the saying is not quite fulfilled in my case. The gods have, however, been very kind to me in keeping me alive so long.”

“You must be very holy; you are mother Lakshmi herself.”

“How holy? If I were righteous, would I have suffered so much trouble in my life?”
"What trouble! You are like a queen! Yea, more fortunate than a queen, for how few queens can see their grandchild's child!"

"O Rúpa's mother! why call me fortunate when that golden moon of a son, Gayáram, has been bitten to death by a snake? I must be a great sinner to have deserved such a dreadful calamity! The gods must have been very angry with me to have sent such a visitation. O my dear Gayá! my moon of gold! my lost treasure! where art thou? Where are you gone, leaving your mother here?"

"Girni [mistress], don't think such thoughts at Govinda's marriage. Why grieve when you have Govinda on your lap? The gods spare his life, and he will yet have sons and daughters, and then your heart will overflow with joy."

"True, Rúpa's mother! but how can I forget my poor Gayá devoured by the ruthless serpent? My heart is going to split with sorrow."

"Girni, leave off these sad thoughts. Now rejoice at Govinda's marriage. Bless him, and he will remove all sorrow from your heart."

"The gods make my Govinda immortal and perfectly happy! But as for me, there is no happiness anymore for me. I shall be happy when I die, the wind shall then enter into my bones. My wish has now been fulfilled: I have seen my Govinda married. I have seen my Govinda's wife with my eyes. I have no other wish. I can now die in peace. Let me go to some place of pilgrimage, and there end my stretched days."

"Don't say so, Girni. Banish that thought from your mind. Get up and join in the merriment. You will yet see Govinda's child."

At this moment Badan came accidentally to the spot where the two old women were talking together, and seeing tears trickle down his mother's cheeks, said, 'You are weeping, mother? You weep where everybody else is rejoicing!' Alanga replied, 'These are tears both of joy and of grief.' Badan, of course, understood that his mother was sorrowing on account of Gayàrâm's untimely death; he therefore said, 'Mother! do not fill your mind with melancholy thoughts on such a joyful occasion. Gayârâm's death because his rice had been finished. His purâna mîga (allotted life) was over, therefore he went away. Who could reverse the fate inscribed on his forehead? All sorrow therefore is useless. Besides, you have your Govinda. Delight yourself in him. One Govinda will be found equal to seven Gayâ's. Now, get up, mother! come with me; speak to those women who have come to rejoice with us. Come and look at the sweet face of Govinda's bride.' So saying, Badan took hold of his mother's hand, and joined a company of women who were making themselves merry.
CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SUGAR-CANE.

*These ways of planting Nature did ordain,*
For trees and shrubs, and all the sylva, rough.
Others there are by later experience found;
Some cut the shoots, and plant in furrow'd ground;
Some cover rooted strike in deeper soil;
Some eleven stakes, and (wonders to behold!)
Their sharpened ends in earth, their footing place;
And the dry poles produce a living race.

*The god's (Dryden's Translation).*

Like every substantial husbandman of the district of Vardhamâna, Badan had a sugar-cane plantation. When the paddy was gathered in, the sugar-cane was almost ready to be cut, but it is customary to allow the crop to remain in the field some time longer, in order that the juice may attain to consistency. The sugar-cane is therefore cut generally a month after the paddy harvest, that is to say, about the end of January or the beginning of February—at least, such is the custom in the village of Kanchanpur. As the sugar-cane is a valuable crop to the Bengal zayat, as its cultivation is attended with greater labour and pains than that of paddy, and as India has supplied the rest of the world, amongst others the Southern States of America, with the precious plant, we hope to be pardoned for saying a few words on the manner in which it is cultivated.

When in the previous year Badan had cut his sugar-cane, he had lopped off the upper parts of the
cane, and planted them in nurseries on the edge of the tank near his house, whence they were to be transplanted into the field, when the soil should be ready to receive them. Unlike the paddy-field, which requires only to be slightly scratched to ensure a plentiful harvest, the soil for the sugar-cane needs careful and repeated ploughing. As early as the beginning of March, the soil is turned up. The field is ploughed three or four times, and sometimes oftener. It is then manured with cow-dung, the earth of crumbling walls, and mustard oil-cake. After this, the field is again ploughed. The clods are then pulverised, and the field made smooth and level by drawing over every part of it, with the help of bullocks, a bamboo ladder, which serves the purpose of a harrow. The whole field is next covered with parallel ridges of heaped-up earth, between every two of which is dug a trench. In these trenches, the cuttings are planted at the distance of a cubit, with the fingers closed, from each other. At the time of planting, around each cutting is put a small quantity of pulverised oil-cake, as manure. As the cuttings are invariably planted long before the rains set in, they require to be kept wet by artificial irrigation from a neighbouring tank, whence water is brought by a sluice, and thrown into the sugar-cane-field by means of baskets. This operation is repeated every day for about a fortnight. Cow-dung and oil-cakes are again applied to the cuttings, and the earth round about them is turned up. Irrigation commences anew, and continues for four or five days, and when the water is absorbed by the soil, the earth of which the ridges consist is put round the cuttings. This may be considered as the first process-
Should the cuttings not take root and sprout, the process is repeated again and again, till the object is accomplished. When the plant rises about two feet from the ground, some of the useless leaves are torn off, and the rest tied round. Weeding also is carried on at this time; and should the plants become dry, they are again watered. As by this time Heaven sends rain in copious showers, the husbandman is relieved of the laborious and troublesome work of irrigation, and his attention is chiefly directed to weeding the garden, and to its general superintendence. Constant inspection is, however, necessary, as, not unfrequently, a peculiar species of insect attacks the cane, and makes the rayat’s labours abortive. Care is also taken that the plantation is not robbed and spoiled by that nocturnal thief, the jackal, an animal which seems to be particularly fond of chewing the cane, and of swallowing its sweet juice. Such, in brief, is the mode of cultivating sugar-cane in the village of Kanchanpur.

In the village three varieties of sugar-cane are produced—the Pure, the Kajule, and the Bombay. The last sort, which is blackish in colour, is by far the longest and the stoutest of the three, but much of it is not grown at Kanchanpur, partly because it requires a more moist soil than that of the village, which is rather high and dry, and partly because the peasants are of opinion that though a single cane of that species gives out more juice than two of the others, it contains less saccharine matter. The Kajule, the colour of which is deep purple, is believed to contain the largest amount of saccharine matter of the three varieties, but it so often cracks of itself, through excess of juices, and is so apt
to be attacked by worms and insects, that it considered not economical to grow it to any great amount. The *Puri*, therefore, which is white colour, tinged with a slight yellowishness, and which is about seven or eight feet in height, is grown largely, and, indeed, may be said to be almost exclusively cultivated in the village of Kanhaipuri.

Early one bright morning in the delightful month of February, Badan, Kalanāṁk, Govinda and his father-in-law Padma Pāl, and about a dozen other husbandmen, who were either neighbours or friends of Badan, were seen busy in the sugar-cane plantation and its immediate vicinity. Some were cutting the cane with the sickle, others were taking the dried leaves covering the cane, and cutting off the upper part of the stalk; and others still were carrying the canes thus cut and prepared to the *niksāhi*, or sugar-cane house, which is a temporary but erected at no great distance from the plantation, where the juice is pressed out of the cane and boiled down into molasses. This hut contains what is called a *bām*, or boiling-house, an immense furnace for boiling sugar-cane juice in large earthen vessels. It is often a mere thatch of straw supported by bamboo posts, but sometimes the boiling-house is constructed in the open air, where the spot is shaded with mango or other trees. Just outside the boiling-house is the press for squeezing the juice of the sugar-cane. It consists of two massive wooden cylinders, cut into notches all over, and furnished at both ends with wheels, or rather simple spokes, for the spokes are not surmounted by a felloe. The cylinders are placed so close as almost to touch each other; and it is through this interstice between
THE SUGAR-CANE

The cylinders that the canes are inserted and crushed, the juice falling into a large earthen receiver placed below. Two persons sitting opposite to each other insert the cane between the cylinders, which are kept in perpetual motion by four persons. As the cylinders are placed very close to each other, the friction produced is very great when the canes are inserted between them; strong men are therefore made to work at the spokes. Kālamānuk was the best sugar-mill turner in the whole village. There he was now, with his two long legs placed firmly on the opposite side of the trench, tugging away at the spokes with almost superhuman strength, now pressing his hips together when making a grand pull, and now hallooing his associates to excite them to get on briskly. Our hero, who had now developed into a strong, well-built Upa-kshatriya peasant, was also working at the spokes. Badan and Padma Pul were inserting the canes between the cylinders.

Nor is this an easy task; indeed, it is the most perilous of all, since it not unfrequently happens that the fingers get jammed between the cylinders. The juice, taken out of the receiver, is put into the boilers, beneath which a glowing fire is kept up by the firemen on opposite sides of the kiln, the fuel being chiefly the dried leaves of the sugar-cane itself. Near each boiler stands a peasant, whose duty it is to stir the boiling juice, and to skim it off by means of large wooden spoons or ladles.

It must not be supposed that the sugar-cane fields and press, which we have now described, were set up only for Badan’s purposes. It was the share of a joint-stock company composed of all the esbirdmen who grew sugar-cane living in the
northern and eastern divisions of Kānchānpur. The sugar-cane of each of these was crushed and turned into guḍ or molasses in succession. We sat turned into molasses, for Bengal husbandmen never manufacture sugar, that being the work of another caste, called the modaka, or the confectioner. Another sugar-cane house, with its attendant sugar-mill and press, was set up in the southern outskirts of the village for the benefit of the husbandmen of the southern and western divisions. I may state here that certain religious ceremonies are always gone through when Hindu rāyāts set up the boiling house. At the setting up of Badan’s press, his family priest, Rām Dhan Misra, consecrated it. Prayers were offered chiefly to two divinities—Lakshmi, the Indian Demeter; and Agni, the god of fire. The first was not so much thanked for past favours as prayed to for future ones; and the second was earnestly besought to preserve the sugar-cane house from fire, for it sometimes happens that through the negligence of the firemen the sugar-cane house becomes reduced to ashes.

We have said above that a great deal of friction is produced in the sugar-cane press when the canes are inserted between the cylinders. The consequence of this is that the press makes an unearthly noise. The noise is quite deafening in the neighbourhood of the machine, and can be heard at the distance of two or three miles. Day and night—for the operation goes on all night—for three or four weeks together are the inhabitants of Kānchānpur regaled with this delicious music—a music which can be compared only with the “jarring sound” produced by the opening of the gates of hell, which “on their
ages grated harsh thunder," and shook Erebus to
lowest bottom.

But though the village áuksáliá has this drawback, it has also its advantages. The paddy harvest-field is, as we have seen, a scene of rural joy, but the sugar-cane house is a scene of still greater joy. It is visited day by day by every little boy and girl in the village, each of whom receives one sweet cane as a present from the kind-hearted peasants. Every day loads of sugar-cane are given away to children and Brahmans; and the peasants give them away with cheerful hearts, believing that Mother Lakshmi will bless them the ensuing year with a more abundant crop; and the one of the niggardly and impious husbandman who sends away children and Brahmans empty-handed from the sugar-cane house is held in execration by the whole of the village community.

