

769. *President.*] Then would it be possible for *perwannas* of the authorities, for the preaching of Missionaries, and for the influence of landholders, combined or separate, to stop the cultivation of sugar-cane, cold weather crops, jute, or tobacco, or any other crop avowedly profitable? is that your opinion?—Combined, yes; but if separate, the ryot would go for help to the planters and try to avoid the annoyances as much as possible.

770. *Mr. Fergusson.*] Do you remember hearing of zemindars, in Eastern Bengal, having endeavoured to put a stop to the cultivation of jute?—I remember having heard something about it, but not caring much, did not pay particular attention thereto.

771. *Mr. Temple.*] If the cultivation of indigo is not profitable to the ryot at the present time, can you suggest any terms that might satisfy the ryot so that he might be willing to continue the cultivation?—No, my ryots never having complained to me, I cannot suggest any thing.

772. Then you think that if the price of 4 bundles be accompanied with collateral advantages, the ryot may be satisfied, although the rate be not of itself remunerative?—Undoubtedly; and I do not know that the Indigo Planter can alter the number of bundles under the existing prices of indigo and chances of bad seasons, without being exposed to ruin.

773. But if better terms be allowed to the ryots, could not a higher price be demanded for the indigo?—Higher prices could be demanded for indigo, but this is doubtful, and if the price of indigo were to rise, this staple would meet with competition from rival countries where it may be produced cheaper, and, thus, the present planters would be ruined, and indigo planting altogether fall to the ground.

774. Are your ryots generally in debt to the factory, or do they clear off their balances, season by season?—In general they are in debt, but a few have cleared and taken new advances. It is owing to a run of bad seasons. I have, however, given up yearly a portion of their balances to make them hold on to the factory.

775. Previously to the run of bad seasons, were your ryots free from debt?—Yes; in Jessore for a number of years I paid them what is called their *fazil* or excess, after they had cleared their balances. The impression on my mind is, that while at Ramnaghur, I have paid as much as 7,000 or 8,000 rupees a year as *fazil* to the ryots, besides advances of 2 rupees per beegah. At that time the ryots used to give me six bundles for the rupee; since those days those very concerns have sunk 200 or 300 per cent in their produce, owing to various causes.

776. Do *fazil* or excess payments ever occur now?—No; the indigo seasons have been very bad for the last 7 or 8 years.

777. Do you think the land exhausted?—No, the defective seasons have been caused by bad weather.

Reverend Frederick Schurr, Missionary, Church Missionary Society, called in, and examined on oath.

778. *President.*] Will you state in what part of Kishnagur you have lived, and for what time; and can you state what is the feeling of the ryots as regards indigo?—At first I lived for two years and eight months at Ruttonpore Mission, a mile east of the Ruttonpore factory, and since December 1849, I have been living at Kapasdanga, within about a mile of Nischindipore factory. At first while living at Ruttonpore I had charge of a small Mission Station, Jaoginda, within Mr. Roberts's concern, but for the last few years it has been the property of Mr. James Smith. From the first, in 1849, I heard many complaints about indigo cultivation from the ryots. I spent occasionally a few days at an out station, and heard many complaints about oppression and unfair conduct on the part of planters in regard to indigo cultivation; some cases were

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brought to my notice by the Christians, whereupon I either spoke or wrote to the proprietor of the Amjoopi factory. In a few cases relief was granted, but at last the proprietor refused to listen to any more representations. Whilst living at Ruttonpore, several cases of injustice on the part of Indigo Planters' servants were brought to the notice of my brother Missionary, and on his either speaking or writing to the planter at the Ruttonpore factory, he granted immediate redress. At Kapasdanga, I found first only a few Christian ryots cultivating indigo, and I was told, that they had willingly taken the advances from the factory, some fifteen years ago from the present time, as the cultivation of indigo was then a little more profitable than it has ever been since. The reason for taking advances, I have been informed, was, that they were at that time in great want of money and could not obtain it any where else. Since I have had charge of Kapasdanga the cultivation of indigo by Christian ryots has considerably increased, but I am not aware of one instance in which the ryot has taken the advances of his own accord. They have been induced first by my persuasion, in order to live peaceably with our neighbour, as the planter was holding the lease of the land, and gradually a few new men were told that they *must* cultivate indigo; the condition was that if they did not cultivate indigo, they would not be allowed to cultivate their own lands for any other crops.

