

acquiring a permanent landed interest such as *putnis* confer, should not avail himself of his inherent rights. Again, some of these advantages depend on the planter's command of money; and money in late years has been scarce. A great deal too would depend on the skill, tact, and experience of the planter in giving the fullest effect to the kind of collateral advantages which he had it in his power to offer. Then there is the contrast of the planter's rule to the rule of the zemindar, and to what is termed the rapacity of the *mahajun*. As regards the latter, his terms are high, and his need is felt everywhere, but we are not aware of similar complaints made by the ryot of the pressure of his debts to the money-lender. At any rate no body of ryots have come forward with such complaints, nor do we think that the slight supervision which the mahajun may exercise over the cultivation is vexatious to the same extent. As to the zemindar, we should ask all Europeans seriously to remember, if they take this view of the question, that when they acquire influence and authority of whatever kind in this country, it is not sufficient that they should exercise it with only a little less of the oppression ascribed to the native. The rule of the foreigner should not only be as good as that of the indigenous zemindar: it should be much better in every possible point of view, to take only the low ground of political or private expediency. Experience teaches us, in every department, phase, and period of Indian history, that the lower orders will endure patiently at the hands of one of their own color or creed ten times the oppression which they would at the hands of a foreigner. Allowing too, that many planters dispense a summary justice in the courts which they hold, to their own ryots, the zemindars, who balanced, the indirect advantages which planters have usually offered, will be found reduced to a certain moderation in the enhancement or assessment of rent, some few loans without interest, and some other acts of personal kindness. We say this in no spirit of disparagement to the planters, but it must be obvious, that unless dispensed with regularity, or if exposed to any peculiar counteracting causes, such advantages could not be expected to compensate for the direct loss of profit to which agriculturists look in all countries, for the chance of extortion at the hands of the numerous servants employed in the task of supervision, and for the life tie which binds the ryot to the factory. Indeed, to quote the language of our colleague Mr. Sale, a system, which for its success, may depend on either terror on the one hand, or indulgence on the other, is not a good system in any country.

67. Besides, even if we admit the full force of indirect advantages to exist in all well-regulated factories, there are, even in the very same factories, disadvantages and inconveniences peculiar to this system, and to no other that we are aware of. We have clearly explained the system of contracts, which never end, and which are tantamount to a denial of personal freedom of action, and which result in the additional charge to the ryot of two annas a year; small, indeed, but irritating and unnecessary.

68. Then the lands of the ryot are selected as the planter may choose; they are not bid for; nor are those which the ryot would set apart for indigo usually taken; and they are measured for their produce by a standard different to the usual zemindary or land measurement. This varies from one-fourth to one-half as large. In defence of this it is pleaded that the difference is of long standing, and is one of which the ryot is fully aware, and it is shown that there is one uniform standard for the indigo beegah throughout all indigo concerns in the Nuddea district. But there is no question that the distinction operates to the prejudice of the ryots; and of all the complaints which they have made known to us, this is one of the most universal, and the source of very considerable disgust and ill-will. Again, when there is a crop of seed grown from the stumps of the indigo, it is considered the right of the factory to take the produce at the invariable rate of four rupees a maund, and this, when the seed

may be selling in the bazar at from ten rupees to thirty rupees a maund, as has been the case in the three last years. But we have reason to believe that this rate was originally fixed when the price of seed in the market was generally much lower.

