TRUE TALES OF INDIAN LIFE

DWIJENDRA NATH NEOGI
B.A.

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BY

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CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS

In the annals of the Mahrattas a story is told of an incident which is said to have occurred during their campaign in Malwa. It is related that Bhji Rao Pashwa, their commander, having run short of provender, was at his wits' end as to where he might obtain a fresh supply. Accordingly he chose from his men a certain *náik* (captain) and sent him out at the head of a small body of men on a foraging expedition, but as the country had been laid waste and most of the inhabitants had fled, the troops had to march many a weary mile without seeing either a green field or an inhabited village. At last they came across a man going along a country path. The *náik* at once accosted him and asked him to guide him and his men to any cornfields that might be near. The man silently obeyed and led the way. After a little time they came to a cornfield, and overjoyed at the sight, the captain said, "This will do," and began to give his men orders to get in supplies, but the guide interrupted him saying, "Not here, sir. There is more further on," and, thinking that still better crops were near by, the *náik* ordered the troops to move on.

After marching for a full hour the man brought them to another cornfield, at the same time saying to the captain, "Here, sir, your men may gather all they want for themselves and their comrades." But you can judge of their surprise, not to say disappointment, when they saw a field no better than the one which they had left. Exasperated at his men having had to make a long and apparently useless march at a time when they were already footsore and weary, the *náik* spoke sharply to the man and rated him for having brought him to a field with no better crops than those they had seen an hour earlier. The man listened patiently, and then answered, "This field is my own, whereas the other was not. What right had I to stand by and see other people's property taken from them without payment of any sort when my own could be given?"

Perhaps no finer instance of regard for the belongings of others than this of a man whose name even is unknown to us has ever been recorded.

2

A GREAT SACRIFICE

Teg Bahadur, the Shikh guru, was beheaded at Delhi by order of the Emperor Aurangzebe, and at the same time an order was issued forbidding his relations either to remove the body or to give it proper burial, and so it came about that the body was left at the cross-roads where the execution had taken place exposed to the gaze of every passer-by. Now Teg had a son, Gurugovinda by name, then but a youth of sixteen, who resolved to

risk his all—even life if need be—to wipe out this insult to his father and at the same time frustrate the tyrant in his unholy purpose. Anxious not to associate anyone with him in an enterprise which he thought could only end in death, he set out for the Moghul capital alone and without a word to anyone.

On his way he met an old Shikh carter and his son, both of whom knew him and had also heard of his father's cruel death, and the still more cruel fate to which the body was destined. These poor men were loyal and devoted followers of the *guru*, and it was not long before they divined the purpose his young son had in proceeding to Delhi, which was, at the time, a veritable death-trap to all Shikhs. Foreseeing the great danger to which Gurugovinda was about to expose himself, the old Shikh reasoned with him thus: "I implore you, my holy one, not to go to Delhi except at the head of an army of your valiant Shikhs, to avenge the death of your father and our leader. But as there is now no time for that, we beg of you to remain here and let us go in your stead. Do not forget that you are now the only hope and stay of a whole nation. We beseech you not to risk your life, nay, throw it away as surely as one who stabs himself through the heart of set purpose."

The youth was at length prevailed upon by these and other arguments to return home, leaving to the carter and his son the hazardous enterprise which he had undertaken. Straightway the father and son turned their bullocks' heads towards the imperial city, and after a journey of some days reached it. Then, disguising themselves as Mussalmans, they entered it at nightfall. Wishing to attract as little attention

as possible, they remained in the less frequented parts of the city until midnight, when they drove to the place where the body of the *guru* lay. They then got out of the cart in which they had come, and, creeping stealthily up to the body, found much to their surprise that it was unguarded. Evidently the foul smell which had arisen had been too much for the sentinels, who had betaken themselves elsewhere and were in all probability by now fast asleep. Without loss of time the old man and his son lifted up the body tenderly and reverently and placed it in the cart.

Then, as both father and son had foreseen, a question had to be settled, which was nothing more nor less than which of them should sacrifice himself and leave his dead body to take the place of the *guru's*. They had each in their own minds decided that some such plan was necessary, as otherwise an alarm would have been given as soon as it was seen that the body had been removed ; a hue and cry would at once have been raised, and all their efforts would have been in vain, for needless to say the country would have been scoured and the remains brought back before they had got far on their way to distant Amritsar. In his own mind the father had firmly resolved that he should be the victim. As yet he had said nothing, but now he spoke out and declared his intention.

In vain his son tried to dissuade him from his purpose, and pleaded that his father's tact and foresight were indispensable, and further, that as he was one of three sons, his loss would not be felt so much. But his entreaties and arguments were of no avail. The old man was not to be moved from his purpose, and firmly but lovingly overruled his son's objections. Then,

having tenderly embraced his son in a last farewell, the father drew his dagger and stabbed himself through the heart, crying the while in a deep low voice, "*Guruji ka fateh*!" (victory to the *guru*).

Such is the tale of devotion and sacrifice which has been handed down to us.

3

A HIGH STANDPOINT

ONCE when the late Mahammad-ul-Nabi of Pandua was a deputy magistrate at Arrah, a *fakeer* wandered to his residence, and receiving a warm welcome stayed in his house for a considerable time. One day in course of conversation the Maulvi asked the holy man, "Where, in all your wanderings, have you, *fakeer shàheb*, met with the largest number of godly men?" The *fakeer* readily answered, "At Hardwar, one of the places of Hindu pilgrimage." This answer did not seem to please the orthodox Maulvi, who said impatiently, "*Fakeer shàheb*, I did not expect this answer from you, a Mussalman holy man. When I said *godly men*, I never meant Hindus, but Mussalmans." The *fakeer* smiled as he answered, "My son, take a more lofty view of things and you will see that the differences, great as they seem to you, between Hindus and Mussalmans will disappear. When a man, gazing from the top of a high mountain, looks down upon the country spread below him he perceives nothing of the heights and hollows, the hills and valleys which are there. All have vanished, and in their place appears a surface apparently flat and

smooth. In the same way, when God looks down upon mankind he recognises neither Hindu nor Mussalman, but sees only those who are engaged in His service."

4

FOR FRIENDSHIP'S SAKE

NIMÀI, afterwards famous as the great Chaitanya Dev, the founder of the religion of love, and Raghunàth, who in later life gained celebrity as the greatest Hindu philosopher of modern times, were loving friends. It is related that Nimài and Raghunàth had unknown to each other written commentaries on the great *nyàya* philosophy of Gâutam. Now, one day when the two were in a boat on the Ganges, Nimài, wishing to get his friend's opinion on his work, read it out to him. Great was his surprise to see Raghunàth sunk in despondence. Naturally, Nimài asked the reason for this, and after much pressing his friend, whose vivacity had gradually returned, said, "Don't mind me, dear friend, it was but a passing fit of jealousy, and now it has gone. The fact is, I too have written a commentary which I have called *Didhiti* on the philosophy of Gâutam, and I thought in the pride of my heart that mine was the best ever written. But yours is so far superior to mine in every way, that so long as your work is in existence, my *Didhiti* must not see the light of day." "Then my work shall exist no longer, my friend," said Nimài quickly, and before Raghunàth could guess what was in his friend's mind, he had torn his *puthi* (manuscript) to pieces and had thrown

them on the water. When we remember the surpassing merit of Raghunàth's *Didhiti*, we can faintly realise the excellence of Nimài's book and the sacrifice which he made on the altar of friendship.

5

DEATH THE RECONCILER

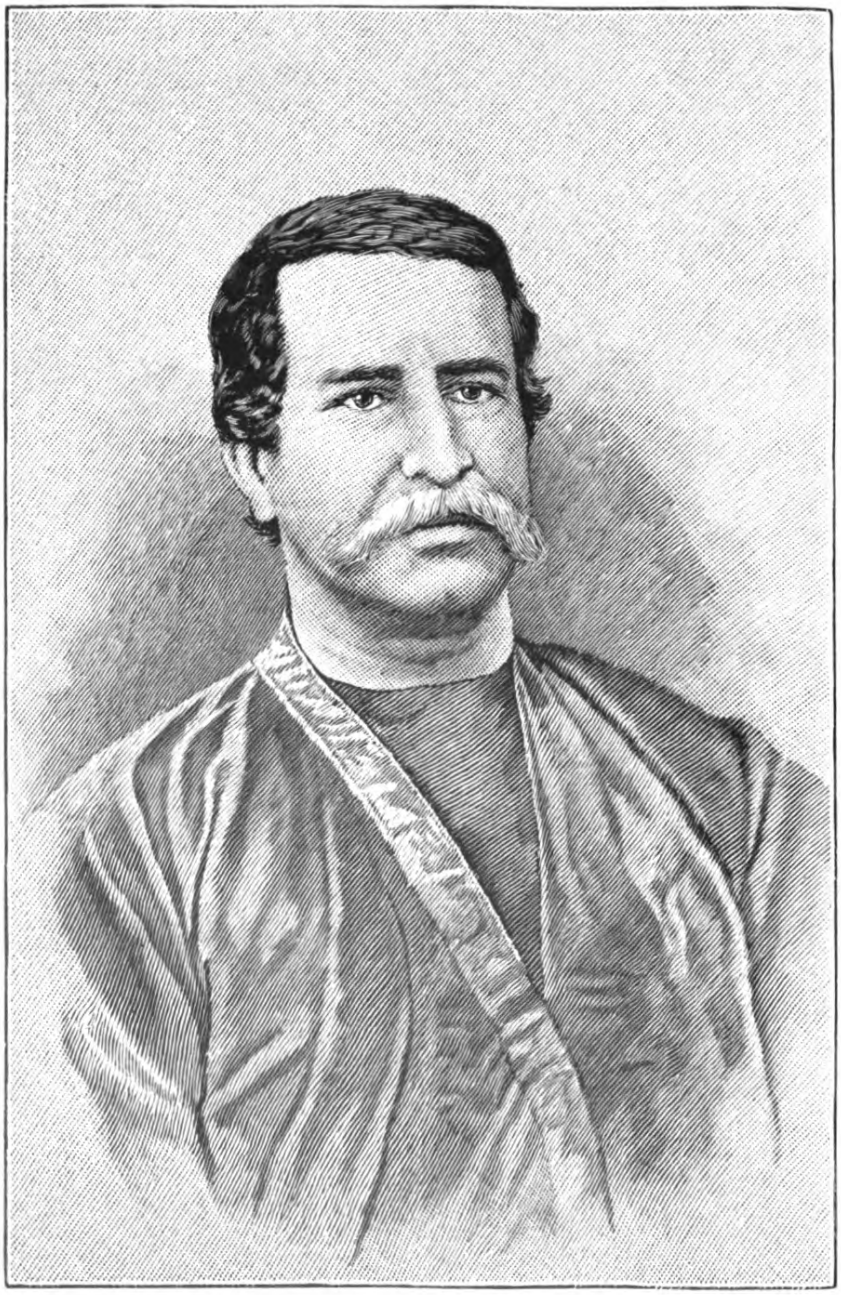
A STORY is told of the two young princes Protap and Sakta, of Mewar, who were both hot-headed and hasty-tempered, that on one occasion when out hunting they had become separated from their retinue and found themselves in the depth of a wood with no one but their family priest in attendance. They had not been there long when some trifling incident occurred which set the two youths aflame. Words ran high, until at length swords were drawn and they prepared for a mortal combat. Horrified at what he saw, the old priest implored them to desist, and used every entreaty and argument at his command that they might refrain from their purpose. With tears in his eyes he prayed them to remember what was due to their rank and position, and reminded them of the disaster which would befall their country if either of them met his death. But, notwithstanding the sanctity of his calling and the influence which at other times he was wont to wield, the words of the old priest fell upon deaf ears, and seeing no other way in which to save his beloved country from a calamity which he dared not contemplate, he drew his dagger and, rushing in between the two combatants, stabbed himself to the heart

saying, with his last breath, "Will *this* not make you stop?" Filled with horror at the sight, the two young princes stood gazing at the corpse. Then shedding bitter tears of repentance, they sheathed their swords and embraced each other, vowing that never again would they allow their passions to master them in such a way. From that time forth the two were changed men, and so the patriotic old Bràhman's self-sacrifice, which has been enshrined in the history of Mewar, was not in vain.

6

STORY OF ALI

ALI was the dearest disciple and son-in-law of the prophet. His life was spent in preaching of the Koran and fighting with unbelievers in order that he might convert them to the faith. On a certain field of battle a *kàfer* (an unbeliever) fought him with such obstinacy that he was not overcome until after a long and exhausting struggle. Sitting on the man's chest and holding his sword to his throat, Ali was on the point of dealing a death blow when of a sudden his vanquished foe spat in his face. It is related that the devoted follower of the prophet at once flung away his weapon, and standing aside allowed his antagonist to rise. Overcome with astonishment, the man asked, "Why have you not killed me?" Ali answered, "It was for the faith and the faith only that I took up arms. With no man as a man had I any quarrel until your action in spitting in my face roused in me a fierce hatred towards you. Sooner than sully



BHUDEV MUKHERJEE.

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the purity of the cause for which I fight by killing a man in anger and for a personal revenge I determined to free you, but now that I have put aside the temptation there is naught to prevent me from fighting once again for the true faith. So take up your sword and defend yourself." But instead of arming himself, the man threw himself at Ali's feet crying, " I am conquered —conquered, not so much by your steel as by the grandeur of your soul ; and true must be the faith that can make man so like to God ! "

This man was afterwards one of the most faithful of Ali's followers.

7

TRUE COURTESY

On one occasion Babu Bhudev Mukherjee paid a visit to Maurbhanja (Orissa) whilst inspecting schools in the district. Before going there he had heard it reported that the Rajah of Maurbhanja was a man who, apparently unmindful of his birth and rank, adopted a cringing attitude towards those with whom he was brought in contact. It was even said that when one of the magistrates in his district called upon him he would help him off his horse or out of his carriage, follow him meekly into his own drawing room, and fan him with his own hands, so forgetful was he of his position. " How shameful," said everyone, " to think that one who bears a name known throughout all Orissa should so demean himself ! "

When Bhudev Babu arrived at the palace-gate, he found the Rajah standing there to receive him. He

helped the Bengalee gentleman out of his palanquin, welcomed him with a smile lighting up his face, walked behind him into his drawing room, fanned him with his own hands; in short, treated him with the same lavish hospitality characterised by warmth of feeling and simplicity of manner as was traditional in his ancient house and enjoined by the *shàstnas* (the holy books).

Now in all this there was nothing different to the manner in which he had behaved towards the magistrate, who was a man of great influence, whereas the Bengalee school inspector, though a very worthy gentleman, had no power for good or ill over the fortunes of the Rajah. Thus it was clear that what common report described as subservience was, in fact, the essence of good manners, inasmuch as all those who came to his house, whatever their rank might be, were treated with perfect equality and with the same attention. Little wonder was it that when his character became more fully known the Rajah was beloved by all.

8

MOTHER AND SON

THERE was once a very poor Bràhman named Kàshinàth Gànguli. This man had never married and dwelt with his aged mother, to whom he was devotedly attached. Now it so happened that the district in which he lived was ill supplied with water, and his mother had to fetch water from a distance.

Now, as she was old and gradually becoming infirm, this greatly pained her son, and his grief can be imagined

when one day, as she was returning with her pitcher, the old woman slipped and fell, hurting herself severely. The shock was too much for the poor woman, who contracted a fever and died in a few days, to the inexpressible sorrow of her devoted son.

The Bràhman's agony of mind was intense, as he felt convinced that it was owing to his not having provided a tank of drinking water for his mother that she had met her death. Bitterly reproaching himself, he resolved to dig a tank for public use as the best means of making amends for his previous neglect. He then performed the usual *sràddha* ceremony (funeral rites) as best as he could, but made a vow that until he had completed his self-appointed task he would consider his obligation to his mother's memory unfulfilled.

Having no money, he was forced to beg for alms from the villagers and others in the neighbourhood. But when they heard what he proposed to do, they only laughed at him, telling him that no one but a madman would dream of making a tank in such a place, people had managed without one before, and so forth. But he was not to be dissuaded, and returning home took up a spade, and having no other place in which to dig began to turn up the soil in his own homestead, and to such purpose that in a few months the place where his hut had stood was nothing more than a large ditch. When the neighbours saw this they scoffed at him more than ever, and were now firmly convinced that he had lost his reason, but in spite of all he persisted in his task.

Now it so happened that about this time the wealthy Dewàn Gangàgovinda Sinha, founder of the Paikpara zaminder family, was celebrating in great

state the *sràddha* of his mother and giving away large sums of money, gifts of land, and herds of cattle to Bràhmans. The whole country was ringing with praises of his munificence, and the news naturally came to the ears of our Bràhman, who made up his mind to ask for a gift of money. But, alas, on going to the great man's dwelling he found he was too late, and the servants went to turn him from the door. Incensed at this treatment, the Bràhman could not refrain from blurting out, "For all your boast about the magnificence of the *sràddha* which your master has performed, I tell you, man, and I care not who hears it, that my mother's *sràddha* which I commenced five months ago and have not yet finished will be a greater and more splendid achievement." Some one immediately carried this remark to the Dewàn, who was greatly enraged and had the Bràhman brought before him with all speed. Addressing him in angry tones, he bade him explain the meaning of his insolence. Kàshinàth was prompt in his answer: "Ràjà, you have given liberally to the Bràhmans and others who have come to you, yet, in spite of all, you are not a whit the poorer and will live no less comfortably after all you have given away. But I have parted with my all and more than all and have not yet accomplished what I set out to do to gratify the soul of my dead mother." He then related the whole story of his mother's death, and to what he attributed it, the task he had set himself, and how, for want of land and money and help, he had turned his humble dwelling place itself into a ditch, and how he had been digging away, weak as he was, with his own hands for five months past, and yet seemed to be no nearer the end of his labours. "Ràjà," added the Bràhman, his

emotions getting the better of him, " having spent all that I was worth on the *sràddha* of my mother, I have lacked food since her death, no roof have I had to shelter me nor help from my fellow men. My body is wasted, my strength is leaving me and my hands are little more than skin and bone, yet will I labour till they drop off sooner than forego the accomplishment of my vow. Do you any longer marvel at my saying that the *sràddha* which I am performing for the soul of my mother is greater than yours ? "

Greatly moved at the Bràhman's recital, the Dewàn answered with equal warmth : " Yes, a thousand times yes ; and by *Hari*, our Lord, I will see to it that your vow is fulfilled. No more shall you suffer, and as for food and shelter, these you will have in my own house, where I entreat you to live henceforth as my most honoured guest."

Soon the tank was excavated at the Dewàn's expense, and known by the name of the Bràhman's mother, it has ever since been a boon to the inhabitants of the district.

9

HIS WORD WAS HIS BOND

Of Krishna Pàuti, the founder of the family of the wealthy Pàlchandhuris of Ranaghat, the story is told that in the course of business he once made a verbal contract with an English trader to supply him with a large quantity of *àtaḥ* (sunned) rice. Now, when the bargain was struck, business was very slack and prices correspondingly low, and so it happened that the rates

agreed upon were much less than at ordinary times. But very soon afterwards, owing to heavy rains having destroyed the crops in many parts of Bengal, prices began to rise again, until at the time fixed for the delivery they were three times as great as when Krishna Pàuti and his English customer had entered into their arrangement.

In the meantime the latter, who looked upon the unwritten contract as a mere proposal which in no way bound either party and which certainly gave him no claim on Krishna Pàuti, particularly, under the altered circumstances, had no thought of demanding its fulfilment of the Bengalee contractor. But to Krishna Pàuti matters seemed very different. He was a man on whom a spoken word was as binding as a written one, and wishing to complete the contract he sent for the Englishman. Much wondering what Krishna Pàuti might want, the latter called upon him. Judge of his astonishment, which was only equalled by his admiration of the man's honesty, when the Bengalee requested him to take immediate delivery of the rice at the price which had been verbally agreed upon.