779. Can you state if there are any other causes which have made the ryots more averse to sow than they were before?—The chief cause is that the cultivation of indigo is very unprofitable to them, on which account the planters are under the necessity of resorting to compulsion, such as threatening them with withholding their lands for other crops; or abducting their cattle; or fining them; or imprisoning them in the godowns;—one such instance I have seen with my own eyes, I refer to a case of abducting cattle, or beating the ryots. My own Christians have been threatened twice with the loss of their lands for cultivating other crops. In one case the European Assistant told me himself, that it was the planter's intention to do so. Two or three days after I heard from my catechist that the proprietor had called upon the Hindoo ryots who hold *jummas* and demanded of them the withholding of their lands from the Christian ryots. I may mention that land is so much occupied by ryots with tenant rights, that Christian ryots have to obtain lands for their cultivation from such tenants: the Hindoo ryots represented to the proprietor that the Christians were very peaceable neighbours; they paid their rents regularly, and if they had to oust them, they would not be able themselves to cultivate that land or procure other ryots, so the matter dropped. There was another instance of the same kind when land was on the point of being taken away. I just now remember one man cultivating 2 or 3 beegahs for rice, and the Manager demanded that he should sow half a beegah of indigo, or give up his rice cultivation altogether. The man actually threw up his cultivation for 2 or 3 days, and then went to the factory and took the advance for half a beegah, as he had no other means of subsistence. The whole community was threatened, but only this one man gave it up. I remember an instance of a Christian who had been living within the Ruttonpore concern; his son being in my employ, the whole family were anxious to settle at Kapasdanga, and so left their old abode. The Manager of the Ruttonpore concern demanded that the man should sow a quantity of indigo for which he had received advances, which the ryot objected to do, stating his willingness to cultivate the same quantity of land in the Nischindipore concern, and that his name and debt only should be transferred. This at first not being acceptable to the planter, one Sunday morning, when all the Christians were assembled in church, some of the Ruttonpore factory servants abducted that Christian's cattle from the fields and took them towards Ruttonpore. The cow-boys running in gave notice, and all the Christians ran out and rescued the cattle; I was just then on a visit to the Kishnagur Station for 2 or 3 days, when I received information of it on Sunday evening, I immediately returned home on Monday morning, and

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found the case as I had been informed. My friends informed the Magistrate of Kishnagur of the occurrence, who showed his willingness immediately to afford redress, but I considered it more in accordance with Christian doctrine and practice to speak first personally to the planter, who, admitting all the facts, apologized to me, and granted the transfer of the advances and debt to the Nischindipore factory. In July 1856, some seven men, Christians, received advances for carts to carry indigo. The Christians desired the planter and dewan or gomashtha before beginning their work to give them receipts, viz. *hath chitties*, for their daily work, which was agreed to. They went for some days to their work and they received their receipts, but the servants began to make excuses, and they did not receive the receipts regularly; whereupon the Christians stated that they could not carry indigo any more unless the contract was adhered to by the planter's people by giving them their regular *hath chitties*; the gomashtha came to me and I requested him to procure the receipts for the Christians, promising that if he brought them on that day, in the evening, the Christians should fulfil their contracts, and myself would see them do it. The following morning, (July 31st 1856) the *hath chitties* did not come, nor did the Christians go to carry indigo, but an *amin* came and told the Christians that that day their cattle would be taken away. I disbelieved the statement, saying, "that no such thing could be done to them." But at 4 P. M. when I was writing at my desk, 2 or 3 men came running in, saying that the *lattials* had taken the Christians' cattle away. As it had been so often asserted that Missionaries listened only to false stories of natives, I had my horse immediately saddled and rode out in the direction of the factory. Near the bazar, I overtook some 35 head of cattle, and when the clubmen saw me, they ran away and I rode round the herd and turned them back; some of the Christians running after me took the cattle home; I was then told that another herd was coming up from the river side driven by *lattials*, I rode in that direction and close to my day school, the cattle came up, some 80 head. I rode along, and an *amin* with some 8 *lattials* was in the rear of the herd. Immediately he saw me, the *amin* called out "*kharra raho*," stand! "*Sahib ke maro*," beat the *Sahib*; twice he used these words; I had only gone out to be an eye witness, so I called out "*ami dekhiyachi*," or, I have seen it, turned my horse round and galloped away, and I am told that one of the *lattials* attempted to take hold of the bridle of my horse, and to aim a blow at me, which fell on the syce. Returning home, I wrote to the planter briefly stating what had happened, and he returned rather a sharp reply, telling me to mind my own business. I immediately wrote off to the Magistrate, who promised to send out the *kotwali* or Town Daroga as soon as he could get bearers. The cattle were taken away on Thursday; the Daroga arrived on Saturday morning. He began at once to enquire of me and the Christians, after which he proceeded to the Dumuhoda Thannah, to which the planter had sent the cattle (the Cattle Trespass Act was not then in operation) and found them there. They were sent on the pretext that they had been on the indigo, but within several acres of land, to my certain knowledge, there was not a stalk of indigo. Mr. Grant, the Post Office Superintendent, was just then living in the factory, opening a new Post Office; he, hearing from me of the occurrence, was anxious to make it up between the planter and me and for this purpose came over to me. I stated I had not the least ill-feeling towards the planter, and to convince him of my sincerity I promised to go over to see him that evening, Saturday. On my arrival, the planter began to speak at once about the case, and pressed me hard to come to an accommodation rather than to make a complaint, on which I at last yielded to the request and to his solemn promise that in future nothing of the kind should happen to the Christian ryots. The Magistrate had given the Daroga a good character, and he acted up to that character.

