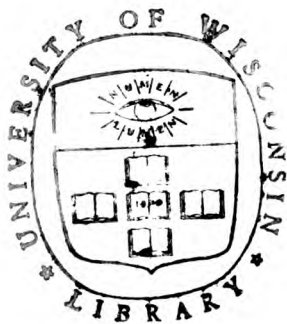


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LIEUT. SURESH BISWAS :

HIS LIFE AND ADVENTURES

BY

H. DUTT,

Author of "The Diamond Jubilee Souvenir,"
"Child's History of India," "Child's History of
Bengal," "Indian Monte Cristo," "Short
Stories," "For the Queen Empress,"
"Bejoy Chand,"
etc., etc.

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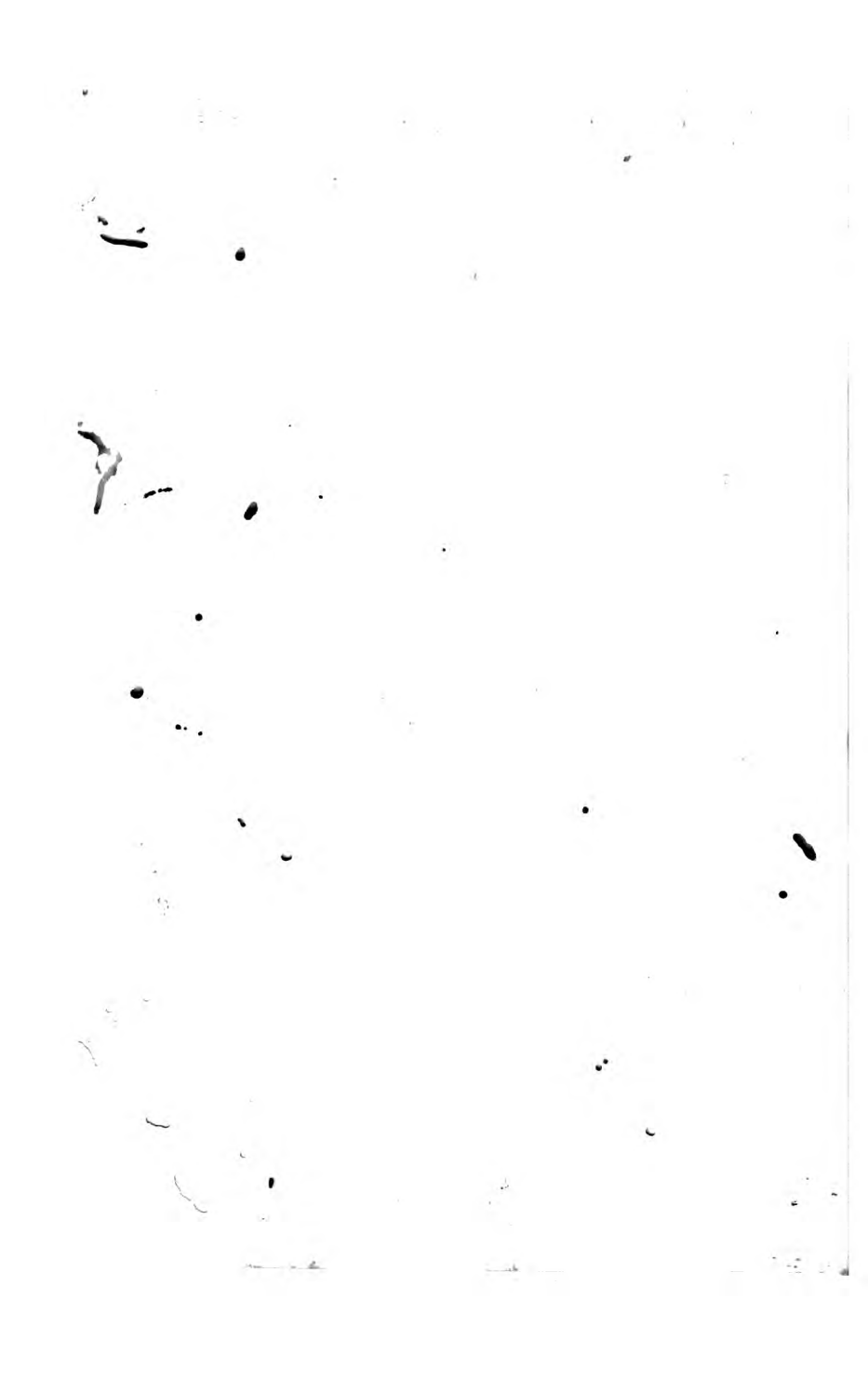
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Printed at

THE MERCANTILE PRESS,
12, WATERLOO STREET,
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DEDICATED

TO

His Highness the Honourable

Maharaja Rameswar Singh,

Bahadoor,

OF

DURBHANGA.

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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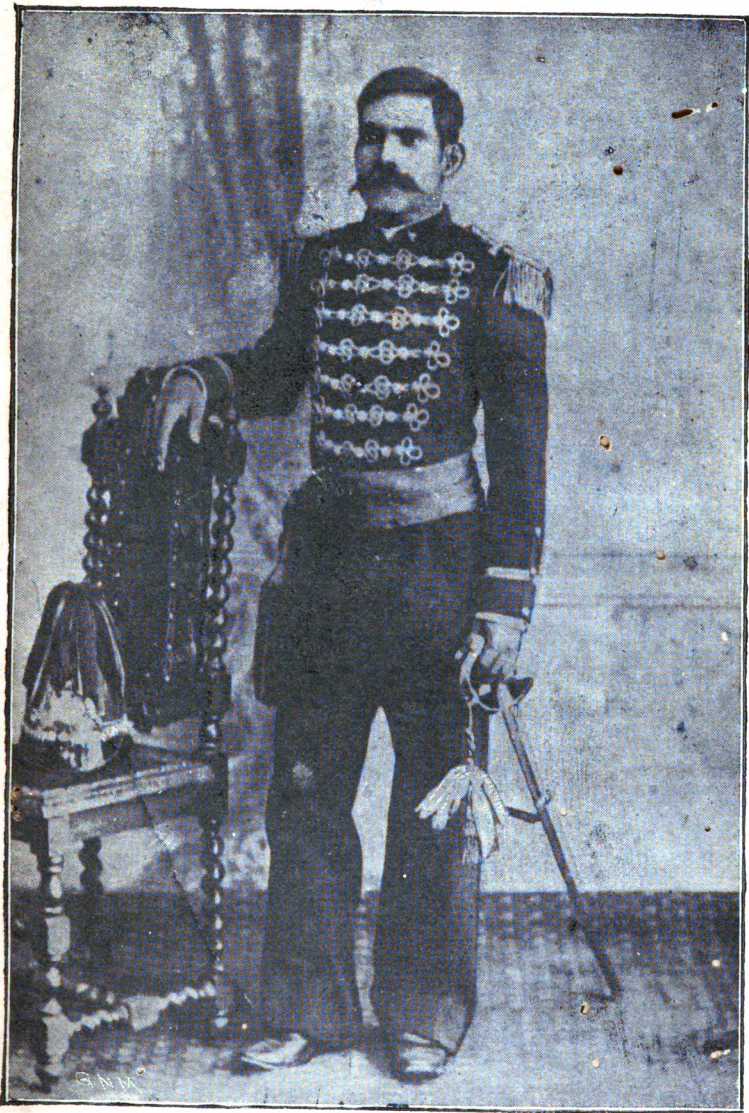
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METCALFE PRESS.

Lieutenant Sures Ch Biswas.



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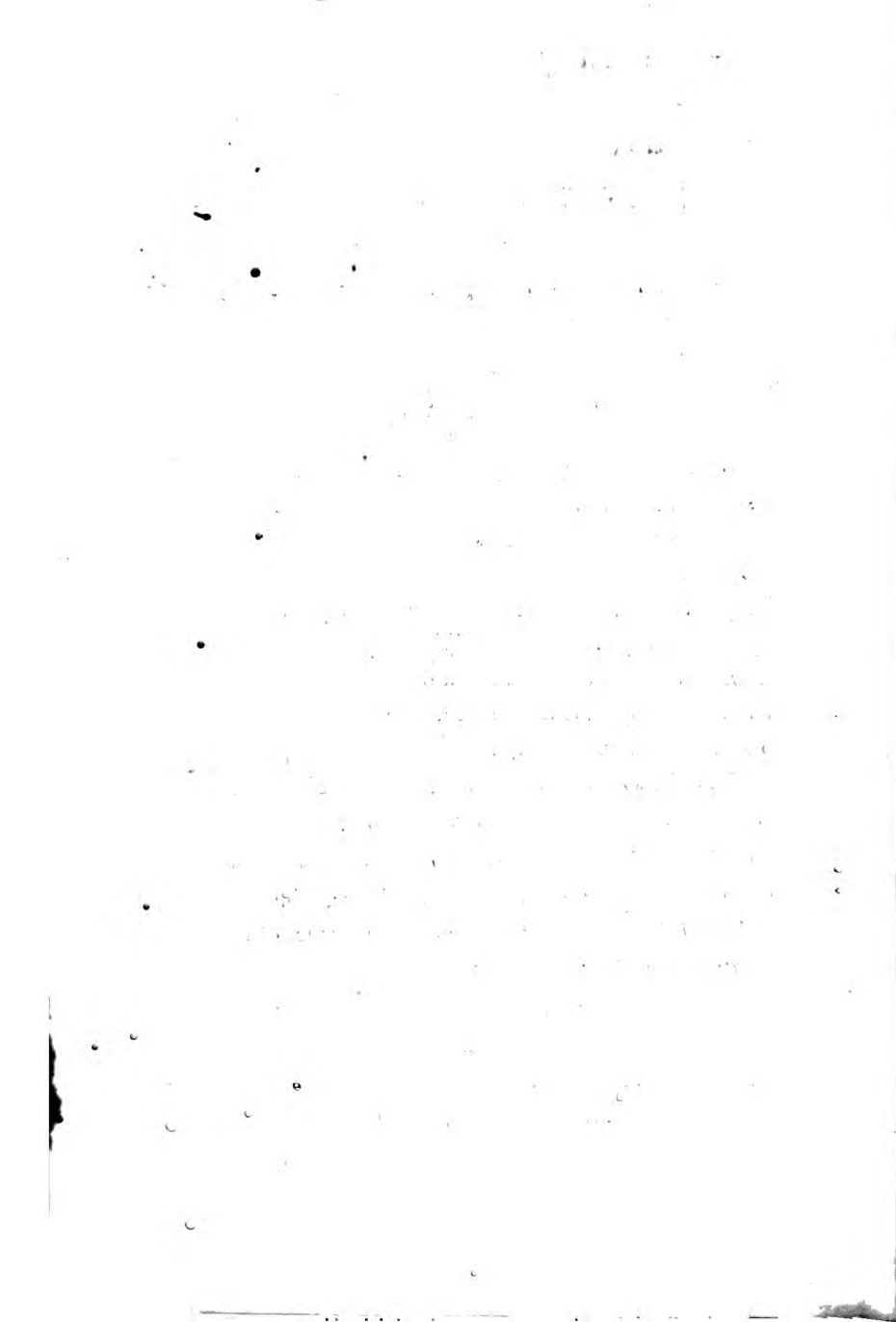
PREFATORY NOTE.

Considering the fact that ever since leaving the land of his birth, Suresh has been very reticent in his letters to his relatives about himself and his doings in the countries he has visited, the materials before us for anything like a full and connected story of his eventful life, have not been of a satisfactory nature at all. The present sketch therefore leaves much to desire, which we fear will not be supplied unless, as he has promised, Lieutenant Biswas himself comes forward to write his own autobiography. We, however, hope that incomplete as it is, the present brief sketch of his life will prove interesting, in view of the fact that there is not another Bengali, and for the matter of that an Indian, who has done so much to remove the stain on the national character, and in whose short life so many adventures, perilous situations and hair-breadth escapes have been crowded.

The publisher begs to thank Babu Monmotho Nath Biswas, the only brother of Lieutenant Biswas, for his kindly placing the materials of the present work at his disposal and to those princes and noblemen who have helped him pecuniarily in publishing the work.

In conclusion the publisher hopes that the reader will not mind the mistakes that have crept into the last few chapters owing to the change of press, etc.

THE PUBLISHER.



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INTRODUCTION

BENGAL AND BENGALEES.

INDIA has justly been styled the granary of the world, and Bengal has ever been her fairest province. The beauty of Bengal lies not in the wild majesty and rugged grandeur but in the smiling appearance and laughing eyes of Mother Nature—not in wood-capped hills, rushing mountain torrents or leafy vales, but in the smiling plains, the winding rivers and the happy villages of a peaceful people. The rugged side of Nature is scarcely perceptible in this fair, fertile province, watered by the holy Ganges and Brahmaputra and their innumerable tributaries and distributaries. It is a smile all over the land giving food for rich reflection to all who have a heart to feel and a head to contain all the blessings that a kind providence has bestowed.