In spite of the Englishman's protests, Krishna gave his orders, and speedily a long string of coolies began to load his customer's boat with bags of rice. Not until about one-third of the quantity bargained for was shipped could the Englishman, with cries of "Enough! enough! my boat will sink if we take any more of this good man's things," get the men to desist.

Such is the story told of Krishna Pàuti.

10

THE BEJEWELLED CARPET

OMAR of Bagdad was, perhaps, the truest representative on earth of Mahammad, the Prophet, and the godliest among his successors. Persia was conquered and partly brought within the fold of Islam during his lifetime. As general of the conquering armies, he brought in an immense booty from that country. All was sold and the proceeds distributed impartially among the true believers. There was one particularly rich and beautiful carpet, studded with jewels of great value, which the general kept back from the sale and made a respectful present of to Omar to use as a prayer rug.

The good man did not wish to hurt the general's feelings by refusing the precious gift, though, simple man that he was, he felt that the carpet was much too grand for his use.

Once only did he kneel on it at prayer. But in his soul he felt far from comfortable; his prayers that evening failed to inspire him, soothe him, or fill him with joy such as he had experienced when his coarse camel-hair carpet was under him. True humility he felt was inconsistent with luxurious, dainty surroundings, and filled with such thoughts he spent the whole night walking up and down the room filled with remorse at the sin he felt he had committed, and praying for forgiveness. In the morning he gave it to his men to sell and put the money into the public treasury that it might do the most good to as many as possible.

11

THE SICK STRANGER

Of the saintly Mahammad Maruf of Aligarh it is related that a stranger once came to his house and begged hospitality for the night. He was made welcome, and everything was done for his comfort. During the night the visitor was taken ill and had to be specially looked after. At daybreak the man was no better, and day after day went by, during which he needed most careful nursing. This was given to him by Maruf and his wife, who did not spare themselves. Night after night they sat up watching by the sick man's bed and ministering to his needs as best they could. After a time the man grew querulous, and began to complain of carelessness and inattention on the part of his host and hostess. Notwithstanding all this, Maruf did not take the man's ingratitude to heart nor did he slacken in his efforts for his welfare, but his wife, made of baser metal, was not willing to endure this treatment in silence, and would go off into ill-humour against the guest, and spoke her mind pretty plainly to the sick man. To her Maruf would say, " Wife, remember that the man is ill and in pain. His complaints, unreasonable though they may be, ought to be excused. Have you not seen people in a delirium of fever bite their own hands ? But we who are, by God's grace, sound in body and, I hope, also in mind can have no excuse for being angry with a man who, owing to bodily pain, is not altogether responsible for his actions."

12

GRATITUDE

ONE more story about Krishna Pàuti, some commendable traits of whose character have already been noticed and illustrated. He was a man who never forgot a kindness, however old, nor was he ever satisfied until he could repay it, as the following incident proves. Both he and his younger brother, Shambhu Chandra, in their early youth were very poor, and were dependent upon their own exertions for the bare means of existence. They made a scanty living by selling betel-leaves at the weekly market at Gàngnàpur, some miles away from their home. The walk was a long one for the youths, and often when returning from the market they were worn out with hunger and fatigue. A poor Bràhman, who lived close to the road by which they had to pass, noticed the two brothers more than once, and seeing their laggard steps and tired looks, used, poor as he was, to call them in and give them a simple meal of *pànta-bhàt* (watered rice) or *moà* (balls of fried and sugared rice).

Years afterwards, when one of the erstwhile betel-leaf-sellers had become the wealthy Krishna Chandra Pàlchandhuri, merchant and landowner of Ranaghat, an old Bràhman was one morning found tottering near the millionaire's offices. By great good fortune he attracted the notice of the master himself, who asked him who he was and what brought him there. He gave him his name and that of his native village, and also his business. He was a *ryat* (tenant), he said, of the Pàlchandhuri's (he had no idea that he was speaking to the Pàlchandhuri

himself), and some of his belongings had been taken by the landlord's agents for non-payment of rent which he was at the time too destitute to pay. Further questioning made it clear to Krishna Chandra that the Bràhman was none other than he who had been so kind to him and his brother, Shambhu, and had helped them in the days of poverty. No sooner did he realise this than, taking the old Bràhman tenderly by the hand, he brought him to the office where Shambhu sat surrounded by his clerks. Then said Krishna, "Shambhu, have you forgotten the Bràhman who used to feed us with *pànta-bhàt* and *moà* on our way home from market at Gàngnàpur? Oh Shambhu, it cannot be that you have forgotten this good man's kindness to us in the dark days of our boyhood!"

He said nothing more, nor did Shambhu need any further reminder. From that time forward the two brothers saw to it that the Bràhman's needs were satisfied. His debts were paid, his lands were freed, and his life thereafter was one continual happiness.

13

DEVENDRANÀTH TAGORE

DEVENDRANÀTH TAGORE, the revered father of Rabindranàth Tagore, Bengal's poet of world-wide fame, inherited vast estates from his father; but, unfortunately, the property was saddled with enormous debts, which it became his business to deal with. Now it happened that the estates were so entailed that the creditors could not touch them, nor could any legal steps

be taken to compel Devendranàth to pay his father's debts if he refused to do so.

It was, however, far from Devendranàth's purpose to defraud his father's creditors In all probability young Tagore knew of the *shàstric* warning that until their debts were paid the souls of the dead were not at rest. But even if he knew nought of this, the love which he bore for his father would have been too strong to have allowed him to leave his debts unpaid, and so he determined that, cost what it might, no creditor should go unsatisfied.

With this object in view he called his father's creditors together and offered to place all his vast estates in their hands, since there was little ready money to pay their demands, and let them remain in possession until their claims had been fully satisfied. One reservation, and one only, was made, which was that a small sum, barely sufficient for the actual needs of himself and the family, should be paid to him from the income of the estate. Honesty was met by generosity. The creditors, struck by the filial piety and upright conduct of the young heir, refused to take any course of action which might in the remotest way imply distrust, and determined to leave the property entirely in the hands of young Tagore, quite content to be paid in such time as he could arrange. And although many years had to pass before all the debts were cleared off, yet in the end every creditor was paid in full.

Even when the debts had all been settled, Devendranàth did not consider himself free to use the estates as he liked. He remembered that his father had expressed a wish to endow a charitable dispensary with a *lakh* of rupees, but that death had intervened before he

could fulfil his desire. The dutiful son, to whom a father's wish, though that father were dead, was law, resolved that this endowment must be the first charge on the estates after the liquidation of the debts. He carried out his all-praiseworthy resolution, and in so doing justly earned the esteem of all right-thinking men.

14

HIS MASTER'S PROPERTY

RÀMDULÀL was employed as an assistant bill-*sarcàr* (a clerk to whom accounts are paid) by a rich merchant of Calcutta, Madanmohan Dutta by name, on a monthly salary of five rupees. As a young man Ràmdulàl was hard-working, honest, dutiful and resourceful, and these qualities gained for him the confidence of his master. As a result the latter gradually entrusted him with greater responsibilities. Bills for large amounts were given him to realise, and thus it happened that he was often the bearer of considerable sums of money which he was bringing back to the firm.

Once, when on a business journey, he was carrying with him a large amount of cash from Dumdum. There were no railways in those days, and the country between Dumdum and Calcutta, and indeed parts of Calcutta itself, were covered with patches of jungle and marsh-lands and infested by tigers and robbers, and human habitations were few and far between. It was in this district that Ràmdulàl found himself one evening when but half way home. It was rapidly growing dark and he began to feel anxious, fearing for the safety of his

master's money. His first idea was to seek shelter in some house, but the thought that the householder himself might rob him deterred him. Yet it clearly would not do to hold on to his course and brave the outlaw and the tiger with the money which he was carrying. So he took off all his clothes except a piece of linen, which he tied round his waist, and then hid them and the money in a thicket near one of the houses. He then covered himself with dust from the road side, and under the disguise of a *fakeer*, whom no one would suspect of having anything of value with him, lay down under a tree in the outer courtyard of the house. Thinking he was a *fakeer* no one interfered with him, and he was left to his own devices. Some time before day-break, he started up, and, still unobserved, put on his clothes, and taking his bag of money from its hiding place resumed his journey, eventually reaching his master's office, where he delivered his precious burden.

15

A REWARD FOR HONESTY

THIS same good man, Ràmdulàl, was later appointed a ship-*sarcàr* by his master. In this capacity he had to look after the loading and unloading of ships at the wharves on behalf of his firm, which did a large export and import business. After having served a few years in this department he became a wonderfully skilful calculator of the quantity and value of a ship's cargo. His judgment in other directions also became no less acute. For instance, if a ship lay partially sunk in

the Hughli, as not infrequently happened owing to the numerous accidents there, he could tell upon inspection of her whether she could be floated again, how much of the cargo could be recovered, and what sum it should realise.

One day, it so happened, his master, Madanmohan Dutta, sent him to Tàlà, a suburb of Calcutta, with Rs. 14,000 in paper money wherewith to buy some property at a public auction to be held there. On his way he had to pass along the river-bank, and there he saw a newly arrived ship with her cargo undischarged lying partly under water off the wharf. He inspected the vessel as thoroughly as possible and made his calculations as to the amount of damage she had suffered and the value of the cargo lost in her. He then went on his way to the sale, but he had delayed too long at the wharf and found that the property had already been disposed of when he arrived at the auction room. He was much upset, but at the same time could not get the ship and its cargo out of his mind, so on his way home he went again to the wharf just as the boat and its contents were being offered for sale. There were not many people there, and the bidding was poor and slack. Ràmdulàl saw his opportunity, and regardless of the fact that the money in his pocket was his master's, that he had barely a hundred rupees in the world to call his own and had no authority for what he was doing, began bidding, and finally had the cargo knocked down to him for Rs. 14,000.

Within an hour of this happening an Englishman came panting to the spot and haughtily bade Ràmdulàl give up his purchase and take back his money. Ràmdulàl very naturally refused, whereupon the stranger said

that the sale had not been a legal one and threatened all kinds of actions, but, knowing that he had done no wrong, Ràmdulàl refused to be bullied. Seeing that he was on the wrong tack, the Englishman then had recourse to cajolery and tried to coax him to give up his bargain, for such it was. This course also failed, and the stranger, seeing that he had to deal with a man of business, came to the point and offered Ràmdulàl 20—30—50—75—100—and lastly, 114 thousand rupees for his purchase. This last offer he accepted, and a cheque for the amount changed hands.

It was late in the evening when Ràmdulàl returned to his master. He dreaded his displeasure for not having bought the property at the auction at Tàlà, as he had been told to do. Nor was he at all sure how he would view the transaction at the wharf. But, afraid though he was of what might result, he did not delay telling the whole story to his master, who listened with astonishment, which was in no way lessened when Ràmdulàl placed the cheque before him. "Like master, like man," is the old saying. In this case it might well have been inverted. Madanmohan Dutta stood up, beaming with joy, not at the gain of a *lakh* of rupees, but at the unparalleled honesty and faithfulness of the man, and warmly embraced him. And he was as generous as Ràmdulàl was loyal, for he gave him the whole sum which had been so astutely made, saying, "Dear Ràmdulàl, take it as a reward for your honesty. May the money prove a blessing to you!"

And a blessing it proved to be, not only to Ramdulàl himself, but also to many others. With its aid he built up a vast business, eventually trading with America in his own ships. So large did this business become

that he used to be called the Rothschild of Bengal by American merchants.

16

TIPOO SULTAN AND HIS SONS

In January, 1792, Tipoo Sultan was driven into a tight corner. Lord Cornwallis, aided by the Mahrattas, had taken all his mountain forts and was advancing upon Seringapattam, the capital. Tipoo held the fort in person for a time, but soon lost heart and sued for peace. Lord Cornwallis granted it on condition that the Sultan should give up half his kingdom, that he should pay 330 *lakhs* of rupees as a war-indemnity, and that—this was the sorest condition of all—he should place his two sons in the hands of the English Governor-General as security for his good faith. Peace made on such terms could hardly be a lasting one, and it was plain that the Sultan would seize the first opportunity which offered itself to again try conclusions with his conquerors. But that is another story.

The two sons of Tipoo were Prince Abdul Khaleque, who was ten years of age, and Prince Mujauddin, a boy of eight. Deceitful and crafty in most of his dealings with the enemy, the Sultan resolved to play a trick on the English, and made up his mind to substitute two other boys in the place of the two princes, and palm them off on the Governor-General as his own. The few to whom the Sultan confided his plan did not approve of it, but had not the courage to offer advice, far less to remonstrate, for Tipoo was a despot of despots, and any opposition to his purpose did not bode well

for those who made it. His plans were, however, to be thwarted from an unexpected quarter, and this is what happened.

Prince Abdul Khaleque waited on his father one morning, and in the course of some boyish talk, asked, "Father, when are my brother and I to go and live with the English?" The father thought that it was the boy's unwillingness to leave parents, home, and all that home implies, as well as his dread of the English which had prompted the inquiry, so he answered tenderly and encouragingly, "No, my boy, do not fear; you will not go to the dreaded English. Two other boys will personate you and your brother, and take your places." "What should we be afraid of?" cried the young prince. "If you do not quarrel again with the English we boys have nothing to fear from them. Besides how degrading to your rank and ours for two sons of the people to personate us of the blood royal! And, above all, why should we stoop to deceit even though its success were assured, which it is not and cannot be."

These words, from the young prince, were so entirely unexpected that they struck the Sultan with the force of an injunction from the Koran, and then and there he gave up his plan and determined to send his sons to the English camp as he had promised.

17

A MAHÀRÀNI'S KINDNESS

MAHÀRANI SARATSUNDARI of Putia was possessed of qualities of the heart such as are seen in but few men and

women. Of these her keen sympathy and delicate regard for the feelings of others were most conspicuous. One out of many instances is given here.

Wishing to find a suitable wife for her adopted son, she sent men of judgment and taste far and wide to look for a maiden who, so far as birth, beauty, character and education were concerned, should leave nothing to be desired. Now her son was one of the richest heirs in Bengal at the time, and, as was to be expected, the fathers who were honoured by the visits of the Màharàni's men earnestly prayed that the choice might fall on their daughters. In the end two damsels were selected as best fulfilling all requirements; but so difficult was it to choose between them that when the Mahàràni saw them side by side she hardly knew to which of the two to give the preference, as they were both so exquisitely lovely, each in her own style of beauty and apparently equally matched in other respects. After much consideration one was chosen, as only one could be, by a sort of mental lottery. But the Mahàràni was extremely sorry for the other, sorry to deprive her of the great good fortune of being the future mistress of such vast estates as hers. And with a delicacy of sympathy, a tenderness rare to meet with, she resolved to do all in her power for the less fortunate of the two girls and give her as good a start in life as possible. This she soon did by marrying her to the son of a wealthy landowner in her part of the country, and so long as she lived, she heaped kindnesses and presents on the happy pair.

18

STORY OF VIDYÀSÀGAR

It is said of that great and good man, Vidyàsàgar, that his love of his fellow-beings fulfilled the highest ideal of human benevolence. The instances of his "good will to all" and his kind actions are numerous. I shall give one below.

Once upon a time he met at a bathing *ghàt* on the Calcutta side of the Hughli an elderly man seated on one of the steps, the very image of melancholy and despair. He watched him for some time, and then approached him softly and sat by his side. He tried his best to draw him into conversation, as he wished to know the reason of his demeanour. But the melancholy man repelled his advances either by making no answers at all, or, when silence was impossible, confining them to mere monosyllables. But in the end sympathy dissolved the ice a little; and the man, still apparently thinking that it was impertinence on the part of Vidyàsàgar to question him on his private affairs, told him his name and his place of residence, and, in as few words as possible, the cause of his grief. It transpired that he had borrowed largely in order to give his daughter in marriage, and had not been able to pay the debt; that the creditor had gone to law against him, and was sure to obtain a decree the next day—which was the date fixed for the hearing of the case at the Court of Small Causes. Then, farewell to his dear old home, the home of his fathers, said he, for he would be ejected from it with his wife and children (the house had been mortgaged to his creditor) and he might even be sent to jail.

This much only he said, then abruptly got up and hurried away.

The next morning, as soon as the office of the court was opened, Vidyàsàgar was there inquiring minutely of the officials who were acquainted with the case of the man to whom he had talked on the previous day. He found his statements to be correct, and understood that his fears of a decree against him and of the subsequent evils were only too likely to be fulfilled. He also ascertained by careful inquiry the whole amount of the defaulter's liabilities; and having done so, this man of wonderful charity out of his pocket paid the money—his own hard-won money—deposited it with the proper officer and came away.

When, an hour or so afterwards, the debtor, faced by ruin as he thought, came to the court, he could hardly believe his ears when he was told that his liabilities had been paid off and that he was free. He made many inquiries that day and for long afterwards to find out who his benefactor was, but although he suspected that it was the man who had thrust himself upon him at the *ghàt*, he never found out who or what he was. Nor did Vidyàsàgar give any cue. For he was a man who would not let his left hand know what his right hand gave.

19

STORY OF THE MUTINY

THE narrative here given is from the journal of a Bengalee whose name has not come down to us.

In the stormy times of the Sepoy mutiny, so it runs,

I was at Delhi in the service of Mr. Fraser, the Commissioner. At daybreak on Monday, 11th May, 1857, news was received at Delhi that the Sepoys at Meerat had risen, had killed their officers and any other Europeans whom they could lay their hands on, had plundered the treasury, and were on their way to our city. On receipt of this news, Mr. Fraser sent for me. I had been long known to him and enjoyed his confidence. He had shown me many favours and seemed to entertain a good opinion of me. Hardly had I bid him good-morning when he said, "Have you heard the news from Meerat?" Upon my answering in the affirmative, he spoke again slowly and distinctly, as was his wont when he had made up his mind to any course of action, "From now until the Sepoys come I shall have my hands full," said he; "there will be a hundred things to be seen to and put in readiness, for the city must be defended whilst there is a man left, and I, too, shall have to fight. But above and beyond all this, I have one great anxiety, which is the safety of my wife, who, I am resolved, must leave the city immediately, and you must escort her. She will be your special charge, and I trust to you for her safety. Do not raise objections, as I am quite determined about the matter, and refuse to consider any other suggestion, so come to my house in an hour's time prepared for the journey."

I did not hesitate, for the trust reposed in me gave me a confidence in myself such as I had never felt before. I simply said, "I will do my best," and left.

During the hour allowed me for the preparation, I had much to think about and much to do. My wife was at our distant village home in Bengal at the time; so I had no anxiety about her, but all the personal

property which I had in the world was in my house at Delhi, which was close to the European quarter. There was no time to remove them; so the best I could do was to lock them up in the house, and chance their escaping the notice of the mutineers. I only took out my cash and jewellery, which were easily carried. Then, going to the bazar, I bought two suits of clothes of the commonest quality, such as poor Mussalman men and women wear. Having done this, I hastened to Mr. Fraser's, and found him and his wife in the drawing room seated hand-in-hand and talking in a low voice. As soon as I came in, Mr. Fraser said, "I have just now been informed that the main body of the Sepoys are within twenty-five miles of the city; their scouts are, of course, nearer. Are you ready? The *mem-shàheb* is." Now, I had already put on my Mussalman dress and said, as I handed him the woman's outfit, "I am ready; only let the lady wear these clothes, slippers and all, and thus disguise herself as a Mussalman woman. They both consented; and while Mrs. Fraser retired to put them on, Mr. Fraser handed me two pistols, a bag of cartridges, a letter of credentials, and some money in gold and silver. I said, "This money, sir, together with my own and this case of jewellery will be in our way more than anything else, and in any case we shall not want much money on the way. Give me ten minutes to run to the house of my friend, the banker, Àmir Khàn, whom you know, and let me leave what is not actually needed with him to keep for us until we claim it again."