As to fines I cannot recollect a case of this nature occurring among my Christians, but I have generally heard complaints when preaching in the villages, of heavy fines having been inflicted: I make no enquiries of their

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sufferings or the injustice and oppression practised towards them ; but when preaching or speaking to them about justice, kindness, holiness, charity, &c. the villagers frequently speak of the wrongs which they suffer under the indigo system.

As to confining in godowns, &c. I can mention no case of my own personal knowledge ; none of my Christians have complained of being confined, but others have. In one case a native Christian, not my own, but Mr. Lincke's, was imprisoned ; Mr. Lincke will be able to give particulars. A servant of mine saw two men imprisoned in a godown.

780. Have you any personal knowledge of any graver acts of oppression on the part of the planters or the servants of the planters, such as severe beating, arson, destruction of houses, and outrages on women ?—Some 9 years ago, the European Assistant of the factory required ploughs for the *nij* cultivation after a shower of rain ; he came into the field and demanded all the ryots, Christians and others, to leave their own rice cultivation and go into the indigo field ; one Christian requested him to let him just finish his work and he would go immediately when done, upon which the planter aimed some blows at him, but the ryot escaped the blows by running amongst his bullocks. The Christian came running in to me, and I promised to speak to the planter on his return. A little while afterwards I was told that the planter was at that man again, whereupon I ran out and saw him aim the blows at the man, which he escaped. I went up and remonstrated with him ; he acknowledged he was not right in what he had done, but that he was acting under the orders of his master, and that he would go home and tell him about it. The following morning he came again into the village ; I asked him, well, have you told your master ? He said, yes ; and what did he say ? He said that "he would not give any more lands to Christian ryots."

On another occasion a ryot came to me for medicine, because he had just been beaten by the planter in the fields for allowing some cattle to stray into the indigo ; I saw one wound and some bruises on his arm.

Some 12 years ago I paid a visit to another Missionary, and at breakfast time, he spoke to his wife of the outrages of the neighbouring planter and of his threat of burning down a certain village ; at that time I was astonished to hear of such things occurring, and after breakfast, we both went to the top of the house, where he pointed out to me the direction of the village and I saw the smoke arising : I think it was in the cold season ; I was new to the country and did not understand these things. I have no personal knowledge of pulling down houses ; but I remember one case in particular about a *haut* ; I was then living in a tent for some days, and people pointed out to me where a good many shops and houses were standing, and affirmed that a certain planter had burned down the place. They did assign a reason, but I forget it, as it is so long ago now. A few miles from that place where I happened to pitch my tent, I saw another village with the vestiges of very respectable houses, which had evidently been inhabited by prosperous ryots ; I was also told that the planter had desolated the place, because the ryots would not agree to his terms ; it had the appearance of having been once a prosperous village. I know no instance of any outrages on women to my personal knowledge ; no one has ever complained to me of the abduction of his wife or daughter ; but only a few days ago the ryots of one village said in my presence, "we will tell the Commissioners what oppression they have practised on our women" ; I have not heard much on this head. I am quite sure that not one instance of the kind has happened to my Christian ryots.

