

their labour can be called their own ; their rice grounds are left untilled or only half tilled ; and they are subjected to such constant annoyances, indignities and oppression, while their bundles of plant are unfairly or hurriedly measured, that they have learned to hate the very name of indigo. For confirmation of the above remarks, we have only to solicit His Honor's attention to the evidence on both sides, which, on this head, is too copious to detail.*

60. We believe that one explanation of these contradictory statements, and the main point which it is necessary to keep in view from this time forward, is, that the cultivation of indigo is *not* profitable to the ryot on the terms heretofore existing. Without anticipating our conclusions on the just and fitting relation between ryot and planter, we think it absolutely essential, for a right understanding of the whole subject, at this stage of our report, to draw His Honor's special attention to this fact ; and that it is a fact not to be disputed or questioned, we shall now show, not from the evidence of exasperated ryots relating their grievances, or from that of the gentlemen who have testified in their behalf, but from the admissions of the planters themselves, or of those who have spoken somewhat on this side of the question.

61. It is admitted, then, by one planter, Mr. J. P. Wise, (A 30), " that the ryot takes very little interest in his indigo crop," and presently by the same witness (A 120) " that indigo at present is not so profitable to ryots as other crops ;" by a gentleman who has had experience as a Magistrate of a large indigo district, that the crop is unproductive, and that " hitherto the planter has taken upon himself too little of the risk, and left too much of the risk with the ryot" (A 273) ; by an old planter of large experience that " the risk is, no doubt, with the ryot" (A 372), and (A 374) that " the ryot, generally speaking, does not produce enough to cover his advances ;" by a gentleman who was a planter formerly, " that the cultivation is not popular because it is not profitable, and the ryot has to bear the whole brunt of the risk" (A 513) ; by another gentleman, that *nij* is more profitable to a planter than " dissatisfied ryots, who give a great deal of trouble, and cost a great deal of money ;" by a gentleman who has a large *nij* cultivation, " that even were a beegah of indigo to pay better than a beegah of rice, the ryot would give a preference to the rice" (1,453) ; by Mr. Larmour, " that indigo may not be profitable or popular in some places," (2,161) ; by Mr. Clarke, that the ryot " will sow a small quantity to please his zemindar, although he may not gain much profit by it," (3,443) ; and, generally, by planters and by zemindars of experience in *ryotti* cultivation, that the cultivation is not directly remunerative to the ryot ; but it is pleaded that this is to be attributed mainly to bad seasons, high prices, and the precariousness of the crop. In mitigation of this charge, too, it is urged, that it has still been found comparatively easy to satisfy the ryot, and to keep him contented and faithful to his engagements, by the grant of what have been termed collateral advantages ; and that even with the above disadvantages, several ryots, working honestly and faithfully, have cleared their advances, and received large payments in excess. This last averment is quite true, but it is also true that by the practice of the factories, some ryots who might have cleared themselves are nevertheless kept in debt, because it would seem, when their delivery of indigo would suffice to clear their balance, the planter prefers to pay fresh cash to the ryot for the indigo, and retain the old balance against him. With the favorable exceptions, the fact remains of the greater number of ryots being in balance, and sometimes in heavy balances in all the large Concerns of which we are qualified to speak, and of their having been so for years ; in other words, the fact of their having repeatedly grown plant without profit, under a supervision which planters themselves avow to be requisite, and which the ryots declare to be vexatious,

*NOTE.—Appendix No. 1, Evidence of Ryots, *passim*.

stands out as a broad and decisive one, from which it is possible to draw but one inference.

62. Various attempts have been made to show the expenses of cultivation, and the profit and loss of the cultivation of indigo and of other crops, which will be found in the evidence. Even the most advantageous statements, made on favorable suppositions, shows but a slight profit derivable to the ryot from indigo, and it is quite clear from the statements as to the production of rice, not to speak of the higher kinds of produce, that indigo, as a paying crop, must stand very low in the scale. The valuable information given as to the rise in prices, and the returns of divers kinds of produce, in the Appendix, aid in establishing this point beyond question.

63. Some ryots may have been pacified, contented, and even willing to sow, and several ryots even in the past years have cleared their advances; but when we consider the small number of those who have done this, and the large number of those who have not, within the limit of one of the largest and best managed Concerns, the Bengal Indigo Company, the huge amount of bad balances of a long series of years, pronounced irrecoverable, as well as the frank admission of planters, that most of their ryots are on the wrong side of the books; we can have no doubt that the question of direct profit to the ryots as a body, is no longer matter for serious discussion.

64. But, it has been said, the ryot once fairly under the shield and protection of the planter, enjoys those solid but indirect advantages, whereof particular mention was made in the commencement of this Report, when we stated the case, as it was generally put by those in the interests of the planter. As far as our inquiries have enabled us to discover positive facts, we have heard of but two dispensaries, that at Mulnath, and that at Salgurmudia, and a few vernacular schools; and we can of course readily understand that every European, remote from medical aid in the interior, keeps by him a supply of medicines, not only for himself or family, but for the use of such of the neighbouring population as may apply to him in cases of sickness. We cannot either refuse to believe, in spite of the asseverations of the ryots to the contrary, that many planters have been in the habit of assisting ryots with money, quite independent of the regular advances, for the purchase of cattle or for the repair of houses; and it is not within our knowledge that such loans, without interest, would be available to a ryot in distress from any other source.

65. Then, there is the question of diminished rents. By this we do not understand that any planter, becoming possessed of temporary or permanent rights in land, ever takes less rents than were taken by the person from whom he has derived his interest. What is meant, is, that the leaseholder or the *putnidar* forbears to put in force the power derived to him to measure and assess the lands of the ryots to the full amount legally permissible, and that he also never calls on the ryots for those various payments, which some of the native zemindars, on some one pretext or other, constantly demand from the tenants, on births, marriages, religious festivals, and similar events, or on pressing necessities. Mr. J. P. Wise asserted his belief that he could double the rent of his ryots, and Mr. Forlong said that he allowed the ryots to sit at as easy a rate as possible. Mr. Larmour, in Mulnath alone, has released 17,000 beegahs of land held rent-free, on the production by the holder, of certain papers called the *taidad*, endorsed by the collector of revenue.

66. That the above demands are made by some native zemindars is perfectly notorious, though there are some honorable exceptions to this rule, and we can readily believe that such are unknown on estates held by planters, but the statement regarding the omission to raise rents must be taken with a qualification, for we have seen the admission by Mr. Larmour of his taking certain leaseholders' fees, though not heavy fees, and of his having raised the rental of his *putni* by management and measurement some 18,000 rupees a year; and it can hardly be imagined that an European

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 attend to business, do exactly the same; when therefore these points are fairly 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