The climate of this rich province—rich alike in crops and minerals—is mild and moist, not in consequence of the proximity of the sea alone, but for having, in a manner, been rescued from the water, by the inexorable laws of Nature. Science has proved

that at some remote age—far, far away into the dark, unexplored womb of Time—the position occupied by Bengal in the present map of the world was marked by the blue waters of the ocean, beating with terrific din against the high adamantine walls of the Himalayas for an inlet into the tableland of Central Asia, where the forefathers of the Hindus and the Buddhists, the Mahomedans and the Christians were peacefully grazing their flocks and singing their simple hymns to the different elements and forces that govern the world. On the high ridges of the Himalayan range are still to be found the bones and fossils of prehistoric fishes and sea-animals indicating the height to which the Bay of Bengal once reached. Gradually, through centuries and cycles the forces of Nature that were incessantly at work under the boiling waters, produced the land which we now call our own. But it is not geography nor the very interesting subject of the formation of land that is our lay to-day, and so we leave here the enquiry into the dim past of Bengal to be taken up by some abler and wiser theorist, lost in his own premises and deductions.

Well, the climate of Bengal has been enervating ever since it became the habitation of man. When the Aryans in their triumphal progress through Northern India reached the borders of this pleasant country, it was, historians tell us, inhabited by a dark people, thoroughly innocent of any of the arts of civilisation which distinguish a man from the brute

creation. In this conflict between ignorance and knowledge, between the dark and the fair, between the non-Aryans and the Aryans, the former went to the wall, and had either to submit or take themselves off to the impenetrable wilds and forests of the mountainous tracts which gird this land. History tells us that those of the dark race who remained became the slaves and servitors of the conquerors and joined their fate with theirs. With this, however, we are not concerned here to any great extent.

Residence in the mild and enervating climate of Bengal soon told not only on the physique but on the spirit of the brave and hardy Aryans, who had already conquered half the known world. The land of their adoption was fertile; the climate salubrious; while their wants were few. No wonder then if the Aryan settlers of Bengal quietly and gradually forgot the duty they owed to the Majesty of labour and became more or less enervated. They surrendered themselves up to the arms of comparative indolence and began to pass their days in the less arduous discussion of spiritual questions. Thus while they grew in spiritual worth, they lost in physique and martial spirit. Of course, we admit that it would be manifestly unjust to say with Macaulay, who, by the bye has now been thoroughly found out and discredited that the Bengalees were, or they are, a nation of slaves and cowards, without one redeeming feature in their national character. Though it is not politics

we are dealing with, we believe that we owe it to ourselves to say that if enervated by the mild climate and rich soil of their native land, the Bengalees were not yet dead altogether to all sense of patriotism and heroism. True, Bakhtiyar Khiliji, occupied the capital and palace of the old King, Lakhanya Sen, with only seventeen spears at his back,—true, the eighty-year old monarch, who was then in his dotage, did not offer any resistance whatever to the invader but fled by a back-door out of harm's way, leaving his kingdom at the mercy of the foreigner and the *Mlechha*; but then there are points even in this, which redeem the position a little. Bakhtiyar Khiliji would never have been able to penetrate to the capital, in the way he did, without meeting with any the slightest resistance whatever, as if he was on a triumphal progress over a thoroughly subjugated country, had it not been for the blackest treachery and ingratitude of ministers whom Lakhanya Sen had pampered for years. Yes, it was treachery which lost Bengal its independence,—treachery and perfidy. There are writers who make this treachery of a few black-hearted fools, their stock argument to villify the whole race. But what nation is there and what country, which has not a parallel to this historic incident? All men are not equal, and like spots in the moon, there are black sheep in every fold. Be that as it may, though Gour was conquered by Bakhtiyar Khiliji with 17 horse-

men, it took the Afghans more than a century to conquer even half of the kingdom. And even after centuries of Moslem rule, Bengalee chiefs maintained their independence in various parts of the country with the aid of Bengalee soldiers, for then, unlike the age we live in, sepoy and *paiks* were not imported from the North-West. To-day perhaps every house in the metropolis would boast of an up-country durwan, but like Swiss porters in France, it is not because this duty cannot be equally well performed by Bengalees.

During all the centuries of Moslem rule, while the majority of Bengalees contented themselves with peaceful pursuits, a section of the community always bore arms and passed their days in gymnastics and athletics. At times there would spring up among them warriors who left their names behind to be recorded in the roll of honour and heroism. If Pratapaditya was a Bengalee hero, whose name remains deathless in song, his rise and feats were not accomplished all by himself. They surely required the co-operation of other equally brave and heroic spirits. Pratap's associates were each a hero worthy of a better reputation than they seem to be credited with. Coming to more recent times we have had hundreds of instances in which natives of Bengal have given signal proofs of bravery and martial spirit. It is, however, useless to mention them here. We will only content ourselves

with quoting a few passages from the remarkable letter of the Hon'ble Mr. Oldham to the *Englishman*, vindicating the national character of the Bengalees, from the undeserved and gratuitous strictures of one Mr. Steevens—an Englishman *minus* the most prominent English characteristic—fairness. Here are the words of Mr. Oldham :—

“Among the vices of the Bengali which Mr. Steevens enumerates is “utter incapacity for any sort of chivalry.” What sorts of chivalry Mr. Steevens had in view it is impossible to say, but Sir William Sleeman’s sentiments in this connection are worth comparing. I have not time to get out the book and quote the exact words, but they are to the effect that if by chivalry is meant a tender reverence and solicitude for womanhood and readiness to suffer and even die in its defence, then India has nothing to learn from the West in respect of chivalry. After having spent far more years in Bengal than Mr. Steevens has spent days, I believe Colonel Sleeman’s opinion to be as true for the Bengalis as for the people of Central India where he was when he wrote it. Charges of “dishonesty” and “suspiciousness” are easy to bandy anywhere. The charge of cowardice rests, I presume, upon the Macaulayan legend. When so many of us have, as we have at different times, in field and flood, owed our lives to the intrepidity of Bengali companions, it is time for it to be discredited. If Macaulay derived his views from the clerks and other sedentary Bengalis of his time with whom he was in contact, it would have been as suitable to judge the manhood of the English from the old City clerks described by Dickens. If the opinion rested on the disinclination still shewn by Bengalis to undertake military service in the ranks, it leaves out of

count not only the poor physique which the prevalence of Malaria throughout Bengal has caused, but also the disinclination to wear uniform and to submit to discipline which, along with their tendency to questioning and their marked individualism, are characteristics of this keenwitted race. Were it possible to give them anything like independent commands Bengali youth in abundance would be found ready to face death in war. As it is they face it as medical officers and commissariat officers and as clerks wherever British troops march in or on the borders of India.

No one could be less relevant than Macaulay when he wished to make a point. In writing his famous description of the Bengali he forgot that a large portion of the force with which Clive had won at Plassey was composed of "Bengalis" of just the same classes as those "Bengalis" whom Mr. Steevens watched crossing the Howrah Bridge. Similarly I remember that in his history he dilates on the cowardice of the Irish as soldiers because of the results of the Boyne, quite forgetting how gallantly the Irish horse bore themselves in that engagement, and how badly the infantry were commanded: but still more unaccountably forgetting how, comparatively a few years before, his own countrymen, the tried soldiers of Leslie and the veterans of the 30 years' war, had fled in far more disastrous rout before the half starved troopers of Cromwell at Dunbar."

After this vindiction coming from a quarter, at once so exalted and impartial, it is useless for us to adduce further proofs of the bravery of the Bengalees.

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LIEUTENANT SURESH BISWAS.

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Chapter I.

NADIA AND ITS PEOPLE.

FEW districts in fair Bengal enjoy a better reputation than Nadia—the ancient Navadwip. So early as the time of the Sen Kings, Navadwip was famous as one of the seats not only of government but of learning and culture. Since then it has always maintained its reputation, if not as a centre of brute, at least of intellectual, power, and has ever vied with Benares and Bikrampur for the place of honour in Sanskrit learning. Apart from this eminence as a seat of learning, Navadwip enjoys the unique honour of being the birth-place of Sree Gauranga, whom millions of people still regard as the latest *avatar*, and who certainly was a god-in-man—with an amount of intellectual and spiritual force—which enabled him to shape and mould the thoughts of nations. No Hindu there is who will question the greatness of Gauranga as a spiritual guide whose advent was regulated by high Heaven at a time when the nation was fast lapsing into irreligion and agnosticism.

That was an age of godless philosophy, of the superabundance of learning at the cost of spirituality—an age when flourished some of the most renowned of Hindu philosophers—an age, too, when the Moslem rulers of India were doing their best to convert by hook and by crook the mass of the Hindu population. Whether we are prepared to go so far, as to say that Sree Gauranga was an *avatar* or Incarnation of the God-head, we have not the least doubt that the times were such that but for his advent Hinduism would have received a terrible shock, from which perhaps it would have been difficult for it to recover its pristine glory. From that time forward Navadwip has always been a place of pilgrimage to millions, second to none in the continent. From Navadwip the present district has been named Nadia, and still it forms one of the most important districts in Bengal, not only in point of population but also as the birth-place of a number of men who have made their mark in their respective spheres of life. Its position, too, in the province is very favourable, for it is centrally situated. It is also famous as an indigo-growing district. The agitation which led to the suppression of the outrages and oppressions that for a time dimmed the lustre of British glory and reduced the people to the level of Carolina slaves, sprang up in this district. It was a family of Nadia Biswases,—quiet, middle-class men without fame or riches—who

staked their little all in the defence of their poorer neighbours and began a war to the knife with the powerful European planters all of whom were on the most intimate terms with the district officials. Often and often were these heroic souls,—they were true patriots—attacked and sought to be ruined by their richer and more powerful opponents; their houses were sacked; their properties looted; their families insulted. Often and often were their lives not worth a moment's purchase. Nothing daunted, however, the Biswases went on with their self-imposed task of ridding the country of the planter pest. They lost their all, but still they kept up the unequal war. It was no small credit to Nadia that two of her sons, sprung as they were from the middle-classes, could change the course of events by their indomitable will, their fearless advocacy of the rights of the raiyats, their complete abnegation of self, and their unswerving loyalty to the cause of the weak. The seed they sowed soon germinated and taught the illiterate raiyats of Bengal the lesson of opposition and struggle. And in the end, the sympathies of Mr. (afterwards Sir) Ashley Eden, Mr. Long and others were enlisted and indigo-oppressions were put a stop to.

Malaria has no doubt ruined the district of Nadia and emasculated its people. But still the *goalas* of Santipur, Kissengunj and other places in the district are expert *lathials* whose feats with the quarter-staff excite the wonder of those who are initiated in the

mysteries thereof. Who again has not heard of Bodey and Bishey dacoits, whose names have passed into a proverb?

Ram Das Babu of Matiari was another inhabitant of Nadia whose marvellous feats of strength smacked of the superhuman and still remain unparalleled. Such are Nadia and its people. But before we have done with them we believe we should just mention the Maharajas of Nadia—the descendants of Bhabananda Mazumdar, immortalised in Bharat's songs. It was at the Court of Raja Krishna Chandra of this illustrious family that Bharat Chandra Rai Gunakar shone as a meteor of exceptional brilliancy. And if Krishna Chandra was justly famous for his patronage of letters, the greater perhaps was his claim to our attention because from the first he sided with the English and thus contributed not a little to the foundation of that Empire which now excites the envy, wonder, and admiration of the entire civilised world.

Chapter II.

THE NATHPUR BISWASES.

NATHPUR is a pretty little village in the district of Nadia, on the banks of the Ichamati, some fourteen miles to the west of Krishnagar, the seat of the Rajas of Nadia and the present district headquarters. It is certainly not a large or important village; but the Biswases of Nathpur have for generations occupied a respectable position among the gentry of the district. They are not aristocratic people; they have no boast of heraldry, no pomp of power; but still they are known all over the district as solid, country squires. Simple and unostentatious, hospitable and charitable, the reputation of the Biswases was not founded on the unsteady basis of sand accumulations.

It was in this ancient and respectable, though perhaps not wealthy, family that Suresh Chander was born in 1861. His father was in Government service. He and his family were Baishnavas by persuasion—followers of Sree Gauranga, who had appeared among his forefathers four hundred years ago. Girish Chander,—that is his name,—could not at that time remain long at home. While he remained away his wife and family, according to the system

then prevalent in society, remained at home, and hence was it that our Bengal villages were then in a flourishing condition and had not to suffer on account of absentee residents and landlords. No one, indeed, would in those days leave home for the pleasures and vices of the metropolis if he could help it. The majority of middle-class men loved independence better than service and preferred the free and easy village life to a residence in town where one had even then to regulate his very words and actions according to the hard and fast rules of a tyrant society; to restrain all simplicity of manners and sincerity of feelings; and to tutor oneself to bow his head unquestioningly to mere conventional forms, that is to say, learn to be "sincerely insincere." Thus few villagers would care to leave their families and rend asunder their family ties, to pass their days as a stranger among strangers. Those, however, who had, by the force of circumstances, to reside elsewhere for service or business, made it a rule to leave their families behind so that their home instincts might remain undimmed. Once or twice a year would these men come home, and how very pleasant and happy would those days be not only to themselves but to their families, relatives and neighbours! How swiftly, sweetly and serenely, would those days pass, leaving at their close a hankering in all minds for a return thereof!

Chapter III.

BIRTH AND CHILDISH TRAITS.

WELL, Girish Chander was in Government service and had consequently to remain the greater part of the year away from home. He had two sons and three daughters, Suresh being the elder of the two boys. Great were naturally the rejoicings that attended the birth of our hero, and everything was done to propitiate the gods into showering their blessings on his head. Suresh, as we said above, was born in 1861 and so to-day, he is but 38 years of age, too young for all the triumphs he has achieved, the trials he has undergone, the perils he has passed through, and the glory he has won.