781. Some of these cases happened some years ago ; can you give the Commission your opinion as to the particular causes which made the ryots so unwilling to sow this year ?—I believe one cause is the aggression of the Indigo Planters upon the ryots' lands for *nij* cultivation ; I mean particularly the fertile lands round the village, such as the foundation of old houses and dwellings which the planters have had dug up by their *Boona* coolies for their own cultivation ; the people are vexed at that, because if cows

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stray into the indigo unawares, they are fined for it and it deprives the village of its *privacy*.

Another cause is, the weeding of indigo with the weeding knife, which was not known a few years ago, which costs them a great deal of money, and deprives them at the same time of the leisure to attend to their own rice cultivation and other crops, to compel them to attend to indigo. In many cases, their ploughs are kept in charge of the factory people to secure attention to the *nij abad*, and during the weeding time in many instances their ploughs, horses, &c., are taken away and kept with the planters' servants, to ensure their attention to the weeding of the indigo. Another reason is the oppressive measure that has been resorted to to ensure the better growth of indigo, which is either breaking up the clods with hoes or removing the clods from off the field. No doubt another cause of the unwillingness of the ryots, is the high price of provisions and the unproductive nature of the indigo crops for the last few years; I have heard many ryots declare that they and their families are now on the point of starving. The ryots have not time to attend to the rice cultivation. I have seen many rice fields overgrown with weeds in consequence of the ryots not having time to attend to them, and in many cases the people cannot sow their rice, being compelled to attend to the indigo.

Another circumstance has, I think, given the ryots courage to bring their grievances to the notice of the authorities. The ryots of one village complained to the Magistrate of Kishnagur about the hard conditions they were placed under to the planters. Gradually several villages joined, and the movement having begun, before the time of making advances, the Magistrate released them from the obligation to cultivate indigo *forcibly*. This spread like wild-fire among the indigo ryots, and petition upon petition was poured into the Magistrate's Court. A *perwanna*—not the *perwanna* which has been so much discussed—was placarded by the Magistrate of the Sub-division. This encouraged the ryots to petition the Magistrate for redress.

782. Do you think that a well-known *perwanna* issued in the Kalaroa Sub-division had anything to do with the dislike of the ryots to sow, or that they imagined that it was the desire of Government that they should not sow?—I did not hear about the *perwanna* till I saw a discussion in the papers. Since that I have heard it from the ryots in a few instances, by way of allusion, some 3 or 4 months ago. The impression I have received is, the ryot thinks, that the Government intends administering even-handed justice, and will no longer allow the *forcible* cultivation of indigo. I lay particular stress upon the word *forcible*. If indigo cultivation were profitable to them, they would have no objection to cultivate it. At present they are as much afraid of indigo as of a snake; and many have declared most emphatically in my presence, that they would sow no more indigo under any circumstances. I have seen ryots stand up and say, (putting their hands up to their throats) "let the Government cut our throats and send soldiers to kill us with bullets, but we will not sow indigo."

783. Baboo Chunder Mohun Chatterjee. Have any of your Christians been imprisoned by the Summary Indigo Act?—No, because I persuaded them to submit to the Act this year; and several Hindoo and Mussulman villagers in the neighbourhood have followed the example of the Christians.

784. Mr. Sale.] Will you state what is the nature of the advice you have been giving to the ryots regarding the indigo question?—Before the passing of the Summary Act, I advised the ryots in my neighbourhood to submit quietly and patiently to the planters, and by no means to commit any outrage or any illegal act, and to carry their grievances to God; but in case they should be unable to forbear any longer, they should respectfully represent their hardships to the constituted authorities; and the ryots have done so.

785. If a poor man is oppressed, do you think he finds it easy to get redress from the authorities?—It is now much more easy than it ever was before, because several Magistrates have been appointed to Sub-divisions in the

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district, consequently the Officials have been increased, and the Courts being much nearer to their habitations, the ryots have found it more feasible to seek for redress; and as far as I know, the Magistrates have been much more accessible to the ryots than formerly, in consequence of the non-intervention of the *amlas*.

786. You said in a former answer that you lay a great stress upon the word "*forcible*," are we to understand from that, that the cultivation of indigo is in practice a forced cultivation?—Yes, as far as my knowledge goes.

787. Mr. Temple.] In what way is it a forced cultivation?—In the way I have already described it.

788. Mr. Sale.] But we are told that the ryots take advances and enter into contracts, and that having got the money, they try to evade them, is this true according to your belief?—I previously stated that a few of my Christians took advances some 15 years ago, but to the best of my belief, I have never seen any ryot, for the last 6 or 7 years, who has willingly taken advances except under a certain pressure.