69. Thus the constant attitude of the ryot, when under the planter as zemindar, is one of dependence; and that of the planter to the ryot ought to be, and sometimes is, one of advice and protection. But, even should such protection never be exchanged for harshness and oppressive conduct, it is quite clear that this mutual relation is hardly compatible with the free and uninfluenced exertions of manufacturer and producer. For according to the decisions of the highest Courts, whenever the law may come in between the parties, the produce of the land belongs to the ryot. That the land is not the planter's, to enter on at his free will, is quite clear from the course he is compelled to pursue whenever he resorts to *nij* cultivation, and when the plant grows up, it belongs to the ryot, who is only bound by civil contract to deliver it at the factory. Here, too, we must discountenance an erroneous notion, which has been held in some quarters, to the effect that the labour of the ryot costs him nothing, on the ground that he, in the performance of his contract, with his own muscles, drives his own plough, behind his own bullocks, over lands of which he is the undoubted occupant. The bullocks, the implements, the time and the labor of the ryot represent to him *his capital*; and it is quite certain that in the populous districts of Lower Bengal, such labour has a market value. Besides, a ryot unemployed in working out his contract would be cultivating his own lands, or helping his neighbours under the plan of mutual assistance, well described in answer 458. Still the ryot may be able to cultivate his land with indigo at a cheaper rate than the planter could cultivate his *nij* lands with the same crop, by hired labour. We need hardly use further arguments to set before His Honor one of the first principles of political economy as to what represents capital. Our object is simply to show that, until the plant reaches the vats in the factory, no share in the labour of producing it has been borne by the planter. He has given his advances and his seed. Everything else, the land, labour, and the risk, is the ryot's.

70. We have deemed it our duty thus to draw attention to the unfortunate position of the ryot as a cultivator of indigo, because it is one of those points that has hitherto been kept out of sight, misrepresented, or misunderstood. The Commission, which has been mentioned at various times for the last twenty-five years as a desideratum, has now been looked for anxiously by the agricultural population; the more intelligent portion are fully aware of its objects; and we feel that it is incumbent on us first to place in the strongest and clearest light, the ryot as he appears to us, deprived of his free will, and bound to continue a cultivation, which does not give him a fair or adequate profit, which in its worst aspect he absolutely dislikes, and in its most favorable aspect he is only induced to tolerate. All the defects of the system, inherent and incidental, all the faults which justly are to be laid at the door of either planter or ryot, by their respective opponents, may be traced originally to one bare fact, *the want of adequate remuneration*. It is this that mainly renders the possession of landed influence indispensable to extensive cultivation, and it is owing to this that the planter has to urge the ryot to plough and to sow, to weed and to cut, by means little short of actual compulsion; it is this that brings out into strong relief the well-known defects of the national character of the Bengali; that sharpens his cunning, aggravates his indolence, tempts him to procrastination, and fosters his proneness to concealment; it is this, in short, that renders the whole relation between the two parties one prolonged and unhappy struggle in which Anglo-Saxon energy, promptitude, and pertinacity, are often almost baffled by that subterfuge and evasion which are the proverbial resources of the weak.

71. But having thus discharged our duty towards the ryots, we mean to be just towards the planter, and to take no unfair or contracted view of his past and present position.

72. Indigo, it is well known, is one of the most important of our exports, and a staple of great value in the home and foreign market. The indigo manufactured on this side of India is of prime quality, and that of Lower Bengal especially, which is produced in the districts of Nuddea and Jessore, is probably the very finest in the whole world.

73. The annual outturn of this dye on this side of India, for the season, averages 1,05,000 maunds, and the value of this would be nearly two crores of rupees, or two millions sterling.

74. It is clear that, even independent of all other political or social considerations, the loss or diminution of an export of such extent and value would be severely felt both in India and England.

75. But the absence of the manufacturers would be also felt, we have every reason to believe, in the interior of the country, were the skill, outlay, and enterprise which are expended on indigo to be suddenly withdrawn.

76. In a political aspect, the presence of a body of Europeans, scattered over various portions of the interior of the country, is highly valuable. In troublous or disturbed times, it is to them that Government would partly look for assistance in the repression of anarchy, the maintenance of order, and the counteraction of disaffection. In more quiet times the residence of an Englishman is a sort of guarantee that violent abuses shall not long remain undetected. If there is an oppressive law, or a barbarous and antiquated custom, he is probably the first to feel its pressure, and to be urgent for its abolition. If a public functionary is corrupt, idle, or incapable, he will pray to have him removed. Though his complaints be sometimes unreasonable, or be tendered in no measured language, the Englishman acts as the representative of public opinion, and we feel that the administration of justice could not well dispense with his determined and vigorous expostulations.

77. Then, as to the power of the planters to offer more liberal and advantageous terms to the producers, we must bear in mind that, as appears from the evidence of Mr. Moran and others, a considerable portion of the indigo factories are working on borrowed capital and at a high rate of interest. Before the planter, so situated, can offer handsome terms and realize a fair profit, he has to pay heavy interest on his debt and the annual outlay.