Not only is the cane given away, but quantities of the juice while boiling are frittered out to children, who come provided with vessels for the purpose; and at unfrequently brinjals (egg-fruit) and other vegetables are thrown into the boilers, and then taken out and eaten with infinite relish by the children, altitudes of whom are seen, at all hours of the day,uttering about in the precincts of the sugar-cane house, to the great detriment of the village school, which during those days has a thin attendance.
CHAPTER XXXIV.

ÁÔUKI BECOMES A VAISHNAVÀ.

No finer dish
Than broth of fish;
Nothing is sweeter
Than lap of spinster:
With joy all ye the name of Hari shout.
Nityánanda.

The reader has doubtless got some inkling of the religion of Badan and his family; but as religion forms a prominent part of the social and domestic life of Bengalis—the agricultural and working classes not excepted—we should be hardly excused if we did not speak of it at some length. The Hindu population of Bengal may be ranged under two classes, the Sáktas and the Vaishnavas: the worshippers of Sákti or the Divine Female Principle, and the worshippers of Vishnu, or rather of Krishna, for though the Hindus in general take the latter deity to be only a manifestation of the former, the Vaishnavas of Bengal regard him not as a part of God but as Púrna Brahma: that is, the full and complete divine essence itself in human shape. The Bengal Vaishnavas, however, are the followers of a Bengali reformer of the name of Chaitanya, whom they worship as a god, or, more strictly speaking, as an incarnation of Krishna. Images of Chaitanya, made of clay painted, and of the size of life, and those of his two chief associates, Nityánanda and
Adwaitána, are worshipped by them; and in the village of Káncanpur a life-size image of Chaitanya is adored, under the name of Syáma Sundar, by hundreds of the inhabitants. But the chief divinity of the Bengal Vaishnavas is Krishna, the cow-herd of Vrindávan near Mathurá (Muttra); and his mistress, Rádhá, the principal gopi (cow-herdess) amongst sixteen hundred women of the same occupation, receives equal adoration to himself. The sports and amours of Rádhá and Krishna form the subject of the Vaishnava’s daily meditation; and there is no Vaishnava who has the slightest pretensions to piety that does not repeat the name of Hari or Krishna at least one hundred and eight times on a bead-roll made of the stem of the sacred tulasi (basil) plant. This institution of the repetition of the name of Hari is called the sacrament of Harináma. It is observed by elderly men and women, especially widows. Alanga observed it punctually twice every day—once before her noon-day meal, and again after sunset. The words of this formula of devotion are as follows:—

Hare Krishna!
Hare Krishna!
Krishna, Krishna!
Hare, Hare!
Hare, Ráma!
Hare, Ráma!
Ráma, Ráma!
Hare, Hare!

Aduri also occasionally told her beads, but not so punctually as her mother-in-law.

The visiting of holy places is another part of Vaishnava devotion. The three holiest places of Vaishnava pilgrimage are the groves of Vrindávan
near Mathurā, where the divine neat-herd Krishna romped about when a lad with the milk-maids; the temple of Jagannátha at Puri in Orissa; and Dváraká in Gujaráth, once the residence of Krishna. But in the district of Vardhamána itself and its borders there are three places of some sanctity. These are Navadvípa, the residence of Chaitanya, Ambiká (Culna), where Nityánanda lived for some time; and Agradvípa, famous for the shrine of Gopínáth, the lord of the milk-maids.

We have seen that Alanga felt that her cup of earthly felicity had become nearly full at the marriage of Govinda. She had now nothing brighter to look to. She could now sing her Nunc dimittis and calmly devote the rest of her life to religion and to pilgrimage. She therefore made up her mind to visit first the holy places of the Vardhamána district, and afterwards at some convenient opportunity to set out on the distant and somewhat perilous pilgrimage to Jagannátha. Áduri expressed great desire to accompany her mother-in-law. She said that as a widow she had no earthly object to live for; it was therefore her intention to devote the remainder of her life to pilgrimage. Though Badan and Kálamánik doubted the sincerity of her professions, yet they did not think it proper to put any obstacles in the gratification of her religious wishes, they therefore complied with her request, and the rather as their mother would thus have a companion in her peregrinations. In the company of two other women of the village, who went on the same errand, Alanga and Áduri set out on pilgrimage. Their plan was first to go to Ambiká, next to visit Málati at Durgánagar which was not far from it, then to
go to Navadvipa, and last of all to Agradvipa, whence they resolved to return home direct. Our pilgrims, each of whom had a bundle containing one or two pieces of cloth, a quantity of rice, a small earthen pot of mustard oil, and one brass vessel, reached Ambiká in two days. They went to the house of the Gosvámis, bowed down before Syáma Sundara, worshipped the foot-print of Nityánanda under a tree, and bathed in the holy Bhágirathi. From Ambika to Durganaga was an easy journey of about eight miles. We need not say that Málati was delighted at her grandmother’s visit, and made the party as comfortable as she could. After stopping there a couple of days they went to Navadvipa, the birthplace of Bengal Vaishnavism. There was not much to see there, for they were told that the house in which Chaitanya lived was in the middle of the Bhágirathi, as the river had since changed its course and washed away a good part of the old town.

From Navadvipa (the new island) they proceeded to Agradvipa (the fore island), where the great festival of Mahotsava (literally, the great rejoicing) had already commenced. Vaishnavas had flocked thither from all parts of the country. Vairágis, Báuls, Nágas, Nešas, and Nešis, in their grotesque habiliments, were all there. The music of the khol or mridanga and of the karatála was heard day and night. They sang the praises of Gopinath in merry groups through the village. They danced with wild excitement.

Now pursuing, now retreating,  
Now in circling troops they meet;  
To brisk notes in cadence beating,  
Glance their many tinkling feet.
They shouted the names of Radha and Krishna till their throats became hoarse; they foamed at the mouth; they cut religious somersets; men and women danced together promiscuously, the latter excelling the former in the violence of their gestures; many mridangas and karatalas were broken through violence of striking; and many women had fits of devotional fainting. The excitement among the pilgrims—and their number was about fifty thousand—was immense. The joy of Alanga and Aduri knew no bounds. They seemed to be translated to Vaikuntha, the Paradise of Vaishnavas.

While Alanga, Aduri, and their two companions were one day—for the festival lasted several days—going round the parti-coloured groups of regular, that is, mendicant Vaishnavas, they were attracted to one particular group, where the music and the singing were more vociferous, and the dancing more violent than the rest. There was one actor on this scene to whom every eye was turned, partly on account of the violence of the music—if music that could be called, which was dissonance itself—which his karatala sent forth, and partly on account of the vehemence of his devotional dance. He was in a state of primitive nudity, save and except a small bit of rag, called kaupin; a red cone-shaped cap was on his head; and his neck was encircled with a three-fold bead roll. He was singing, dancing, and shouting at a tremendous rate; now falling to the ground, now jumping up, and now twisting his body in varied contortions, as if in convulsions; in a word, he was conducting himself in such a manner that anyone not acquainted with the manners of the Vaishnavas would think that the man had gone
"daft." But the madder a Vaishnava is, the holier he is deemed by the people. As he was going through all this buffoonery, to the edification, doubtless, of the spectators, his eyes met those of Áduri. Suddenly he fell down on the ground as if perfectly senseless, foaming at the mouth, his body trembling and moving like a fish hooked by an angler. His friends immediately gave out that he was possessed of dasá, that is to say, was under supernatural influence. When he lay thus stretched on the ground, Alanga and Áduri at once recognised him to be Prem-Bhakta Vairági, the same who often came to their house for alms, and who acted as their guru's legate on the occasion of Govinda's marriage. His companions lifted him up, and put a little water on his lips. Being still in a state of dasá, he was asked what he had seen. He said he had a sight of Gopináthji, who had revealed to him the interesting fact that there was one woman there standing amongst the group who was destined to be one of the most glorious of mendicant Vaishnavas. With a view to the identification of this favoured person, Gopináth had told him that the woman in question was a young widow, who had come to the festival in the company of three other women, and who was at that moment standing under a tree in the north-east corner of the area. All eyes were turned to the foot of the tree; and sure enough four women were standing there, one of whom, Áduri, was a young widow. The leader of the Vaishnava group went up to Áduri, acquainted her with the subject-matter of the revelation vouchsafed to Prem-Bhakta, congratulated her on her singular good fortune, and added that, under the circumstances, it was her
duty to take bhek, that is to put on the garb of a mendicant nun and to join the Vairāgi order. Alanga did not know what to make of the affair. The idea never occurred to her simple soul that any imposture was practised; and yet she felt it difficult to part with a friend whom she loved and who was a member of her household. Other Vaishnavas now came forward, and poured their oily eloquence into the willing ears of Āduri. After a few moments' hesitation she consented to take the bhek.

As religious bigotry allows of no delay in swallowing its victims, Āduri was there and then made to go through the ceremonies, and admitted into the order. Vairāgis, as men who are destitute of passion—for that is the meaning of the term—of course never marry; neither are female Vairāgis given in marriage, they being like the angels in heaven; yet a pious Vairāgi has a religious female companion, who is to him a sort of helpmeet, and an invaluable auxiliary in devotional exercises. For this holy purpose Āduri was entrusted to the care of Prem-Bhakta who was the instrument of her conversion.

Poor Alanga, though a sincere Vaishnavi, could not help shedding tears at the calamity which had befallen a member of her household. With a heavy heart she started the next morning with her two companions, on her homeward journey. She had scarcely reached the door of her house at Kānchanpur when she set up a loud cry lamenting the loss of Āduri. Sundari and Dhanamani rushed out on hearing Alanga’s cries, led her into the house, and, on hearing of the fate of Āduri, joined their lamentations to hers.
CHAPTER XXXV.

ALANGA GOES ON PILGRIMAGE.

Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken strange strondes,
To serve halwes couthe in sondry londes;
And, specially from everie schires ende
Of Bengal, to Jagannath they wende.

Prologue to Canterbury Tales.

"The Sethuyá was just here," said Alanga to Badan, as the latter returned from the fields; "he said I must be ready to start the day after to-morrow early in the morning. It is an auspicious day; and all the yatris of this village and of the neighbouring villages will start on the same day."

Badan said, "So you have made up your mind, mother, to go? I am very sad; Sri Kshetra is at a great distance; it will take you about four months to go and come back and to stay there. And the way is long and tedious. My chest is almost breaking to think of what may be in store for us."

So saying the old husbandman burst into tears like a child. Alanga, wiping his eyes with the skirt of her sádi, said,

"Bábá Badan, don't cry. I am going on religious duty, and not on pleasure. The gods will take care of me in the way; Jagannath will protect me. Don't be sad. And besides, you know whatever is written on my forehead will surely come to pass. Who can undo the writing of Vidhátá?"
At this moment Kālamānik and Govinda came in, and were not a little surprised to see Badan weeping. On being acquainted with the cause Kālamānik said, "Mother, if you go I will also go with you. If you be sick in the way, who will put water into your mouth? How can you go alone?"