Being given leave, I ran to Àmir Khàn, who smiled when he saw my Muslim garb, and said, "Allah! Babu Shàheb, how long is it since you became a true believer?" "Only half-an-hour or so," said I, "but take

this purse and this case of jewellery and keep them for me. You know the Sepoys are coming. I am flying from the city." With that I hurried away.

Mr. Fraser had provided a camel for us, and as he helped his wife on to the animal's back, I was most impressed by the intense sadness of the parting. Hardly a word was said by either, but one knew that both felt it might be a final farewell. Nor did Mr. Fraser speak a word to me. He only looked at me steadily for a minute, then waved his hand in sign of farewell, and off we started.

Now, I had a Hindu friend who lived in a village twelve miles off, on the road to Meerat, and it was to his house that I had decided to go. There was some risk in doing this, as the mutineers were known to be coming through part of the district which we had to cross. However, commending myself and my charge to God, we set out and had travelled a little over eight miles without any mischance, and had begun to feel confident of our safe arrival at our destination, when suddenly a loud shout rang through the air in front of us. It was quickly followed by another and yet another, until, after going round a sharp turn in the road, we beheld a large body of men about half-a-mile away from us. I looked at Mrs. Fraser behind me. She was ghastly pale and seemed ready to faint. I did not expect this, and it added considerably to my own fears. I told her that although the Sepoys were before us, yet we might safely pass them, for in her disguise, her face being completely and thickly veiled, they would not suspect her to be an Englishwoman, and, as for me, I was a Mussalman, whom they would not molest. I earnestly begged her to be herself—a brave-hearted English lady—and to

bear herself as such, for on it our safety depended. I told her how proud Mr. Fraser would be to hear that she had not failed at the critical moment. This appeal had the desired effect and restored her power of self-control.

I drove the camel, as I had been doing, straight on, only keeping to one side of the road. The insurgents were soon upon us. They were a rabble mob, begrimed with dust and streaming with sweat and armed with every kind of weapon—guns, swords, axes, lances, and clubs. As they drew nearer, a small active man detached himself from among them, and, springing forward, brandished a rusty sword above his head and shouted out, "Who are you?" "Where are you going?" "We are travellers bound for Meerat, *jonàbàli* (your honour)," answered I readily, without the least hint, fear or hesitation in my voice. Whereupon another man cried out from amongst them in a tone of command, "Let them pass."

It was with a most comfortable sigh of relief that we heard that command, and I lost not a second in putting our camel to its pace. I did not dare to urge it to its fastest trot for fear of arousing suspicion; and the few moments which it took us before we had seen the last of the rebel throng seemed to us like an eternity. We had no more trials, however, thank God, and reached my friend's house filled with gratitude at our escape. We were warmly welcomed and made to feel as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

Early next day I returned to Delhi, anxious to hear what had happened, and above all desirous for news of Mr. Fraser. When I arrived the city was in an uproar and confusion. The Sepoys in the barracks had made

common cause with the mutineers from Meerat, and a large part of the citizens also had risen and joined them. They had killed all the Europeans they could lay hands on, and had plundered right and left, my house and that of Àmir Khàn, the banker, being among those broken into ; and I heard—alas ! alas !—that Mr. Fraser had been one of their earliest victims.

I was overcome by the news of Mr. Fraser's death. My grief was intensified by the painful necessity of my having to break the news to his wife, as I felt it would break her heart. And I was not far wrong ; for, on my return to my friend's house, she seemed to know from my face and manners almost before I had opened my lips that the worst had happened and swooned away in my arms. Very tenderly did we—my friend, his wife, his sister and myself—tend her through her subsequent illness. But it was of no avail. Within a month the poor lady followed her husband to the grave, dying of a broken heart.

20

A FAITHFUL STEWARD

THE same journal continues :

After Mr. Fraser's death I left upper India and lived in my village home in Bengal until the mutiny was suppressed and order was restored. In the spring of 1861 I revisited Delhi, and before I had been there two days, I received a message from Àmir Khàn asking to see me. The message was a pleasant surprise, and it made me very happy, as I had given him up for dead. Nobody had been able to give me any news of him,

although everyone agreed that on the day after the mutineers' entry into the city, his house had been looted and murder done. It can accordingly be imagined with what delight I hastened to my friend, and with what warmth I greeted him. Much had happened since we last saw each other, and there was much to talk about. After giving me many new details about the horrors of the mutiny, my friend then turned to me and said: "But now, my friend, a heavy load is lifted off my mind, for I can, at last, make over to you what is yours." "What is mine!" exclaimed I. "Do you mean the money and jewellery I deposited with you? How could they escape the looters' hands?" "Your property was saved through my carelessness," he answered. "When you gave me the purse and the case of jewellery, I threw them into an old wooden box in a corner of the office, meaning to remove them into one of my iron safes later on. I was very busy at the time and had no opportunity of putting them away, whilst the bewildering events which soon followed put the whole matter completely out of my mind. The mutineers came and carried off my iron safes, killing three of my men who guarded them, but they took no notice of the old wooden box. Thus was your property saved. Soon after the pillagers had left, I betook myself into the country with the wrecks of my fortune and your money and jewels. Later on it was this very money of yours that helped me to make a fresh start in business, and a little over two years ago I returned to the old house; but fortune has not favoured me again as she did in olden times, my business has not prospered as it might. But, notwithstanding all this, I can pay you back the money which you entrusted to my care

together with interest, and I shall, of course, also return you your jewellery, which is still quite safe. I would have done so before now if I had known where to find you."

Here, indeed, was honesty of a rare quality. In the destruction of his house and the entire loss of his property in gold, silver, and paper, I could never have dared to hope that mine alone should be saved. And if it were, many a man less honest than Àmir Khàn would have concealed the fact. But not only did he take steps to return my savings, but in addition wished to pay interest, and this at a time when I knew he must be hard put to it to find the principal.

21

A CONSCIENTIOUS MAN

Babu Niemàdhab Mukhuji, concerning whom the following story is told, was a munsiff. It happened that he wanted to insure his life, and for this purpose went to an insurance company. There he was examined by their doctor and certified to be in good health and free from any disease. On the strength of this his life was accepted; but scarcely had he paid two quarterly premiums before he was taken ill with a complaint which must have long been present in his system. He at once saw that the doctor who had examined him some months previously had overlooked the fact, and that owing to this mistake he had been accepted by the insurance company, who assuredly would not have entered into the contract had they known the true state

of affairs. This thought worried him greatly, as he felt that he would be cheating the company if he kept them to their bargain as many a less scrupulous man would have done, so what does this upright Babu do but write to the agent explaining all the circumstances and releasing the company from their obligations. What an example to the worldly wise !

22

RETURNING GOOD FOR EVIL

Tir Salàr Jung, Dewàn of the Nizam's state, was a great man. The words "great man" are used not because of the position which he held nor the power which was his, but as a tribute to the true nobility of his soul and character. The following story is an instance.

The great Sepoy mutiny broke out during his term of office. Sepoys in almost every part of India joined in, and an almost universal conflagration resulted. The Nizam's Sepoys amongst others showed signs of restlessness, and there were evil-minded people among the upper classes who were ready to fan the smouldering fire. But Salàr Jung, who was loyal to the heart's core to the British suzerainty, held the Sepoys down with a strong hand until the crisis had passed. But by his conduct he made enemies, who sought to bring trouble on him. His life even was not safe against the foul plots of his foes.

Once it happened that, as he was being borne to the palace for an interview with the Nizam, a miscreant

fired a pistol at him twice in rapid succession, but, fortunately, both bullets missed him: one struck a panel of the rapidly moving palanquin and the other hit a man who happened to be passing and mortally wounded him. The people in the street and Salàr Jung's own attendants immediately fell upon the would-be assassin, who was shouting madly, "Down with the Dewàn! Down with the traitor!" and were about to wreak their vengeance on him when Salàr jumped down, and with great difficulty protected him from the fury of his captors, afterwards handing him over to the authorities. In due course the man came up for trial, and after a patient hearing was sentenced to death. Then it was Salàr who begged the Nizam to exercise his prerogative of mercy on behalf of the condemned man and let him off with a lighter punishment. His prayer was not granted, but it is some satisfaction to know that before paying the extreme penalty of the law, the culprit, who was one of the Nizam's nobles, struck by the noble generosity of the man whom he had sought to kill, expressed the greatest contrition for his act and pleaded for forgiveness, which was readily granted.

23

THE DYING MAN AND HIS FRIEND

You all know that the late Babu Krishtodàs Pàl, Rài Bàhàdur, Editor of the *Hindu Patriot*, was a far-sighted politician, an excellent writer and speaker, and a sincere patriot. The following short story will show how true he was to his friends.

Falling seriously ill, several of the most renowned physicians were called in, but to no avail, as his complaint completely baffled their skill. Seeing this, his relatives desired to try another system of treatment, of which one of the most noted exponents was Dr. Mohendra Làl Taikài. Now, this distinguished man was one of Krishtodàs's intimate friends, and when the latter heard the proposal he said gently, "If you think another treatment should be given a chance, let me try it by all means; but on no account call in Mohendra. I know that the grip of this old disease is too strong upon me this time for any doctor to cure. Why, then, should Mohendra, my own friend, be asked to try and fail—as fail he must—and thus damage his reputation as a medical man? I will not hear of such a thing."

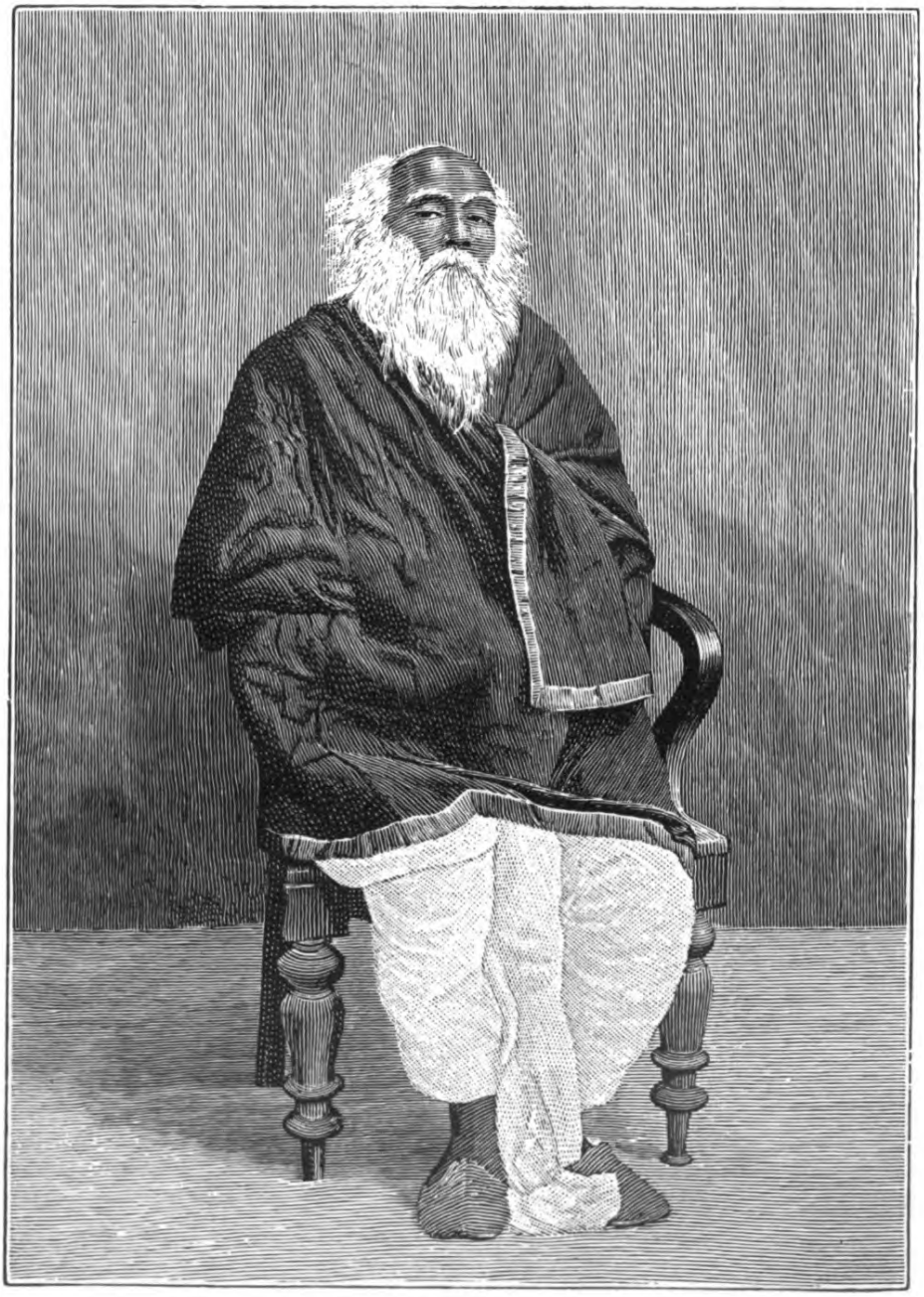
There was no persuading him, and in the end other doctors of the same school as Mohendra were called in, but the case was beyond their skill, and their patient died.

But what an example of fidelity to his friends was shown by this great man in his last hours and at a time when most mortals would have clutched at any chance which might have saved their life! It is well that such a story should be recorded of one who was never more noble than in the manner of his dying.

24

A NOBLE CHARACTER

THERE was a fine old man at Dinajpur who was noted for his virtue and good works. His name was Babu



BHUBAN MOHAN KAR VIDYARATUM OF DINAJPUR.

Face page 38.

Bhuban Mohan Mar, and at the time the writer knew him he was 86 years old. He had never married, and so, not having a family of his own, had adopted the whole world in its stead. He was a homœopath, much skilled in the art of healing and had a dispensary of his own, to which there came far more people than to the government dispensary in the same town. He also visited patients at their homes free of charge at all hours of the day and night, and counted among them men of all classes, from the big landowner and proud official at the top to the decrepit carter and the dirty sweeper at the bottom. Bhuban Mohan was pious, as all know, and his piety was of the type spoken of in the lines :

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> Both man, and bird, and beast."

The following story illustrates his character.

One very hot day in June a gentleman sent a *ticcà ghàrry* (a hired coach) to fetch Bhuban Babu to his house to attend a son of his who was ill. It was a little past mid-day, and the earth was blazing like a furnace. Bhuban Mohan looked at the coachman, who seemed overcome with the heat, and at the two equine skeletons which heaved and panted in their harness. He bade the man take the carriage under a spreading tree which was at hand and rest himself and the animals in its shade. Then shouldering his umbrella, he set off in the scorching sun to pay his visit. The master of the house was astonished to see him arrive thus, and eagerly inquired why he had not come in the carriage which he had sent for him. "My dear sir," answered this great old man, "the coachman seemed to be in such a sorry plight from the effects of the great heat and the poor horses

so exhausted, that I preferred to walk rather than put the three in pain again!" How full of charity and thought for others was this man! Well did he deserve the *Kaiser-i-Hind* medal which the government awarded him at the Coronation Durbar at Delhi, and one cannot but feel that Heaven has since given him a reward more lasting.

25

THOUGHT FOR OTHERS

A CITY official of Hughli once spoke to Tanicharia, the Sirdar *methar* (sweeper) of the city, in these words: "Sirdar, this man," pointing to one who was standing close by, "wants employment as a *methar*. He is strong and willing to work. See that he gets a berth in one of the wards." "The wards are all full, sir," answered the man. To which the commissioner thoughtlessly rejoined, "Oh, let him take the place of someone or other." Greatly surprised at this, the Sirdar asked, "Whom shall I deprive of his bread, Babu?" The Babu had no answer to make to this direct question and hung his head for very shame. Let us hope that the humble Sirdar taught him a lesson which would ever make him remember what was due to the bread-winner and those who depended on him.

26

A MAHRATTA JUDGE.

YOU have read, perhaps, of Prince Hal and Judge Gascoigne in the annals of early England, and have admired

the judge's boldness in the performance of his duty. In the present story is given an instance of the same virtue in a man of similar station which, occurring, as it did, in India, is more likely to make a deeper impression on Indian minds.

Raghunàth Rào, as is well known, murdered his nephew, Nàràyan Rào, and usurped the throne of the Peshwas at Poona. This dastardly crime raised a storm of indignation throughout the Mahratta world, and the murderer, as one can imagine, sat none too easily on his throne. Indeed, he found his life in the palace so beset with danger that he hastily got up an expedition against the state of Mysore, thinking to be safer in the field than at home, and, perhaps, hoping to drown his conscience in the excitement of the campaign. He also thought to reconcile the Mahratta people to himself by a successful war against a Mussalman kingdom and acquisition of territory at its expense.

On the eve of his departure from Poona, Raghunàth Rào held a *durbàr*, which was attended by all the principal officers of state. Amongst these was Ràm Shàstri, the Chief Judge of the High Court of Justice. The Peshwa, in a somewhat halting speech, bade them farewell and exhorted them to serve the state loyally whilst he was away. The conclusion of his speech, which was well worthy of a better man, was as follows : " By the great Mahàdeo's blessings and your good wishes, my fellow-labourers in the state, we hope to render such an account of ourselves in that land of the *mlechchar* (impure people) as will for ever occupy a glorious place in the annals of Maharashtra."

At this a few shouted applause, some murmured approval, but the greater part of the audience remained

silent. Ràm Shàstri could hold his tongue only for a second. Then he burst forth. "Raghunàth Rào, murderer and usurper," cried he in a loud, ringing tone, "neither are the blessings of the great Mahàdeo yours nor are our good wishes. A hand dyed with a nephew's innocent blood cannot wield a victorious sword. Besides, you are arraigned before my tribunal by the force of public opinion to answer for your crimes. I forbid you to depart from Poona until your trial has taken place." As he spoke thus, the grand old man with his snow-white hair and beard presented a never-to-be-forgotten picture as, with gleaming eye and outstretched finger, he denounced his royal master. The whole *durbàr* was awed to silence, and all could see that Raghunàth Rào was visibly affected by the force of Ràm Shàstri's eloquence, but quickly recovering himself, he broke in with an answer as wrathful as it was base: "Who talks of trying the ruling Peshwa of Maharashtra? If there be such a man, let him bear in mind that both court and judge derive their authority from the ruler of the land and can exercise it only during his pleasure. He it is who makes the laws, and he is above what he makes. Ràm Shàshtri, I abolish your court, and you I dismiss!" The old judge replied solemnly, "You have no more power, even were you the rightful Peshwa, which you are not, to abolish the court and tamper with the law than you have to restore life to the youth whom you have murdered. I refuse to take my dismissal from your hands, but of my own free will I lay down my office, preferring to do so rather than serve under a criminal on the throne."

So saying he left the *durbàr* unbidden, and left Poona shortly afterwards. He departed from Poona not again

to return to it or to office until Raghunàth Rào was removed and Madhu Rào Nàràyan, Nàràyan Rào's posthumous son, was installed on the throne by Nànà Farnavis and other powerful nobles.

27

A BENGALEE'S GRATITUDE

Lord Macaulay has laid modern India under a debt of obligation by having it enacted that English should be the medium of their education, and no amount of gratitude offered by them to his memory can fully repay the debt. But, on the other hand, in his essays on Clive and Warren Hastings he penned the most disparaging remarks on the character of the Bengalee. His style is, as everybody knows, brilliant in the extreme, and the effect on the reader is correspondingly great. It is, therefore, all the more to be regretted that he held the same opinion of the Bengalee as was for long entertained by the home-staying Britisher. This opinion, which was utterly wrong, took a long time before it died out, and it was perhaps incidents such as the following which helped to correct these impressions.