All the world over and in every age the child has always been the father of the man. The traits of character that appear in one in childhood's happy and innocent days cling to him to his last day and are only more developed and become more marked as years roll on. As a child, Suresh never knew what fear was, and most children do not. But Suresh's courage was not like that of other children; it did not spring from unconsciousness. He knew that fire would burn but yet he would put his finger into it. Suresh was restless and of a rather violent temper, so much so that when bent on doing any-

thing he would scarcely be restrained or balked of his purpose save by the exercise of superior strength; and then he would fret and fume, and his childish eyes would burn like that of a caged tiger in impotent rage, seeking an opportunity to wreak revenge and to renew that from which he had been kept back.

Kindness and gentle treatment were, at the same time, never lost on him. What the rod failed to achieve a smile or encouraging look or a pat on the back would easily accomplish. He was, indeed, a slave to gentle words and treatment.

What would appear an impossible feat to most children of his age came to him most naturally. In his childish pranks he would daily receive hurts and scratches, but never would he give vent to a cry nor would he desist from what hurt him. Jumping to improper heights, running long distances, climbing trees, scaling walls—all these were quite familiar to him even from early childhood.

Some persons are, they say, born to command, and this was the case with our hero even from the earliest age. Children would flock to him without his having to seek their company; and quite naturally, without any effort on his part, would they bow down to his superior nature, and stronger will. He was a commander even from a child.

Chapter IV.

SOME CHILDISH ANECDOTES.

SURESH'S powers of endurance have been remarkable all through life. Fire or the flame of a lamp always has a fascinating effect on childish minds, and no child there is who has not, sometime or other, hurt himself by an attempt to "catch" fire. When a tiny little thing, of a year or so, Suresh's mother failing to dissuade him from playing with fire, the red glow of which seemed always to captivate his childish mind, hit on the dangerous plan of giving him pain by scorching his fingers. It was evening, and she had many household duties to attend to; but so restless grew the child that she could not leave him alone in the bed-chamber where there was none to take care of him, nor could she take him with her for that would be spoiling her work. In the room burnt a *chirag*—the antiquated Indian lamp—unmasked and within the reach of even children. Those were days when kerosine oil had not come into practical use, and Indian villages do not even now boast of gas works. Lanterns were used but rarely and almost exclusively by the higher classes. Naturally, therefore, did Suresh's mother think, that were she to leave her restless child in the room with the *chirag* burning he might come to grief by playing with it. She took his tiny hand in hers and

then held it to the flame of the *chirag*, evidently intending to withdraw it as soon the child felt pain and cried. But no cry or groan escaped him. He did not, of course, laugh, but save silence there was no other indication of his feeling any pain. The lady was surprised at this manifestation of her son's strange powers of endurance. Since that day she would never think of chastising him.

At the age of two Suresh performed a feat which boys of double or treble his age would not dare, and which established his reputation in the village for restlessness and fearlessness. One day, while no one was about, he twaddled with scarcely steady steps towards a bamboo ladder that rested against a wall. Up this ladder he made his way, fearlessly and with the agility of a cat, to a height of nearly 20 feet,—to the highest rung in fact. Then sitting astride the ladder and looking triumphantly down, he clapped his tiny hands in great glee and began to sing lispingly a string of meaningless childish jargon, to the utmost capacity of his childish lungs. His voice soon brought his mother and other relatives to the spot, and the awful situation of the brat sent a thrill of horror through their frames. The least inattention, the slightest unsteadiness, the merest accident—was sure to hurl him to the ground,—a drop of twenty feet,—and then all that would have been left of him was his body, mutilated perhaps beyond recognition. The sight of his mother and relatives made the child hilarious with joy, and the way

He began to clap and sway his head to and fro made every one apprehensive of his safety. He might overbalance himself at any moment or might slip down at the merest nothing. It was again impossible, or at least very risky, for any one to hurry up the ladder and bring him down, for a man's contact with the ladder might make Suresh lose his balance. But the more his mother asked him to cease his prattle and sit quiet, the more uproarious he became. For some time coaxing and persuasion were of little avail. At last, perhaps through exertion or perhaps softened by the entreaties of his mother, Suresh was persuaded to sit quiet for a time. Some one then went up the ladder while several others held it fast to keep it from shaking, and rescued the fearless child from his perilous position. What a load of anxiety and tribulation was lifted off his mother's breast, when she pressed him, after this incident, almost hysterically to her panting breast, we leave the reader to judge, for surely it is beyond our capacity even to attempt to describe it. Indeed, she often felt that her mischievous child would never reach manhood, so very dangerous were the pranks he often played.

Chapter V.

A CAT STORY.

ABOUT this time, Suresh one day had a strange adventure with a cat, which is too good to be lost. Village cats are, as a rule, more ferocious than their fellows in town. Those who have any knowledge of the mofussil will bear us out when we say that country cats not only prove a terror to mice but also to other creatures, such as birds, hares, squirrels, etc. Indeed, we once witnessed a remarkable fight between a cat and a dog of the ordinary size. The posture of the cat, which seemed double its size, by being inflated with ill-concealed rage, its suppressed growls of pent up anger, its wild fierce eyes all combined to impress us with its ferocity. The dog was evidently playing at first, but when barking loudly it rushed upon its tiny adversary, it met with so warm a reception that howling with pain, it retreated with its tail between its hind legs. A few moments later it again advanced, only to receive a terrific slap from the forepaws of the cat and retire again. We watched this duel with keen interest and kept off those who seemed willing to interfere; and the combat continued for a little over half-an-hour. In the end to our utter surprise the dog beat a hasty retreat, its mouth and shoulders lacerated and bruised. The cat did not, of course, pursue the fugitive, but its sneezing and scratching

proved to demonstration how very satisfied and elated it was at the happy result of the combat.

Now to our story. One day a cat, a very big specimen of the species, climbed up a *Bael* tree and brought down a squirrel, squeaming and palpitating. A squirrel is a very delicate creature, so much so that it hardly survives a little pressure of an ordinary man's hand. When the cat brought down the squirrel, it had, though bleeding from a wound in the neck, a little life left in it. It lay on the ground staring at its cruel adversary, and slightly moving now and then. The cat sat over it switching its tail this way and that and striking it on the ground with something like savage satisfaction. As soon as the dying victim made the slightest movement down came the cat's paw on it. While this preparation for pussy's noonday meal was going on, Suresh happened to run up to the spot. The sight of the squirrel led him instantly to make an attempt to get possession of it. Never once did he think that the cat would at all object to his laudable desire of possessing himself of the beautiful prize. But as he advanced to snatch up the bleeding squirrel, the cat growled and attacked him with a strange ferocity. Now, this was what the child had not bargained for, for he was very friendly with the cat and regularly shared his meals with it.

"*Duh—duh*," (*Dur*=off) he lisped, but the angry animal was not inclined to take this admonition. The nearer he approached the more angry and

ferocious it became. He stretched his hand for the animal and the cat clawed him unmercifully. His hands were lacerated but Suresh would not desist. Any other child, under similar circumstances would have either fainted away or alarmed the whole house with his cries. The injuries he had received only made him more determined if possible; and manfully did he resist the attacks of the infuriated cat, raining down upon it kicks and cuffs to the best of his power. How this encounter would have ended is hard to tell, but happily for the world, and for the Indians especially, a servant happened to pass that way at the height of the combat. He ran up to the spot, drove away the cat and took up in his arms the wounded and gasping child, but not before the latter had possessed himself of the carcass of the squirrel. Some idea of the tenacity with which he had been fighting the cat would be had when we say that for several months Suresh remained bedridden, during which period his life was despaired of several times. What wonder can there be that one who, as a child of two, gave such a striking proof of pluck and endurance should in after life distinguish himself as a warrior and commander and infuse his own indomitable courage into battalions of wavering Brazilian troops, and shame them into following him to the very muzzle of the enemy's cannon?

Chapter VI.

BOYISH CHARACTER.

AS the child grew up into a boy, Suresh lost none of his childish characteristics, but became, perhaps; more active, more restless and more fearless. Like Shivaji, the immortal founder of the Mahratta Empire, boy Suresh loved to listen to tales of heroism, of battles fought, and passes won, of castles captured and countries conquered. Though he could hardly be persuaded to touch his book or slate, he would repeat the entire narrative of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*,—of the triumphs of Arjun, and the victories of Ram. It was, indeed, a pleasure to listen to his glowing accounts of these pre-historic incidents, for his boyish countenance would be lighted up with a glow of enthusiasm, not anyhow to be mistaken. And it was not merely of the mythological heroes of India that he had any knowledge. English education was then just expanding and people could be found who liked to repeat the stories of Alexander and Leonidas, of Cæsar and Hannibal, of Alfred and Harold, of Bruce and Wallace, of Napoleon and Washington, which they had read in their schools. Krishnagar College, it is well known, was one of the first institutions of the kind in the empire, and used to be resorted to by students from every part of the country. In the place of hundreds

of colleges and schools that now impart English education to the children of the soil, there were then only three—the Hindu College, the Hughli College and the Krishnagar College. Suresh would always seek the company of young men come home from their Colleges on a holiday, to hear from them not of what they had learnt or to take example from them, but to devour with avidity whatever they had to tell him of the exploits of heroes in this or any other clime or age.

Like Shivaji, again, Suresh would form bands of youthful adventurers and issue out on foraging expeditions. His forays extended to gardens, fields and orchards, to nests of birds or to the banks of the Ichhamati for angling. These bands he would control with an iron hand, for his word was law with them, a mere child as he then was. When he felt tired or had nothing better to do, he would steal the chess-board which even now is an appenage to every Bengali home and sit down to a game, himself manipulating both the whites and the blacks and deciding the victory as it suited his childish fancy. Of course, we are perfectly aware that these are very minor details, but they go to show the gradual development of the powers which have made the world ring with his name.

The chess to the Hindu has a very interesting history. Ravana the celebrated King of Ceylon, (*Lanka*), whom mythology credits with ten faces and twenty hands, was the greatest warrior and conqueror of the age. Even the gods in Heaven had to

acknowledge his power, and the Lord of Lords, Mahadev himself, acted as his door-keeper. War was sport to him, without which relaxation life appeared to him a burden. Under the blessings of God, he was to remain unconquered till man and monkey should unite for his overthrow. It was only once, in his encounter with Bali, King of Kishkindhya,—the great and pious Monkey Chief, that he came off second best. Now, it was to wean Ravana from the pursuit of the dangerous and deadly game of war that his principal Queen, Mandodari, invented the equally absorbing if innocent game of chess, so that he might feel all the actual pleasures of war without having to shed blood and render thousands of women widows, and thousands of boys orphans. Such was, then, according to Hindu belief, the origin of the game of chess, which still, after the lapse of so many ages, claims so many votaries.

Now, it was certainly not expected that Suresh would, at the age of six or seven, be able to master the principles and intricacies of the game. We mention the incident only incidentally, just to show the trend of the boy's disposition. Of course, every one at Nathpur was convinced in his heart of hearts that Suresh was the wickedest of the wicked—an incorrigible character who was sure to fall into bad ways in his manhood. This opinion was not shared, in by one person only and she was his mother. Her maternal instincts would not permit her to see any-

thing extraordinary or unnatural in her son, though all else voted him to be a mischievous imp.

About this time Babu Girish Chandra Biswas purchased a house in Calcutta—in Koreya, and brought his family down. Henceforward, Suresh, therefore, divided his time between Calcutta and Nathpur. He was put to school, but very little was the progress that he made in his studies. His one ambition seemed to attain to physical and not intellectual perfection, and hence he took kindly to gymnastic and other physical exercises, calculated to develop the body at the cost of the brain. In Calcutta he had ample opportunities to increase his stock of anecdotes about his favourite heroes, for a cousin, who was much older and better posted in such informations kept him company. These anecdotes impressed his young mind so strongly that often would he engage in mimic warfare and pass through scenes of which he might have received vivid descriptions. Thus we find him leading out his companions to the open fields and there, dividing them into two parties, act the part of contending forces. A tree or a mound would often serve him as a fort to be captured or defended. Napoleon's snowballs were not, of course, there to come handy to his Bengalee imitator, but mud would answer equally well.

Chapter VII.

COMBAT WITH A COBRA.