"I am not going alone, Bābā," said Alanga; "you know six women of Kānchānpur are going; they will take care of me; and the Sethuyā will also take care of me."

"The Sethuyā has hundreds of people to take care of, and as for the six women of our village, they can hardly take care of themselves. Let me accompany you, mother."

"How can you come with me? If you come, who will till the fields? My son Badan is getting old and feeble, and Govinda is but a child; you, my Mānik, the treasure of seven kings, are the prop and stay of this house. If you come with me how will this family get on? No, child, you must not come with me. Mahā Prabhu will protect me."

Govinda, joining in the conversation, said, "But, grandma, what is the use of your going at all? you can worship Jagannath here in the house. Every man's mind is a temple of worship. I do not see the use of going to distant places to worship God. God can be worshipped in the mind."

"You have become a Pandita," replied Alanga, "you have got wisdom by conversing with Khonda Mahāsaya, and by reading the books the Vardhamāna Padre Saheb gave you. But I am an ignorant woman. I think there is great merit in going to Sri Kshetra."

"So there is," rejoined Govinda; "pilgrimage
is good for those who can afford it. But how can you, grandma, leave my mother alone in charge of this house; as for bow she is but an infant."

"I know that, Govinda; but I hardly do anything for the house; all the work is done by your mother and your wife. I only eat and sleep, that is all. You will not miss me. You have got a golden wife, Govinda. She works day and night. She is Lakshmi herself in flesh and blood; and because she is so active and energetic I am emboldened to go on pilgrimage. As for my safety, don't be anxious about it; Jagannath will protect me. Don't prevent me from going. My mind is made up, and won't be quiet. I have almost become mad for going."

Yes, indeed, it is a sort of religious madness which takes possession of old Hindu women, impelling them to go on distant pilgrimages, utterly regardless of the pains and troubles connected with the journey. The Sethuya, or the pilgrim-guide, had for many days past been visiting Alanga, describing to her the glories of the temples of Jagannath at Puri in Orissa, and expatiating on the ineffable merit of visiting those holy shrines. Alanga's imagination was set on fire. She made up her mind to go. In her dreams every night she saw the armless deity in all his glory. Nothing would dissuade her from going. The auspicious day scarcely broke, when the Sethuya, long before sunrise, came to the door of Badan's house, and shouted, "Jagannāthji ki jaya." "Victory to Jagannath." The members of the household had been up long before—as for Alanga, she had had no sleep through excitement. Alanga took up a small bundle of rice, clothes, and two brass vessels, tied a few rupees at one extremity of her
sādi, and hid it in her waist, and bade farewell to all those that were dear to her. She embraced and kissed Sundari and Dhanamani, and put her right hand on the heads of all and blessed them. They all gave vent to tears, Sundari and Dhanamani crying aloud, as if they were never to see Alanga again. Alanga, choked with tears, at last pronounced the words, "Sri Hari! Sri Hari!" and the Sethuya shouted out, "Jagannāthji ki jaya!" They both rushed out of the house, and Alanga did not look back, as that would have been an unfavourable omen.

It is superfluous to remark, that Alanga, like the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims that annually visit Jagannath, went on foot. The plan is to travel every day between twenty and thirty miles, and sometimes more, and stop at places called chatis or addās, that is inns, or huts, where are sold rice, dāl, salt, mustard oil, fried rice, treacle, and a few other necessaries of Bengali life. As hundreds of pilgrims may be stopping at the same inn the same night, there can be no room for them all to sleep under sheds; hence the great majority of pilgrims bivouack on the bare ground under the open sky, or at best under trees. It is easy to conceive that, under these circumstances, travelling all day and exposure at night generate disease, and numbers of yātrīs or pilgrims die before they reach the holy city. It is not our purpose to relate all the incidents connected with the pilgrimage of Alanga to Puri, but briefly to indicate the stages of her journey. The Sethuya, Alanga, and the six other women of Kānchānpur, went to Vardhamāna, and from that place to Medinipur (Midnapore), through Chandrakona and Khirpai. At Medinipur they met with hundreds—it would be
more correct to say thousands—who had come from all parts of Bengal, Behar, and the North-west, and who were on their way to the temple of the "Lord of the World." It was at Medinipur that Alanga’s troubles commenced. After a weary day’s travel of thirty miles or more, she had to assist in the evening at the cooking of the evening and the only meal, and then at night to sleep on the bare ground under the open sky. An hour or two before dawn the march again commenced, and did not end till near nightfall. Day after day did she pursue her wearisome journey, and night after night did she sleep on the bare ground. From Medinipur the pilgrims went to Nárayanagád, then Chhatrapál, then to Pátña Jalesvára, and then to Rájghát, where they bathed in the Suvarna rekhá, or the Golden Line. From Rájghát they marched on to Valesvára (Bala-sore), the many temples in the neighbourhood of which they visited; then going by Panchagád, they went to Bhadraka, near which they crossed the Vaitarani, the river of death, the Brahmani, and the Mahána dé. They then came to Kañaka (Cuttack), or the "Middle of the Mountains," for the spurs of the Vindhya Hills make their appearance there; and then passing through Gopináth Prasád, Balavánta, Sri Ráma Chandra Sásana, and Hari Krishnapur, they came to Puri, or the city, by way of pre-eminence.

As we have brought Alanga to Srikshetra (or the Holy Field), we think it proper to inform the reader why the ground is holy, and briefly to recite the legend of Jagannath. Once on a time there lived a pious king of the name of Indradyumna, who, after he had performed great religious austerities, was told by the god Vishnu to form an image of Jagannath.
and put in it the bones of the god Krishna, who had been killed by the chance arrow of a hunter, and whose bones had been put into a box by some person. On being asked as to who should be the architect of this image, the king was told that the image should be constructed by Visvakarma, the World-maker; so the king prayed to the World-maker, who agreed to make the image on the condition that, if he should be disturbed in his work, the image would be left incomplete. In one night the mighty World-maker built a magnificent temple on Niláchal, or the Blue Mountain—that is, Orissa; and then proceeded leisurely to construct the image of Jagannath, or the World-lord. But the pious king became impatient. Fifteen days had elapsed, and yet he had not heard of the completion of the image. In an evil hour he went to the spot to see what the World-maker was about. The architect, agreeably to the terms fixed on, immediately ceased from working, and the image was left without hands or legs. The king became very sad; but he was assured by heaven that the image, incomplete though it was, would become world-famous. The king invited all the gods to assist in the consecration and deification of the image. Brahma, the supreme god, himself officiated as hierophant on the occasion, and endowed it with the power of vision and a living soul; and the bones of Krishna were put into it. This is the image of Jagannath placed in the temple of Puri, called the Pagoda by Europeans; and it was to worship this legless and armless deity that Alanga, along with about two hundred thousand pilgrims, plodded on her weary way through hundreds of miles. What Alanga did at Puri must be described in the ensuing chapter.
CHAPTER XXXVI

THE CAR FESTIVAL.

All around, behind, before,
With frantic shout and deafening roar;
And the double, double peals of the drum are there,
And the startling burst of the trumpet's blare.
And the gong that seems, with its thunders dread,
To stun the living, and waken the dead.

Southey's Kohama.

Never had Alanga seen so many human beings crowded together in so small a space as at Puri. She had been to Agradvipa, and had seen thousands of devotees worshipping the “Lord of milk-maids;” but they were as a drop compared to the ocean of human heads which she saw in the Holy Field. There were pilgrims from all parts of India; from Bengal, from Behar, from the North-West, from the Central Provinces, from Madras, from Bombay, from the Deccan; devotees of every religious persuasion were there, especially Vaishnavas of all orders and habiliments. The utmost enthusiasm prevailed amongst the pilgrims. They spent their time in visiting all the temples in the neighbourhood, and especially in loitering about within the precincts of the great Pagoda, near which, within an enclosure of stone wall, there are no less than one hundred temples. The attractions of vice were not wanting. The number of courtesans and women of easy virtue was immense; and in the purlieus of the holy temple
itself dwelt women who were destitute of all sense of shame. To Alanga, however, who sincerely believed in the divinity of Jagannath, and was diligent in the discharge of every religious duty, the scene was one of high devotional enjoyment.

The worship of Jagannath is always associated with that of his brother Balaram, and of his sister Subhadra. The image of each is a rudely constructed and ill-shapen wooden bust, of about six feet in height. The image of Jagannath is painted white, that of Balaram black, and of Subhadra yellow. Jagannath has mere stumps of arms, while Subhadra is destitute even of those stumps. On the whole, the two divine brothers and their sister are the ugliest of all the deities in the Hindu Pantheon. But though the ugliest, they are the most luxuriously fed of all the gods and goddesses. At the time Alanga visited Puri, Jagannath had the largest establishment of any prince in India. It consisted of 3,000 families of servants and dependants, of whom 400 families were cooks. The deity's daily bill of fare was as follows:—

"220 pounds of rice, 97 pounds of kalai (pulse), 24 pounds of mug (another sort of pulse), 188 pounds of clarified butter, made from buffalo's milk, 80 pounds of molasses, 32 pounds of vegetables, 10 pounds of sour milk, 2 ½ pounds of spices, 2 pounds of sandal-wood, some "amphor", and 20 pounds of salt." During high festivals, the 400 families of cooks, of whom we have spoken, are all engaged in preparing food for the pilgrims, who buy cooked food; and it is believed that within the court of the temple itself food for about 100,000 pilgrims is daily cooked and sold. No Hindu ever buys cooked food in any place, but the Holy Field is an exception to the rule.
Boiled rice in large quantities is bought by the pilgrims, is dried and taken to their respective homes, under the name of maháprasád; and in all parts of India, but chiefly in Bengal, one grain of this dried holy rice is eaten every day by every devout Vaishnavas, male or female, before ordinary food is tasted.

The first great ceremony which Alanga witnessed at Puri was the Snán Yátra, or the Bathing Festival. The image of Jagannath was brought out from the temple in great state by the Pándás, or priests, and placed in an open terrace, amid the deafening shouts of "Jaya Jagannáth! Jaya Jagannáth!" "Victory to Jagannath! Victory to Jagannath!" raised by myriads of spectators. Holy texts were then chanted, and water was poured on the head of the "Lord of the World;" the deity, thus bathed, was wiped, and presented with offerings by innumerable votaries; and was taken back to his abode.