An Englishman, who had been one of the chief officials in the railway service in Bengal, was at home in England, and once when dining out happened to praise the gratitude of the Bengalee. A friend, who was listening, smiled at the eulogium, and remarked that the Bengalee must have greatly changed since Macaulay had formed his opinion of him. To this the defender of the Bengalee

character warmly retorted that Lord Macaulay's experience was probably gathered from among the Bengalee *khànsàmàhs*, *khitmatgàrs*, *chàpràsis*, and such others, but that he had not known the Bengalee gentleman proper. And he offered to prove the gratitude of the Bengalee, if not his other virtues, for his friend's satisfaction. "Here is a case for you," said he. "When I was in Bengal I engaged a young Bengalee Bràhman of the name of Ràmgati Mukherji in my office to fill a minor post. When I left, he had been about ten years in my service, and I feel confident of his devotion. Let us put him to the test." So then and there he wrote a letter to Ràmgati Babu telling him that failures in certain speculations had reduced him to the utmost want, and that he was greatly in need of pecuniary help. In time an answer to this letter duly arrived, and its contents, which the gentleman read to his friends, were as follows :

"My dear sir, I have received your letter, and am very sorry to hear of your embarrassments. I earnestly hope that something will yet turn up to your advantage, and that you will ere long be as well off as ever. In the meantime you will find enclosed herewith an Indian currency note representing my pay for one month, which is all that I now have. Henceforth you will share my monthly pay equally with me so long as you may need it. I am thankful for the present opportunity, though it sounds ungracious to say so, of showing my feelings towards you, and am only sorry that my means are so small."

This letter naturally converted those who heard it read to a faith in the moral qualities and good heart of the Bengalee, which he possesses in so marked a degree.

28

FIDELITY

KÀRTIC CHANDRA ROY, father of Duijendra Làl Roy, the poet, was *dewàn* (chief manager) to the Mahàràjà of Krishnagar. The estate, not being in a prosperous condition, the Mahàràjà could only give him a salary of Rs. 100 a month. Kàrtic Chandra was a very capable and dutiful officer, and his fame spread through the reports of the successive magistrates of Nudia and commissioners of the Presidency division to high quarters, from which offers of appointments under government soon came to him. One of the posts offered to him was worth Rs. 300 a month, but he declined it with thanks. The next offer carried with it the monthly salary of Rs. 500. This, too, much to the surprise of many, he also respectfully declined, saying that he could not leave his master, the Mahàràjà, for the latter could not spare him ; and though he could not give him much pay, yet he was very kind to him and reposed much confidence in him. He had, besides, been a considerable time in his service and had managed somehow or other to get on upon his small salary, and, indeed, he had not thought of it as being so small until the government offers came. At anyrate, he argued, it would be rank ingratitude on his part to leave the Mahàràjà for higher emoluments when he was so necessary to him.

This good man did not resign from the Mahàràjà's service, but continued to work for him as long as he was capable of working for anyone, and thus furnished a most striking instance of devotion to an employer in spite of strong inducements to leave his service.

29

A FAITHFUL SERVANT

BABU TÀTCAWRI GHOSH held a small post under a landowner in the Murshidabad district. A dutiful servant and a strictly honest young man, he enjoyed the confidence and affection of his master, who some time later died suddenly in Calcutta. Now, the heir was a very small boy and, the estate being encumbered with debt, the Court of Wards resolved to take it under its care and manage it until he should attain his majority. For this purpose inventories were made by order of the collector of the district of all the property left by the deceased landowner, and the officer came himself to the latter's house to make the necessary arrangements. On his arrival, Tàtcawri at once sought an interview with him and made over fifty thousand rupees in paper money, together with a gold watch and chain of great value, saying that these things were not in the inventories, for neither the manager of the estate nor anyone else knew anything about them, but that the *zaminder* had secretly entrusted them to his care to be kept until they were wanted, and since doing so had not again mentioned them.

The collector was not unnaturally filled with admiration at the fidelity and honesty of the young man, who was a person of but small education and still smaller means, and one to whom the chance of possessing so much money must have been a strong temptation. The collector could not restrain his admiration and shook him warmly by the hand. Afterwards, when one of the deputy magistrates was appointed chief manager,

he took care that his services were retained on the estate, and when a year or so later the manager was given another appointment, the honest servant was put in his place, and for many years managed the estate with conspicuous honesty and success.

30

THE HONEST STRANGER

When Babu Ambicà Charan Mujumdàr, who afterwards distinguished himself on the field of battle at Barisal, and Babu Kàli Prosenna Bhattàcharjya, who was in later life Principal of the Sanskrit College in Calcutta, were at college and resided in the students' quarter in the Shankibhanga portion of the city, they one day encountered a stranger. This man was of a very ordinary type and dressed in clothes which were none too clean. In his hand he carried a bag, which he held on high as he walked up to the two youths and said, "Babus, I have just picked up this bag in the street; it is locked, as you see; but it seems to have money and papers, as you will notice if you shake it. From its weight I should think that there must be a considerable sum inside. I want you, if you will, to take care of it, and, if possible, find to whom it belongs. I dread the responsibility of having property of such value in my charge, nor can I spare the time to trace the owner. Let me, therefore, leave the bag with you. You will, I am sure, do all that is necessary."

The two students agreed to do as the man asked, and took the bag from him. They then took steps to

find the owner, and by dint of advertising and getting the assistance of the police were at last successful in tracing the bag, which on being opened was found to contain some Rs. 11,000, to a city merchant, who was overjoyed at having his property restored to him. He was naturally anxious to reward the original finder, whose honesty and straightforwardness he could not but admire. The man, however, could not be found, and even if he had been, it seems more than probable that he would have refused to accept any reward.

31

A SCHOOLBOY'S HONESTY

As the gentleman whose little adventure is here narrated is still alive—and it is the hope of all who know him that he may long live—I shall refrain from giving his name. When but a boy at school in Calcutta he once took a return ticket from Sealdah to Belghoria, but by mistake got into a train which did not stop at Belghoria. Instead of doing so it brought him on to Titagar, which is three stations ahead. The stationmaster there demanded and took from him the excess fare, but at the same time said he was sorry for him, and advised him to buy a ticket for Belghoria and run down by the next train, which was shortly expected. But the boy answered that he had not a pice left in his pocket, whereupon the station-master suggested in a whisper that he might still go by the train and that without a ticket. So far as he was concerned he was prepared to overlook it, and as there was no collector of tickets in the train, no one

would be any the wiser. The boy thanked the station-master for his kindness and good will, but, said he, "I will not defraud the government even of a few pice. If you will kindly lend me the money, I will pay it back in a day or two. If you will not, I shall make the journey on foot to Belghoria." The stationmaster was much annoyed at being thus rebuked by a mere boy, and, railing at the latter's honesty, tried to pass the matter off by remarking in jest that the government would hardly be reduced to bankruptcy by the loss of such a vast sum as five pice, adding as he turned away, "Truly, times are out of joint when advice given in good will is not taken in good spirit."

The boy, not to be turned from his purpose, left the station and took the road to Belghoria. It was about seven in the evening when he started, and darkness had fallen upon the earth. But nothing daunted, he sturdily walked the six miles to his destination, and reached there in about two hours. He afterwards declared that the knowledge that he was doing what was right had given him strength and courage, and so enabled him to drive away fear and complete his journey.

32

A STORY OF SHISHU BABU

SHISHU BABU'S was a name to conjure with, not only at Chandranagar, his native place, but also in the country for many miles around it. He was a man of great wealth, but of far more importance than that, he was a good man, "full of the milk of human kindness."

The story given here is typical of many similar incidents in his life.

One evening a servant of his was lighting his sitting-room, and in doing so carelessly handled a valuable chandelier which hung from the ceiling and dropped it. It broke into a thousand pieces, and the chief officer of the household, who was close by and saw what had happened, instantly fell upon the poor man, already half dead with fear, and cuffed and kicked him with such force that the man screamed with pain. Shishu Babu hearing the man's cries came running up, and the officer seeing who had come at once let go his hold of the man and stood on one side. Without a word Shishu Babu caught his servant up in his arms, and the latter laid his head on his breast as a child does on his mother's. A few minutes passed in this way. Then the good man looked straight at his manager and said, "I wish you to understand, sir, that I disapprove of your conduct. Tell me what has happened." On the officer informing him, he answered, "I am sure it was an accident which might have happened to any of us. One can see how truly sorry the man is for what has happened, and the last thing he deserved was the buffeting you gave him." Can the reader marvel that a master who showed such consideration was beloved by his servants and all who knew him ?

33

A RAJPUT'S PROTECTION

THE ancient Ràjputs were the souls of honour. In the field of battle, in negotiations with the enemy, in social

or domestic relations, they were actuated by the most delicate sense of what, according to their light, was honourable, and they made extremely light of life and limb in carrying out such principles. They were, as the world knows, a very war-like people, impatient of opposition, tenacious of purpose, and ready to draw the sword at the slightest provocation. Their plighted word was to them as a god whom they served with a fanaticism such as was felt by the Soudanese for their Mahdi. The following story, related in the annals of Rajasthan, is a good illustration of the Ràjput character:

It is related by Sangràm Sinha that after the sudden attack on him in the mountain cave of Chàrani, the Prophetess of Mewar, by his younger brother, Prithviràj, he mounted his horse and fled from his assailants, in order to avoid unnatural strife between two brothers. He was hotly pursued by Joymalla, who had attached himself to his brother's cause. Fast though he rode, his pursuer rode still faster, until, nearing the gate of a temple, and seeing the plight he was in, he threw himself from his horse and at once sought the keeper, who was a Ràthore. A few breathless words were sufficient to explain that he was flying from the fury of mad jealousy, and that he claimed the shelter and protection of the sanctuary. The guardian of the temple, being a Ràjput, who was bound by his creed to protect any man or woman who sought his protection, whatever their position or character might be, quickly pushed him into the temple, barred the gate, and posted himself, sword in hand, ready to meet the pursuer.

Hardly had he done so when, begrimed with dust and perspiring at every pore, Joymalla rode up. The sight of Sangràm's horse standing at the gate showed him

that he had caught up with his prey, and he imperiously demanded his immediate surrender. Said the keeper, "Sangràm Sinha is now under my protection and that of the temple. You are a Ràjput, and know that so long as a Ràjput can wield a sword he does not betray his trust." Not waiting to hear what was being said, Joymalla sprang from his saddle and thrust at the Ràthore with his sword through the bars of the gate. "Wait!" thundered the latter, "sooner than see you defile this holy ground with blood, I will come out and meet you in the open." With these words he unbarred the gate and sprang forward. The swords of the two clashed; blows were fast and furious; but the fight was a short one. Joymalla's sword clove through his antagonist's unprotected head, and the brave guardian of the sanctuary fell dead at his feet.

Thus did a Ràjput give his life rather than betray his trust to one whom he had pledged himself to protect.

34

STORY OF RÀMTANU LÀHIRÍ

THE good Ràmtanu Làhirí, about whom much has been written, was one morning walking along a street in Calcutta accompanied by a friend. On a sudden he seized his companion's hand, turned round, and hurried him into a lane close by. Setting off at a great pace, he did not stop until, glancing backwards, he seemed satisfied that he was not being followed. Far too surprised to speak, it was some time before Ràmtanu's companion could utter a word. At last he found his

tongue, and asked the reason of their sudden move. Ràmtanu, who had by now let go his friend's hand and had apparently recovered his presence of mind, answered, " Oh, I saw a man some little way off who was apparently coming towards us."

" But what of that ? Why did you avoid him in that strange fashion ? Surely you had nothing to fear from him ? "

" The fact is," said Ràmtanu, " that he has owed me some money for a very long time, and I know he is quite unable to repay it."

" How can that be a reason for flying from him as you did ? " interrupted his friend.

" It is this way," continued Ràmtanu ; " you see, if we were to meet not only would both of us feel awkward and uncomfortable, but he would be sure to make excuses and probably give promises which he could not keep, that he would pay me in the near future. As a matter of fact, this is what he has been doing whenever I saw him, and I was anxious neither to embarrass him further nor to be the cause of his telling fresh lies."

" But why not have told him not to trouble about paying what he owed you and thus have settled the matter ? "

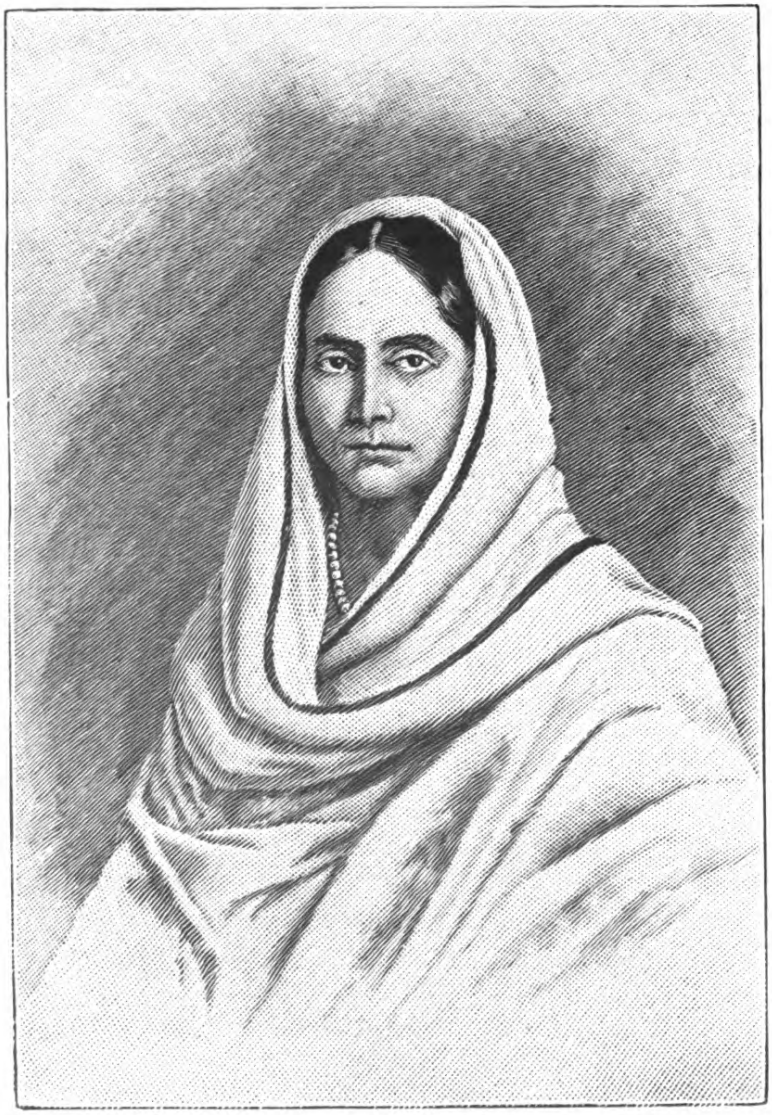
" Perhaps I ought to have done so," said the worthy man, " but I shrank from saying anything which might cause him to lose his self-respect, and so thought it better that he should not see me."

His companion was struck speechless with admiration at one whose regard for the feelings of others was so delicate, and could not but wonder whether in all the world there existed another man with the same refinement of sentiment.

35

THE GENEROUS MAN

Our great poet, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, is well known to have been one of the most generous of men, and so was another of Bengal's men of letters, Ràjkrishna Roy, perhaps the most voluminous of our writers. At once poet, dramatist, essayist, translator, the latter might well be called the Southey of our country. Of him it is said that at one time, having suffered à very heavy loss, owing to the failure of a theatrical enterprise in which he was interested, he found himself in such a destitute position that he had perforce to beg his publisher, Babu Gwindàs Chatterji, to lend him a few rupees to supply his wants for the day. His request was granted, and he had scarcely finished congratulating himself on having escaped from his difficulties, when in came an acquaintance with a woe-begone face, who poured into his ears the sad story of the serious illness of his wife, who was in the country, of his great longing to fly to her side, and of his inability to do so for want of money for the journey. Ràjkrishna's hand was immediately in his pocket, and the borrowed money was handed over without as much as a hint of his own needs, and, apparently, with no thought as to what he should do without it. His friend, little suspecting the sacrifice that Ràjkrishna Roy had made, took leave of him with many expressions of gratitude, and it was only a long time afterwards that he became aware of the sacrifice his benefactor had made.



BHAGABATI DEVI.

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THE MOTHER OF VIDYÀSÀGAR

If there is one Bengalee name which conjures up more than another the thought of all that is noble and good, it is that of Isvar Chandra Vidyàsàgar. His learning, his fame, his wealth, and his position in society were brought about in various ways, but his character was the result of his mother's training. Bhagabati Devi, for that was her name, had brought up her son with loving care. Here is a little story about her.

One evening while Bhagabati Devi was busy, as usual, doing her housewifely duties, a poor woman from a neighbouring village came in with a small child at her breast, and both, mother and child, were shivering with the cold, for it was the winter month of *Màgh* (December-January). Although an icy wind was blowing at the time, yet the poor woman had but a rag on, which barely sufficed to cover her decently, far less to protect the child. She said, addressing the Devi, "Mother, would you give me an old piece of cloth for the child? I have nothing to wrap him in, and it is so bitterly cold!" The Devi could hardly restrain from tears when she saw the pitiable condition of the mother and child, and without a word hurried into her bedroom, brought out a newly-made coverlet and gave it to the woman, saying "Take this; it will be warmer than a piece of cloth."

Now, it will hardly be believed that this was the only coverlet which she had for herself; and when it had been given away, without anyone knowing what had been done, she in her turn had also to shiver in the cold. But she made light of her suffering, comforting herself

with the thought that she had been able to provide for the poor woman and her child.

Vidyàsàgar might not have been the man he was, the man who seemed to live more for others than for himself, whose heart melted at the sight of the least distress, and whose hands could not rest until they had relieved it—he might not have been the man, so generous, so good, so godly, if he had not sucked at Bhagabati Devi's breast. Of course, the soil favoured the growth of the seed, but as examples of perfect upbringing with the best results, those of the mother Bhagabati and the son Vidyàsàgar are not likely to be surpassed.

37

MASTER AND SERVANT

A LARGE volume could be written recounting the many generous deeds of Vidyàsàgar, and yet not tell the half of them. Here is a fresh story:

At one time, when staying at the house of a very rich man, a servant of the Bràhman caste sought him out with a letter. The man had walked long and swiftly in a burning sun; he was red in the face, profusely perspiring, and gasping for breath, when at last he found Vidyàsàgar seated on a fine carpet under a swinging *punkhà*. Instinctively contrasting the man's condition with his own, Vidyàsàgar was filled with compassion, and springing up took the man, who stood at a respectful distance, by the hand and seated him on the carpet under the full swing of the *punkhà*. He then read and answered the letter, while the man rested. When he saw

that the servant had fully recovered from his exertions, he gave him a small sum of money and dismissed him.

When he was gone, some four or five "gentlemen" who were with Vidyàsàgar at the time, and who considered their dignity compromised by a mere servant having been given a seat in their company, ventured to remonstrate on Vidyàsàgar's conduct. He was, however, fully prepared for them. "Be pleased to listen to me patiently," said he, "and I will explain my reasons. I could not consider the man inferior to me in social rank from the orthodox Hindu point of view, inasmuch as he was a Kanauj Bràhman, who would disdain to eat food cooked by me. But, looking at the matter from the standpoint that he is only a servant getting but a pittance of eight or ten rupees a month perhaps, I have not forgotten, and I say it without shame, that my father, too, was once a servant even as this man is, receiving no more wages and performing no higher duties. Could I, therefore, treat this man otherwise without casting disrespect on the memory of my sire?"

38

A STAUNCH FRIEND

Babu Rajani Kànta Roy, afterwards Accountant-General of Bengal, and Babu Thàradà Prosàd Hàldar were close friends when they were students together in Calcutta.