WE now have to record an adventure which may well be regarded as one in a hundred ; though the hero of it was a mere lad of eleven. Suresh was on a visit to Nathpur ; but residence in Calcutta had not rendered him either effeminate or foppish. He was the same mischievous, daredevil Suresh. He would remain very rarely at home, passing his days either in outdoor games and exercises, or in sauntering in the fields and realising Nature's beauty. In one of his rambles he espied a bird's nest high up on a mango tree. The sight fired him with the desire of possessing the young birds. He at once girded up his loins, and like a squirrel went up the thick trunk towards the branch where hung the nest. Up he went quite unprepared for any danger, except, perhaps, the risk of losing his hold and being precipitated to the ground. He had almost reached the nest, when something happened which would perhaps have made many older and wiser persons to lose their presence of mind. He was then astride a thick branch at the end of which was the nest. A hissing sound at the back made him turn round and the sight that met him was enough to damp the spirits of many men. From a hollow in the trunk was issuing a huge cobra, hissing and inflating with

anger at this intrusion of a stranger into regions sacred to itself, with expanded hood and its steel grey eyes emitting mischievous sparks of fire. Any other boy, or for the matter of that, man, would, perhaps, have been so very demoralised as to leave his hold, lose his balance, and be precipitated to the ground, a drop of nearly 15 feet. Suresh was, however, not the boy to lose his presence of mind in the presence of danger however appalling it might be. He had his wits about him. In the twinkle of an eye, indeed in far less time than it takes us to record it, did he turn completely round so as to face the deadly reptile with the cold glitter in its cruel eyes. At the same time he moved backwards on the branch he was sitting upon so as to leave the close proximity to the cobra, which as we said was a long one. But there seemed no escape for him. He could not descend from the tree without passing the hollow from which the snake was issuing, for it was too dangerous to take a leap from there and risk his limbs and perhaps his very life. The more, again, he would recede the nearer would the cobra approach and then on that branch which tapered to a point there would be nothing but death. All these perhaps passed through his boyish brain and he nerved himself for a death-struggle. Seeing its victim escape, the cobra raised its hood, poised it for a moment and then made a swift fell swoop. Fortunately for Suresh, its fangs came in contact not with his thigh which was the

point aimed at but with a twig which snapped by the force of the concussion. Instantly, before the cobra could recover itself the left hand of our hero shot out and clutched its head in a vice-like grip. Yes the imminence of the danger gave the strong boy greater strength for the moment than he really possessed. Simultaneously his right hand sought a large knife which residence in Calcutta had taught him always to carry about his person. While the snake writhed and twisted about in his left hand, Suresh opened the knife with his teeth and put it across the neck of the deadly reptile which had all but victimised him.

One, two, three, four, ten seconds, a minute and the keen blade of the knife went on performing its bloody work. At last—at last the end came—the serpent was cut in twain, and Suresh threw the head on the ground with a mixed feeling of relief and fear which is better conceived than described.

You or I, after passing through such a blood-curdling adventure would have made the best of our way down; but Suresh is made of other metal. He did not lose sight of what had led him to climb the tree, and made his way to the bird's nest, which he robbed of two of its tiny occupants. Next he drew out the body of the snake from the hollow and threw it down on to the ground. It measured six feet,—a patriarch of the tribe,—with a girth of six inches and more. The birds and the snake he carried home as a

trophy of his wonderful victory, much to the consternation of his parents and relatives, who all became convinced that the boy was sure to die a violent death.

Chapter VIII.

A SERIOUS ENCOUNTER.

ONE of the pests of Bengal villages even now is the mad dog or jackal, which not only attacks solitary people and cattle, but sometimes commits regular havoc. In villages, however, where there is an old fowling piece or gun, such dangerous animals cannot make a long stay but where, under the dispensation of a kind and indulgent Government, a fire-arm is a curiosity, mad dogs and jackals are naturally allowed to run riot with the lives and properties of the inhabitants till they take courage out of despair and combine to club the animal to death.

On one occasion, while Suresh was at Nathpur, the village became the happy hunting ground of a mad dog which signalled its appearance by attacking several people and killing several heads of cattle. Pasteurism was then unknown and the poor half starved villagers were not certainly in a pecuniary position to travel all the way to Paris and get a scientific treatment at the Pasteur Institute. All

that they could therefore do was to take what medicine suggested itself to their simple intelligence, and depend on God. When the village was thus in a state of panic, Suresh was out on a stroll one day, without, however, any thought of danger crossing his boyish mind. He was walking along the dusty village road, a little out of time as it were, enjoying the cool evening breeze, when he was set upon by the pest which had proved a terror to the villagers. It was a cruel fix. Suresh had no sort of defensive or offensive weapon in his hands ; there was no one in sight ; it was the outskirts of the village and no cover or tree was near by to afford shelter. Suresh ran, not towards the village but away from it—ran along the road raising a cloud of dust that trailed behind for yards. The dog was after him, its tongue lolling out, its mouth frothing, its wild eyes shooting out of the sockets. Thus went the pursued and the pursuer. Suresh was losing breath ; the dog was gaining upon him. What was to be done ? Was there no way out of the danger ? Suddenly, the ever obedient presence of mind which has never left him all through his eventful life, came to his rescue, not a minute too soon, however, for in a second more the dog would have been upon him and would perhaps have torn him to pieces. He bethought of an expedient, of the effect of which he had only heard, but of which he had not till then any experience whatever. He thought that the least shock to the wild rush of the

animal would give it a recoil, which would give him a little time to recover. There was a ditch by the roadside, full of mud and slime. Suddenly Suresh stopped; and thus allowed the dog to approach within a foot of his feet. He had shoes on, and in Calcutta he had practised the trick of "double kick." When he found the dog within kicking distance, he dealt it a "double kick" in the most approved style and with all the force his condition and age would allow him to exercise. Like a spinning top the animal was precipitated into the ditch, and the short—very short interval which intervened between its fall and rise, gave Suresh an opportunity to recover himself and take up a brick from the road. Then, as the animal was staggering up the bank, in a greater paroxysm of rage, down came the brick on its head, hurled with unerring aim by the boy whom it had sought to victimize. So well-aimed was the missile, that the dog rolled over into the ditch,—stone dead. Thus was Nathpur rid of a pest and a dangerous pest—by a boy of eleven.

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Chapter IX.

VERY NEAR DEATH.

ENGLISHMEN are fond of nothing better than hunting, and enormous are often the expenses they incur for this sort of amusement. English sports, are, however, not identical with Indian sports, for the conditions of the two countries differ as poles asunder. In England, whenever a hunt is organised, dogs form a conspicuous part of the arrangement and hunters ride out in the fields, unless it is bird-shooting in a preserve. In India, scarcely do Europeans go out except on the back of elephants with hundreds of attendants who form the honourable company of beaters, because the jungles here not only abound in innocent big game, but in such ferocious animals as tigers, leopards, panthers, lions, and so forth. It is only when they are sure of meeting with nothing but small game that Europeans in India go out on foot or on horseback. This is, indeed, the rule with all gentleman-shikaris, Native or European. Those who live by the profession of hunting in the endless jungles of India do not, however, take all these precautions. The jungle is their drawing or bed-room. They are as comfortable here as we are in the lighted and watered streets of the metropolis. Dangers surround them on all sides—dangers both by land and water,—dangers by night and by day—

dangers from ferocious beasts and uncanny reptiles ; but little do they care. They live in the jungles for jungle produce and for the skins of animals which they sell in towns to eke out a miserable existence. Surely they are a class of people against whom the charge of cowardice so gratuitously hurled by Mr. Steevens and others of that ilk, can never lie. But of that enough.

At the time we are speaking of, there was quite a large number of European gentlemen in the Nadia district, resident in the many indigo factories which flourished in every corner of the district. They often came out hunting with hound and hullo, on horseback and with spear at rest, reminding them of happy scenes in their own country from which they had to live the life of an exile, in the midst of an alien population, with whom they had scarcely one point in common, and with whom they were constantly at variance, for the interests of the two communities were never identical.

While Suresh was still at Nathpur, a party of three English hunters one day rode up to the vicinity of the village, with a pack of hounds in search of a vicious wild boar, which had been committing great depredations in the neighbourhood. It was afternoon and after a whole day's search the hunters were thinking of returning home disappointed, when they caught a glimpse of the shaggy hide of their long sought for quarry in a bamboo clump. The

report of a gun raised the echoes of the silent scene, while the dogs began to bark—fast and furious. The shot only had the effect of making the boar break cover. It left the welcome shelter of the bamboo clump and made for the open country, pursued by the barking dogs and the three *shikaries* on the run. It was fleeing for dear life, and hence it naturally exerted its most. From the opposite direction were coming three boys, among them our hero, Suresh, returning from a fishing excursion, with fishing rods and implements in hand. Attracted by the report of the gun, the boys rushed towards the spot whence the report came. The Europeans saw this move on their part—a move fraught with very great danger to themselves. They hallooed and gesticulated, they warned and waved their hands; but the boys understood them not. Suresh saw the boar coming down upon them and realised the danger they were in. His heart, however, instead of sinking to the zero point leapt with joy, for he saw that he was in for a bit of adventure and that he had the prospect of witnessing the exhilarating spectacle of a boar hunt. He warned his companions to run in opposite directions sideways, himself keeping straight to the path. Nearer and nearer came the boar, hot and hotter became the pursuit. The panting and frothing beast was scarcely twenty yards off the spot where Suresh was; the dogs were close behind; and the European *shikaries*, their guns ready for instant use, were somewhat in the rear.

Awful now became the position—one that could be better imagined than described, one in which few would like to find himself. The boy and the boar met. The hot breath of the animal fanned the cheeks of the boy. They were within striking distance of each other, while the dogs were a few yards behind. Suresh's body became covered with the foam which issued from the nostrils of the infuriated animal. Its eyes, with an ominous glitter in them, looked into his boyish countenance as if to tell him that his last moment had arrived.

The boar looked earthward—it was a sign that the next moment, its terrible tusks would tear up Suresh's body, and thus remove the obstacle that stood in its way. A brief moment—a moment pregnant with the fate of not one man but of thousands whose lives had to be shaped by this dauntless boy who stood there brave and erect, his eyes emitting sparks of fire, his bosom heaving with a strange sensation, not of fear, reader, but of a mixed sensation of joy and anxiety. He knew that that moment would make or mar him, but still undaunted he stood—firm as a rock, all his limbs ready for action.

Suddenly Suresh raised his hands; as suddenly down they came. There was a sound, and the progress of the boar was arrested. It rolled over on the ground, and before it could again regain its legs, the dogs were upon it, fastening their fangs in his hide with a tenacity which it was not for it to

shake off. Suresh had struck it on the head with all his might with the fishing rod he carried in his hand. The blow came like a flash of lightning and came with the strength and courage of despair. •

While the boar was yet struggling with the dogs, trying to catch them with its tusks, blows began to rain on its huge body from the fishing rod of the boy Suresh. The Europeans, too, came up. They could not shoot down the animal for fear of hurting the dogs. They, therefore, took to striking it with the butt end of their muskets. A few blows, and the country side was well rid of a most unwelcome intruder.

This done, the *sahibs* had an opportunity of examining closely the features of the boy who had distinguished himself so much in that terrible hand-to-hand encounter with the boar. Their admiration for his wonderful pluck and presence of mind could easily be detected in their eyes and expression. They crowded round Suresh, and in their broken Bengali, for in those days European planters used to learn enough of Bengali to allow them to carry on ordinary conversation with the children of the soil, and some could even speak the language like natives themselves,—enquired his name and address. It was growing late, and the companions of Suresh were nowhere to be seen. They had taken Suresh at his word and made their way into the village as fast as their legs could carry them. They had not waited

to see what became of their companion whose warning they were acting up to.

Suresh gave his name and address, and one of the *sahibs* took it down in his note-book. So very impressed were they all at the unflinching courage and independent bearing of the boy before them that their hearts went simultaneously out to him. Brave as Englishmen are, they are scarcely loath to acknowledge and welcome bravery in others. On the other hand, nothing appeals to their hearts better than courage and independence. Grovelling servility is what they detest most, though they may not show it openly. And if they are found to be unsympathetic and unkind to the Indians, it is because of this servility coupled with the desire and attempt to divest their rulers of some of their despotic powers.

But we digress : it was evening by this time, and as the night was dark, and Nathpur quite two miles off, Suresh essayed to leave the sportsmen with their game and make his way home as best as he could. The *sahibs*, however, would not let him. The shades of evening were then swiftly creeping over the face of the earth, and in a few minutes it would be too dark, and rather risky to pick one's way into the village from the marshy land where the party were assembled.

"You must," said the sportsmen in one voice, "accompany us to the factory. You can sleep there to-night ; and to-morrow you may return home."

“And what would my mother and uncles think? They would go mad if they don't find me at home.”

“Never you fear that. We will see that *khubbur* reaches your home, so that your relatives may not be anxious.”

“But I am hungry,” protested the boy, “and I cannot lose caste by taking any food at your place.”

The *sahibs* laughed outright. “Are you,” asked one, “so very anxious for caste, boy? What do you, pray, understand of caste and its rules?”

“Not much perhaps,” retorted Suresh, “but enough to convince me that as a Hindu it is wrong on my part to partake of food touched by *Mlechhas*.”

“Do you always reside here?”

“No, I generally reside in Calcutta, and read in the London Missionary Society's Institution at Bhowanipur.”

“Ah, is it? Then you are already half-Christian. Contact with Christians makes one if not a Christian, at least a *Pirali*.”

“No, I do not admit this. I don't drink water touched by Christians, or even take a betel from them.”

“But you sit with them; you touch them, and—and take water without performing your bath I am sure, for at school you cannot bathe.”

Here was a stunner for Suresh. He agreed to the proposal of the *sahibs*. Just then lights were seen approaching from two different directions. It soon

became apparent that being informed of the danger of Suresh by his companions, his relatives had set out for a search, while the servants of the planter *sahibs* came from the other direction to light the way of their masters.

Thus Suresh had not to accompany the *sahibs* to the factory, but he was not allowed to go home before he had promised to call at the factory the next day.

Chapter X.

THE LADY AND THE LILY.

THE boar adventure was, indeed, a good thing for Suresh; for it gave him entree to the local European society. Not that the planters of those days were by any means an exclusive set, but because there were not many among the people in whose midst they lived, who liked the idea of associating with Feringhees. Orthodoxy still reigned supreme, and prejudice lurked in every breast against the Sahibs. Of course, the nature of the planters' occupation made it necessary for them to see as much of native life as was possible for *aliens* to do. But that was neither here nor there.