The other festival, the greatest of all the festivals of Jagannath, which Alanga saw, was the Ratha Yátra, or the Car Festival. On the appointed day—and it usually takes place in June or July—the three idols of Jagannáth, Balaráma, and Subhadrá, were brought, or rather dragged—for they are actually pulled by means of cords fastened round the necks of the images—from their thrones in the temple, and taken out at the Sinha-dváral, or the Lion Gate. When the deities made their appearance at the gate, shouts of "Jaya Jagannáth! Jaya Jagannáth!" rent the air. The images were then dragged in the same irreverent manner as before, by means of ropes, up an inclined plane, into the rathas, or cars. The cars are huge vehicles, five stories high, with a number of wheels, turrets, and flags. The car of Jagannath
is 43½ feet high, having 16 wheels, of 6½ feet in diameter, and a platform 34½ feet square; the car of Balaram is 41 feet high, with 14 wheels; and that of Subhadrā, 40 feet high, with also 14 wheels. After the stumps of the idols had been put in their places on the cars, hands, feet, and ears (all made of gold), were supplied to them; and orders to drag the cars were issued. It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm of the people at the first movement of the cars. From myriads of throats issued the shouts of "Jaya Jagannāth! Jaya Jagannāth!" "Hari bol! Hari bol!" accompanied by the harsh dissonance of hundreds of so-called musical instruments. To touch the holy ropes, or hawsers, by which the sacred vehicles were pulled, is reckoned an act of high merit; hence the rush towards the cars is always great. In former days, men and women used voluntarily to fling themselves under the wheels of the ponderous chariots, and were crushed to death. But, thanks to the humanity of the British Government, that murderous practice has been stopped. The gods remained eight days in their cars, receiving the adorations and offerings of their devotees. On the ninth day they returned to their temples. Soon after their return, the two gods and their sister were put to sleep, and as their sleep extends generally from about the middle of July to the middle of October—a shorter siesta, by the way than that enjoyed by the earthly divinities of the Calcutta Government House, on the sublime heights of the Indian Olympus—the pilgrims commenced returning to their homes.

It is when the pilgrims return from the Holy Field that the horrors of pilgrimage appear in their full
magnitude. Owing to constant exposure day and night, to the heat of the sun, to the rains pouring every now and then in copious showers, and to night dews—for most of the pilgrims sleep in the open air for want of accommodation in the inns; owing to the immense mass of human beings crowded into a small space; owing to the badness and insufficiency of food—for most of the pilgrims spend nearly all their means of subsistence before they set their face homewards; owing to imperfect sanitary arrangements in the sacred city and its environs; owing to these and other causes, no inconsiderable a proportion of the pilgrims fall victims to fever, to dysentery, and to cholera. The tract of country in the immediate vicinity of Puri becomes a vast Golgotha. Dead bodies are met with everywhere. The little river which flows near it is often covered with corpses. The great road from Puri towards Kataka (Cuttack) may be traced, by funeral piles on which dead bodies have been burnt, or by bones left by jackals or vultures; while in the inns on the roadside may be heard every hour of the day and of the night the groans of dying men. On the pilgrim road to Puri, if anywhere, may be witnessed the shocking scene described by the poet:—

He saw the lean dogs
Gorging and growling o'er carcase and limb;
They were too busy to bark at him
From a pilgrim's skull they had stript the flesh,
As ye peel the fig when the fruit is fresh;
And their white trunks crunched o'er their white skull
As it slipt through their jaws when their edge grew dull;
As they lazily mumbled the bones of the dead,
When they scarce could stir from the place where they fed;
So well had they broken a lingering fast
With those who had fallen for that repast
Poor Alanga left Puri with the seeds of disease sown in her system. On the second day after her arrival at nightfall at an inn, she discovered all the symptoms of malignant cholera. The six women of Kanchanpur who had accompanied her did as much for her as they could under the circumstances; in other words, they did nothing, for they could do nothing. They did not succeed in getting shelter for her in a hut. She was laid down under a tree all night. There was no doctor, no medicine. The six women resolved next morning to leave Alanga to the tender mercies of dogs and vultures. Early in the day, however, Prem Bhakta Vairagi and Aduri, who had come on pilgrimage, and who were returning home, accidentally came to the tree under which Alanga was lying. The Vairagi, who pretended to have some knowledge of medicine, made her swallow some drugs. But in vain. Alanga died the same afternoon, after an illness of less than twenty-four hours. No firewood could be procured for the purpose of cremation, and the rest may be imagined. Such was the end of Alanga, a woman estimable both for her intelligence, considering her station in life, and for her character.
CHAPTER XXXVII.

BENGAL FEVER AND THE VILLAGE LEECH.

Learned he was in medicinal lore,
For by his side a pouch he wore,
Replete with strange hermetic powder,
That wounds nine miles point-blank would solder;
By skilful chymist, with great cost,
Extracted from a rotten post.

Hudibras.

"I hear your father is sick, sángát," said Nanda to Govinda, one morning, as the latter was sitting on his haunches on the threshold of the door of his house and enjoying his smoke.

"Yes, last evening when he returned from the fields he was in a strong fever. And all night the fever was upon him and has not yet left him."

"You should take care, as the fever this season is of a very bad type; are you thinking of calling a Voidya?"

"What’s the use just now? I hope the fever is of a slight character; it may go off by fasting one or two days."

This, in truth, is almost the universal practice in the villages. In the first instance, in case of fever, no medicines are taken, but the patient is made to abstain from all food; and, as to drink, a few drops of water are given at long intervals, and only when the sick man loudly calls for drink. Two days had already passed, and there was no remission of the fever, indeed it was every day increasing in strength, and the patient had already become very
weak. Kālamānīk and Govinda both felt that the case was becoming serious, and that it was high time to call in the aid of a doctor. By the advice of neighbours they delayed one day longer, as it was imagined that if the fever were of a light kind it would go off after three days—the three being a magical number among Bengalis—but if it did not leave the patient on the morning of the fourth day, it would be necessary to call a Kavitāj. The morning of the fourth day dawned, and Badan was worse. Kālamānīk therefore at once went to call a doctor.

There were several families of the Voidyā or medical caste at Kānchānpur, the male members of which have in succession been practising medicine from time out of mind. They were all called Kavitājēs, or lords of poets, though none of them ever perpetrated poetry in their lives. The most eminent physician in the village was Mṛitunjāya, or the Conqueror of Death, though to speak the truth, he seldom cured any serious case which he took in hand. Bengali physicians have been facetiously divided into "killers of ten," "killers of hundreds," and "killers of thousands;" and it is to this last class of heroes that Mṛitunjāya belonged. It might have been truly said of him:—

Nor engine, nor device polemic
Disease, nor doctor epidemic,
Tho' stored with deleterious medicines,
Which whosoever took is dead since,
Ever sent so vast a colony
To both the under worlds as he.

This trifling circumstance, however, did not detract from his reputation as a first-rate physician; for it
is argued that a physician can only apply proper remedies; he cannot annul the decrees of fate; and if it is written on the forehead of a patient that he should die of a certain disease, no doctor in the world—not Dhanvantari himself—could cure him. That Mritunjaya had a collection of the best and rarest medicines was a fact admitted by every one in the village. He had the ingredients of several excellent aperients composed of five, ten, and eighteen different sorts of vegetables. Metallic medicines of various kinds, especially a famous one made of gold dust; rasásindhu of the first quality; poisons of serpents of various species of the cobra; and oils of an infinite variety. But the richness of his laboratory was his least merit. For many miles round no Kaviraj had such perfect Dhátujnan, or knowledge of the pulse, as Mritunjaya; and this must be acknowledged to be perhaps the most difficult part of the practice of medicine. Nor was he less profound in his knowledge of the diagnosis of disease. It is well known that he never made any mistake in ascertaining the nature of the disease, though it must be acknowledged that he was seldom successful in grappling with it. The wonderful insight which he had acquired into the nature of diseases was chiefly owing to a diligent study of those renowned medical treatises in Sanskrit which were written several centuries ago, and which showed such a miraculous knowledge of both diseases and their remedies, that he believed them, along with all his brethren of the craft in Bengal, to have been composed by divine inspiration—indeed, to have been written by the finger of Mahádeva himself. For modern medicine, and especially European médecine,
he had a perfect contempt: and it was one of his constant sayings that European doctors did not at all understand the treatment of Indian fever. He admitted the superiority of English to native doctors in surgery, but then it was his opinion that surgery formed no part of the functions of a medical man, as surgical operations belonged, properly speaking, to the province of the barber.

In our accomplished physician there was only one drawback, and that was that he was an inveterate opium eater. He began with swallowing every day a dose of the size of a pea, but the modicum increased gradually, till at last he used every day to gulp down a quantity sufficient to kill a horse. Owing to this habit he was seldom in a perfectly wakeful state; whenever he sat for five minutes his eyes were almost always half-closed. As his practice was not large, and as a doctor’s fee is very little in the villages—generally a rupee for curing a patient, who may require attendance every day for a fortnight or upwards, and in case of non-recovery nothing at all—he was often in pecuniary straits. But whether he had his daily Dát and bhát or not, the supply of his daily modicum of opium was absolutely necessary, and sometimes when the exact hour had passed away without his swallowing that precious drug, he became so sick as to seem almost to be in a dying state. Such was the redoubtable physician who now accompanied Kálamánik.

On feeling Badan’s pulse Mritunjaya found him in strong fever, and therefore prescribed one of those aperient mixtures or pánchans, which goes by the name of Dasmóla, so called from its being a composition of the roots of ten different vegetables; but
before the mixture could be prepared he made him swallow a couple of pills—a large number of which he always carried about with him in his pouch—mixed with the juice of a pán leaf. The Dasmúla had no effect; and there was no remission of the fever. Various other mixtures and pills were tried successively, but with little effect. Rasásindhu was applied, but with the like result. Badan was evidently in high fever. The members of his family were alarmed, and Rámdhan Misra, the family priest, was requested to come to the house, and offer every day to the gods one thousand leaves of the sacred tulasi; and various forms of prayers called Swastyayanas were offered, with a view to averting the displeasure of the gods and the recovery of the patient. Vegetable and serpent poisons were next tried by the Conqueror of Death, but no signs of victory were forthcoming. As a last resource the patient was made to swallow a deadly poison, which passed under the name of the hukáwálár gundo, or the powder of the Hubble-bubble seller, so called from its having been invented by a dealer in hookahs of the town of Vardhamána. All these poisons, instead of contributing to Badan’s recovery, only made him worse. He became delirious. It was evident he was fast sinking, and there was not the remotest chance of his recovery. In order to prevent the spirit from departing from the body in a room, Badan was taken down one evening from his bed-room to the open yard, where shortly he breathed his last, amid the loud cries and lamentations of all the members of the household. That very night the corpse was taken to a tank called Náráyan Síl, on the embankment of which it was burnt, as it is considered inauspicious to keep the corpse for a long time in the house.
CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE SITUATION.

They perished—the blithe days of boyhood had perished—
And all the gladness and all the peace I knew!
Now have I but their memory, fondly cherished—
God, may I never, never lose that too.

Longfellow

The morning of life, like the prime of day, is unquestionably the pleasantest and happiest period of a man's existence. Devoid of all care and anxiety, having no experience of the asperities of life and the roughness of the world, the thoughtless youth eats and drinks, and takes his pleasure and rejoices in everything about him.