Some little time before the University F.A. examination was to be held, for which they were both to sit, Rajani Kànta was called away to his village home by

his mother on some unfortunate business in which his presence was unavoidably required. This was considered fatal to the hopes which were entertained of his brilliant success at the examination, for he was known to be the brightest scholar of his year; and second only to him was his friend Thàradà Prosàd. Now, no one was more distressed and more worried about this interruption to Rajani's studies than Thàradà was. Some of the latter's friends admired him for his unselfishness, whilst others ridiculed him as a fool who did not know his own interests, for if the accident prevented Rajani from making his full preparation for the examination or from appearing at it, Shàradà was sure to head the list of the successful candidates of the year, and thus win a much coveted distinction. These remarks cut Shàradà's sensitive nature to the quick, causing him on one occasion to burst into tears. Another time he bitterly upbraided his so-called friends, saying, "How unkind, how wanting in feeling you must be to say these things. Do you think I can be happy in my friend's misfortune even though through it I may achieve my ambition? What glory would there be in a success to which chance and not merit had contributed? Rajani has always been ahead of me in our studies, and nothing will make me more happy than to see him occupy his rightful position when the results of the examination are announced."

This generous wish of his friend was fulfilled, for Rajani Kànta duly sat for the examination and carried off the first honours. His success, however, much as it pleased him, made him scarcely more happy than Shàradà whose position was next below him.

39

HELPING THE NEEDY

It is generally by his private character that the world judges a man, and far too often is it in ignorance of his private life. As a rule but little interest is taken in it, and, indeed, it is more than possible that in many instances a great reputation might suffer were all the facts known, but on the other hand the study of humanity as a whole would be enriched. It is, however, comforting to think that, taking them as a whole, the lives of our great men would bear the closest scrutiny and, in fact, enhance the good opinion in which they are held by their fellow-men. There is no doubt that Girish Chandra Vidyàratha was one of the latter, as the following story tends to prove.

Once upon a time, a broker, who was a personal friend of his, advised him to buy a piece of land in Calcutta which was to be had at a very low price, with a view to re-selling it at a large profit. The Pundit accepted the advice, and eventually made Rs. 20,000 by the transaction.

The possession of this money, which meant to him great wealth, roused all his best instincts, and he at once began to consider how he could utilise it best for relieving distress and helping the unfortunate. He made enquiries in all directions as to the best means of achieving his object, and, finally, at the suggestion of a former pupil, he gave it away to the Harinavi Poor Fund, a society for helping the poor and needy at Harinavi, his native village.

40

AN OLD FRIEND

DWARKÀNÀTH TAGORE of Calcutta, besides being a man of social standing and great wealth, was also a man with a warm heart. The following story illustrates the latter.

One day, while he was attending to his banking business, a newly appointed clerk came with a respectful bow to his desk, bringing some papers for him to look over. Dwarkànàth looked at him for a second, then went over his work again, and went on writing. In a short while he raised his head a second time and looked hard at the clerk, as if he were trying to remember something. Then he asked the man, " Have I not met you before ? " The clerk answered, " You did, sir, very, very long ago. We were then little boys learning to read and write under the same *gurumahàshaya* (teacher)." At this Dwarkànàth sprang to his feet, grasped him by the shoulders, and said with great warmth, " Why did you not tell me this before and so save us both from the humiliating position we find ourselves in—one master and the other servant. However, now that you are here, sit down, and let us have a good talk about old times." With that he made the clerk be seated, and, drawing up another chair by his side, was soon engaged in an earnest conversation. The clerk, however, could not help feeling great restraint when he remembered the great gulf that lay between them in wealth, rank, and position. But such was the geniality of Dwar kànàth's heart and the simplicity of his manners that it was not long before the clerk was quite at his ease.

The intimacy thus renewed grew stronger and sweeter day by day, until a time came when Dwarkànàth proposed that the friend of his childhood, whose health was far from good, should go home and live with his wife and children on a handsome allowance. On hearing Dwarkànàth's generous offer there was witnessed a scene so affecting as to have moved the hearts of angels. The two men, one filled with gratitude, the other flowing over with generosity, were united as one in love, stronger than life itself, and until death divided them were ever after inseparable

41

MASTER AND PUPILS

WHEN Babu Bhudev Mukherjee, who has figured in these stories more than once, was appointed to the Normal School at Hughli, he was very young, younger even than some of his pupils. The first day on which he entered upon his new duties his class thought to take advantage of this fact, and instead of attending to his teaching made fun of him and giggled. One, bolder than the rest, asked the boyish teacher if he knew the pips of the playing cards and if he could take a hand at *gràbu* (whist of the Indian variety). Bhudev Babu affected not to see or hear, but went on reading from the book out of which he wished to teach them. Next, another would-be wag asked if he knew the game which went by the name of "Moghul-Pàthàn." Thinking that he saw a way of bringing his pupils to a proper sense of respect for him, he caught at the question, and, ignoring

the spirit in which it was asked, gave such an eloquent and picturesque narrative of the Moghul-Pàthàn war in India, that the whole class was struck with admiration and their attitude towards their teacher underwent a complete change. Since then Bhudev Babu had no trouble with them as long as he was in the Normal School.

42

THE RÀJÀH AND THE MASON

BÀNCHRÀPÀRÀ is a small village which was at one time in the hands of a *ràjàh* of great renown. Now, this prince had begun to build a mighty temple, which he meant to consecrate to the god Mahàdev. When the dome of the building was almost finished, the Ràjàh mounted up to it by means of the bamboo ladder which the mason and his people used. Arriving on the top, he looked down from the great height and was attacked with a great giddiness. He dared not attempt to get down by the ladder; yet he could not stay there for ever. The mason who was with him said, "It is not at all difficult, Ràjàh; have you not seen us run up and down the ladder a hundred times a day? Let me go first and you follow me. Do not, please, look down on the ground which is so far below. Keep your eyes on the next rung of the ladder only. That will prevent dizziness." So saying, the man began to run down the ladder with the utmost ease. But the Ràjàh did not stir. His face was deadly pale, his legs and hands shook, and he moaned piteously.

Then the clever mason had a happy idea. He thought

that the only thing to do was to arouse some strong emotion in the Ràjàh's mind to overcome the sense of fear which was rendering him so nervous and incapable. He determined that this stronger feeling should be anger. No sooner was his plan formed than he acted upon it, and, re-ascending the ladder, confronted his master, saying, " You are nothing more than a fool, Ràjàh, the greatest fool I have ever had the misfortune to look on. If you cannot get down, what on earth did you want to come up for ? But advice is wasted on you. Here, Karim, kick this idiot down ! "

These words, this unlooked-for insult from a mere day-labourer, inflamed the Ràjàh's anger to fury, and he snatched up a large trowel lying by to strike the mason. This was just what the man wanted. He ducked his head under the uplifted hand and sprang down two steps at a time. The Ràjàh followed him almost as quickly, until they both reached *terra-firma*. The man ran for his life and was soon out of sight, while the people who had been in the utmost anxiety for the safety of the Ràjàh, and now rejoiced to see him safe, crowded round him offering their congratulations on his escape, and thus effectually stopped him from pursuing the work-man. They had understood the meaning of the mason's conduct, and, when the Ràjàh was in the mood to listen, explained it to him. They all admired the mason's presence of mind, and the Ràjàh more than all, and in the fullness of his heart he rewarded the man.

43

HIS HOST'S FEELINGS

ONCE upon a time a poor gentleman invited Keshab Chandra Sen to dinner. He was one of the ardent admirers and followers of this great religious reformer and orator. The *menu* was none too sumptuous, for the host, as I have said, was poor. But he sat by his guest's side while the latter ate and evidently felt gratified at every morsel that he put into his mouth. Keshab for his part ate with a show of greater relish than he really felt, for he wanted to please his host. But the climax came presently when a cup of boiled milk was served up. Keshab clearly perceived by its peculiar smell that some castor-oil had somehow or other got mixed with it, and that it was not fit to drink; but as the host, quite unaware of what had happened, strongly recommended the milk, which, he said, was pure and sweet, because it was from his own cow, the good guest did not hesitate, for fear of giving him pain, but drank it all to the last drop. With a great effort he concealed from his host his feeling of nausea, and smiled as if he had greatly enjoyed the mixture of milk and castor-oil. Surely politeness to one's host could go no further.

44

A MILLIONAIRE'S PROMISE

IT was while the multi-millionaire, Ràmdulàl Sarkàr, was a petty clerk on five rupees a month in the firm of the

RÀMDULÀL SARKÀR.

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Duttas of Hatkhola, that an elderly Bràhman, an astrologer, asked him casually how he would reward him if he should prophesy that within twenty years from that day he would be a man worth many millions and if his prophecy should come true. Ràmdulàl answered, laughing lightly, that the reward would be Rs. 10,000, to be paid on demand. The Bràhman said, "Do you promise it, Ràmdulàl? If so, let me have it in writing." Then, in mere playfulness, Ràmdulàl took up a scrap of paper that lay by and wrote on it in ink: "I promise to pay Pundit ————, astrologer of the village of ————, in the district of ————, the sum of ten thousand rupees in cash in case his prophecy made to-day, that I should be a man of many millions within twenty years from now, should be fulfilled."

Within five years Ràmdulàl was a man of means; within ten probably a millionaire and in a fair way to be what had been predicted of him. But the old astrologer did not think that the time had yet come to make his claim. And, alas! his chance never came, for he died shortly afterwards. On his death-bed he handed the bit of paper, which contained Ràmdulàl's promise, to his sons as the most valuable legacy he could leave them, and bade them seek out the wealthy man in about five years' time, and ask him to redeem his promise to them as his legal heirs. In these five years Ràmdulàl actually grew to be a multi-millionaire, and the fame of his wealth and goodness spread all over Bengal. Then the young Bràhmans called upon him in Calcutta—he was accessible to all—and presented to him the paper, over fifteen years old, unstamped and unregistered, and without anybody to attest its genuineness. But all this was of no account to Ràmdulàl. When he recognised

his hand-writing and remembered his promise to the Bràhman, the document had on him all the binding force of a properly executed bond. He only inquired whether the claimants were really the heirs of the man to whom he had made the promise; and when he was satisfied upon this point, he had the full amount of ten thousand rupees paid over to the young men. And also, going beyond the letter of his promise and being solicitous of their well-being, he purchased them broad *bighás* of good land with the greater part of their money, lest, unaccustomed to having so much money in their possession, they should squander it.

45

A CONSCIENCE-STRICKEN WITNESS

THE name of the *zamindàr* who figures in this story should, for charity, be suppressed. On the other hand, it is unfortunate that the name of the countryman who is the principal character is not known; it surely ought to be written in letters of gold.

The *zamindàr* had a case in the law court, so the story goes, and wanted the rustic, who was one of his tenants, to give false evidence on his behalf. "You have to say this and not say that when you are in court," said the landowner, at the same time giving minute instructions as to the answers the man should give to all sorts of supposed questions. "But," said the poor man, "how am I to know that I am speaking the truth? I cannot swear what is false." "Who are you to prate to me of what you can do and what you cannot do," cried his

evil-minded master; "to hear you talk one would think you were Yudhishthir, the son of virtue, at the very least. But enough of such nonsense. Say what I tell you to. If you do not I will take good care that you are left without a roof over your head. Now, do you understand?" The poor man, utterly dismayed at what he heard, sat for a long time with his head between his knees without uttering a word. At last he spoke. "Mahàràja," said he, "I will do as you ask even though my soul has to suffer for it."

During the next few days the unfortunate man tried his best to still his conscience and make himself perfect in the story which he had to tell in the witness-box. When the day of the trial came, he thought that he would go through the ordeal awaiting him without flinching. But hardly had he taken the oath and begun his evidence when his resolution deserted him and his better nature reasserted itself, until at last, casting aside all fear of what the consequence might be, he began, "My Lord," but seeing that the *zamindàr* was watching him intently, he suddenly faltered and then stopped. "My Lord, I cannot bring myself to the speaking of it in spite of all my previous determination to do so. I feel my tongue burns in my mouth at the shaping of the untrue words. I was ready to risk hell in the life hereafter, but I see now it is here! it is here!"

The whole court was struck dumb with wonder; and when they understood the man, their admiration was boundless. In his confusion, the *zamindàr* could think of nothing better than a precipitate flight from the court.

46

THE LESSONS OF ADVERSITY

It is well known that the great Vidyàsàgar came of very poor parents. Poverty almost to destitution was the companion of his boyhood and early youth. In those days he had rarely any curry or pulse or milk to eat with his rice, but had to be satisfied with only a pinch of salt. He was, however, blessed with an excellent appetite, and so did not miss these things much, but ate a hearty meal of what he had. Indeed he seemed to look upon this scarcity in the light of discipline; and all through his life, even when at the height of his success, he would at certain times have nothing but the coarse and simple dish of his early youth. He used to say that what he had been he might be again by a turn of fortune's wheel; he would not, therefore, give up for good the rough fare to which he had once been accustomed, and so, as has been said, used now and then to revert to rice-and-salt, or at most, rice-and-pulse, although several dishes of tasty food had been cooked and were ready to be served up.

Here was moderation in practice which, perhaps, few people have carried farther.

47

PRIDE AND ITS FALL

It has been said that an ounce of practice is better than a ton of precept. The following story is an instance.

A Bengalee government official of some rank once got down at a small railway station not far from Howrah and

called loudly for a coolie to carry his small hand-bag to the hackney carriage stand. The bag with the things in it could not have weighed more than five seers, but the gentleman's calls for a coolie were so persistent and urgent that one would have thought that he had *maunds* of baggage waiting to be taken outside. The great Vidyàsàgar was standing by and watching the official with an amused smile. You have heard, perhaps, that the philanthropist never paid much attention to his dress. He hardly ever wore a shirt or a pair of shoes, and so one who did not know him might easily mistake him for a man who was looking for a job. So when the great man came forward and asked if he might carry the bag, the stranger at once handed it to him with a sigh of relief and bade him follow him. This Vidyàsàgar meekly did. Outside the station the official got into a carriage in which the seeming coolie deposited the bag, but just as the former was putting his hand into his pocket to pay the man his hire, some well-dressed and better-class men of the neighbourhood who knew Vidyàsàgar came by, and seeing him there uttered exclamations of surprise and delight, at the same time bowing low to him and showing other marks of respect. A cry went up, " Vidyàsàgar ! " and stationmaster, clerks, and passers-by all quickly surrounded him and the carriage in which the official sat. You may conceive the confusion of this poor man when he discovered the mistake which he had made and who the supposed coolie really was. So great was his discomfiture that words completely failed him, and he was hardly able to stammer out an attempt at an apology.

Some time afterwards, when this incident was referred to in his presence, Vidyàsàgar commented regretfully

on the snobbishness of those people who thought that some of the most trifling actions were in some way lowering to their dignity and should be performed by menials. There were men, for instance, who would not wash their mouths after a meal unless a servant poured out the water for them, others who would not walk half a mile, however easy the road and fine the weather, but must roll in a carriage, whilst some thought it lowering to their position to buy in the bazar, far less to carry the purchase, however light, in their own hands, and so on.

It is to be hoped that in this instance Vidyàsàgar taught the officer a lesson which he did not forget.

48

A STORY OF THE FAMINE

In a little village in the district of Cuttuck there lived a small Bràhman family, consisting of the father, the mother, and two sons, Sanàtan, the elder of these, being twelve years of age, and Krishna, the younger, about eight. The circumstances related here took place in 1866, the year of the terrible famine in Orissa. The crops had been scanty in 1864, and in the following year were still worse, whilst in the fateful year, 1866, they failed altogether. Those were the days when the authorities had not as yet learnt how to deal with the periodical famines of India, and government relief to the stricken people was, if not altogether unknown, at any rate slow and uncertain. No viceroy or provincial ruler had then expressed himself as Lord Curzon did in 1899 when he

said, "Every man, woman, and child who has perished in India in the present famine has been a burden upon my heart and upon that of the government," or in the words of Sir Archdale Earle, of Assam, on another occasion, "I must first save my famishing people." Measures to relieve the famished are now a science which all administrative officers learn, but in the days of which we are speaking practically nothing had been done to combat the dreaded evil.

Our Bràhman was poor in the best of times, and it was with difficulty that he scraped a living out of the few small patches of land left him by his father. The scanty produce of two previous years had reduced him and his wife to one meal a day, and in 1866 even this meal was not forthcoming. In the first month of the famine the family had eaten up the seed grain, and in the second month the Bràhman sold his two oxen at less than a quarter of their value, for there were few people in a position to buy. This money tided the family over a couple of months, which meant that the parents ate once a day and the two children twice. Month by month the grip of famine tightened, until a time came when it was extremely difficult to get food grains even for money. The Bràhman next sold all his brass plate and vessels for a mere song, and with the proceeds managed to procure a little rice from a distant bazar. When this was exhausted, he had practically nothing left to sell; and even though he had, there were no purchasers. Begging was now his last resource, as it was by this time that of thousands of others. But he hated the alms-bowl, even had it brought him money, which it did not, as there was little or no charity then in the land. Being of a virtuous and peaceful character, the Bràhman

refused to join any of the numerous gangs of robbers and marauders who overran the country looting and killing for the sake of loot. The family were now living, if living it could be called, on leaves and roots and wild fruits and grass; but what with worry, what with starving, and what with eating unsuitable things, the Bràhman was taken seriously ill. And it so happened that one day he went out, nobody knew where, and no more was seen of him. It was suspected that he had done away with himself, for he had been heard to talk of such a step as the only means of terminating his misery. Then the heart-broken mother, who had secretly suffered more than he who was gone, took quietly to bed. So long as she had had any strength to walk, she had helped her husband to get what could be found in the woods or elsewhere for the children to eat. What was picked in these places would in ordinary times have seemed uneatable, but in a famine it was at least something to stay the stomach.

Now, on the shoulders of Sanàtan, the twelve-year-old boy, devolved the care of feeding his younger brother and the bed-ridden mother. From morning till sunset the boy begged and ransacked the forests and waste lands for anything there might be to eat. He did not get much; but his brother and mother had the best and the biggest bite of what he did get. Sanàtan's whole soul was bent on saving the dear ones as long as he could. On the few days when he could get rice for his mother to eat, she seemed to revive a little; on other days she lay like one dead. One morning the boy went out very early. He had had practically nothing to eat for two days past, and was so weak that he could hardly drag himself along. Luck seemed in his way

that day, for happening to call on one who, like himself, was a Bràhman, he found him willing to give him a few mouthfuls of boiled rice. When the food was offered him, Sanàtan said that, if his benefactor had no objection, he would rather take it home. When asked why he did not eat it then and there, he said, "I would sooner take the food, no matter how little there may be of it, home for my mother who is starving to death, and for my younger brother whose condition is almost as bad, than let a mouthful pass my own lips," and as he uttered these words he burst out sobbing as if his heart would break.

The Bràhman naturally did as he was asked, and Sanàtan tied the rice in a corner of the rag he wore—not a grain did he put into his mouth—and rose to return home. But alas! alas! he was destined never to reach it. His strength failed him, and falling on the roadway he was found later lying dead in the dust, but so common were such sights in those black days that they passed without remark and without inquiry as to who the unfortunate lad might be.

The foregoing story will have achieved its object if it brings home to the reader the fearful privations and sufferings in the great famine of 1866. This little narrative, so simple and yet so tragic, is only one out of countless others which have never been recorded.

49

KEEPING HIS WORD

A HINDU contractor of Calcutta had entered into an agreement with a Muhammadan *mistri* (blacklayer) for

the execution of a certain building work and had advanced him Rs. 200 in connection with it. This man, however, failed to carry out his part of the bargain, and sad to relate did not return the money. The contractor, much enraged, went to law and obtained a decree against the man, who was given permission to pay the debt by monthly instalments. The *mistri* paid an instalment or two and then stopped. The contractor became furious, and, calling one evening at the *mistri's* house, rated him soundly for his dishonesty. There were other people there, and one of them took the man's part, saying that he was not dishonest but too poor to make regular payments. "That is so," said another, "and I assure you, contractor Babu, that you will have your money." At this half-a-dozen voices cried out, "Does Elahibux say it? Then, Babu, you may set your mind at ease. If Elahibux has given his word, your money is as safe as if it were in your pocket," and with this assurance the contractor had to be satisfied for the time being.