Since his strange adventure with the boar, Suresh became a constant visitor at the *Nilkothi* (Indigo factory) in the neighbourhood, during his stay at

Nathpur. Here he became a universal favourite,—a favourite with both the males and females,—with both the Sahibs and the natives. His frank, open countenance, his independent bearing, his natural aversion to everything mean and despicable, his willingness to obey, his readiness to be of service to those who were kind to him,—all these combined to make him a favourite. The lady of the house,—it was only a rare circumstance with planters in those days that they should live with their wives, the general rule being that either planters were still free bachelors or liked nothing better than to live by themselves, leaving their devoted spouses to pass the summer and the winter in foggy England to cherish in their corseted bosoms the fond hope of being united to their husbands at some remote period of their existence or other, and to make up for the absence of the latter and consequent disappointment by plunging headlong into the vortex of pleasure—was particularly fond of the bright-eyed, cheery-hearted, sable-complexioned boy who made a rather close demand on her affections.

Her own son, he would be about Suresh's age—was far away, completing his education at an English school. Naturally, therefore, did she lavish her wealth of affections on the native boy who had given such evidence of British instincts. Thus at Nathpur Suresh was most happy. In the company of his European friends and patrons he learnt to speak in

English, though he did not still make any appreciable progress in his studies, and to comport himself after the fashion of the rulers.

• One day, while Suresh and the wife of the planter were out on an evening drive through the plantations, —it was a big affair, covering many acres of land, the carriage was stopped by the side of an ancient tank, excavated centuries ago perhaps by some kind-hearted, public-spirited zemindar to remove the water difficulty from which the people suffered. It was an old tank, the water of which was no longer as pure as it once had been. Lilies grew here in abundance,—lilies, so rich in hue as to appeal to every woman's tender heart.

• Suresh and the lady were driving in a tandem, for out in the mofussil Europeans like a trap better than a covered carriage, which they take not only to be cumbrous but costly as well. It was afternoon, rather late in the afternoon. The rays of the departing sun glinted on the tree tops and played on the fair, handsome countenance of the European lady as she sat in the tandem, the healthy exercise of driving a thoroughbred of blood and mettle, lending additional colour to her rosy cheeks. Though not quite youthful Mrs. M———was regarded by all her friends as a beautiful woman, who combined in her person the grace of youth and the matured charms of age. She was a good and kind lady, not overtinged with the idea of her own greatness. She was

what many of her friends were not, a friend of the poor and a mother to waifs and orphans. But it is not with her character that we are concerned here.

Getting down from the carriage, Mrs. M——— began to pace along the tank-side and gaze on the lovely lilies that grew on it. It was a lovely spot, in the midst of a mango grove, shaded from the slanting rays of the sun by the overhanging branches of the trees that reared their gigantic forms all around. Wistfully did she look on the lilies. She was a lover of Nature, and no wonder therefore, that she should yearn to have a few lilies that so temptingly lay on the bosom of the tank. Suresh saw what passed in the mind of the lady, who dared not give expression to her desires, because there was no one near by to come and fetch her a few flowers. They had not even a *syce* with them, while no labourer or *paik* was, in sight. Suresh observed all this, and with a shrewdness not compatible perhaps with his age, he divined that it would mightily please the lady were he to present her with a lily or two.

To think was to act with Suresh. He never took long to decide anything, however delicate or difficult the question. He took off his shirt and shoes, a movement which did not escape the notice of the lady. She at once understood what Suresh meant and, apprehending danger of some sort or other, were the boy to plunge into the tank, she tried to dissuade him from his purpose. But no, that at least

was impossible. Once he was resolved, nothing could shake him from his resolve, no matter how difficult it was of attainment or how strong the opposition against it.

Suresh ran down the slope of the tank and tucking up his cloth waded through the water towards the largest flower there. He had not proceeded far when it became evident that it was not all smooth sailing. Indeed, it appeared that he was struggling, but against what? Mrs. M———could not find out what it was that gave pain to her *protege*; but she was perfectly aware that he was not altogether safe. She called out to him to come back; she entreated and besought him to return; but he would not. He had set his heart on the flower and it he must have.

A few more steps in advance and Suresh's efforts became almost frantic, we mean his efforts to maintain his footing, as it appeared to Mrs. M———. She became pale, for while she full well understood that Suresh was in danger, it was not yet possible for her to find its nature. She, however, had the presence of mind to raise her voice, and see if it would attract any one to the spot.

Her cries soon brought a villager to the spot. The moment he saw Suresh, he realised the nature of his danger, for the pond had no secrets for him. He raised an alarm and when a few men had collected they improvised a rope and threw it down to Suresh. Mrs. M——— was still in the dark as to

what had overtaken her *protege*; and she did not naturally understand what the villagers were about.

When the rope was thrown out to him, Suresh got hold of it, and though he was still trying to reach the particular lily on which he had set his heart, he had the presence of mind to tie the rope round his waist. The flower was plucked, and it was then and not till then that Suresh signalled to those on the bank to pull him up. Several men set about it with a will, and soon was the lad landed on the *terra firma*, but so exhausted did he appear that it was scarcely possible for him to articulate a sound. It was now found that all his nether limbs were covered with slimy mud, which showed that the bed of the pond was a quagmire in which possibly he would gradually have sunk but for the efforts of the villagers whose services happened to be so opportunely enlisted by the mistress of the factory.

Suresh was removed in the carriage by the loving and kind-hearted European lady to the *bungalow* where he was not only rubbed and washed dry of the mud, but restoratives were administered to bring him completely round. Very much certainly did Mrs. M—— prize the lily, which had given so much trouble to the lad she loved so well, and it should be noted to her credit that even when it withered, it still adorned her bosom for months.

Very happily did these months pass for Suresh, for not only was he out of his father's lynx eyes, but he

had not to devote much time to his books. It was all play and pleasure to him during these months, and no work. Although he would not still take any substantial food at the factory, at least not in the company of the Europeans in charge, still most of his time was passed in the factory. He would on occasions, sleep there at night, for he was, indeed, regarded by all as a member of the family. At last the time came for Suresh to leave Nathpur and return to Ballygunj and to his studies. Sad and affecting was the scene at parting, for however strange it might appear, it was nevertheless true that Mr. and Mrs.— had unaccountably learnt to take a paternal interest in the native lad. They were shortly to leave the shores of India for their mother-country and they did their best to induce Suresh to accompany them home. Our hero, however, would not by any means entertain any such ideas. Had he done so, he would no doubt have escaped some of the terrible trials that he had eventually to pass through, and though he still would have received an European education and reputation, it would perhaps have been in a different sphere that he would have shone. Fate, however, ordained otherwise; and it was, indeed, with a heavy heart that Mr. and Mrs. M— took leave of their young and dusky *protege*, little dreaming then that a time would come when they would meet him in another clime and know him in another character. They wanted to do something

for him, but no favour would the proud boy receive at their hands. His affection for them had nothing of the mercenary in it and consequently what he insisted on at the parting was their blessing and not any pecuniary help or costly present.

Chapter XI.

ON THE GANGES.

AMONG other amusements that Suresh engaged in at this period of his life was rowing. Nathpur, as the reader already knows, stands on the banks of the Ichhamati, one of the finest and deepest rivers in middle Bengal, and naturally therefore contains a *jelia* (fisherman) community who fish in the river in their tiny cockleshells of boats. Parties of boys under the leadership of Suresh would often unmoor some of these *dinghis* and go out on rowing excursions. Rowing has always been a healthy exercise, but as every rose has its thorns, it has its dangers, especially for boys of a tender age whose tact and experience must be on a reasonable par with their years. At Nathpur, however, Suresh and his companions never met with an accident, because there people were always watching their movements, to render them help whenever that might become necessary.

When the family of Babu Girish Chandra returned to town, one enjoyment that Suresh missed very

keenly was rowing, for at Koreya, too far away from the riverside, he had very little prospects of engaging in the healthy pastime of rowing. He, however, liked rowing and he was certainly not the boy to give up anything he liked without an effort—a serious effort. His father was not rich enough to get him a boat, nor was the boatmen of the town sufficiently sympathetic to allow him and his companions to use their crafts for a song or for empty words of praise and gratitude.

Whatever it was, Suresh formed a rowing club composed of boys of his age. A boat was somehow or other secured, and the boys would after school hours make it a point to visit the riverside and have an hour's rowing.

It was on an April day, hot and sultry, that Suresh with four companions of the same age, got into the boat and left the moorings to have a few hours' pull. As the boat neared Garden Reach, a black speck was seen on the horizon! The air was, no doubt, a little sultry, but the sky was otherwise clear, and the rays of the sun were as strong as ever. Not a breath of wind was there, and the heat was simply oppressive.

The speck of cloud, at first no bigger than a man's hand, grew large and larger till it overspread the entire vault of heaven, and shut out the rays of the sun. Quickly enough did also the wind rise to bear the cloud company and all the sleeping elements became suddenly very much awake and began to fight.

with one another. A perfect pandemonium was raised by the birds and other creatures of the earth,—all eager to secure some sort of shelter from the violence of the warring elements.

Suresh and his companions were no weather prophets and hence they did not seem to have calculated upon any sudden change of the atmosphere or upon the breaking out of one of those sudden squalls which are so prominent a feature of the variable weather in Bengal during the months of April and May. In vain did the boys try to keep the boat straight; their strength and muscles were not equal to the tension. The rudder became useless and the boat began to spin round and round like a top, till it struck against a buoy, bumped up in the air and fell only to sink. The boyish occupants were all thrown out and had to struggle hard for dear life, against the strong current that had set in and the wind and rain that blinded them. Half choked they were still making frantic efforts to gain land when a launch happened to pass up the river, gallantly running the gauntlet of the storm. Steam was shut up for the moment and three of the unfortunate boys were picked up, almost in a dying state to be restored to their senses and to the bosom of their anxious families.

Suresh and another lad had meanwhile been swept away by the current which had set in rather strong. The latter, however, happened to be only an indifferent swimmer and so Suresh, while he had

enough to do to keep himself floating and reach the shore, had to help him as much as he could. The two, however, were soon separated, and before his eyes his companion got exhausted and was drowned.

Suresh's strength, too, was being spent, and all that he could do was simply to keep himself afloat. The current which ran seaward at a tremendous pace,—it was ebb tide,—carried him like a log of wood. While thus passing by a German vessel he was fortunately espied by one of the crew who at once threw a rope out to him. Suresh saw the rope and got hold of it with both hands. But the current was, as we said, strong and his hands had almost become nerveless, after the struggles he had to make after the sinking of the boat. He was about to climb up the side of the vessel, when the rope slipped through his hands, and he dropped again into the water.

His efforts to save himself, however, attracted the notice of the Captain; and the latter at once ordered the life boat to be lowered. This was done and after considerable difficulty Suresh was picked up, almost in a state of unconsciousness. Nor did he recover his senses till the next morning though every effort was made by the surgeon of the ship and the crew. The next morning, however, he had so far recovered as to be able to return home to his sorrowing parents in a carriage kindly hired by the Captain.

Chapter XII.**ROW WITH EUROPEANS.**

IT was not on the river alone that Suresh and his friends would have an outing. Every afternoon they would also visit the Maidan, the Race course, the Eden Gardens, etc. Here they would often meet with European lads of their age.

One afternoon Suresh and another boy visited the Race Course. While there they had an altercation with two Eurasian lads much bigger and older than they, who called them names and twitted them as being niggers. Indeed, relying on their superior physique they gave themselves airs as if they were European gentlemen of the purest blood. They even went so far as to call Suresh and his companion swine and so forth.

Suresh was not the boy to brook an insult. He, therefore, returned all the compliments paid to him by the Eurasians with compound interest, for he certainly did not fear the Eurasians, for fear never formed a component part of his nature. Meanwhile his companion deeming discretion to be the better part of valour, quietly edged away leaving Suresh to fight it out, if necessary, with the Eurasian aggressors. Hot words were soon exchanged for blows, and our hero found himself opposed to two burly beef-eating Eurasians who had stuck up their coat sleeves

and prepared themselves for a simultaneous attack on the Bengali boy whom they confidently hoped to make mincemeat of.

But Suresh remained quite undaunted in spirit. He, too, put himself on the defensive and assumed a proper boxing attitude. He rained blows, always taking care to parry those aimed by his adversaries, and soon grew so offensive that his quick movements could hardly be followed by the Eurasians who found to their utter surprise, that bullies as they were, they had found their master in a Bengali comparatively their junior in years. One by one, both of them were placed *horse-de-combat*, having received blows which rendered it impossible for them to rise and continue the contest, at least for the honour of their community. To the credit of Suresh Chunder be it said that when his enemies had once been reduced to a state of utter helplessness, he made haste not only to shake them by the hand but also to do everything in his power to give them relief.



Chapter XIII.

INCREASING DIFFICULTIES.

SURESH was still a student in the London Missionary Society's institution,—one however with no very clean record. His character book was disfigured with entries and remarks by no means complimentary to him as a diligent student. He was, indeed, a terror not only to his fellows but to the teachers as well. His party was a large one, composed entirely of wild and rowdy spirits like himself who would never bestow any considerable thought to the lessons set by the teachers and who would deem it a good pastime if they could by some means or other put these teachers to trouble.