A. 1472 78. Now the general rate of interest is not less than 10 per cent, and if paid on the block and on the advances for the current season, it must add much to the cost of the indigo; but owing to the valuable landed interests which are attached to almost every factory, the purchase of a good-sized Concern is now almost beyond the power of any moderate capitalist. Taking the Concerns generally, and their annual outlay, it would be unreasonable not to admit that in indigo districts there is a beneficial and active circulation of money. The residence of the manager and his assistants in the interior is tantamount to the expenditure, by each of them, of a certain sum on the spot. Large sums are annually spent in the purchase of seed, grown both in the Upper and Lower Provinces. A very considerable establishment of native servants, many of whom live in the immediate neighbourhood, and nearly all in the district, is maintained on regular salaries, and such men are thus enabled to rise in the social scale. At the manufacturing season of the year, large numbers of laborers are employed in many ways in working for the factory, and the mere manufacturing expenses, we have reason to believe, average 20 rupees a maund; and after making every reasonable deduction for the reasons before given, there still remains a certain sum expended in advances and payments made to the ryots. The yearly outlay in cash of the factories in the district of Nuddea alone is estimated at 18 lacks of rupees, which is about 6 lacks in excess of the Government revenue. It must be that such a system facilitates the collection of rents and circulates cash through many villages. The amount paid in wages during the manufacturing season by Messrs. Watson and Co. amounts monthly to something very large. The value of the property is very great; the same Concern in

A. 3189

A. 1530

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Rajshahye and three or four other districts, the Bengal Indigo Company in Nuddea and Baraset, have an amount of property at stake in the country, both in houses and lands, which may be estimated at little short of half a million.

79. Next, as regards the soil actually taken up for Indigo, it is quite certain that low *chur* lands, which are submerged early in July, could not grow anything else but indigo as the first crop of the season. Early rice grown there could not come to maturity before the inundation in July. On some other *chur* lands not exposed to so early a rise of the rivers, the *Aous* crop of rice could no doubt be grown, but the anxiety of the ryot to grow rice is more visible in regard to high lands than to any kind of *churs*. These high lands are indeed a different subject; they are not exposed to any rise of the rivers except in remarkable seasons, and they are preferred by the ryot for rice for reasons already specified. Yet in any Concern, the area of such lands taken up for indigo does not exceed one-twentieth of the whole village, or as a very extreme cultivation one-sixteenth; and we have every reason to believe that indigo not being in itself injurious to the soil, it is decidedly advantageous that there should be a due rotation of it with other crops. As a mere question of agriculture, it is beneficial that indigo, like tobacco or sugar-cane, should occasionally occupy lands which otherwise might be given up mainly to rice. We here argue on the supposition that indigo were really remunerative, for, in this case, the ryot would be glad that it should have its turn with other products, in the same way as he has hitherto sown it for seed, in parts of Jessore and Nuddea, without any advances, and to his own profit. Viewed in this light, we should be loath to see indigo cultivation entirely thrown up in any one district, and must hold it to be of service to the agriculturist in the due rotation of crops.

A. 80. Nor must we omit to give prominence to the fact that, wherever indigo
2587 planters have established themselves, whole tracts of jungle have been cleared
2024 away. The evidence of Mr. Reily, Mr. Tissendie, Mr. Forlong, and others,
3153 is conclusive on this head. Nor can we assent to the inference that these good
effects are connected solely with an extension of *nij* cultivation and not
with an increase of population and homesteads. Perhaps, in the first instance,
lands so cleared were sown by the factory servants, but as such cultivation is
confessedly expensive, and as it is the object of the planter to extend his
ryotti and not his *nij* cultivation, we can have no doubt but that the clearance
of jungle was, in nearly all instances, followed by an addition to the
number of the villagers, and in this way that social comfort was promoted.

81. Conflicting statements have been made as to whether there is or there
is not a perceptible difference in the condition of the ryots who grow indigo,
compared with those who do not grow it. Seeing that it is not to be contra-
vened that the majority of ryots derive no profit, but a loss, from indigo, and
that many ryots in the greater part of Hooghly and Baraset, as well as those
on Mr. Morell's estate in Backergunge and in other parts of that district
have grown rich and wealthy, without this kind of cultivation, we do not
discover any particular difference to be perceptible in favor of ryots, who
are cultivators of indigo.