A year or so passed away, and yet the money was not forthcoming. The contractor had almost given up hopes of ever seeing it, when a Mussalman, meeting him in the street, inquired if Elahibux's assurance had been made good; and on being told that it had not, he advised him to see Elahibux at his village home at Pero, and tell him what had happened. "I am sure," said the Mussalman, "if you do so you will not have undertaken the journey in vain."

The contractor took the advice and went to Pero. There he saw Elahibux and told him of the non-payment. The Muhammadan gentleman expressed great regret, and was clearly ashamed of his co-religionist's conduct. He

at once made inquiries and ascertained that the *mistri* had all the time given the contractor a wide berth and had made no effort to pay the debt. No sooner had he heard this than he himself gave the whole amount out of his own pocket. This he did as he had given his word that the money would be paid, and he would not have this assurance go for nothing.

50

LOYALTY TO THE STATE

SIR SAIYAD AHAMMAD, of Aligarh, came of a family which was held in high esteem. His father, Saiyad Mahammad Taki, was noted for his piety, and was a personal friend of Akbar II., Emperor of Delhi. On his death Saiyad Ahammad, then nineteen years of age was attached to the imperial retinue, but stayed at court for one year only. Seeing that his prospects under one who was a sovereign in name only were far from promising, he entered the services of the British Government. Being a young man of considerable talent, able and industrious, he rapidly obtained promotion, and in 1857, the year of the terrible mutiny, he was acting judge at Bijnour. There were about twenty English people, including women and children, at Bijnour in the June of that year who, all living as they did within the sound of the mutineers' cannons, went in constant dread for their lives. There was not a cantonment of Sepoys in the town, but Sepoys from the stations in the neighbourhood threatened to visit it, and in the end did so. At last, an evening came when eight hundred of them

surrounded the houses in which the English and some other people, mostly government officials, had taken shelter. No troops were there to defend them, nor was there a single military man amongst the surrounded party. The civil officers were doubtless brave men, but bravery under their present circumstances would avail them nothing. The only course open was to make the best terms possible and use all the diplomacy they could. Yet the European officers, the very sight of whom would rouse the besiegers to frenzy, could do nothing, and so Saiyad Ahammad suggested that he should try to negotiate with the Sepoys. His offer was eagerly and thankfully accepted. He entered bravely upon his perilous duties, and interviewed the leaders of the band, doing his best to persuade them to leave the town. He discussed the situation with them from all points of view, until at last, by dint of coaxing combined with tact and eloquence, he at last won two of them over, both old men, who had known his father as a good man and an adherent of the late Emperor, Akbar II. These two were not aware, however, that he was in the service of the English. Had they done so, it is more than likely that he would not have received a hearing, but having been for some time at Bahadur Shah's court, a circumstance on which he expatiated with great volubility, they, perhaps, inferred that he was still in the service of that sovereign. In the end the Sepoy leaders agreed to leave the town unharmed and to preserve the lives of the Europeans in it. Shortly afterwards they raised the siege and marched away.

Thus, by his loyalty to the government which he served, Saiyad Ahammad saved the place and the lives of those in it. It afterwards transpired that during his

discussion with the Sepoy leaders some of them, objecting to the tone of his remarks, more than once drew out their knives to put an end to him, and were with difficulty restrained by the others who were there. From this the reader can form some idea of the risks which he ran. It is only fitting to add that after the suppression of the mutiny, the British Government thankfully acknowledged Saiyad Ahammad's services, and amply rewarded his loyalty.

51

AN ACT OF COURTESY AND ITS REWARD

One afternoon in the sultry month of June there was a great crowd in the verandah of the Hughli railway station. There were only three benches for the passengers to sit on, and they were all occupied. Those who had not been fortunate enough to secure a seat, either stood around in small groups or sat on the ground. So hot was the sun outside that they were thankful for the shelter which the verandah afforded, though, in fact, the heat was no less there than in the open. An old Bengalee gentleman came in with a bundle in one hand and an umbrella and a walking stick in the other, and with difficulty made his way to one of the benches. He seemed to be worn out with fatigue and heat and as if he would be more than grateful for a seat, but not one of those who were on the bench offered to make room for him. So the old man moved on to the next seat, but here again the people were no more courteous. Lastly, he came to the third bench, and here a young man at once stood up and politely gave him the corner place on

which he had been sitting. Not content with having done this act of kindness, the young man proceeded to fan himself at a short distance from the old man, doing so in such a manner as to benefit both of them.

A European gentleman who was in the waiting-room had been watching the scene unobserved through an open window. He had noticed everything, and was delighted at the young man's ready courtesy, for he was a lover of his kind, and, being a keen student of human nature, liked to study it wherever he could. One point he was highly curious to know, and that was whether or no the old man was a friend or in any way related to the youth. If he were, it might account for the polite behaviour of the young man, but if he were not, the latter's conduct assumed a new value. The spectator, who happened to be a high government official, had with him a Bengalee clerk, whom he immediately sent to inquire who the young man was. From him he learnt that the young man's name was Satish Chandra Banuji, that he was a graduate of the University of Calcutta, and that the old man was a perfect stranger to him. All these details the official made a note of in his pocket book. So well had the enquiries been made that Satish, who did not know the clerk, had no idea that the questions which he had put to him and which had the appearance of being merely casual were made on behalf of anyone else.

A few months afterwards it befell that Satish was endeavouring to obtain a position in the service of the government, and so had occasion to bespeak the favour of this very European official. The latter recognised the Bengalee youth at once, and, what was more, his previous good opinion of him was strengthened on a

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MAHAMMAD MOHSIN.

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closer acquaintance, with the result that he interested himself in the youth and gave him all the help he could.

It may seem to the reader that what Satish had done, although no doubt a kindly act, was in itself too unimportant to have led to such a result, but it must be remembered that it is in small matters a man's true character reveals itself, and the shrewd judge of human nature will lay more store by such indications than by actions which, although perhaps of more import, have been carefully thought out beforehand and so are of less value in disclosing a man's true disposition.

52

CHARITY IN SECRET

MAHAMMAD MOHSIN, of Hughli, inherited the vast estates of his sister, Mannujàn Khànum, at the age of fifty. He was a bachelor, a profoundly learned man, and one who had travelled much. His soul delighted in nothing more than in doing good to his fellow-beings without distinction of caste, creed, or colour. Almost the whole of his princely income was spent in his numerous charities, some of them of a permanent nature, but most of them temporary in character. He established or endowed schools, hostels, and charitable dispensaries, created funds for the maintenance of poor scholars, and supported mosques and societies for the culture and dissemination of the Islamic faith. In addition, he fed and clothed the poor and the destitute at his own house and elsewhere. Not content with relieving the wants of those who came to him for assistance, he used to go

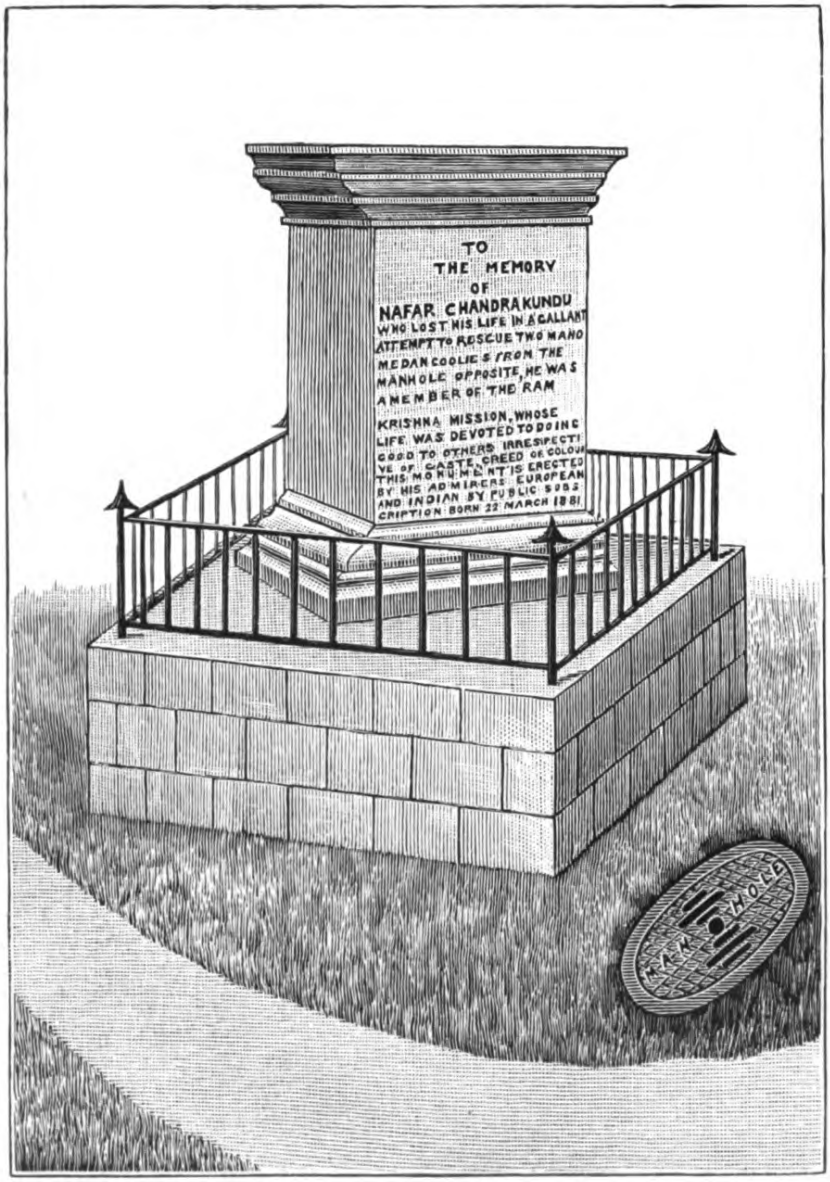
out night and day on charitable errands, and in this way did good unknown to any. The following story of one such act is worthy of record.

One evening, as he was feeling his way along a dark alley situated in one of the slums of his native town, he heard the loud voice of a woman raised in anger in a low hovel. Drawing near and putting his ear close to a hole in the mud wall, he found that it was a wife abusing her old, blind husband for having returned home empty-handed from his round of begging in the streets. For answer the man seemed only able to make excuses in a weak supplicating voice. Without a moment's thought, Mohsin, who never went out without carrying with him a plentiful supply of small silver and copper, took out some coins, and tying them in the corner of his handkerchief, threw them through the hole and hurried off. The sound they made in falling caused the woman to look round and see the unexpected gift. Uttering a cry of delight, she snatched up the money and ceased her abuse of her husband, who, poor old man, could not refrain heaving a sigh of relief. Both of them knew without being told whose was the hand of charity which liked to work in secret, and on the instant cried out, "Mahammad Mohsin has done this!" Thus testifying to the esteem in which he was held by all.

53

A HERO'S DEATH

THE story which follows is that of a man who was neither a rajah nor a nawab, not highly educated, as



NAFAR CHANDRA KUNDU'S MEMORIAL PILLAR,
BHAWANIPUR, CALCUTTA.

To the Memory of

NAFAR CHANDRA KUNDU

Who lost his life in a gallant attempt to rescue two Mahomedan coolies from the manhole opposite. He was a member of the Entally Ramkrishna Mission, whose life was devoted to doing good to others, irrespective of caste, creed or colour. This Monument is erected by his admirers, European and Indian, by public subscription. Born 22nd March, 1881, Died 12th May 1907.

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education goes, nor highly placed in the service of the state. Neither was he one of those who have risen to prominence by taking part in political, social, or philanthropic movements, or one of the bending and bowing tribe who frequent the ante-rooms of men of power and position, but he was rather one of those whose true nobility of character was known but to a few, and might never have been known to the world at large but for the circumstances about to be related.

Nafar Chandra Kundu, of Bhawanipur, Calcutta, was but a humble clerk—one of the many hundreds whom we pass in the streets every morning and afternoon, poor, half-fed, lean men whose shabby clothes and patched shoes, whose sulky looks and querulous tone, and whose monumental ignorance of all things outside the purview of their offices proclaim them. But Nafar differed wonderfully from the rest of his tribe. He spoke softly and sweetly, worked with an unruffled spirit, and was always cheerful in his demeanour. By his death he has earned an undying fame, and has left an example which may be followed in all times.

One morning, as Nafar was on his way to his office, he saw that a sewer in the street had been opened and that a number of coolies were working at it under the direction of an overseer. Suddenly there was a cry of horror as a coolie, stepping carelessly over the opening, fell through into the sewer, which was filled with poisonous gas. The other coolies, aware of their comrade's danger, were running up and down throwing their arms about whilst the overseer, greatly agitated, kept telling now one, now another, to go down and rescue their fellow-worker, and abusing them all the time for not doing so. Still nothing was done to save the man's life,

which by now was almost despaired of, when Nafar came up, and, taking in the situation at a glance, at once threw off his coat, cap, and shoes and slid into the sewer. For a couple of minutes he was lost to sight. The overseer, now thoroughly alarmed and oppressed by a sense of his responsibility, peered in and perceived a man's head just below his eyes. With the help of one or two coolies he threw down a coil of rope, and with some difficulty succeeded in twining it round Nafar's body and also that of the coolie who was in his arms. It was then but the work of a moment to pull both men out, but, alas, neither of them was alive. It seemed that Nafar had groped about in the dark for the coolie and had caught hold of him a few feet from the aperture, and with him in his arms had hoped to get out with the help of those who were above, but had been overpowered by the deadly gas before aid came.

Thus did Nafar Chandra Kundu lay down his life in the noblest cause known to man—to save a fellow-creature—thus imitating the examples of some of those beings, divine or semi-divine, who have been the beacon-lights of humanity in all times and places.

The then ruler of Bengal, Sir Andrew Fraser, who, in common with many others, revered the spirit in Nafar Chandra, spoke at his funeral, and had a marble bust of him made and put up in a public spot in Bhawanipur.

54

A DUTIFUL SON

THE high-souled Bhudev Mukherjee came of poor parents. His father, Pandit Bishvanàth Tarkakhusan, was a learned

Sanskrit scholar, but his learning did not bring him prosperity, and about the time when Bhudev had just finished his education at the Hindu College in Calcutta, his circumstances were particularly distressful. When the youth became aware of this, he was filled with an eager desire to get work which would enable him to relieve his parents' distress; and he tried hard to this end. He was well qualified by education and character for a post of responsibility, but qualifications do not always get quickly recognised or remunerated, and day after day Bhudev went his weary rounds looking for employment in Calcutta, but all to no avail. This went on until, worn in mind and still more worn in body, he was almost starving. If by good luck he got a full meal one day the chances were that next day and the day after half a meal or perhaps no meal at all would be his portion.

On one of these days he crossed over to Chinsura from Naihati and trudged about the town in the hot mid-day sun, hungry, foot-sore, and so fatigued that he could hardly drag himself along. Whilst in this sad plight he was accosted by a gentleman who was standing at his door. This person had perceived as plainly as if he had been told that the young man was hungry, that he was exhausted, that he was full of care, and that he stood in the greatest need of help, and so with great kindness he invited him into the house and gave him a glass of *sherbat*. It was not long before he ascertained that Bhudev had not eaten a proper meal for several days, and on that day in particular nothing had passed his lips. As soon as the stranger heard this, he had rice, curry, and other good things cooked by his wife and served to his guest. But when Bhudev was bidden to

eat, he suddenly burst into a flood of tears which very much astonished his host and hostess, who inquired the reason, whereupon Bhudev said between his sobs, "I do not find it in my heart to eat whilst I remember that my poor old parents will, perhaps, be starving at home." He then told them of his father and mother and their poverty, of the struggle they had made to have him educated, and of his unsuccessful efforts to find employment. His dearest wish, he said, was to earn enough to relieve his parents' wants. The story greatly affected the kind-hearted couple. So much so that his host at once appointed Bhudev as private tutor to his children, and gave him part of his first month's salary in advance to be immediately sent to his parents. Now, indeed, was Bhudev's heart gladdened, and his gratitude was shown, not so much by the few words of thanks which he with difficulty managed to utter, as by the care and affection with which he did his duty by their children so long as he remained with them.

Bhudev was distinguished no less than Vidyàsàgar for his filial piety. A striking proof was afforded in his after-career, which was a very brilliant one. Advancing rapidly in the education service of the government, he acquired considerable wealth. A large portion of this —one *lakh* and sixty thousand rupees—he used to create a fund which he called after his father, the "Bishvanàth Fund," and which has since been applied to founding and endowing schools for Sanskrit learning in Bengal. His object was, of course, a double one—perpetuation of his father's name and encouragement of Sanskrit scholarship. How beautifully were the two purposes blended, one with the other!

This story may well conclude with the reflection,

borne out by numerous instances, that those among whose virtues filial piety has had a prominent place have ever prospered in this world and at all times gained the respect of their fellow-men.

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SAVING A TRAIN

DURING the month of August, 1902, it rained so heavily for a whole week in the district of Jessore and the neighbourhood that the rivers, canals, and *jhils*, already full, as was usual at the season, overflowed their banks and flooded the whole country. Fields with crops standing in them were submerged, houses washed away, cattle drowned, and loss of human life was also reported. The Bengal Central Railroad was flooded in many places, and the engineers with their armies of coolies had endless work and worry to put matters straight. No sooner had the damaged line been, with great difficulty, repaired in one place, than another and still another would be reported elsewhere, so that the workmen had hardly any rest by day or by night. The anxiety of the authorities was extreme, for it was plain that, unknown to them, breaches in the line might be made at any moment in apparently sound spots, and, should such happen, a train disaster, involving loss of life and material, was almost inevitable.

During one densely dark night, when the air was rendered still denser by torrents of rain, such a breach actually occurred in the line between Maslandpur and Gobardanga. It so happened that no news of the

disaster had reached the worn-out engineers nor were the head officials at Calcutta any wiser. Accordingly, the evening train for Khulna started as usual from Sealdah. On it went, passing station after station until, at last, it drew up at Maslandpur. No news of the damage to the line had reached there, so after stopping a few minutes the bell was rung, the guard blew his whistle, and on again went the train. No one in it knew that they were speeding to the scene of the disaster, which was some thirty-five miles away—about half the distance to the next station, Gobardanga. Now, it so chanced that a fisherman, who belonged to a village close by, was fishing at the spot by the light of his lantern. As he was pulling in his line he became aware of the rumbling of an approaching train, and suddenly realising that not a moment was to be lost if the train and its passengers were to be saved, he sprang up, and, running with his lantern some way up the line, took his stand where he could be seen for some distance, and began to wave his light to and fro, at the same time shouting at the top of his voice. On rushed the train, the fisherman's signals being apparently still unnoticed by the driver. Now it was about a quarter of a mile away, and as yet showed no sign of drawing up. Very possibly the fisherman's cries were drowned by the noise of the train itself as well as by the steady downpour of the rain, which was falling in torrents. Surely, even if his shouts could not be heard, the movement of his light must be seen! At last, when the fisherman had all but given up hope, his warning was heeded, and about a hundred yards from where he stood, the brake was applied and the train pulled up. The driver and the guard at once jumped down and ran to the fisherman, who was still

waving his light about and shouting as if he would burst his lungs. Gasping for breath, he told them of the danger ahead and took them to the place. When they saw what they had so narrowly escaped, each of the two men embraced the fisherman in turn, and poured forth their gratitude in an amazing mixture of Bengali, Hindusthani, and broken English, the first two of which the man barely understood, whilst the last he was quite ignorant of. But, when a few minutes later, scores of passengers, startled by the sudden stoppage of the train, got out of their carriages, and, hearing what he had done, crowded round the fisherman, and in every possible way tried to express their gratitude to him for having saved their lives, he knew that he had rendered them a signal service. His delight may be imagined when some of them hoisted him on their shoulders and, with wild cheering and cries of "Jaya Bhugabàn!" (Glory be to God!), made the night air ring again and again.