789. Is that constraint always imposed by the planter?—I believe that in many instances the servants are to be blamed; they make a traffic by extorting money; I mean the smaller servants.

790. You have stated that indigo is not profitable, can you give us any proofs of that?—I put in a *jumma khurch* or regularly balanced account of 9 of my Christians. Those accounts are for the last season with the Nischindipore concern. They show the amount for the cultivation of each beegah of indigo at an average of 5 rupees, and the subsequent loss. In every case, there has been a loss to the ryot.

791. Mr. Temple.] Are those cases that you mention exceptional or fair average cases?—My opinion is that they are rather in favour of the planters.

792. Was this last season a good one, or a bad one?—It was a bad one.

793. Supposing the cultivation of indigo is in itself unprofitable to the ryot, does not the planter offer the ryot various collateral advantages, which, on the whole, might make it worth his while to sow?—I know of none such at present existing except in a few cases; in former times they had schools. In the Mulnath concern there was a hospital for men and women, besides the school. There were other schools in the out-villages.

794. Does not the planter lend sums of money to those ryots who give him satisfaction?—Besides the advances I know of none.

795. Is it not often a great convenience to the ryot to get the cash advances at the very time he wants money?—I know positively of a few instances mentioned above in which it was an advantage; but now I am not aware of their getting much money in hand in October, when the advances are made, and I think that the ryots would rather be left alone.

796. Does not the ryot ever place himself under engagement to the planter to obtain protection from him as against the zemindar?—I am not aware of any such instance.

797. In cases where the planter has acquired proprietary power either by means of lease, or *putni* tenure, or otherwise, does he not mitigate the rent upon the ryot's land generally, on condition that a portion of it be sown with indigo?—I am not aware of any instance.

798. On the whole, do you consider it possible, that so large a number of ryots could be absolutely forced to cultivate indigo for such lengthened periods, unless at least there were various inducements of some kind or other held out to overcome their unwillingness?—If the ryots enjoyed the benefits and protection of the law, like the English peasants or peasantry in Europe, I should consider it impossible; but the terror in which the ryots have been kept sufficiently accounts for their submission; besides that an erroneous opinion seems long to have existed among them, that the Government had a share in all their profits, and being loyal subjects, they submitted to the present necessity: as soon as they were disabused of that opinion, up they rose.

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799. At what time did a change in their opinion take place as to the interest of the Government in the indigo concern?—Gradually, for the last 6 months; light came upon light, and now they are quite sure the Government have no interest, as the Magistrates have given heed to their complaints.

800. Can you trace the origin of the change which has occurred within the last 6 months?—I cannot trace the origin, but the *perwannas* have had a great deal to do with it—I mean the Lieutenant-Governor's and Mr. Herschel's.

801. Have the ryots imbibed any impression that the Government is hostile to indigo cultivation, or that it desires that a fair opportunity should be afforded to the ryots?—I believe the latter to be the case: I believe the ryots entertain this opinion of Government that they will henceforth render indigo cultivation *optional*, and treat the Bengali ryots as *free subjects*.

802. You have stated that the Magistrates have admitted the ryots to a full hearing, could you state how they are heard now, and in what manner they were not heard before, *i. e.* what new mode of hearing now prevails?—Formerly all the petitions used to be written on stamp paper, and without the intervention of the *amlas* the ryots could scarcely come near the Magistrate; but now some of the Magistrates listen to their complaints in person.

803. Have not many ryots' balances in their favour to be received by them at the end of the year from the factory?—I believe a great many receive balances in their favour, but these are quite disproportioned to what is properly their due.

804. Is the compulsion you speak of on the part of the planter to the ryot moral or physical?—Both combined.

805. In those cases where the ryot has excess of *fazil* to receive, why does he take fresh advances?—He cannot help himself. There is such moral influence brought to bear upon him, that if he refused, physical force would be applied.

Commission adjourned at 5-30 P. M.

Tuesday, 29th May 1860.

PRESENT.

W. S. Seton-Karr, Esq., c. s., *President*.

Members.

R. Temple, Esq., c. s.
W. F. Fergusson, Esq.

Reverend J. Sale.
Baboo Chunder Mohun Chatterjee.

Reverend F. Schurr's examination continued.

806. Mr. Fergusson.] On behalf and at the desire of Mr. Forlong I have to enquire whether any of the instances of oppression, &c., related by you refer to that gentleman?—Yes, the second attempt to take away the lands from my Christians occurred when he was in charge of the Nischindipore concern;

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