Govinda had hitherto lived a life of ease and quietude. It is true he had none of the elegant comforts of polished life; it is true he laboured every day in the field, either at the plough, at the barn, or the field; it is true he dined off only boiled rice and pulse, a vegetable or two, and some miserable looking fish, and washed down that food not with wine, but with simple rain water; yet he felt himself as comfortable and happy as the proudest English nobleman who rolls in wealth and magnificence, and to furnish whose table with delicacies, earth, ocean, and air are laid under contribution. What though Govinda ate only Punya Sāk (Bassella lucida) along with his coarse rice, and slept on a palm-leaf mat spread on a mud floor, his stomach was not
the less filled, neither was his repose the more disturbed on that account. Govinda's usual article of clothing, it is true, consisted of a single dhuti wrapped round his waist, and dangling down perhaps a little below his knees, while both the upper and lower regions of his frame remained in a state of primeval nudity; yet who shall tell me that the man who is covered in kinkob and gold brocade is, on account of that circumstance, happier than he. As a peasant youth he spent most part of his time under the canopy of Heaven, inhaling the fragrant breeze of the fields, and holding communion, such as it was, with the beautiful, if somewhat uniform, scenery of his native land; and though education was wanting to enable him fully to profit from his daily contact with external nature, yet there was nothing in paddy-fields and mango-groves and hedge-rows, as in towns and cities, to corrupt his heart and to brutalise his nature.

In most countries marriage brings in its train all sorts of cares and anxieties. It is not so in Bengal. Govinda got married, and even begat children, but he took no thought for the support of his wife and his children. It was Badan's business to provide for his daughter-in-law and his grandchildren. The family treasure, such as it was, was in the hands of Badan. He kept in his own possession all the money obtained by selling paddy and molasses, and the small sums he realised every month by selling milk and some of the products of his fields, like pulse, brinjal, palval, and other vegetables. He paid rent at fixed periods to the zamindár, or landlord, for the ground on which his house stood, and for the fields which he cultivated. He borrowed
money from the mahájan, or the money-lender, when funds were a minus quantity; and though he consulted sometimes with his son, the task of making both ends meet never fell on the shoulders of Govinda during the lifetime of his father.

Next to Badar, Alanga had had the largest share of care and anxiety in the management of the family; indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that Badan did nothing without consulting his mother, who was endued with no little amount of common sense. Sundari, though the wife of the master of the house, had never been its mistress. That post was always filled by Alanga, without, however, the slightest jealousy on Sundari’s part; indeed, Sundari often expressed her thankfulness for the privilege of being under the guidance of so wise and so affectionate a mother-in-law.

But all this now underwent a change. Badan has been gathered to his fathers, and Alanga has fallen a victim to the “Moloch of the East.” According to Hindu manners and customs, it was Kálamánik’s business to take Badan’s place in the household; but though he was a brave fellow, and the sturdiest ploughman in all Kánchanpur, his defective intelligence incapacitated him for the task. Govinda therefore became the master of the house, and his mother Sundari the gríhini or mistress. Hitherto Govinda had lived without anxiety. The colour and complexion of his life underwent a change immediately on the death of his father. How to support the family entrusted to his care became now the problem of his life.

At such a time it may not be deemed unseasonable briefly to glance at the situation in which
Govinda now found himself. There has been no change in his homestead. There is the same big hut, with its two compartments, one serving as a dormitory, and the other as a refectory, or rather store-room; there is the hut, in the verandah of which is the homely pedal; there is the third hut, which now serves the double purpose of a kitchen and a sleeping-room for Kālamānik; and there also stands the cow-house as before. It is unnecessary to remark that death had made havoc of the family. Gayārām had been bitten to death by a serpent; Badan had been carried off by fever; and Alanga had died on the “holy field” of Orissa. Mālati was in her husband’s house at Durgānagar, and Āduri, having become a mendicant, was wandering about the country in the company of her pious lover Prem Bhakta. There remained now our hero, his mother Sundari, his wife Dhanamani, and his uncle Kālamānik, who was still living in single blessedness.

The fields which Govinda cultivated were precisely those which his father had tilled; there was neither increase nor diminution in the number of bīghas. Govinda, however, commenced life with one serious drawback. His father had bequeathed to him the legacy of a small debt, which had been considerably increased by Govinda having had to celebrate in succession the funeral ceremonies of his father and grandmother. What made the burden of the debt galling was that it was contracted at a heavy rate of interest, namely, two pice a rupee per mensem, that is, thirty-seven and a half per cent. per annum, though the rate, as it was the usual one, was not regarded as extravagant by any mahājan or money-lender.
CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE ZAMINDÁR OF KÁNCHANPUR.

Our laird gets in his racked rents,
His coals, his kain, an’ a’ his stents;
He rises when he likes himself;
His flunkies answer at the bell

The Two Dogs.

One morning as Govinda was sitting at the door of his house, smoking and engaged in thought, he was accosted by a person who had a thick bamboo club in one hand and a bit of paper in the other. The person who came up to Govinda was of stalwart size, being six feet in height, with a fine pair of moustaches which joined the whiskers descending from the temples, and a thick beard brushed upwards. It was evident from his dress and features that he was not a Bengali, but a native of the North-Western Provinces. Hanumán Singha, for that was the name of the person who accosted Govinda, was one of the officers, or nagodis, of the zamindár of Kánch-anpur, whose business was to bring them over to the gomastá, who received rent and gave receipts.

"And what is that in your hand, Hanumán Sing?" asked Govinda.

"In this paper is put down your share of the máthot which is being levied from every ráiyat on account of the approaching marriage of the son of the zamindár ‘u February next."

"Máthot! dear me! how can I pay máthot, when
I am in arrears to the zamindár for rent, and largely in debt to other parties, chiefly on account of the funeral obsequies of my father and grandmother."

"It is not much you will have to pay; and besides it is only once in a way, as the Raya Chaudhuri's son is not going every now and then to get married. You, along with other raiyats, are to pay only two annas for every rupee of rent you give to the Tulukdár. The amount of your rent is forty rupees per annum, and surely it is not too much for you to give five rupees."

"My dear sir, I am not in a position now to give any máthot or abwab. It is all very well for persons well-to-do to pay their cesses. But surely the zamindár ought not reasonably to expect me to pay anything of the sort, since now I am in great distress. You speak of five tákás not being too much, I cannot give five cowries."

"But you must give. It is the order of your zamindár. Any how, you must produce the five rupees either by begging, or borrowing, or mortgaging the ornaments of your wife, or selling your brass vessels."

"You go and tell the gomastá that I am unable to pay."

"What a fine fellow you are! You have become wiser than your father, who regularly paid every máthot demanded by his landlord. Come now, and get me the five rupees."

"Am I joking with you, Hanumán Sing? I have no money in the house. If you make a diligent search through the house you will not find even five payasás. Go and tell the zamindár when I have means I'll pay; at present I can't pay."

"Well, then, you yourself come and tell the zamindár..."
dár. And if you don’t come willingly, I have orders to take you by force.”

Govinda, perceiving that resistance was hopeless, agreed to go. He put away the hookah, took his gāmchhā, put it on his left shoulder, and went with Hanumán Singha.

The house of the zamindár was the largest and best building in the village. Its entrance faced the south, like most houses in this part of Bengal, as the object is to avoid the sharp, cold, north wind in winter, and to get the benefit as much as possible of the delicious south wind which blows during summer. The outer gate of the mansion was built of solid masonry, with a colossal door of sáł wood, studded with huge nails, surmounted with the figure, in stucco and plaster, of a lion. As you go within through the gate, you see before you a courtyard of about sixty feet square, on the north of which is a large hall, and on the east and west suites of small rooms, extending from the sides of the hall, and meeting the long and high wall in the middle of which is the gate. This part of the house, including the courtyard, the hall, and the suites of rooms on the sides, is called Káchhári bāḍi (Cutcherry-house), where the zamindár holds his court, and transacts all affairs regarding his zamindári. The hall is covered with satrañajas, or Indian carpets, in the middle of which sits the zamindár, propped up by pillows on all sides; the divāna, the gomastá, and other officials squatting at distances varying according to their rank. Beyond this hall, and further to the north, is another courtyard of equal area with the first, in front of which is a spacious hall, called the dálán, supported by arches, and on the two sides of which
are covered verandas, two stories high, consisting of several small rooms. This part of the house is called the Bāhir-bādī (outer-house), or the Dālān-bādī. The Dālān, properly so called, is used only on great religious festivals; the images are placed there, and all sorts of dramatic and pantomimic exhibitions are made in the open courtyard below, which on such occasions is covered with a large cloth canopy, called chandrātapa or moonshade. The hall of the Kāch-chāri-bādī opens into the courtyard of the Dālān-bādī; but the regular entrance into the latter is by a lane on the left of the hall. Beyond the Dālān-bādī is a third courtyard of exactly the same area with that of the other two, which is built round on all sides with covered verandas similar to those in the Dālān-bādī, two stories high, containing a large number of small rooms, with very few windows. This part of the house is called the antahpura, or the andar-mahal, or the zenana, properly so called. There are the women’s apartments, visited only by the light of the sun.

Govinda passed through the lion-gate of this huge pile of brick and mortar, walked on to the door of the hall, and putting his sheet round his neck, made obeisance to the zamindār, who was leaning on one of those bolsters called tākiās, but which looked more like a huge bale of cotton than a pillow. The zamindār was a large-built man, taller than ordinary Bengalis, and proportionately corpulent. He was sitting like a lion couchant. His eyes first attracted the notice of every one that approached him. Bright, large, and rolling, they seemed to be sending forth every moment flashes of lightning rage; and the sturdiest peasant of Kānchanchpur has
confessed that there is no standing the fire of those
two dreadful batteries. His voice was singularly
powerful, of immense volume, and sounded, when
he was in a tempest of rage, like the artillery of
heaven. The silver streaks in his hair showed
that he was between forty and fifty years of age.
Jayachánd Ráya Chauduri (for such was the name
of the zamindár of Kánchanpur) was, strictly speak-
ing, not a zamindár, but a middle man, for he only
held a Pattanitáluk under his Highness the Mahárájá
of Vardhamána; but though he was only a Pattanidár,
he was usually called the zamindár of Kánchanpur
and of scores of other villages lying round about.
He paid 2,000 rupees a year to the Mahárájá for the
village of Kánchanpur: but it was generally be-
lieved that he himself realised in rents about three
times that amount. For the whole of his zamindári,
or rather pattani, he gave eighty thousand rupees
to the Raja, but he himself has admitted that after
paying the Sadar Jamá, his own net profit amounted
to the round sum of two lakhs, or £20,000 a year.
Such immense profit could only be obtained by a
system of rack renting, of illegal extortion, and of
cruel oppression; and it must be admitted that
Jaya Chánd belonged to a class of zamindárs who
were the greatest curses to their country. Not having
had the benefit of an English education, unacquainted
with Sanskrit, and possessing only a smattering of
his mother tongue, he was an ignorant man; and
the natural selfishness of his character made that
ignorance dangerous to those husbandmen who had
the misfortune of being his tenants. Unscrupulous
in his character, he did not hesitate to have recourse
to any means, however illegal or dishonourable, to
screw out of his ráiyats as much money as he could. Of the Haptam and the Pancham he often took advantage; and many were the ráiyats who were ruined by his oppression. By forgery, by chicanery, by all sorts of fraud—for Jaya Chánd stuck at nothing—he deprived many a poor man of his lákhraí, and though by religion a Hindu, he did not hesitate to rob many a poor Bráhmana of his Brahmatra. He was the object of universal dread. His name was never pronounced by his ráiyats except with execrations; and he was so much feared that it is said that at his name the tiger and the cow drank water at the same gháf. Such was the man in whose presence Govinda now stood with folded hands, and with his sheet round his neck.