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SHYÀMÀCHARAN SARCÀR

BABU SHYÀMÀCHARAN SARCÀR was a native of the village of Mamjoan in the district of Nudia. His father was in the service of a rich landowner; and while he lived, kept his family and dependants in comfort. But he saved nothing, and at his death when Shyàmàcharan was only five years old, the widowed mother and her little son were reduced to sore straits. She sent him, however, to the village *pàthshàlà* (school) for his

education, but the learning which he acquired there was small indeed.

When about nine years old he was transferred to the care of a relation at Krishnagar, where he was placed in the hands of a maulvi, who taught him Persian. But his life at his new home was one of servitude, unrelieved by affection or even kindness. Yet the boy did not complain, but did all that he could for the family, running errands, shopping, scavenging, washing, doing every menial work, in short, that he was bid to do in consideration of his board and lodging and the tuition which he received from the maulvi, whose fees his kinsman paid for him. As a result Shyàmàcharan learnt so much Persian in four years as to make him a tolerable maulvi.

He then departed from the house, and had the fortune to come under the notice of a Mr. Reid, a landowner in the district of Murshidabad, who had known his late father. He gave the boy, at his request, a post in his office. Shyàmàcharan, however, only stayed with him for a short time, for his thirst for knowledge was so great and growing that he could not remain where the pursuit of it was not possible. He accordingly made his way to Calcutta, and there he found an asylum in the house of Babu Ràmtaun Lahiri, a famous son of Bengal, who had long known the family to which he belonged. He now began to learn English privately, for he was too poor to get himself entered at the Hindu College or at any of the few other English schools then in existence in Calcutta, picking up what he could from Ràmtaun Babu and those of his friends who knew English. His industry and perseverance soon had their result, and in two or three years' time he had acquired

a fair knowledge of English. To improve it by all possible means he used to go for a stroll every evening in the Eden gardens, where he met many English people with whom he would enter into conversation on every conceivable topic. Now, Shyàmàcharan was a real genius and a keen observer of men and things, but withal extremely modest and unassuming in his manners. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that he soon became a favourite amongst the English people, who greatly enjoyed his intelligent and witty remarks. In this way he speedily acquired remarkable fluency in speaking English. His Persian scholarship also became known to several Englishmen, to whom he gave private lessons in the language, and thus earned a good deal of money. Through the good offices of one of these pupils he was introduced to Sir Charles Trevelyan, one of the members of the Council of the then Governor-General of India, who wished to publish an English-Urdu-Bengali dictionary. Eventually Sir Charles entrusted him with the compilation of this work. He also read Persian with Shyàmàcharan and had two or three Urdu books translated into English by him. In spite of all this work, Shyàmàcharan, who could not bear to waste an hour of his time, also acted as junior teacher in the Madrasa College in Calcutta, and teacher of Persian to two military officers who lived at Dumdum, six miles from Calcutta. But a still more remarkable proof of his industry and love of learning was forthcoming, for he now began to attend French, Latin, and Greek classes at St. Xavier's as an unregistered pupil. His application and memory were, indeed, wonderful, and as he considered his time the most valuable of his possessions, he never lost a moment if he could possibly help it. It is

related that he used to doubly utilise the time on his daily journey from Calcutta to Dumdum, by walking so as to get physical exercise and at the same time preparing his French, Latin, and Greek exercises.

After spending three years in this way, his acquaintance with European classics became considerable. His knowledge of Persian, too, made him a maulvi of maulvis, whilst he did not neglect to cultivate Bengali, his mother tongue. At the age of twenty-three he was appointed second teacher of English at the Sanskrit College. Here he came in contact with Vidyàsàgar, the greatest Bengalee of his age, and the two men soon became attached to each other. Among the many qualities of head and heart which Vidyàsàgar possessed in an eminent degree was an ability to pick out geniuses from among plodders, and thereafter take the keenest interest in their welfare. The patronages he extended to Michael Madhusudan Dutta and Nabin Chandra Sen, two of the immortal poets of Bengal, are instances to the point. Shyàmàcharan began his study of Sanskrit at Vidyàsàgar's feet, and by virtue of his natural aptitude for the acquisition of languages, acquired a fairly deep knowledge of the Sanskrit poets, philosophers, and law makers before he left the Sanskrit College, after a lapse of four years, for the higher post of *Peshkàr* at the Sudder Diwani Adàlat in Calcutta. From this time onward his promotion was rapid. From *Peshkàr* to interpreter of the same court was his next step, and this was followed by his appointment in a similar capacity in the Supreme Court. The post of interpreter at both these courts carried very respectable salaries.

Shyàmàcharan was now a high official. The little ragged boy who slaved for an unsympathetic relative

twenty years earlier was now famous as a scholarly linguist, a high official, and a fairly wealthy man. He had now hosts of friends among Europeans and his countrymen, admirers, even flatterers. His circumstances being easy, he might, as others in his position would most probably have done, have lived an easy life of it and given up the strenuous and self-denying practices of the student. But no, that was contrary to his nature. Instead he devoted himself to the study of the Hindu and the Muhammadan laws, sounded all their depths, and unravelled all their intricacies. As a result of these studies he wrote and published two large works on the Hindu law and two on the Muhammadan. These books soon came to be regarded as standard books on their respective subjects, and gained for their author not only an Indian but also a European reputation.

The moral side of Shyàmàcharan's life was no less praiseworthy. He was an excellent son, a devoted husband, an affectionate father, and a true-hearted friend. His benevolence was also above the common. The recollection of the poverty of his boyhood and early youth, and the "chill penury" of his student days filled him with sympathy towards those in a similar plight, and he maintained a large number of schoolboys at his house in Calcutta, and assisted many more in various ways. For others of his countrymen he established and maintained, while he lived, a guest house at Krishnagar, and constructed several tanks of pure drinking water at his native village of Mamjoan and the neighbourhood.

Such was Shyàmàcharan Sarcàr.

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A MAN IN A MILLION

In all ages and countries there have been men who, by the magnanimity of their soul, have risen above the sect, community, or race in which they were born, to brotherhood with men of all denominations. One such man in recent times was Nawab Khawja Abdul Ghani, of Dacca. A Mussalman, sincere in his faith in Islam and strict in the performance of the rites prescribed by it, he was yet exceptionally tolerant of the followers of other religions. In spite of being the chief landowner and wealthiest man in Eastern Bengal, he could fully sympathise with the poor in their trials, and although, as a Mussalman, his social customs differed much from those of the Hindu, he could yet take part in a Hindu wedding or funeral or any simpler function with zest and ease, and, perhaps, in this way more than in any other showed his complete freedom from prejudice.

Of this good man, whom Europeans and Indians, Hindus and Muhammadans, rich and poor, delighted to honour, I shall tell you here a story which you may ponder over and remember for the guidance it may give to your own conduct.

Ràjà Babu—that was the name by which he was known, although it was not his real name—was a rich landowner of Dacca. But a life of wild incontinence and extravagance had left him a hopeless invalid before he was forty years of age, and reduced him to poverty. Coming as it did after a life of affluence Ràjà Babu found the latter harder to bear than most men, and suffered many privations. He dragged on a miserable

NAWAB KHAWJA ABDUL GHANI.

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existence for four or five years more, and then the end came. When on his death-bed he sent to the Nawab Shaheb humbly and earnestly begging him to come and see him before all was over with him. The Nawab not only knew him as he knew all the other landowners of his city and the district, for they were all in a manner under his protection, but he had also taken in bygone days some special interest in him and his affairs, trying to check him in his evil course, and thus save him and those who depended on him, and his property. But his benevolent endeavours in the shape of counsel, even admonition, had been flouted, and the wilful man had pursued his downward path till he reached the inevitable end. Ràjà Babu repented late—only on his death-bed —yet the repentance was true, and God in His mercy took note of it as will be seen from what followed. The Nawab received Ràjà Babu's message and hastened to his side. He was not a man to take offence or, having taken it, to remember it long, particularly if the remembrance stood in the way of his doing a generous deed. He strongly disapproved of the manner of life which Ràjà Babu had led ; he hated the excesses which he had committed, but the summons from the death-bed drove all thoughts from his mind except that he might be able to render him a last service. He hastened to the dying man's side. Ràjà Babu could with difficulty raise his hands in salutation to him, but he opened the floodgates of his eyes ; and when the surcharged heart was eased a little by this means, he said in feeble accents, which the Nawab bent over the pillow to catch : "Nawab Bahadur, I am going to expiate my sins. I know the penalty which I shall have to pay will be terrible ; but just now I do not think of it. I think

only of the ruin I have brought upon my poor, dear wife and children. Allow me, Nawab Shaheb, to leave them to your generous protection, though I have no right to ask it of you, seeing with what scant respect I have treated your well-meant endeavours to stop me on my downward path." The Nawab was silently crying all the while the poor man spoke, but he heard every word he said, and answered distinctly in the hearing of the wife who sat in a corner of the room and of the children who stood round the bed, "Ràjà Babu, if the worst happens, your wife and children shall be my charge, and they shall find in me, such as I am, a friend and guardian, and their well-being and interests shall engage my most anxious care. You need not worry yourself on their account from this moment. Try to forget the past and consecrate your soul to Him who alone can give peace, and who, I am sure, will accept your sincere repentance."

On the following day the end came, and until the affairs of the family were placed on the best footing which was possible under the circumstances, the Nawab's care for them was incessant. He gathered together the wrecks of the departed man's fortune, arranged with the creditors for the payment of his debts, settled the most pressing of them himself, saw that something was set aside for the maintenance of the family, that provision was made for the education of the sons, and for the marriage of the daughter, and arranged with the family priest for the daily *pujàh* of the family god—in short, did everything that his strong commonsense and his foresight suggested was necessary.

The Nawab was, indeed, a man in a million, such as "leave their foot-prints on the sands of time."

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RÀMGOPÀL'S BRAVERY

HAT-HABIBPUR is a considerable village in the district of Murshidabad, and Babu Kàlicharan Ghosh was one of its most important inhabitants. His family-dwelling consisted of over a dozen buildings, large and small, all made of mud walls and thatched roofs. One December evening one of these large buildings, the kitchen, caught fire by an accident, the exact nature of which was not ascertained. A breeze sprang up to help the fire, as so often happens, and in a short while the fire began to roar, its forked tongues leaping from the top of the kitchen to those of the neighbouring buildings. The inmates sprang from their beds and screamed "Fire! fire!" The neighbours, aroused by their cries, came running in, and one and all set to work to try to save the lives and property of the family and put out the fire. These good people quickly divided themselves into four bands. One rescued the women and the children from the burning house and carried them to a safe place, the second gutted the buildings as far as they could, the third formed a line from the tank to the house, passing buckets of water from one to the other, whilst the fourth made it their business to throw the water on the flames. Hardly had operations been put into full swing when a lady of the house came flying towards the rescuers and cried out, "Oh, my son! my little son! he has not been got out, he is still in the burning building there—there!" The particular building to which she pointed was one of the largest; a part of its thatched roof was burning and some of the windows.

The neighbouring buildings were also in flames, so that it was almost surrounded by masses of fire. The lady in her madness of grief dashed towards the main door of the house, but was held back by those who were about her. None, however, among these could muster courage enough to try to deliver the child from the fate which threatened him. They stood motionless, horror-stricken and helpless, while the fire raged and roared. The bamboos in the thatched roofs cracked, and the poor mother threw herself on the ground and fainted away in her agony. Now there happened to be present one, Ràmgopàl De by name, an ungainly youth, who, being knock-kneed, had been uncharitably nicknamed by the wags among his companions "the drake." This young man suddenly bestirred himself, and thoroughly drenching a thick coat and wrapper which he had on, and his *dhuti* and shoes with water from the buckets that stood by, took a pitcher full of water in each hand and made straight for the door of the burning building. Some tried to stop him, saying that it was a forlorn hope, and that the risk to his own life was too great. But these considerations neither daunted nor deterred him. He had noticed that the part of the building where the child lay was as yet untouched by the fire, although the way to it was a lane of burning cinders and ashes. Ràmgopàl, knowing the interior of the house, for he had often been inside, took the shortest way and was out of sight in a second. The smoke almost stifled him and the heat quickly dried up his wet clothes, shoes and body. He was directed to the bed by the cries of the child, who had got out and was now on the floor. Ràmgopàl snatched him up and hid him in his bosom, emptying as he did so a pot of water on his head, body and clothes.

Then he sought the way out, and, as he did so, poured the water from the remaining vessel over himself and his charge. It was a daring act and a narrow escape, for no sooner had Ràmgopàl crossed the door than the thatch just over it fell in a blaze of fire and sparks. One second later, and he with his precious burden would have been buried in it. His re-appearance was hailed with ecstatic shouts of joy from the people outside. The shouts revived the mother, who started up and hugged the child that was handed over to her to her heart, crying more passionately than ever. Some of the bystanders tore off the clothes from Ràmgopàl's person to see if he was injured (but thank God! he was not), and carried him in their arms out of the reach of the heat, amid deafening shouts of "Long live Ràmgopàl!"

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FROM POVERTY TO FAME

MATHUSWÀMY AIYAR came of a very poor Bràhman family who hailed from a village in Tanjore, Madras. His father died while he was still in the cradle, and it was with the greatest difficulty that his mother managed to provide for herself and her child. Nor could she give the boy any better education than could be had in the primary school of his native village, and even this schooling he could not finish, for so great was his mother's need that she had to take him away when he was only ten years old, having found employment for him in the office of the Deputy Revenue Collector of Tanjore. Here the boy was given his food, clothes,

lodging, and the nominal pay of Rs. 2 a month, which sum he handed to his mother, who was now entirely relieved of the expense of supporting her son.

Even as a boy, Mathuswàmy loved to be thorough in all that he did, as the following story shows. One day news was brought to the Deputy Collector that the bridge over a certain stream in the neighbourhood was broken. Judging that it ought to be either repaired or rebuilt, the Deputy Collector determined to send some one to inspect it and report what was necessary. Having no one else at hand, he sent the boy. And what did the boy do? He not only carefully inspected the bridge and noted what parts of it required to be rebuilt and what parts to be repaired, but even calculated how many planks, girders, bolts, screws, and nails were required for the work, and exactly what they would cost in material and labour. The Deputy Collector was astonished, as well he might be. He knew how intelligent and industrious Mathuswàmy was, but he had not dreamt that he could do all this. From that day forward he began to take note of him, and arranged that he should have lessons in English with his own nephew, who was about the same age. There was, however, a marked difference in the progress which the two boys made. While the nephew with all his time at his disposal prepared his lessons with tolerable accuracy, Mathuswàmy not only did them excellently, but also learnt much more on his own account, in spite of the little time which he could call his own. There happened to be an English school very close to the Deputy Collector's office, and so eager was the boy for knowledge that he would snatch half and quarter hours from his work at the office in order to listen at a door or by a window to the master's

teaching and the students' replies. In this way he learnt more than anyone had any idea of, and when one day the Deputy Collector found it out, his wonder and admiration knew no bounds. He at once stopped the boy's work at his office and put him to the school from which he had been stealing knowledge. Mathuswàmy was about fourteen at the time he went to the school, where he studied with his accustomed application for a year and a half. Next he was entered at the Government High School at Madras, his good patron, the Deputy Collector, bearing all the expenses of his education. Here Mathuswàmy did extremely well, passing all his examinations with the utmost credit and carrying off prizes and medals year after year. His character, too, in all points of honesty, candour, modesty, and respectful obedience to his teachers so distinguished him among his fellow-scholars that Mr. Powell, the principal, took him under his special care and loved him as if he had been his own. He taught him for an hour or more every evening at his own house, and sent him to his hostel after the tuition in his own carriage.

In 1854, while still at school, Mathuswàmy wrote a prize essay in English. It was a model composition of its kind, being, in fact, a store-house of knowledge and research, and easily beat the other compositions which had been sent in. For this he was awarded a prize of Rs. 500, and, writing with reference to it, Mr. Holway, the then secretary to the Education Council of Madras, remarked in a public letter that a talent of the type and excellence of Mathuswàmy's would be considered a valuable asset in any country of Europe. Mr. Powell, too, when handing the purse to him said, " Mathuswàmy, I am sure that this is only the first of the many laurels

you are destined to gather in the field of scholarship, and this money is only an earnest of the very much more that will fall to your share." The prophecy was fulfilled to the letter.

Mathuswàmy's first appointment was to a moderate post in the education department. It was not a high post. In those days there were no universities or high courts in India, but the Madras Government had instituted a test in law which gave those who passed it the privilege of practising at the bar of the Sudder Dewàni Àdàlat. Mathuswàmy passed the test, taking first place, as was usual with him, but as he was appointed to a post under the government, he did not practise. After this he became Munsiff, Deputy Collector, and Subordinate Judge in succession. In 1886 he was appointed Police Magistrate of Madras, a situation of high honour and responsibility. His heavy public duties did not apparently interfere with his studies, which at this time were mainly devoted to the laws of the different European countries. He learnt German in order to study in the original the laws of Germany. He sat for and passed with distinction the B.L. examination in the first year it was instituted in Madras. This was followed by his appointment as a judge of the Court of Small Causes, and in 1888 by his being made a Companion of the Indian Empire. Next, but not the last, was his promotion to the bench of the Madras High Court. The crowning point was reached, however, when in 1893 he was appointed to officiate for a time as Chief Justice of the same court, the highest court of judicature in India, and was invested with the order of the K.C.I.E. Thus, the erstwhile hungry and ragged country lad, the orphan who began life at ten years old as an errand-boy,

and considered it great good fortune to get Rs.2 a month, became Sir Mathuswàmy Aiyar, K.C.I.E., one of Her Majesty's Puisne Judges of the High Court of Madras, and for some time acted as its Chief Justice.

The story is one to ponder over, more especially when one reflects that these honours and distinctions were the outcome of the industry, energy, perseverance, and devotion to duty, which, both as boy and man, were a part of his character.

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THE LOST PURSE

HAVING disposed of his merchandise, a Cabuli merchant, Basir Mahammad Khan by name, was returning home from India with the proceeds, and on his way back decided to make a short stay at Bannu in the Punjab. Accordingly, he took up his quarters in a large garden in the suburbs of the town with a few of his fellow-countrymen, also merchants, with whom he proposed to cross the border. Now, it happened that when the time came for him to leave, he was much pressed for time, and in the hurry and confusion left his purse of five thousand rupees behind him under the tree where he had passed the night. He had not gone far before he discovered his loss, and the thought that he might never see his money again nearly drove him out of his wits. He turned back immediately, and ran and ran until he saw in the distance a Bengalee boy, not more than fifteen years of age, who was watching him attentively. As soon as he came within hail, the boy, whose

name was Bisvesvar Mukherji, accosted him. "Why are you running, Cabuliwàlà? Have you lost anything?" "Yes, yes!" answered the man almost out of breath, "I have lost a purse with money in it." Bisvesvar at once set matters at rest, saying that the purse was safe, that he had found it and had only a few minutes before buried it under a bush to keep it for its owner. It was too heavy and too unsafe to carry it away with him. Then he took the man with him to the spot, dug the purse out, and handed it to him.

The merchant, who was a man of high character, was overjoyed at the recovery of his money, but his joy was not greater than his gratitude to the boy, whose honesty he could not fail to admire. For some time he could not find words to express his thanks, and only held Bisvesvar's hands in his own and gazed at him. When at last he found his tongue, it was to utter words of thankfulness and praise such as the boy blushed to hear. The merchant then offered him a reward of 50 rupees, but Bisvesvar looked at him with so much surprise and wonder that he hastily withdrew it, and after a moment's thought pressed a beautiful pen-knife into his hand as a memento. This Bisvesvar gladly took.