Suresh and his companions were not only a terror to the school but also to the neighbourhood, to householders and shopkeepers. He would leave home punctually at 9-30 every morning, but for 20 days in the month his teachers would see nothing of him. The hours he was required to remain at school would be better and more congenially employed in playing cards or engaging in a game of chess or perhaps in gossip. There was a regular rendezvous near the College where Suresh and other naughty boys would meet at noon time.

This sort of wayward life that Suresh led pained his parents very much. True, his mother was always in his favour, for with her he had always been a prime.

favourite. His father, Babu Girish Chandra Biswas, who is still in the land of the living and now passing his time in devotion and prayer, was something of a martinet. He wanted, and what father does not want, to see his son excel not merely in physique but in his studies, at least for the sake of ensuring the lad's own future. And great was therefore his disappointment when he found that no amount of persuasion, threat or actual chastisement would cure his son of the evil habits he had contracted or induce him to pay a little more attention to his studies.

This was all the more regrettable as, to all accounts, Suresh was naturally an intelligent lad who might have made much progress in study if he had only been inclined that way. But no, books were to him as disagreeable as anything could possibly be. Constantly bent on mischief, he would prefer playing pranks at home or outside to an hour's study. His teachers tried their best to turn his thoughts towards the books that formed his school curriculum, but in vain; no diversion was possible. His father, too, after doing all he could to reclaim his wayward son, at last gave him up for lost; so much so that Suresh almost became an eyesore to his own parent. The only friend that Suresh would appear to have had at this time at home was his uncle, Babu Kaylash Chunder Biswas, who now lives on his pension at the Koreya house and with whom Suresh has ever maintained regular correspondence.

The Revd. Mr. Ashton, Principal of the London Missionary Society's Institution at Bhowanipur, was then here; and Suresh was a great favourite with him. Mr. Ashton, as he was in duty bound to do, exerted himself to the full to make Suresh attentive to his studies; but even he failed to bring about the desired result.

Gradually Suresh's position at home became so disagreeable; he came to be so roundly rebuked whenever he would return home that he would stay away for days together and avoid a meeting with his father. He had contracted friendship with many Christian lads, and so when away from home he would often live with these friends for days together. The natural consequence was that the prejudice against Christianity and association with Christians which had been so strong and marked in him a short while ago, was dissipated as is dissipated the mist before the rising sun. He began to entertain very liberal notions about religion and social customs, not quite in keeping with the traditions of the devout Baishnav family he belonged to, or with the early associations of his own life.

Those were days when Missionary enterprise was very strong in the country and when Missionaries left no stone unturned to make as many willing or unwilling converts as they could, whether by force of persuasion or by holding out hopes of preferment, etc. We have no intention of belittling the efforts

of these Christian gentlemen who are, in most cases, regarded by their blind countrymen at home as martyrs to the cause of Christ and humanity, but who in fact are the best cared for among the English community in India. But we would make certain observations here about Missionary life in Bengal, which, we hope, will have the desired effect of opening the eyes of the charitably disposed in the various Christian countries which send out Missions to foreign lands for the conversion of the heathen, immersed in their idolatrous beliefs, shocking prejudices and blasphemous thoughts.

Christian Missions did not arrive in India along with the traders who obtained a charter from their sovereign to trade in the East. Long decades afterwards when the English had not only obtained a foothold in the country but had established themselves as territorial sovereign and wrested the sceptre from the relaxing grasp of weak Moghul potentates, that to justify their presence in this fair continent did the English think of sending out Missions for the conversion of the heathens to Christianity. It would no doubt be taken as love's labour lost at best, but still the liberty loving Englishmen could not but take shelter under this plea to satisfy their conscience, if not for anything else, in the matter of depriving the dark children of the Indian soil of their national independence. To reduce a free nation to the bondage of slavery was, as opposed to British instincts, as

dishonesty to an honest mind. Then, again, the accounts of the barbarity practised in India, taken home by merchants and soldiers who wanted to take credit for their "wonderful adventures," fired the zeal of the pious and devout; and naturally, therefore, did they come willingly and eagerly forward to subscribe liberally towards equipping missions for the reclamation of the heathens and for bringing them within the pale of civilisation.

The gentlemen who agreed to accept the difficult and dangerous task of converting a heathenish people, to live in the midst of *aliens*, surrounded by known and unknown dangers, were regarded more as martyrs to the cause of Christianity than in any other less reflective light. Every arrangement was made for their comfort so far as that was practicable; the Government itself took them under protection, for their presence in India proved to the jealous and expectant world that Englishmen remained in India not for any individual or national benefit, but for the amelioration of the condition of the Indians themselves—more in the interests of the dark children of the peninsula than in those of the conquerors.

Now began to be erected in every part of the continent, palatial residences for the accommodation of Christian missionaries of every denomination, and in a short time almost every town in the land boasted of a mission house. At first the missionaries used to pay more attention to medicine and education

than to the preaching of the Bible, for keen-witted as they were that unless some breaches had been made in the walls of the citadel of Faith, rendered impregnable by the customs, traditions and belief of thousands of years with the artillery of an iconoclastic education, there could be no hope of winning the battle of Christ. Their mission houses were, therefore, converted into charitable dispensaries and English schools, where medicines were distributed and education was imparted free of cost. The country was already in the hands of the English, and the people found that unless they had learnt English they could not possibly hope to enter into service, and that without service it was growing difficult for many to earn a living. Hence, the altered circumstances forced them to acquire a certain amount of knowledge in the language of the rulers, and to do that they had, of necessity to resort to missionary schools, for neither had the Government perfected their scheme of education nor had private institutions sprung up. Thus gradually the missionaries obtained a footing in the country in respect of their proselytising mission. Add to this the glamour of western civilisation and the several famines that overtook the province, and it will be evident how converts came to be enlisted. Other inducements, too, were offered, and many weak-minded men and women could not resist the temptation even when they were sure to be outcasted. That it was not religious conviction, but the prospect

of some sort of material gain which led to most of the conversions, is clearly proved by the fact that in the majority of cases these converts were recruited from the lowest and illiterate classes of the community, and not from the higher. We have personal experience of many Christian settlements in the interior of the country, and we can confidently say that most of the Native Christians there are sunk in ignorance and superstition, though bearing such high-sounding Christian names of Andrew, Pedro and Gomes. We have seen them bow before the Goddess Kali or Sitala as they were wont to do before their conversion. Now this they could never have done if their faith in their new religion were as strong as their conversion should indicate. We have again heard many educated Christians repent of their folly in forsaking the religion of their forefathers. Others again have been found to complain in after-life of the wiles and snares set to catch them at a moment of weakness and indecision, of anger and disappointment.

As every conversion meant an increase of income to the missionary, there need be no wonder that no stone was left unturned to bring about as many conversions as possible, though the methods employed were not always in consonance to the teachings of Lord Jesus Christ. What Christianity gains by the admission of such followers is more than we can understand. But of that no matter. The Will of the Most

High can never be controverted: everything must happen as He wills it; and it is, therefore, idle to complain. Sometime previously there were, indeed, some signs of the growing influence of Christianity, but those signs are happily disappearing. The tide has again set in in favour of the ancient religion of the Hindus,—a tide so strong that Hinduism which was never an aggressive religion, is claiming some advocates and believers in the cultured and enlightened classes in the Christian West. Of course, it is idle and utopian to expect that unless a little more elasticity is allowed any appreciable impression can be made by Hinduism on advanced Europe and America. But then what the Hindus sincerely pray for is to be let alone in the enjoyment of their social customs and religious beliefs. They do not want to convert the West, for that is neither here nor there. But we are digressing.

If Christianity has done us some harm, however microscopic that amount might be, there can be no questioning the fact that we owe the missionaries a deep debt of gratitude, which cannot be repaid so easily as some perhaps think. They are the pioneers of English education in the country, and as such deserve well of the people. This feeling of gratitude would surely have moved the entire population, but for the occasional escapades of certain missionaries who do not stop at anything, however mean and disreputable, to gain their ends—that is, to justify

their presence in the country and to increase their income.

We have, however, said more of Christianity and Christian mission in India than we ever intended doing, and it is time that we resumed the thread of our narrative.

Chapter XIV.

CONVERSION.

THE reader is perhaps aware that Suresh, whose faith in Hinduism was so strong in him as to lead him at a tender age to refuse the hospitality of English planters, is now a Christian. We will now speak of his conversion and what led to it.

His evil habits acquired such intensity day by day that even his uncle, who had always taken the keenest interest in all that concerned him and who is even now his staunch friend, had to rebuke him often and often again. His father, Girish Chunder was, as we said, a man of strict principles. He wanted to bring his son up as a gentleman. Suresh would not listen to his admonitions; he continued in his evil pursuits notwithstanding all that his relatives did to make him desist. Girish Babu went so far as to chastise him with the rod, but even that would not help him. More than that association with Christians removed some portions of the rank

superstition in his nature, and this came to be still more resented by his Baishnava father than even his waywardness. He discarded many of the petty customs that marked a Hindu of the higher classes from the followers of other religions, and this offended Girish Babu almost mortally.

On the other hand Suresh's own independent spirit began to chafe at all these restraints, and the consequence was a feeling of estrangement between Suresh and his relatives. It was his mother alone who still loved and defended him—his mother whom he really loved. What little ties still bound him to home, all converged into his mother. When his father or uncle would chastise him, his mother would take him to her bosom and soothe his ruffled feelings.

Thus passed sometime—the breach meanwhile getting wider and wider. While Girish Babu was preparing himself to harden his heart to the extent of disinheriting the elder of his two boys, Suresh was continually thinking of cutting off all connections with the family. At last the climax was reached one day, and so violent was the scene between the father and son, that the latter could bear it no longer. He left home in a fit, vowing never to return. He made his way to some of his Christian friends, for be it noted that owing to his connection with the L. M. S. Institution, all his friends, intimates we mean, were Christians. With them he took counsel, and naturally enough, like the tailless jackal, they all advised him to

be "strong," to give up all intercourse with a family which, in its unsympathetic barbarity, had been stabbing so cruelly in that vital part of the human nature—selfrespect. Their views tallied exactly with the feelings that moved Suresh just then; and thus without consulting an older, cooler and wiser head, Suresh came to the conclusion that thence-forward he would have nothing to do with the family he was born into or the parents to whom he owed his very existence.

Many of his friends offered him a permanent asylum, for age laughs at difficulties and obstacles. These youngsters, therefore, never thought that it might not be very easy or safe for their parents or guardians to take the entire charge of a young person.

Suresh, however, had not altogether lost his senses. He realised at once that however welcome he might be in the family of a friend it would never do to remain a burden on a stranger for any considerable length of time, especially when he knew that not one of his friends was suffering from any plethora of riches which he knew not what to do with. He, therefore, resolved to place his version of the case before Mr. Ashton, of the L. M. S. Institution, who had learnt long ere this to interest himself in his behalf.

This was done, and Mr. Ashton gladly gave him advice, asking him to study the Bible with care and diligence. Suresh's mind was just then full to

overflowing with anger against his relatives, and against Hinduism because they were Hindus: Not to let the grass grow under his feet, he lost no time in becoming a convert to Christianity, so that his relatives might not follow and take him to the home which was by no means a pleasant one to him. Though still a boy when very few learn to be self-reliant, his was a determined character. He had left home in anger and nothing would induce him to return there. Suresh was now a convert, without shelter or money. He was young and had not yet learnt to earn so as to make his own way in life. His relatives, when they heard of this crowning waywardness, gave him up and did not choose to help him in any way. His father, Girish Chunder, vowed never to see his face again, and cut him out of inheritance. So he was, what might well be called, a homeless and friendless waif.

At this crisis Mr. Ashton proved a true and kind friend. He gave the young convert an asylum in the barrack attached to the London Missionary Institution, where Suresh found boarding and lodging free. He might, if he had chosen, have prosecuted his studies and become in after life a respectable member of the Native Christian community, with sufficient income to live a decent life, without much to mar its even tenour, as thousands of others are doing under similar circumstances. He was, however, too restless, too independent and too proud to live dependent on

the charity of others or make up his mind to be more attentive to his books. Indeed, as we said before, books, and especially school books, were no great favourites with him, while discipline was something which was more disagreeable still. The natural consequence was that he cast his nets about for service of some sort which would enable him to meet his personal demands.

Here, there and everywhere Suresh tried, but with his scanty education, and owing to his tender age, he could not, for sometime, secure any job whatever. He made a round of both Government offices and mercantile firms, of shipping offices and railway stations, of docks and jetties ; but he was more laughed at than pitied. Coarse were often the jokes made at his expense, especially when he mentioned the fact of his being a convert. This was very discouraging and disappointing to one of his young age and warm blood. But there was no help. It was his folly which had landed him on that bleak shore of misery and hardship, of despair and disappointment. Surely he was not of an age when he ought to have sought service, neither were his circumstances such that he had to earn his living. He had parents and uncles to take care of him and he should have devoted his time and attention to the prosecution of his legitimate studies. He had spurned every opportunity of turning out good ; he had left home in a pet, to the great sorrow of his mother ; he had abjured his ances-

tral faith not from conviction but from sheer obstinacy. What wonder then that he should suffer?