"Who is there?" asked Jaya Chánd Ráya Chaudhuri, of his divána.

"He is Govinda Sámanta, the son of Badan," answered the divána.

"He is the son of a worthy father. What does he want?"

Hanumán Sing, advancing in front, said, "Maháráj! He refuses to pay the máthot for the marriage of your worship's son. I have therefore brought him before Khodáwand."

"Refuses to pay máthot! Is there any ráiyat of mine who dare refuse to pay any máthot I choose to impose? Did you not say, he is the son of Badan Sámanta? Badan was one of the best and most obedient of my ráiyats. Is this fellow his own son? Who has put such high notions into his head?"

The divána now whispered to his master that he had heard Govinda had as a boy attended the same schoolmaster's páthsálá for some years. The
samindár, darting a fierce glance on Govinda, said, "So you have become a Pandita, and your eyes have got opened, therefore you refuse to pay the máthot. I must forbid Ráma Rúpa to teach any peasants' sons; if he persists in doing it, I must break his other leg, fool that he is."

Govinda said in a faint voice, "O, Incarnation of Justice! I have not refused to pay. I dare not refuse. I only said I am unable to pay at present. On account of the funeral ceremonies of my father and grandmother, I have got largely into debt, and my rent will be again shortly due. I will pay the máthot afterwards, when I am able."

"Now, hold your tongue. This is my order. Within three days you must pay the máthot. If you fail to pay within that time, you shall be brought here with your hands tied. Remember that. Divána, let the fellow go."

I beg the reader not to run away with the idea that all zamindárs of Bengal are like Jaya Chánd Ráya Chaudhuri, of Káñchanpur. Amongst landholders, as amongst every class of men, there are black sheep as well as white. Before this story is wound up I hope to present to the reader the picture of a just, humane, and philanthropic zamindár—the father of his people; but the lines of our hero had fallen on unpleasant places, and it was his fate—so Govinda expressed himself—to have his homestead in the zamindári of a man who was a Bengal tiger in human shape.
CHAPTER XL.

POLITICS AT THE SMITHY.

Low lies that house where tobacco inspired,
Where grey-beard mirth, and smiling toil retired,
Where village statesmen talk'd with looks profound,
And news much older than their weed went round.

The Deserted Village.

It is evening. The sun has long ago gone in his fiery car behind Mount Sumeru; the cows have returned from the fields, and have been shut up in their house; the birds have slunk into their nests; the women of Kāñchanpur have “shown the lamp” in all the rooms of their houses, to scare away ghosts and other evil spirits which might lurk in them; and most of the peasantry, after the day’s toil, are either smoking in their huts or making preparations for their supper. Kaveria, however, and his son Nanda, are busy as in the day; for their toil knows no intermission except in the dead of night. It is true that the people who frequented the smithy during the day for little jobs are no longer there, but their place has been taken up by friends who have come to enjoy an evening chat. But, friends or no friends, the father and son are never unmindful of their own business. Vulcan senior and junior have just taken out of the forge a large piece of iron, glowing and red-hot, have put it on the anvil, and are belabouring it with their hammers and scattering about particles of incandescent matter. *Swish! swish! swish!* go the paternal and the filial
hammers, till the sound becomes changed, after the
iron had cooled and been dipped in water, into dhip-
dhap! dhip-dhap! dhip-dhap! While Kuvera and
his son were at this exciting work, four or five people
were sitting on a mat in the room. There was Kapila,
the carpenter; Madan, the grocer; Chatura, the barber;
Rasamaya, the confectioner; and Bokarám, the weaver.
After the hammering had stopped and the piece of
iron had been again put into the forge, Kapila said to
Nanda—"Have you heard that Govinda was taken
this morning before the jamidár" [Hindu Bengali
peasants always call the landholder jamidár, and not
samindár], "and warned that if he did not pay the
máthots within three days, he would be handcuffed and
taken before the jamidár?"

"Yes, ságát told me on his return from the
jamidár's house. It is a great shame that poor
people should be oppressed in this way. I do not
think, however, that ságát should yield in this
matter. What have we to do with the marriage of
the son of the jamidár? That is an affair of his
own. Why should we pay its expenses?"

"But is it prudent not to pay? The jamidár is
a rich man; he has a band of láthiáls [club-men]
under him. How can a poor man, like bandhu, cope
with him."

Nanda, greatly excited, took hold of his hammer
and said, "I wish I could give a blow of this on
the jamidár's fat belly and send him to the house
of Yama [the king of death]. What have we to do
with his son's marriage? What have we to do with
máthots or abwabs? We will only pay the rent
fixed by the Kománi Báiádúr [The East India
Company]." Chatura, the barber, giving a sarcastic
smile, said—"Well done, Nanda! You are a great hero! You show your heroism in the corner of your hut. You are a true 'palm-leaf Sepoy'—a very cheap sort of a hero! But here comes Govinda."

Govinda. "Sāngāt! You are very indiscreet. Don't you know that the jamidār's spies are all about? If what you said just now were reported to him by an enemy, it would go hard with you. Don't speak so loud, for aught I know somebody may be listening from behind the wall."

Nanda. "I don't care if it is reported to the jamidār. It is impossible to bear all this oppression. His injustice knows no bounds. Is there no God in the heavens? All the ráiyāts have got their bones fried through oppression. The Brāhmanas are cursing him loud, taking the sacred paita in their hands, and looking up towards the sun. It is time we all made a dharmaghaṭ and refused to pay the iniquitous máthot. What say you, sāngāt?"

Govinda. "What you say, sāngāt, is all true. It is no doubt a terrible oppression. But what can we do? He is rich and powerful, and we are poor people. How can we fight with him?"

Nanda. "Then I suppose you mean to pay the máthot?"

Govinda. "I have no choice in the matter. If I refuse to pay, he will ill-treat me, perhaps imprison me, and possibly set my house on fire; and it will be impossible to get justice done."

Nanda. "I say, is there no one above? Will He not punish the wicked jamidār?"

Govinda. "I believe the gods punish wicked men. But we do not see that in this life. Perhaps
in his next birth he may be punished. But I see no hope of his being punished in this life."

Kapila. "Friend, you are quite right. There is no use opposing the jamidár. You should anyhow pay down the máthot. You cannot prevail against the mighty."

Madan. "No one is more against the iniquitous máthot than I am. The jamidár has no right to impose this cess on us. But how can we successfully fight against him? Therefore my opinion is that we should quietly pay the cess."

Nanda. "But why not make a dharmaghat?"

Govinda. "That is easily said; but with whom will you make dharmaghat? Will all the people of the village agree with us? Don’t you know that fifteen annas (fifteen sixteenths), of the people through fear of the jamidár will not join us, if we refuse to pay? And of what use will a dharmaghat of half-a-dozen persons be? You are very bold, sángat, but you want discretion."

Bokárám. "I don’t understand about dharmaghat or farmaghat. I know this, that, if we don’t pay the máthot, we shall be ruined. Besides, it is useless fighting against fate. It is his fate to be a jamidár, and it is our fate to be his ráiyats; we must, therefore, submit to his exactions, whether just or unjust."

Nanda. "Well said! you, Bokárám, are a true hero. Sábásh! sábásh!"

Bokárám. "You need not ridicule me. I do not see any difference between you and me. In talk, you are as big as a mountain, but in action, you are like a mustard-seed. I know your father will at last pay the máthot. Then of what use is this boasting?"
Nanda. "If my father pays the máthot, it will be without my consent; and, as he is the head of his family, he can certainly do whatever he likes; but his paying or not paying will not alter my views. But, here comes uncle Mánik, I am much mistaken if he consents to Govinda's paying the máthot. What say you, uncle Mánik?"

Kálamánik. "What about, Nanda? don't bother me with questions just now. Let me first take a whiff."

Govinda was smoking at the moment Kálamánik entered the room, and he immediately put the hookah into his uncle's hands. Amongst the higher and middle classes, it would be deemed bad manners for a young man to smoke in the presence of his father's brother, but it is not considered so amongst the labouring classes, and chiefly for this reason, that, as they always work together in the field, where there can be no privacy, and, as tobacco is the only refreshment they enjoy, they are obliged to smoke in the presence of their superiors.

Kálamánik gave three or four hard pulls with his mouth at the hookah—indeed, the pulls were so hard that the kulika blazed up—and then turning towards Nanda, enquired on what subject he wished to have his opinion.

Nanda. "What other subject can it be, uncle Mánik, except the all engrossing one, of the máthot? I wish to know whether you are going to pay the máthot or not."

Kálamánik. "I thought you knew me too well to ask such a question. I consider the máthot to be a most unjust imposition, and, as such, I can never submit to it. Forsooth! because his son is going to get married, therefore we, poor people, must pay
the expenses of the wedding! When the sons of poor raiyats get married, pray who pays the expenses! Does the jamidár pay one cowrie? On the contrary, does he not on such occasions expect, and actually receive, presents? Such is the way of the world! On the head which is already saturated with oil, more oil is poured, whereas we poor folk go entirely oilless."

Nanda. "Well said, uncle Mánik. I quite agree with you. We should not submit to injustice."

Kálamánik. "That is what I say. But Govinda is like his father. He is a man of peace; he has already made up his mind to pay. He is quite frightened by the jamidár’s threats. If I were he, I would refuse to go again to the jamidár’s cutcherry and crack the skull of the first fellow that came to catch hold of me."

Govinda. "But, uncle, would not that be foolhardiness? I quite agree with you that the imposition is unjust and oppressive. But what can I do? and what can you do? If I beat any of the jamidár’s servants, I shall be without doubt put in jail. Living in water, how can I quarrel with the alligator? The best plan is to live on good terms with him. If I resist, I am ruined."

Ohatura. "That is speaking like a wise man. How can we, poor and weak as we are, contend with the jamidár? Dwarfs as we are, how can we hope to catch the moon with our hands? Govinda is wise in making up his mind to pay."

Kálamánik. "People say that I am rash, and have not much sense. But it is said of over-sensible people, that a string is—you know the proverb. No, no; I do not wish to be wise like you all.
should like to see the fellow that dares come to me asking for màthot. Won’t I make him drink sour milk on the spot, and perhaps send him to the house of Yama.”

Govinda. “Take you good care, uncle, what you do. By your boldness you may bring ruin upon our family. You are the strongest and bravest man in the village, but you cannot fight singly against one hundred men; and the jamidár can muster five hundred men against us.”

Kálamánik. “Don’t be apprehensive of me, nephew. I am not a fool; I will not bring ruin upon you.”

Kapila, the bandhu, or friend of Govinda, who had been all this time quietly listening to the above conversation, said, “Is it not extraordinary that the Kompání Báhádur allows all this injustice to be inflicted upon us? Kompání Báhádur’s rule is in many respects better than the rule of the Mussulmans; but how is it that in this respect it is worse? How can Kompání Báhádur see without concern all this oppression of its own subjects by wicked jamidárs?”