The merchant did not resume his journey that day, but, stopping in the town, had a full account of the event written both in Urdu and in English, and sent it to the papers for publication. Bisvesvar soon found himself famous at Bannu, and was made much of, but the joy in his heart of hearts was derived from the knowledge that he had done as his conscience bade him.

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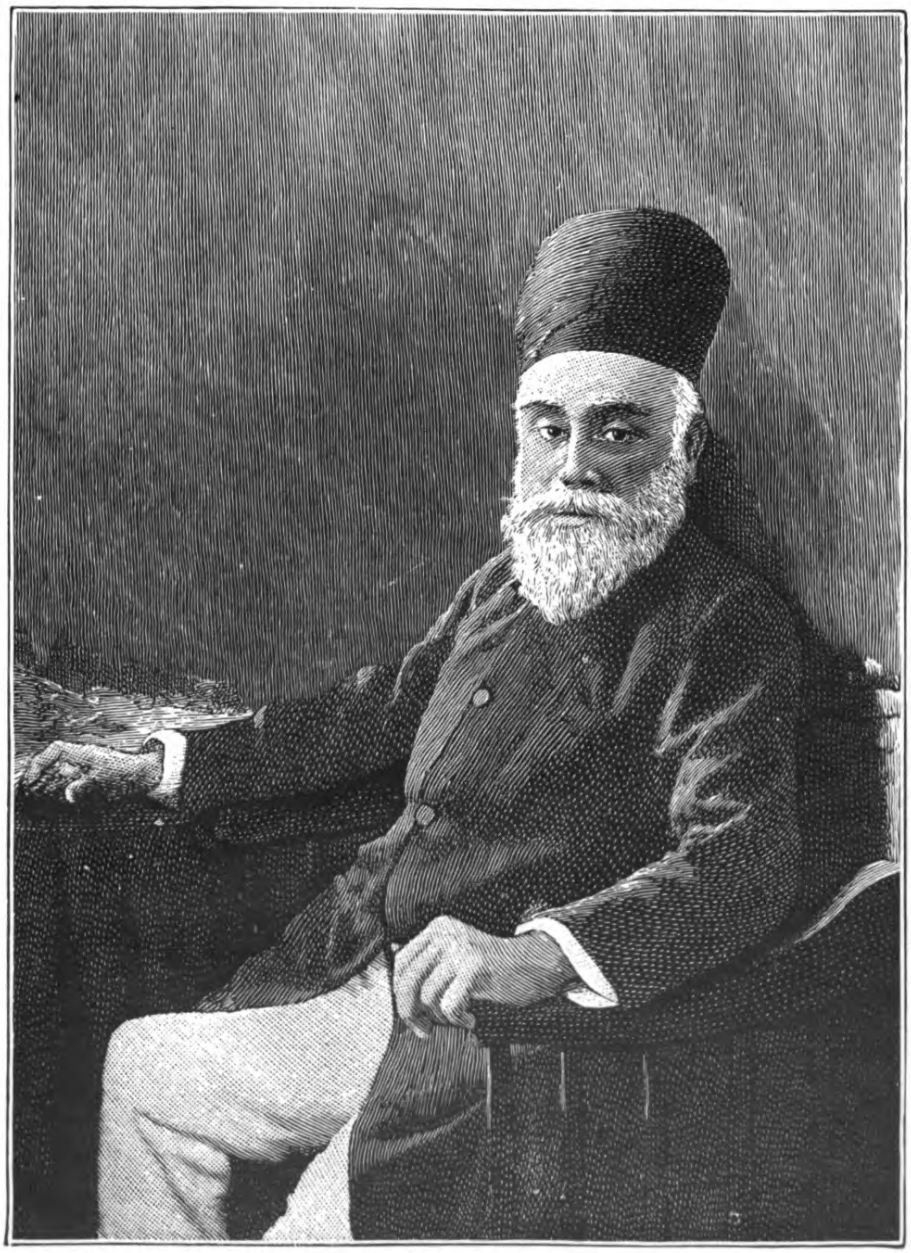
TÀTÀ THE PARSEE

THE Parsees are pre-eminently the commercial people of India. Among them you will find the brightest talent in business, the greatest enterprise, energy, and perseverance in quest of this world's goods, and, consequently, many of them are men of great wealth. There have, of course, been great merchants among other nations of India in no way inferior to the best among the Parsees—Premchànd Roychànd, Jijibhoy, Potit and Oudiyà are examples—but they have been fewer, and have not inspired their own countrymen with that zest for commerce which is a distinguishing mark of the Parsees.

Jamesetji Tàtà, whose career is here outlined, had not much of an academic education. Admitted into the Elphinstone College, Bombay, at sixteen years of age, he left it when nineteen to join his father's firm in the city. Jamesetji had more than an ordinary taste for business, and, though young, soon succeeded in infusing new life into the concern. His enterprising spirit led him to establish a branch office at Hong-Kong, and within a few years he set up others in Japan, America, and France. He was liberally aided in his business by Premchànd Roychànd, the well-known merchant. Jamesetji soon felt the necessity of establishing an Indian bank in London, and with this end in view proceeded to England. At this time a great calamity happened. The prices of Indian cotton in America went down to such an extent that a great many Indian cotton merchants, Premchànd Roychànd among them, were well nigh ruined.

Jamesetji fell with his patron, but he was not the man to cry over spilt milk, and did not despair of retrieving his fortunes. To such men opportunities are sure to come, and Jamesetji had his chance when the British expedition, under Sir Charles Napier, against Abyssinia was planned. He then tendered for and obtained the contract to supply the army with provisions, both on the march and in the field, and in the following year secured further contracts under the public works department of the Government of Bombay. The profits arising out of these transactions, which he carried out very successfully, rebuilt his fortune. Enterprising business men do not allow their money to lie idle in their safes; it must be made productive. So Tàtà laid a portion of his out in setting up an oil mill in Bombay, but, as the success of the venture did not come up to his expectations, he soon converted it into a cotton-mill. Even this was not attended with the full measure of success which he had anticipated, notwithstanding all that he devised and did for it in the course of three strenuous years, so, when an opportunity of selling it at a good profit occurred, he took advantage of it. Feeling that to attain success in the cotton industry a thorough knowledge of the art of cloth-making was necessary, this energetic man determined to go to Manchester, the great centre of cloth manufacture in England, and there learn all there was to be learnt about the manufacture of cloth. There he stayed and studied for about five years. Then he returned home and started a large mill at Nagpur, the capital of the Central Provinces. He named it the "Empress Mill," in loyal commemoration of the great event of the year in which it was started—the proclamation of the good Queen



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Victoria as Empress of India. So much knowledge, skill, industry, and capital were brought to bear upon its working that the success of the mill was assured from the start, and it still holds its position as the premier cotton-mill in the country. Tàtà resolved to trade in cotton goods with the French colonies in Asia, but the duties which the French Government levied on such articles when imported from foreign countries were so high that, in order to avoid this high tariff, he set up a second mill at Pondicherry, the metropolis of the French possessions in India, and sent his merchandise from the French port. A great feature of Tàtà's labours in connection with cotton-mills was that, while no doubt tending to enrich him, they yet took an altruistic and patriotic turn. He freely gave the other mill-owners and their workers the benefit of his knowledge and skill and, at his own expense, sent several Indian youths, who were intelligent and eager to learn, to Manchester to be trained as he had been. He also introduced into India the Egyptian and American cottons, which have longer and finer fibres. Indeed, a great part of the output of his mills consisted of these materials.

Having attained so much success in the manufacture of cloth, he next turned his attention to the production of steel and iron goods. He made elaborate preparations for the establishment of smelting works and factories at Seni, on the Bengal-Nagpur railway, in the Central Provinces, but, unfortunately, did not live to see the completion of this his latest enterprise, which was carried into effect by his sons, who completed the factories which were afterwards opened.

Jamesetji also ran a line of ships on the Indian and Pacific Oceans in co-partnership with certain Japanese

shipowners for the transport of his own and other Indian manufactures and raw products to the islands in these oceans and to those countries whose shores they washed. In this enterprise he met with much opposition from English, Austrian, and Italian shipowners. His chief opponents were the celebrated P. and O. Company, who were supported by powerful interests in England. The struggle was a long and tough one, but Tàtà had his way in the end.

In fact, in all the battles which he fought with fortune, he either gained the victory or made honourable peace with her. Difficulties only stiffened his resolution and roused him to redoubled exertions. Such men are ever a source of inspiration to the timid and the irresolute.

62

THE HEIGHT OF COURTESY

RÀJNÀRÀYAN BOSE, the model schoolmaster, was also the personification of politeness. His simplicity and suavity of manners won all hearts, and even the most sordid minds felt the ennobling influence of intercourse with him, and the humblest gained some self-respect in his company. He lived for some time at Deoghur, and the Europeans who knew him used to allude to him as "the good old man of Deoghur." True politeness is the outcome of great delicacy of feeling and a nice perception of what may be disagreeable to others and consists in refraining from either saying or doing them, in self-restraint and patience, in making efforts to please others, and in general treating those we meet with the

respect due to them. Ràjnàràyan Babu did not consider even a drunkard as beyond the pale of his courtesy, as the following story shows.

Once upon a time an attorney of the High Court in Calcutta, who had drowned his senses for a time in strong drink, came to his sitting-room and started talking to him at a great pace. Not only did Ràjnàràyan endure his maudlin gibberish for three full hours without a murmur, but even nodded or answered by a word or two when necessary, and did not bid him good-bye before he had risen of his own accord.

Still another story is related of Ràjnàràyan's unfailing courtesy. While he lay on a bed of pain and sickness, he would say to anyone who came to see him, "I cannot rise from my bed to greet you, dear sir; I trust you will kindly excuse me."

63

A KIND ACTION

You may have read of the noble sympathy of the American president, Lincoln, who remained standing in a stage coach to afford sitting room to a negro woman. Here is an instance of the same quality afforded by Mahàràjà Manindra Chandra Nandi, of Cossimbazar.

At Ghoosra station an old woman was seen getting down from a third-class carriage, an old woman clad in dirty rags and shaking in all her limbs. She got herself down somehow, but she had a large bundle in the carriage which she found the greatest difficulty in taking out. She tugged at it with both her hands, but

caught between the legs of a bench in the carriage and the partially opened door, it would not yield to the old woman's puny efforts. Rude people inside the carriage trod on it and almost on her in their attempt to get out, whilst others on the platform jostled her and abused her in their hurry to get in. Presently the bell rang, and the guard unfurled his green flag—signals for the train to start again. The old woman burst into pathetic cries which attracted the attention of Mahàràjà Manindra, who just at that moment happened to be looking her way from his saloon carriage. He took in the circumstances at a glance, jumped out, and running to the woman pulled her bundle out, placed it at her feet, and then hurrying back jumped into his compartment as the train began to move out of the station. Your common " big folk " would not deign in their loftiness to look upon the poor woman, far less to sympathise with her and help her with their hands ; but there are men and men among the upper classes as well as among the lower masses.

64

HIS FATHER

THE great Krishnadàs Pàl was not only a famous journalist, a deep politician, and an ardent patriot, but he was also a man distinguished for his sterling honesty, sturdy independence, and moral courage. In spite of the fame and position which he had secured, and the respect in which he was held by Europeans and Indians alike, he was a poor man and lived plainly. His father, an old gentleman, uninfluenced by the

fashions of the day, lived still more plainly, and there was nothing about him to distinguish him as father of his great son, who was a valued member of the Vice-Regal Council, and whom the rulers of the land and Nawabs and Ràjàhs delighted to honour.

Now, one day a high English official came riding to Krishnadàs's unpretentious house, and seeing a bare-footed man, with more than half his body naked, standing at the gate, threw him the reins that he might hold his horse, and inquired if Krishnadàs Babu was in. The latter came out before there was time for an answer, and at once took the reins from his father's hands and bade the official good morning and welcome. Krishnadàs's action caused misgivings in the official's mind, and he looked wonderingly at the old man and inquiringly at his son, upon which Krishnadàs said, "Dear sir, this is my father." The visitor, much embarrassed, coloured to the roots of his hair and shook the old man repeatedly by the hand, profusely apologising all the time.

This story is in pleasing contrast to the tales which we have heard, and which we fear are only too true, of so-called "smart" sons who have been too proud to acknowledge their own parents when their fine friends were near.

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THE FAKEER'S ANSWER

SITÀRÀM ROY, a Bengalee, lived in the last half of the seventeenth century—in the days when Bengal, and, for the matter of that, the whole of India was under no

settled rule. Then whoever could do so carved out a state for himself by force of arms, and it was in this manner that Sitàràm Roy acted in that part of Bengal which is now occupied by portions of the districts of Jessore, Khulna, and Burisal. But all that is another story; the incident about to be related tells of a conversation between him and a fakeer, which had a great effect on Sitàràm Roy.

Now this fakeer was a certain Chànd Shàha, who in the course of his wanderings came to the town of Shyampur, where Sitàràm had his headquarters. Spreading his carpet in the open verandah of a temple of Mahàdev, he slept there all night with his feet sacrilegiously extended towards the idol within. Sitàràm Roy found him in this position at dawn when he went to make his customary devotional bow to the deity, and his blood boiled at the sight.

"How dare you, Mussalman, insult Mahàdev in His own house?" cried he.

"Who is Mahàdev, my son, and where is His abode and how have I insulted Him?" smilingly and mildly said the fakeer without sitting up or budging an inch from his position.

"Mahàdev is God, you unbeliever, and this temple is His abode, and you have insulted Him by pointing your feet towards Him."

"But does not God live anywhere else?"

"He does, ignoramus; not a needle's point of space in the universe but He is there."

"All right then, son, all right; if He is everywhere and at all points of the compass—north, south, east, west—tell me in which direction I shall point my feet and where I shall lay them. I hear you are ambitious—

for I guess you are Sitàràm Roy—ambitious of founding a Hindu state in which God will be glorified. I do not think God can be glorified in a state whose ruler is not wiser than you."

It is said that Sitàràm afterwards placed himself under the spiritual guidance of this fakeer, and at his advice named the capital of his Hindu state Mahammadpur.

66

BENGALEES AND THE FAMINE

NOT until recently has the character of the Bengalees been rightly understood and appraised at its true value. There is no intention in the story which follows to dwell unduly on their virtues, for these have been most eloquently and unmistakably referred to in the writings of such men as Ràjà Rammohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Ràmkrishna Paramahansa, Vibekànanda, Isuar Chandra Vidyàsàgar, Dr. J. C. Bose, Dr. Rabindranàth Tagore, Dr. P. C. Roy, Surendranàth Banerji, Krishnadàs Pàl, Romesh Chandra Dutta, and a host of others, of whose names any country in the world might be proud. We have not as yet had in the British period of Indian history a soldier or a sailor in Bengal, but that is because the time does not yet seem to have come in the judgment of our patriarchal government when the Bengalees shall be trained to the use of arms. Not because they are naturally lacking in gallantry ; and even though they were, it would be no reflection on them, considering the circumstances in which they have been living so long. As to their intellectual keenness, the

world, I think, is in perfect agreement; and as to their heart, which, above all other things, distinguishes man from the brute, which "likens him unto God," the most excellent eulogies have been recorded. In the following doleful story there is added to the long roll of testimonies borne to the nobility of the Bengalee's heart, one by a European gentleman who had an excellent opportunity of forming a correct judgment.

In 1913 the floods of the Damodar swept over large tracts in North Bankura, destroying the standing crops and drowning many cattle and some human beings. Those wretched men and women who survived and returned to the wrecks of their huts after the subsidence of the flood, felt the pinch of want, though not of actual famine, but managed to hold body and soul together in the hope that the coming harvest would be a better one. But, alas, their hopes were doomed to disappointment, for the next crop was scanty in the extreme. This was partly owing to the barren sand with which the floods had overlaid the soil, partly owing to the lack of cattle to draw the ploughs, and partly owing to drought, for in 1914 the rains ceased early in September. Not yet did the people die of starvation, for the Bengalee can exist on very little, and is in general extremely tenacious of life. But the dreaded famine could not be averted for ever, for in the following year there was scarcely any rain during July, August, and September, and the paddy seedlings could not be planted out. The district magistrate reported that large areas throughout the country lay untouched by the plough. The result was acute famine, unprecedented within the century. Of the eleven lakhs of population of the district more than eight lakhs were severely affected.

The Government had full information as to the state of affairs in the district, but Government organisations are often cumbrous machines and slow to move. It was so in this case, and before the official mind had decided as to the necessity of giving relief to the stricken population, numbers of those who for long had subsisted on grass, leaves of trees, roots, or wild fruits, had already succumbed. Happily, however, private charity was not slow. With a promptness deserving of the highest praise, the Social Service League, the Ramkrishna Mission, and one or two other benevolent organisations began without delay their mission of mercy among the suffering people. Relief-centres were speedily set up in convenient places, and the sorely-tried people were given food or money, which had been obtained by dint of earnest appeals to those who were in a position to give. Members of these societies did not spare themselves in their efforts to obtain money. Every class of society, school children and their teachers, clerks and their employers, mill hands and mill owners, gave themselves heart and soul to the work of succouring the famished. Subscriptions were asked for from door to door, and those at a greater distance were appealed to by printed circulars.

But to return to the sufferers themselves. What they went through no pen can ever describe. Principal Mitchell of the Wesleyan College, Bankura, a well-known relief worker, wrote of the famished people as "in every condition of wretchedness." He wrote of "the secret suffering" of the more respectable among them as being "far greater than anyone could imagine." It was in the silent agony which some of the better classes endured without complaint that the most heart-rending

state of affairs existed. Some of them, too sensitive to ask for help, faced the most excruciating of all deaths—slow death by starvation—with a fortitude which was truly amazing. Even when surrounded by their famishing children, it was with difficulty that the emissaries of relief could induce them to accept help or reveal their actual position.

The system of the missionaries was to visit each village and to give food tickets to those who were in absolute need of relief. Their means, however, were so limited that with all their goodwill these missionaries had to use their discrimination between those who were at death's door and those who might yet hold out a few more miserable days! This selection was rendered the more easy by the nobility and self-denial of the starving people themselves. To quote Mr. Mitchell's own words, "I distributed a few tickets. I had only a small sum of money at my disposal, and, therefore, I could not help them much. Only the most needy must ask for tickets. It was fine to see those strong-built but starving men give the names of the old women and helpless men and children. *Not one of them asked for a ticket for themselves*, yet some of them had had no food for three days, but they remained silent." These men's unselfishness moved this European gentleman to tears. He rightly said, "There is true manliness among these lowly people."

One last quotation from Mr. Mitchell's letter will repay perusal, and may well conclude this narrative.

"In one village I had given out the tickets and was leaving when I noticed a tall, thin emaciated lad looking wistfully on in silence. I asked him if he were ill. No, he was not getting enough to eat; but as he was

getting something he had not asked for a ticket. And how much do you think he was getting? *One pice per day* by cutting grass. Poor lad! my heart bled for him. I gave him a ticket unasked for. You should have seen how his eyes gleamed with life and joy!

"At noon I sat down at the foot of a tree to eat my bit of lunch. I tried to find a quiet spot where I should not be seen; but the people spotted me, and long before I had finished, there was a crowd of starving people around me. I did not finish it. I had a loaf of bread with me, and as I required only a little, I gave the rest to the children. One little chap took his share, and immediately broke it up into four pieces, for his mother and two sisters (who were all absent) and himself, leaving by far the smallest portion for himself. Really, the unselfishness I have met with to-day has filled me with a new love for these people and a determination to do all I can for them."

These people were Bengalees; and those of whom Mr. Mitchell has spoken were not of the higher classes but the lowliest in the land—hewers of wood and drawers of water. Yet look at their hearts and remember that Bengal produced them.

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