At last, there came a streak of light piercing the inky darkness of despair which was gradually enveloping Suresh as in a shroud. He obtained a situation, but what a situation! Why, Suresh became a guide or messenger on the establishment of the Spence's Hotel. By this we do not mean that he became what is known in Europe and the Far West as the errand boy. His duties consisted of waiting at railway stations and jetties to conduct strangers to Spence's Hotel, to act as their guide in their explorations in and about the City of Palaces, to book or take delivery of their luggage, to act as interpreter, and so forth.

Suresh could speak English fluently if not very correctly, something like what our China-bazar and Chandney brokers do; and so though the nature of his duties threw him exclusively in the company of Europeans and Americans, most of whom knew not a word of any vernacular language, he managed his duties to the satisfaction of all concerned. Perhaps it was not a bright beginning for one who was destined to carve such an illustrious career and draw upon himself the eyes of the whole world, but still we believe that the insight he thus obtained into western life by contact with Westerners did him some good. It did not perfect his education, but it gave him experience.

For sometime Suresh remained in the employ of Spence's Hotel, but he soon tired of the life he was leading. The novelty wore off, and then it became an unmitigated drudgery. Business, as we said, often took him to the jetties and on board incoming and outgoing vessels. And this fired him with the desire of seeing the world and paying a visit to the enlightened West of which he continually received glimpses. Night and day he thought of the most improbable plans to get away from his surroundings and embark on a voyage to the shrine of western civilisation; as often were they dismissed summarily to make way for others equally impracticable. Weeks rolled into months, and months went slowly by, but still Suresh was as far off the attainment of his day-dream as ever. He even took heart to approach several tourists whom he had in tow during their sojourn in Calcutta with the prayer of being taken on their suite on their homeward journey. But in variably on such occasions was he dismissed with a smile or a frown, according to the temper of the person applied to.

Suresh knew that application to his relatives for money required to secure a passage to England, would be as futile as one to the moon; and so he desisted from taking such a step. The only being who still had some remnant of affection for him was his poor heart-broken mother. She, however, had no private resources out of which she could help him in the attainment of his life's aim. She

too, suffered in silence, poor woman, for she dared not unburden herself to her husband who had firmly set his face against his eldest son, never to unbend or relax even by so much as a hair's breadth. True, she would, now and then, send a few eatables, his favourite dishes, to Suresh, through his younger brother when the male members of the family would not be at home. True, also, his uncle would now and then come to pay him a short visit. But all this did not help him materially, or advance him one step towards the realisation of his fondest hope.

Gradually it became a mania with him—we mean, his desire to see foreign lands by sea. Perhaps a sea-faring life appealed strongly to the romance in his character. Of the unknown and romantic charms of a sailor's life he had read in books of travel and fiction, and no wonder they obtained a strong hold of his mind. At this time he was an inmate of the boarding establishment attached to the L. M. S. Institution, under the direct supervision of Mr. Ashton, with whose family, therefore, he became very intimate. Mr. Ashton had had a liking for him from the first, and he left no stone unturned to induce Suresh to devote a portion of his leisure at least to study, so that whatever his then occupation might be, however lowly and insignificant, there might be some chance of his ever bettering his position in the estimation of the unsympathetic world, steeped head over ears in queer prejudices. The world, we all know,

does not care to recognise anyone who has neither position nor wealth. Real merit wanes before borrowed light ; and whatever the intrinsic worth or inherent virtues of a man may be, so long he is poor or illiterate, he counts for nothing in this nineteenth-century world of ours. Mr. Ashton, therefore, did his best to improve the intellectual side of his *protege's* nature, but, alas, in vain.

Suresh's character knew no compromise. He was, at that early period of his life at least, as great and bitter an opponent of *Saraswati*, the goddess of learning, as one could imagine by the greatest stretch of imagination. His whole soul seemed to be wrapped up with the one prevailing desire to see the world outside the farthest limits of the British Empire in India. Nor was this feeling unknown to his friends,—at least to Mr. Ashton and the members of his family.

They all loved the lad, and hence took very great interest in him. The following letter which Mr. Ashton wrote not long ago to the Very Rev. Father Lafont, when introducing Suresh's brother to the latter, would justify the remarks made by us about the favour shown to our hero by the Ashtons :—

* * * * *

“ He is the brother of Babu Suresh Chundra Biswas, one of our pupils, who confessed his faith in Christ and was baptized in our Mission some 21 years ago. I was very fond of the lad and he was almost like a son in our family—but after a time a restless desire

came over him to see the world and nothing would content him but a visit to Europe. He had the courage to work his way to England as an assistant Steward on a B. I. Steamer. When he got to London he visited my parents—they and my sister took interest in him. He passed through many troubles till, almost at the last extremity, he came across Mr. Jamrach, who took him into his employment and before long he actually became a lion-tamer and exhibited in most of the cities of Europe and even in the Agricultural Hall in London. After many adventures he settled down in Rio-de-Janeiro, Brazil, where he still is. There he held many positions—at one time had charge of the zoo there, &c., but finally, strange to say, entered the Brazilian army and rose to be a Lieutenant.

“He has sent his family some placards and also newspapers—but they are, I believe, in the Portuguese language * * * is very anxious to get them translated. It has occurred to him and me that you may perhaps be able to read Portuguese or if not, one of the Fathers may be able to do so. If you or they could take the trouble to translate the papers and if a literal translation is too much to expect (unless you can get some subordinate to help in the matter), we should be glad to have at least the substance of the articles.”

Chapter XV**OFF TO BURMAH.**

AS days passed Suresh became very anxious, indeed, to leave Calcutta. Such was his mania, that one day he found himself at the office of the British India Steam Navigation Company, there to engage a deck passage to Rangoon. But, why of all places did he choose Rangoon ? He was determined to leave Calcutta and carve his career elsewhere. He would no doubt have liked a voyage to England best, but when that was found impracticable he thought of going to some other country where he might obtain a chance of improving his position and prospects.

Burmah at that time was in a semi-barbarous condition. The English had not yet consolidated their power in Lower Burmah, while the Upper was still under the independent sway of its native chiefs. There was consequently a dearth of English-knowing persons to help in the administration of the country. And Suresh thought that he would easily obtain a suitable situation at Rangoon.

In due time Suresh reached Rangoon without meeting with any adventure or accident on the voyage worth the name. His purse was by no means very full, and if he failed to secure some job it would have been impossible for him to keep himself afloat for any considerable time. He knew no one at Rangoon, and so he was forced to seek one of

those cheap lodging-houses which are to be found in every city in the world. He was yet in search of a resting place when he chanced to meet a friend—one he had known in Calcutta under better circumstances than he was then in.

When this newly found friend found what had brought Suresh to Rangoon, he gladly offered to share his lodgings with the latter. Thus Providence found for him what he was seeking—shelter till he could secure some appointment.

For several days after his arrival in Rangoon, Suresh kept himself busy with waiting on persons who had situations in their gift and with sight-seeing. Now, Rangoon is not a very clean or safe town even now. It was far more unsafe and dirty at the time we speak of. Gangs of desperadoes and *budmashes* perambulated the streets without the fear of arrest or punishment. Dacoities were prevalent even in the heart of the city, and the laxity of police supervision was but too evident. The slums of Rangoon were the hot-bed of crime, infested by men and women, horrid in appearance, dirty in habits, and ferocious in nature, in whom the worst passions of mankind reigned supreme. Walking in the streets of Rangoon after nightfall was a very dangerous game, and for the matter of that, why by night, it was not safe to walk into the back streets and alleys of the city even by day. New-comers and strangers who were not aware of this state of affairs fell easy victims to the

rapacity or lust of Burman desperadoes who might be found lurking in dark recesses, armed with their national weapon of offence and defence, known as *Dao*.

The friend with whom Suresh was putting up did not fail to acquaint him with the dangerous character of Rangoon roads; but whether his words produced any good effect on him would be evident from the following adventure which befell our hero one evening.

Chapter XVI.

ENCOUNTER WITH DACOITS.

ONE afternoon Suresh went out on a boating excursion,—he was, indeed, at that period of his life, very fond of boating; and though he was for the time being with a very slender purse, in a strange land, in quest of service he could not resist the temptation of a few hours' outing on the broad placid bosom of the Irrawadi. As the shades of evening gradually enveloped the earth he dismissed the boat and decided upon returning home by land—which, he thought, would add to the healthy exercise he had already taken. He had no thought of lurking danger on the way, and, indeed, the stories he had heard of outrages and robberies, escaped his memory altogether. He had no weapon with him to be sure,—no, not even a stick worth the name. Only, as usual with him, he carried a small ruler such as boys use in ruling the pages of their hand-writing books.

By this time it was evening. The stars spangled the heaven, and though the moon had not yet risen, it was not totally dark. The roads on the outskirts appeared very lovely in their solitude, while the evening breeze fanned the cheeks of the youthful pedestrian as he walked leisurely along. He was deep in thought—of the past, the present, and the future. Now he was bewailing his lot, and now again building airy castles to be demolished the next moment. A few persons only did he meet, and they chiefly of the labouring classes, returning home after their days' labour. They were Burmans and walked on in silence unlike Bengali peasants who would generally beguile the tediousness of the walk home with songs.

They were honest people and there was nothing suspicious about them. So Suresh became all the more convinced of the foolishness and timidity of his friend. He had just left Calcutta and had, therefore, very great confidence in the long arm of law and the power of the British Government. Chancing to come into a dark lane, he was suddenly startled from his reverie by the hissing past of some sort of missile. It was a *dao*, for as it struck a wall on the other side of the road there could be no mistaking the metallic sound. As he looked up the lane, another missile went past without, as before, doing him any harm. It was pure chance which saved him, for the least touch of any of the two dangerous weapons would have

proved very disagreeable, if not altogether fatal, to him.

But there was no time to lose, for before him he could just distinguish the shadowy forms of two men, running towards him evidently with no peaceful motive. Suresh now realised the bitter truth of his friend's words. But it was too late. There was no way to escape. Perhaps, he thought, destiny had drawn him to Rangoon to witness his end. And if he were to die, die he would gallantly, though his feeble arm could do very little against two strong-built Burman ruffians. He fell a few steps backward, and clutched his ruler almost fiercely. Gnashing his teeth in what may be called impotent rage, he waited for the approach of his assailants ready to sell his life dearly.

The two night-prowlers hoping to score an easy victory over a slight-built beardless boy, came one by one, not deeming it necessary to attack him simultaneously. Suresh was ready to give them a warm reception, and the first man received a blow on his temple before he had time to reach his would-be victim—a blow that stunned and felled him to the ground in the twinkling of an eye. His companion was rather non-plussed at this unexpected turn of things, but not sufficiently to allow the Bengali boy to repeat his successful treatment in his case. The Burman fell upon Suresh before the latter could strike him, and with a sudden jerk wrested the mischievous ruler from his

hand. Both were now unarmed, and hence there was a very interesting wrestling contest between the two, in the semi-darkness of the hour and the solitude of the place.

A few rounds and Suresh found to his dismay that he was no match for the robber, who was a thick-set, powerfully built man with muscles like steel wires. In a few moments his bones would perhaps have been crushed in the vicelike embrace of his assailant but Fate reserved him for a better end; and lights were seen moving up just when he was slackening his hold. It was a marriage procession with lights burning and music playing. Though feeling that he was about to lose his consciousness, Suresh had still the presence of mind to cry out for help. This move on his part the robber had scarcely expected, and finding that there was hardly time for him to escape, he left the boy and scampered off into one of those alleys which were then so common in Rangoon. The marriage party soon came up and Suresh was saved.

Chapter XVII.

A PLUCKY RESCUE.

FOR several days, as we said, Suresh made a round of all the public offices and mercantile houses in the city in search of employment, but such was the

ill fortune that attended him that nowhere did he even get so much as the least hope. In vain did he interview office-masters, in vain did he beseech and supplicate. At last it was settled that he should bid the city of Pagodas good-bye and return to India.

It was on the eve of his departure from Rangoon that he went out for a last stroll through the city. He was walking along one of the principal thoroughfares, when the cry of fire was raised, and flames were seen forking out of a house several hundred yards in front. A strong wind was blowing at the time, and in a few minutes the fire was fanned into a terrific blaze. Hundreds of people collected on the spot, and efforts were made to get the fire under, but to no avail. Indeed, it spread to the neighbouring houses and assumed the proportions of a conflagration. Suresh remained no idle spectator, but lent a willing hand to the carrying of water from a tank at some distance.

Suddenly above the din of the roaring fire and the cries of a thousand people rose the despairing scream of a woman. A window on the upper storey of one of the blazing houses was thrown open and in the midst of smoke and glare was seen the pale, death-like countenance of a young woman, with eyes directed towards the heaven and hands outstretched as if in expectation of help. But whence could succour come? The flames played all around her, and even singed her dishevelled hair.

Awful was the moment and heartrending the scene. There seemed no way left to rescue the girl; she would, in a few minutes, be claimed as the victim of the roaring element. Many were the expressions of sorrow and pity, but not one was there in that crowd of hundreds of people who stood spell-bound by the appalling nature of the scene, that dared lift a finger to rescue her.

Suresh saw and noted all this, and his heart rebelled at the cowardly thought that before the eyes of so many men, an innocent life should be sacrificed to the all-devouring greed of fire. To think was to act with him, and in a loud voice he asked for a ladder sufficiently strong to bear the burden of two human beings and so seasoned as to resist the attack of fire for a little while.