Ohatura. “What a sheep you are, Kapil! you think Kompání Báhádur cares either for our weal or for our woe! Not a bit of it. All that it cares for is the regular payment of the Jamá. So long as the jamidár regularly pays the Sadar Jamá, the Kompání Báhádur does not enquire how he collects it, or how much he collects. Has not the Kompání Báhádur armed the jamidár with those dreadful weapons, the haptam and the pancham, to the ruin of all its raiyats?”

Madun, Govinda’s mitá, said: “But I have always heard old people say that the Kompání Bahádur is just and merciful. How then can it allow the jamidárs to oppress the raiyats so much? The Sadar
Jamá which the jamidár pays is the blood-money of the ráiyats."

Govinda. "The fact is, though the Kompání Báhádur is just and merciful, it has made laws on the supposition that the jamidárs have common honesty and humanity. The Kompání Báhádur never dreamt that jamidárs would be so wicked."

Basamaya. "But you don’t mean to say that all jamidárs are wicked. The jamidár of my maternal uncle in Zilla Hugli is said to be a very good man. My uncle says that that jamidár is the father of his práiyats. He not only does not exact illegal cesses, but in a season of drought, or of inundation, he exempts the práiyats from paying rent."

Nanda. "I daresay there are a few jamidárs of that sort. But fifteen annas of them are tyrants. I should say fifteen annas three payas out of the rupee are of that sort. They rob the poor, deprive Bráhmanas of their rent-free lands, and burn the houses of their práiyats. Why does Mother Earth suffer these miscreants to remain in her lap?"

Govinda. "Sángát, you are always hot. Some crow will carry your words to the jamidár."

Nanda. "I don’t care if it does."

The conversation detailed above was followed by a game of cards called Grábu—Nanda and Govinda being partners on one side, and Chatura and Madan on the other; the rest of the assembly ranged themselves under the one party or the other as spectators. As Chatura was the best player of them all, his party won, having hoisted no less than three sixes and two fives to the disgrace of the other party. When the winning party hoisted a six, great was their joy, which they expressed by a loud clapping of hands. Not a
drop of wine or any spirituous liquor had ever gone
down the throat of any of these rural players—their
only refreshment was the hookah, which ever and anon
went round. It was almost midnight when our village
statesmen arose and went to their houses.
CHAPTER XLI.

BEFORE THE ZAMINDÁR.

I've noticed, on our laird's court-day,
An' mony a time my heart's been wae,
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,
How they maun thole a factor's snab:
H'll stamp an' threaten, curse an' swear,
H'll apprehend them, poind their gear;
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,
An' hear it a', an' fear an' tremble.

_The Two Dogs._

The next two days Govinda spent in earnestly debating in his mind whether he should pay the cess or not, and he found no little difficulty in making up his mind. In his own house he had talk on the subject with his mother and his uncle, and they were of opposite views—the mother urging him to pay, and the uncle insisting on not paying and on abiding the consequences. The arguments of Sundari may be thus summed up:—

"It is a dangerous thing to incur the displeasure of a powerful man, and especially of one's raja. The zamidár can ruin us, can seize the crop in the field on pretence of arrears of rent, can carry away our cattle, can sell our houses, can imprison us, can kill us. How can you, then, my son, incur the displeasure of such a man? Fishes cannot afford to be on bad terms with the alligator of the tank." Kálamánik, on the other hand, thought it would be great cowardice to submit to so iniquitous an exaction. He broke out against the zamindár in a most violent manner, calling
him his brother-in-law (wife's brother), and describing him as the greatest sinner upon earth. Govinda's father-in-law, Padma Lochan, was of the same opinion with his mother, thinking it madness not to pay. He moreover told Govinda that he must not put faith in the empty declarations of people, some of whom, though they use tall language, submit at last; and that not a few people were mischievously inclined towards him, dissuading him from paying the máthot only that they might witness Govinda's ruin. On the whole Govinda thought it wise and expedient to make up his mind to submit to the zamindár's exaction, but at the same time he determined to tell the landlord to his face at the time of payment that the imposition was illegal and unjust.

On the appointed day, at about eight o'clock in the morning, Hanumán Singha called at the house of Govinda, and said that he was wanted at the zamindár's eutcherry. Tying the amount of the máthot in his dhuti round his waist, he followed the tádırí. The zamindár was seated in his usual place, surrounded by the divána, the gomástá, and others. Govinda, putting his bathing-towel round his neck, made obeisance to him by touching the ground with his forehead. The divána said,

"Well, Sámanta, have you brought the máthot with you?"

Govinda. "If the divána mahásáyá were to forgive me I should feel greatly obliged, as I am largely in debt."

Zamindár. "You scoundrel, you still talk of being excused? It is only in consequence of your father, who was a good tenant, that you escaped with impunity three days ago, when you refused to pay
the cess. I mean to punish you well for delaying to pay, and for doing an infinite deal of mischief among my tenants, whom you were trying to dissuade from paying."

Govinda. "O, Incarnation of Justice! I never attempted to dissuade anyone from paying."

Zamindár. "Harámzáda! I am well informed, you did try. Did you not hold nocturnal meetings to discuss this subject? And did you not use threatening language towards me?"

Govinda. "I never used threatening language towards your worship."

Zamindár. "You did, you rascal; and if you again deny it you will be beaten with shoes. You mean to say you did not hold meetings at night for abusing me?"

Govinda. "I do not know of any meeting especially held for the purpose of discussing the subject of the máthot, or of abusing your lordship."

Zamindár. "Were you not present in the shop of Kuvera the blacksmith two nights ago? and did you not abuse me then?"

Govinda. "I happened to be there that night, as I am there almost every evening, but there was no meeting especially called; and I never said one word against your worship, O Incarnation of Justice."

Zamindár. "I repeat, if you deny it, you will immediately get shoe-beating."

The divána now suggested that perhaps it was not Govinda, but some other person at the meeting that abused the zamindár, though he must have heard it with approbation.

Zamindár. "No, I am sure it was this wicked
fellow who used threatening language. Well, if he did not, let him name the party who did."

Untruthfulness not being regarded by the Bengal raiyat as dishonourable, especially in dealings with landlords, Govinda had no hesitation in saying that no one at the meeting abused the zamindar. The zamindar, who had received from some unknown person an account, with considerable additions, of the talk at the smithy, became now furious, and was almost going to strike Govinda, when the divâna interposed, and represented that he was too mean a person to deserve the distinction of being beaten personally by the great zamindar himself. The divâna then ordered Govinda to pay down the mâthot and go away. While in the act of untying the money from his dhuti, he said, "I am paying the cess; but the imposition is an unjust one. It is contrary to the laws of the Kompâni Bâhâdur." The zamindar could no longer restrain his anger, but got up, and taking into his hand one of his own slippers, struck Govinda with it, abusing him at the same time somewhat in the following strain: "You, wife’s brother, ungrateful wretch, you accuse me of injustice! You, ghost of a peasant, you pretend to be versed in law; you dare teach me my duty! I will shorten your mouth by shoe-beating. This is only the beginning of your misfortunes. Worse calamities are in store for you. I will ruin you till dogs and jackals weep and howl at your misery."

Govinda had not courage enough to make any reply to this castigation and this outburst—indeed, he had already shown more than the average courage of Bengali peasants. He quietly bore the castigation and swallowed the insult, wiped his eyes and that
part of his body to which the shoe had been applied, paid down the cess, and left the cutcherry.

The zamindar and the divána now entered into a conversation as to the extent of dissatisfaction created in the village, and both of them dwelt on the necessity of severely punishing Kálamánik who, it was said, was doing more mischief than any other man. The gomastá mentioned the name of the young blacksmith as another dangerous fellow, who was always speaking against the zamindar; but the divána, who was kindly disposed towards Kuvers, Nanda’s father, represented that the lad was indiscreet, using always high-flown words, but that he did no mischief, as he exercised no influence in the village. There was no doubt, however, of the guilt of Kálamánik. It was only through his representations that Govinda had at first refused to pay the cess, and there could be no reasonable doubt that he was endeavouring to prejudice the other raiyats against their landlord. But how was he to be punished? He was a most determined and obstinate character; and as to personal strength, he had such an uncommonly powerful body, that he was more than a match for any three men in the village. It was deemed necessary, however, that he should be somehow punished. The zamindar immediately ordered Hanumán Singha, who was in attendance, to go in search of Kálamánik, and to tell him that his landlord wanted to see him. The divána said that Kálamánik was not likely to obey the summons, and that it would be necessary to send at least a dozen men to catch hold of him. The zamindar replied that should Kálamánik refuse to come, severer measures must be resorted to; but
it was expedient in the first instance to have recourse to less coercive measures.

Hanumán Singha, accordingly, went in search of Kálamánik, whom he found in the field busily engaged in watering a field of sugar-cane. Seeing the zamin-dár’s taídgír, he said, “Hallo, Hanumán Sing! what brings you here?”

Hanu. “I have come in search of you, Mánik Sámanta.”

Kála. “In search of me! What have you to do with me?”

Hanu. “The jamidár wishes to see you.”

Kála. “The jamidár wishes to see me! What have I to do with the jamidár? I owe him nothing. He may have to do with Govinda; but what on earth have I to do with him?”

Hanu. “I do not know the reason why he has sent for you. I simply obey orders.”

Kála. “I am not the jamidár’s servant that I should go to him at his bidding. Go and tell him I am watering my fields, and have no leisure to go to the cutcherry.”

Hanu. “I advise you to come with me. Why should you incur the displeasure of the jamidár for nothing? There is, surely, no harm in going to him. He will not eat you up.”

Kála. “Eat me up! I should like to see him try to eat me up. Should he succeed in swallowing me up, he would die of a pain in his stomach. Whereas I can swallow and digest many jamidárs like Jaya Chánd Ráya Chaudhuri. Mánik Sámanta is too tough to be easily digested. Do you go and convey my reply to his summons.”

So saying, Kálamánik went on, with greater energy than before, with the work of irrigation
CHAPTER XLII.

THE INDIGNATION MEETING.

Thou knowest the discontent,
The ill-pent murmurs, which this man's oppression,
His cruelty and avarice, hath provok'd
Amongst all honest hearts in Schwytz.

Schiller's Wilhelm Tell.