A. 82. What we desire to see is the relation between planter and ryot placed
307 on the permanent footing of a free, a healthy, and a mutually profitable inter-
882 course. The presence of Europeans, their attention to business, the help they
give to officials, their energy in clearing jungle, and in aiding in the formation of
roads, the check they give to abuses, their yearly circulation of large sums
of money, are all things to be admired and valued. But these benefits will
be more freely felt, and more openly acknowledged, whenever the whole system
shall have undergone a thorough reformation, and when indigo can be culti-
vated under such circumstances as shall remove even the bare apprehension of
agrarian rising and popular discontent.

83. The planters, we must also state, have thrown no difficulties whatever
in the way of our inquiry. On the contrary, they have come forward with their
books and accounts to afford us all the information in their power, and never,

during the progress of the inquiry, have they been even taxed with attempting to intimidate ryots, or with obstructing evidence. We have all been struck, too, with the fulness, lucidity, and openness with which several of them delivered their testimony, and we have had reason to admire the thorough knowledge which they evinced of all the principles and details of the planter's profession; nor can we doubt that such qualities would be calculated to shine conspicuously in any other profession or line of life which they might adopt.

84. We now turn to those distinct and specific charges which, either by one party or other, of natives or of officials, have been brought against the planters, before or during our sittings.

85. Commencing with the gravest, we shall go through the list *seriatim*. Of actual destruction of human life comparatively few cases of late years have been brought to our knowledge, as proved, and we have no wish to lay great stress on a list of forty-nine serious cases which are shown to have occurred over a period of thirty years in different parts of the country; because violent affrays, ending in homicide or wounding, are, we are happy to say, of not nearly such frequent occurrence as they used to be, and affrays are not peculiar to indigo planting. They occur equally where the plant is not grown.

86. *From the returns supplied by the Magistrates of some of the most important districts for the last five years, some of which are entirely blank, it is quite clear that investigations into those fights between the adherents of zemindar and planter which used to carry desolation, terror, and demoralization into a dozen villages at a time, no longer disfigure our criminal annals to the extent they used to do. Even in Nuddea, as will be seen from the return, the cases were few in the years preceding 1859 and 1860. Some of this good result is, no doubt, due to the working of Act IV of 1840, for giving summary possession of lands; to the law for the exaction of recognizances and security against apprehended breaches of the peace, namely Act V of 1848; and to the establishment of Sub-Divisions with convenient circles of jurisdiction. A good deal is owing also to the acquisition by planters of rights in lands, and to the peace and quiet which usually follow such acquisition, as far as affrays and fights are concerned; but something also is due to the better skill and management of factories generally, and, we doubt not, to the good sense and good feeling of the most influential planters.

87. Affrays carried out with premeditation, on a large scale, by means of hired clubmen, we are thus happy to pronounce rare in some districts, and in others unknown.

88. Then as to the burning of bazaars and houses, we have a clear admission from a gentleman whose character entitles him to great respect (A. 670) that he "has known of such acts," but no well proved instance of this sort has been brought to our notice in any oral evidence. In one or two instances mentioned to us, when a fire took place, it was a matter of doubt whether its origin was not accidental, and we cannot therefore but acquit the planters, as a body, of any practice of the sort, though we do not mean to say that cases of arson do not occur in lower Bengal, in consequence of indigo disputes. A crime of this kind would, from its very openness, attract attention and should be susceptible of the clearest proof.

89. As regards the knocking down of houses, gentlemen of undoubted veracity have seen places where houses had been, and have known indigo growing on deserted homesteads, understanding that the ryots had absconded after some dispute, and that their houses had been demolished. We have the clear evidence of Mr. Blumhardt (A. 1287-1288) to an outrage of this kind, which came under his observation. It is to be noticed, however, that in this case a sentence imposed at the Sessions was reversed by the Sudder Court. Unless we could fathom the origin of all desertions, we could not take on ourselves to pronounce that houses had been wantonly knocked down by the planter, to intimidate the ryot. In one case, particularly, the

*Note.—See Appendix.