Amongst the peasantry of Western Bengal there is not a braver nor a more independent class than the Ugra-Kshatriyas, or Águris, the caste of which our hero was a member. Somewhat fairer in complexion than Bengal peasants in general, better built, and more muscular in their corporeal forms, they are known to be a bold and somewhat fierce race, and less patient of any injustice or oppression than the ordinary Bengali râiyat, who is content quietly to submit, even without a protest, to any amount of kicking. The phrase Águrir gonâr, or the “Águri bully,” which has passed into a proverb, indicates that the Águris are, in the estimation of their country-men, a hot-blooded class; that they are fearless and determined in their character, and that they resent the slightest insult that is offered them. Fewer in numbers than the Sadgopa class, which constitutes the bulk of the Vardhamána peasantry, they are a compact and united band; and there is amongst them a sort of esprit de corps which is hardly to be found in any other class of Bengalis. Naturally stronger and more industrious than other husband-
men, the Aguris, as a class, are in better circumstances than the rest of the peasantry, and, in consequence, of their superior wealth, display a correspondingly higher spirit of independence. Hence it is not to be wondered at that the zamindar's treatment of Govinda should rouse the indignation of all the Aguris of Kanchanpur. Shoe-beating is looked upon as a most degrading punishment, fit only for the lowest classes of the people; and by how much the Aguris deemed themselves to be better than Bagdis, Doms, and Hadis, by so much was their indignation roused at the insult offered to one of their tribe. Kalamnik, when on his return from irrigating the sugar-cane field he heard of the shoe-beating, became almost insane with rage; he broke out into the most violent language, called the zamindar all sorts of names, and vowed revenge to wipe out the blot with which the honour of the family had been tarnished. In the course of the day and the ensuing evening, almost all the Aguri peasants of the village visited Govinda and Kalamnik in their house, expressed sympathy with them, regarded Govinda's cause as their own, and resolved to harass the landlord in every way they could. And yet what could they do? There were not more than twenty-five families of Aguris in the village; and if their number were larger, how could they hope to be successful in a contest with a zamindar, whose raiyats numbered by thousands, and who had an organised litiial band of at least one hundred able-bodied men? Nor were the Sadgopas and other classes of husbandmen on the side of the Aguris. Accustomed as many of them were to be daily beaten, cuffed, and kicked by the
zamindár and his deputies, they were strangers to that sense of honour which animated Govinda and his caste-men. So far from sympathising with them, they looked upon the Águris as a very thin-skinned class, who made much ado about nothing.

In the days of which we are treating (and it is about twenty-five years ago), it was hopeless for a ráiyat, or any number of ráiyats, to cope successfully with zamindárs. The zamindárs were armed with tremendous powers by the British Government, especially by Regulation VII. of 1799 and V. of 1812, which empowered them not only to distrain the crops and cattle and all the property of tenants who are in arrears of rent, or supposed to be so, but to compel them to attend their cutcheries, and to imprison them. And the zamindárs of those days were not generally an honourable class. They made false charges against their tenants, refused to give receipts for rents received, and had recourse to perjury, chicanery, forgery, and the thousand and one arts of knavery for their own aggrandizement and the destruction of the peasantry. Nor were the peasantry spirited enough to oppose the landlords in their high-handed measures. We have represented the Águris to be a spirited and brave class; but it must be remembered that they were spirited compared only with other Bengali ráiyats, and Bengali ráiyats are, as a rule, a sheepish and submissive race. Were Bengal peasants like Irish cottiers, Orangemen, Ribbonmen, and the rest, zamindári oppression would be impossible. An old husbandman of the Águri caste, speaking in reference to the mode in which they should endeavour to harass the zamindár, said—"As most of us have already paid the
cess, it will not do to prevent the rest from paying it. In what precise way, then, should we vex the landlord?"

Kálamáník. "In my opinion, the best mode would be to deliver by one stroke Mother Earth of so heavy a burden as the wretch whom we call our rájá. I could undertake by one blow of my club to dash out his brains."

The Old Peasant. "Mánik Sámanda, I fear you will by your rashness bring all of us into great trouble. Should you kill the jamidár, you will get yourself suspended from the gallows at Vardhamána, and some of us will perhaps be imprisoned for life or transported beyond the Black Water."

Kálamáník. "Mánik Sámanda will never do business in such an awkward manner as to imperil either his own life or the lives of his friends. The act will be done, but the hand that will do it will not be seen."

The Old Peasant. "My son—I am old enough to be your father—dismiss such a horrid thought from your mind; do not imbrue your hand in the blood of a fellow creature. The gods will punish him. It is not for us to anticipate the decree of fate. We should content ourselves with giving him all sorts of petty annoyances."

Kálamáník. "But have you heard that I have personally given mortal offence to the jamidár? He sent for me through Hanumán Sing, and I refused to go."

The Old Peasant. "What did he send for you for? Did Hanumán Sing not tell you the reason why you had been called?"

Kálamáník. "No reason was given, and it was therefore I refused to go. But I know the reason
why. Some mischievous fellow, some tale-bearer, must have reported to either the jamidár or the divána, what I said the other night at Kuvera’s shop. I am supposed to be the ringleader; and the creator of disaffection.”

The Old Peasant. “You were quite right in refusing to go. If you had gone you would perhaps have been dishonoured. You might have been beaten with shoes or imprisoned.”

Kálamánik. “Ah well! let me see. If my name be Mánik Sámanta, the jamidár will have to rue his treatment of Govinda.”

The Águri husbandmen of Káncchanpur, however, did not determine upon the mode in which they should wreak vengeance on the zamindár. But Kálamánik seemed to revolve some scheme in his mind. From the next day he seldom went to work in the field, but was seen to go about much in the neighbouring villages. Not unfrequently he left Káncchanpur early in the morning, long before sunrise, and returned at night. Govinda could not but notice this circumstance, but as Kálamánik kept quiet when questioned about the matter, he thought it proper not to make any further inquiry.
CHAPTER XLIII.

FIRE! FIRE!

Why flames you summit—why shoot to the blast
Those embers, like stars from the firmament cast?—
'Tis the fire-shower of ruin.

Campbell.

One night when Govinda and the women were fast asleep, and when Kálamánik lay half-awake on his bed, tossing from side to side, partly on account of the sultry heat of the weather, and partly on account of the bite of that little creature (the Cimex lectularius) which infests in shoals the dormitories of poor people in Bengal as in England, but whose inodorous name in vernacular Anglo-Saxon we dare not mention in this history, in the event of some English lady honouring it with a perusal—I say when Kálamánik was in this state, his half-drowsy ears were assailed by the loud barkings of the house-dog Bághá. As Bághá was not in the habit of setting up such a loud howl at the dead of night, Kálamánik thought it strange; and the idea suddenly crossed his mind that some burglar might be, with a view to theft, making a hole in the wall of the big hut where the valuables of the house were deposited. Finding that the barking was becoming louder and louder, he got up from his bed, took in his hand his bamboo-club which stood in a corner, opened the door, and went
softly and slowly into the lane behind the huts. Scarcely had he entered the lane when two men rushed past him in great haste, and ran away with as great speed as their heels could carry them. One of these men he distinctly recognized—for the moon was still in the heavens though not far from the horizon—to be Bhima Katá, the head of the zamindár's band of club-men. Kálamánik called out and said, "Bhime! Bhime! Thief! Thief." But at that dead hour of night no one responded to the call, as all his neighbours were asleep. He at first thought of pursuing the two men, but finding they had already gone a great distance alongside the tank far into the mango-grove, he gave up the idea, and went round to the back-side of the big hut to see whether any hole had been bored. On going to the south-east corner, he found to his horror that the thatch was on fire. His first thought was to save the lives of Govinda, of his wife and children, who were all sleeping in the very hut the thatch of which was blazing. He rushed back into the house, knocked at the door of the big hut with his club, at the same time bawling out with all his might, "Govinda! Govinda! get up! get up! fire! fire! the house is on fire!" Govinda, startled with the loud noise at the door, and the crackling noise of the thatch overhead, was on his feet in a moment, wakened his wife, and rushed out of the room with their children in their arms. Kálamánik rushed into the room, and seizing with both hands whatever clothes and other valuables he could find, brought them out into the open yard. He then ran towards the huts of his neighbours, and raised the cry of "Fire! fire! get up, neighbours!" Having succeeded
in rousing some of his neighbours, he, before their arrival, rushed back into the house, and ordered Govinda, who by this time had scarcely realised the horror of his situation, to bring kalsi of water from the tank which, as the reader knows, lay near the house, while he himself went up to the thatched roof of the big hut, part of which was blazing with fire. When Govinda brought the first kalsi of water, some of the neighbours arrived and assisted in the work of putting water on that part of the hut which the fire had not yet reached. One of these neighbours stood at the ghát of the tank and filled the kalsi with water; it was then carried by a relay of men from shoulder to shoulder to the top of the bamboo ladder where Govinda was standing. Govinda put the kalsi into the hands of Kálamánik, who poured it over the thatch. Kalsi after kalsi of water was in this manner brought and poured on the thatch. But the attempt to save a part of the hut was in vain. The fire had spread itself to the highest part, which is the middle of the thatch, and, in spite of the frequent effusion of water, was making rapid progress. Kálamánik was obliged to come down from the thatch, and resign the hut to the flames. Lest the other huts should take fire, they were copiously watered in the manner we have described. The bullocks and the cows were taken out of the cow-house, and put at as great a distance as possible from the fire, for it is looked upon as a great sin if any member of the bovine species is allowed to be burnt; indeed, the penance which a householder has to submit to in the event of such a catastrophe is far severer than the penance he has to submit to if his wife or children
are consumed in the flames. In the meantime the whole of the big hut, which was the best, was on fire. The smoke ascended far into the heavens; the light which the blazing hut produced, lit up half the village; the sounds of "phut, phut, doom, doom," which the burning bamboos and palmyra-beams sent forth, were heard from a great distance. The news of the fire was carried to every part of the village, and people from all directions came running to see the spectacle. All of them expressed much lip-sympathy, but few lent a helping hand. Agni, the god of fire, was, however, satisfied with consuming one hut, and the conflagration was stayed. Govinda, Kálamánik, and the other members of the little household, spent the remaining hours of the night in the open yard in front of the fire yet blazing. They had the company of a few sympathising friends like Nanda the blacksmith, Kapila the carpenter, Madan the grocer, Padma Lochan, Govinda's father-in-law, and a few other Águris. They had not succeeded in saving anything excepting those few articles which Kálamánik had brought out. Whatever valuable things they had—and they were certainly very few—were burnt, including of course all the papers and documents belonging to the family. Kálamánik told them the events of the night, how the dog barked, how he got out of his room suspecting a burglar was at his work, how he had met Bhima Kotál, the zamindár's head láthiál, and another, how they ran away, and the rest. All came to the conclusion that the hut had been set on fire by Bhima Kotál, doubtless at the bidding of the zamindár. Next morning Kálamánik went to the Phándídáí, or police-constable of the village, informed him that his
big hut had been reduced to ashes, and that Bhima Kotál was the incendiary. Bhima Kotál was sent for by the constable. Bhima's wife sent word that her husband was away a couple of days at his father-in-law's house, which was in a village five miles distant, and that he had not yet returned. Khoda Bux, the village Phándidár, asked Kálamánik how he reconciled his own statement with the fact that Bhima was not in the village the last two days; but he and other Águris who were with him main-
tained that Bhima was certainly in the village yes-
terday, and that his wife's statement was false. The next morning Bhima returned to Kánchanpur, for he had certainly been away after setting Govinda's house on fire; an investigation was held by the Phándidár, and it was deposed by more than a dozen witnesses amongst the zamindár's retainers that Bhima was not in the village the last three days, and witnesses from Bhima's father-in-law's village for the last two days; the Phándidár there-
fore dismissed the case, and, at the bidding of the zamindár, did not send any report of it to the Daroga of Mantresvar, his official superior. Most inhabitants of the village, however, notwithstanding this investigation, believed that poor Govinda's house had been set on fire by Bhima Sardár by the order of the zamindár. The indignation of the Águris was roused still more than ever, and Kálamánik, gnashing his teeth in anger, thirsted for van-
geance.