The ladder was procured. Then drenching himself with a jar of water he happened to be carrying at the time, Suresh set the ladder against the burning walls of the house and climbed up, unmindful of the forks of flame that hissed and crackled around him. This daring action of his seemed to cast a spell over the assembled crowd, and every voice was hushed. Up and up he went, one step by another, with the greatest difficulty possible, but steadily and upward. The window was reached, it was already in flames. To cross that line of fire from without was impossible for the flames forked out and not in. The girl still stood there, but almost dazed and incapable of any great effort.

Here was then a terrible fix. How was Suresh to reach the girl? And to retreat leaving the forlorn woman to her horrible fate, after running the gauntlet of so tremendous risks would be rank cowardice. His mind was made up in a moment: He would either succeed or die in the attempt to save her. Suresh was an athlete—quick in movement, strong of grasp and lithe of limb. With one foot on the sill, he took a venturesome leap clean through the window into the room. The rush of wind that passed in with him made the flames fork into the room and light its darkest corner.

The girl stood in the middle of the room, her clothes in disorder, her hair waving in all directions, her hands clenched, her eyes staring wildly at vacancy, her cheeks ashy pale, her body swaying to and fro like that of an angry cobra, though of anger there could not have been the least trace in her feelings just then. It was despair—blank despair that possessed her soul as she saw the awful doom approaching—the doom of her fair form being consumed by that relentless element, fire.

Suresh grasped the whole situation at a single glance. There was no means of escape, all avenue being successfully closed by the leaping and trembling tongues of flame hissing in their own cruelty. But so long as the framework of the window, by which he had come, remained ablaze it was impossible even to try that way. To wait there, again, meant positive

death to him and to the fainting creature he had come to rescue. Suresh, therefore, decided on taking a very great risk. The sight of him had no doubt inspired the girl with the faintest possible streak of hope; but she too, it appeared, was not very sure of success in making their way out.

Making signs to her to take courage, Suresh retreated a few steps and then running forward gave such a kick to the flimsy and burning wooden framework of window that with a crash, it fell out in a hundred splinters, on the street below, in the midst of an unsuspecting crowd, thus causing a regular stampede among them. Unfortunately along with the framework, Suresh's ladder too was thrown down, thus cutting off the only means of escape. Here was a new fix for the daring spirit who had sworn to save the girl or die in the attempt like a heroic soul. Looking out from the window he called on those who were in the street below to pick up the ladder and re-adjust it without delay, for delay meant suffocation in that room which was already filling with smoke. For a time his voice was drowned in the hubbub, but at last some one caught the meaning of his words, and hastened to carry out his wishes.

The ladder was set again, under the window, while several stalwart Burmans held it in its place, so that it might not slide back with the double weight of the rescued and the rescuer. Suresh now approached the girl, and, grasping her by the slim wasplike waist,

made her head rest on his shoulder, which she did most readily and she even went so far as to encircle his neck with her plump fair hands.

Then through the zone of fire did Suresh bear his burden slowly towards the spot where the head of the ladder rested against the wall. It was an awful moment. One false step, the least nervousness, the slightest trembling and the two would have been precipitated from that dizzy height down to the ground below—a drop of 20 to 30 feet, on the smouldering embers of the window frame.

But Providence was on their side and although Suresh felt the hot breath of the fire which singed his hair and skin, he reached the ladder in safety. Slowly, step by step, with a heavy burden on his arms, for the lady was a dead weight just then, having lost her consciousness the moment she was picked up by her gallant but youthful rescuer, did Suresh descend the ladder, till at last it broke when he was within a few feet of the ground. A hundred arms were outstretched to break the fall, and no injury was surely done to either Suresh or the senseless girl.

But when once he was satisfied that the girl had been saved from the very jaws of death, Suresh felt a sudden dizziness come over him. His head swam, his nerves gave way under the tremendous tension they had been subjected to, his eyes closed, and his body became rigid. He was carried in an unconscious state to the house of his friend whose address

was found in one of his coat pockets. There he hovered between life and death for several days, watched and nursed by the grateful Burman girl and her family.

When slowly he recovered, it became evident to him that during his illness he had become an object of attachment to the girl. But unfortunately this love he could not repay for the very fact of his being instrumental in saving her life so worked on his feelings that it was quite out of the question that he could ever marry her.

Chapter XVIII.

VISIT TO MADRAS.

FROM Rangoon Suresh did not at once return to Calcutta. While at Rangoon he met with more Madrases than in Calcutta, and even the majority of the public women that disgraced the streets of the capital of British Burmah, hailed, he found, from the sunny south of the Indian continent. This made him naturally curious to pay a visit to Madras which had then already earned the sobriquet of the "Benighted South" on account of the backward state of civilisation there, although as a matter of fact Madras had come in contact with the civilized West earlier than most provinces in India.

As soon as Suresh recovered from the serious illness, which came as a consequence of the mighty efforts he had made to save the Burman girl from the jaws of fire, sufficiently to be permitted to leave Rangoon, he engaged a passage for Madras in a coasting vessel. In due time he reached the latter port and landed in the town which had witnessed the first Indian labours of the great founder of the British Empire in India, labours at the desk and in the army, and not only labours but also the determined attempts made by Clive to take his own life and thus to deprive the world of the sight of that genius which induced an appreciative world to dub him "England's Heaven-born General."

At Madras, too, he knew nobody. He found himself a strange man in a strange place. It did not, however, take him long to find out cheap lodgings, such as his slender purse would permit him to seek, and instal himself in a hovel scarcely fit even for a pigery. The city of Madras had positively no interest for him, though we have heard many Madrased friends declare with every show of sincerity that Calcutta could hardly compare with Madras in point of beauty or magnitude. The one spot that had some attraction for him was Fort St. George where Clive and Coote had once had their quarters.

There was not, therefore, much sight-seeing for Suresh at Madras. He, however, made a tour of all the public and mercantile offices in the city, but with the

same success that had attended a similar experience in Rangoon. And really, how could he expect a subordinate position in Madras with the vernacular of which he was not at all familiar? Telugu or Tamil was equally a sealed book to him. Neither of them he knew nor could he expect to pick up in so short a time as a week, a fortnight or a month. The only course left to him was, therefore, to go about among the Christian and Eurasian families and seek for some employment, such as might only help to keep him above water.

We have already said that Suresh's patience and perseverance were very great. Indeed, but for these qualities he would never have been able to cut the figure he has cut, in this matter-of-fact world, at this fag end of the nineteenth century. He began with the Eurasian community, and from one house to another he went, applying for service of some sort or other. But everywhere the result was the same: he was politely shown the door. Gradually, therefore, was the demon of despair advancing to possess him entirely, for his purse had by this time been denuded of all the silver it ever contained, leaving him only a few annas to maintain an unequal combat with fate and life.

Still Suresh did not give up hope. It was not his nature to do so. He kept calling at the houses of his co-religionists. His position was certainly not an enviable one. Not to speak of settling in life on a

decent income, he had not even the means at his disposal to return to Calcutta unless he could earn enough to cover his passage. It is said in our Shastras that God never allows any of his children to die of starvation, though He would never come forward to help unless the person is about to die.

One afternoon Suresh was walking along the beach, in a very unsettled frame of mind, his unpleasant thoughts leading him astray now and again, towards the point of suicide—the crime of a moral coward who has not the courage to struggle against adverse circumstances. Often did he think of putting an end to his existence—an existence which had no charms for him, no promise of sunlight in the future, no prospect of peace and calm. The means were ready at hand. A plunge into the boiling waters of the harbour and all would be over with him in the twinkling of an eye. He felt tempted to take this extreme and hazardous step, but every time this feeling came uppermost in his mind, a secret voice warned him against such a folly.

Aimlessly, therefore, Suresh moved about on the beach, or rather dragged himself, as if he had suddenly been robbed of his strength and energy, like an automatic machine with its wind spent.

He was dressed in European costume, though his linen had not seen the washing tub for days and was not of the cleanest possible. His appearance proclaimed him to be more a needy Eurasian than an

Indian of pure blood. His shoes stood very much in need of blacking and a contact with the awl. His *sola* hat was covered with dust. Surely his appearance was by no means prepossessing, and not calculated to engender confidence in a stranger who knew him not. On the beach were children romping and running about, prattling innocently or filling the air with their merry laugh.

Suresh watched their innocent amusements and a deep sigh escaped him as he re-called his own happy childhood at Nathpur. Simultaneously there appeared before his mind's eye a vision which only helped to sadden him the more. It was of his mother—of her who had fed him from her breast and lavished on him all the wealth of her maternal affection. What she must have been feeling at his unaccountable absence from his old haunts which he had ever loved so well? While he was literally on the verge of starvation, she was perhaps passing sleepless nights and restless days thinking of him. Verily, these were no pleasant thoughts for one circumstanced as Suresh was just then

Among the crowd was an old Eurasian, looking very much like a patriarch, with white hair and white flowing beard descending almost to the waist. His whole appearance betokened peace with the world and contentment of mind. He was a constant visitor to the Beach. Indeed, he was always to be found here surveying the Bay of Bengal with longing eyes, both morn-

ing and evening, as if eager to cross the sea and land on the other side of the ocean of life. His benevolent looks had tempted Suresh several times, to approach him, unburthen himself to him and seek his advice and help.

On this particular evening the old gentleman was walking slowly up and down the beach, muttering some prayer, which, however, was inaudible to even the nearest passer-by. Suresh found him quite disengaged, and made up his mind to approach him. He awaited a fitting opportunity so as not suddenly to intrude upon the old man's privacy. At last they met face to face. Suresh took off his hat and saluted the venerable gentleman in a manner which clearly indicated the sincerity of his respect. The old man—he was one Mr. P—, uttered a benediction and enquired what he could possibly do for the young stranger, for it would not have taken any one long to find out that Suresh *was a stranger* in Madras.

“I am,” said Suresh, with another bow, “a stranger in this city.”

“That one can see from your very appearance. What is it that brings you here?”

“I came to Madras in search of employment, but unfortunately, though I have tried everywhere I have failed to secure even so much as a temporary job.”

“Well, young man, times have changed and service is hard to secure. But you see, I am now a retired

man, an old fossil as they say, and I fear I cannot help you in this."

"But, Sir, I am on the verge of starvation. I have scarcely enough left in my pocket to get me a loaf of bread to-morrow."

"Why don't you go home?"

"I come from far Calcutta."

"Why did you leave home and why did you come to Madras of all cities?"

"From Calcutta, where I was employed as a guide on the establishment of the Spence's Hotel, I went to Rangoon; but ill-luck followed me there and I could not secure any job. Thence I came to Madras, hoping that here at least I might get some employment or other. But who can fight against fate? And here I am in a helpless condition, with scarcely any prospect of bettering my position."

"It is a sad tale, young man; but I am afraid you won't get any body here to lend you a helping hand."

"That I can understand from the experience of the past two weeks. But am I, then, to starve and provide the carrion with food?"

"What's your education?"

"I was for several years in the London Missionary Society's Institution, and know something of English and Bengali."

"Are you a native Christian?"

"I am, sir. It was Mr. Ashton who converted me."

Mr. P—was silent for sometime. They were both walking in the same direction. Though Suresh would have liked to tell his companion more of his private history, he did not deem it judicious to break upon his thoughts, and so walked silently by his side.

After a long interval Mr. P—resumed the conversation with the words—“Well, what do you think you are fit for? I am not a rich man nor have I clerkships to offer you.”

“Anything will suit me which will enable me to have a morsel of food every day and to save something for my passage home.”

“You have had enough of travelling, eh! That’s right. There’s no place like home.”

There was another pause.

Mr. P—suddenly turned upon his young companion, and asked,—“Do you think, young man, that you can take charge of two little children? You see, I have nothing better to offer you for the present. The fact is, I do not know you and cannot surely recommend you anywhere for some better situation. Of course, when we have known each other more intimately, it may be I may help you in securing some better job.”

“I cannot, sir, express the feelings that move me. All that I ask for the present is some sort of shelter to rest my head under at night and something to eat, however coarse it might be.”

“ Well, you need not fear for that, you stop with me. Ours is, no doubt, a very humble fare but I can guarantee you that you will get sufficient to appease your hunger, if only you are not over particular in the choice of your dishes.”

“ No one in my position, sir, can possibly so far forget himself as to turn up his nose at food which is good for his betters ; and I believe I am no exception to this general rule.”

Suresh accompanied Mr. P—to his house where he was formally installed in his new situation as a caretaker of two little children—the grand-children of his kind protector. Suresh had always had a knack of ingratiating himself into the confidence and favour of all he came in contact with ; and in a week's time he became quite a general favourite in the Eurasian's family. The ladies came to like him and so did the gentlemen.

Suresh remained at Madras for some time in the employ of the old Eurasian ; and when he thought that he had enough cash to pay for his passage and enable him to live in Calcutta till such time when he might be able to secure some other job, he shook the dust of Madras off his feet and returned to Calcutta.

Chapter XIX.

RETURN TO CALCUTTA.

After his return to Calcutta Suresh could not secure any permanent berth, although he was always on his legs, trying here, there and everywhere. He seemed

to have fallen upon evil times and ill-luck appeared to dog his steps persistently whether abroad or at home. But as Mr Ashton did not, most kindly and generously, send him away from the boarding attached to the L. M. S. Institution, he had no difficulty in finding food and shelter. Of course, every man, especially those who had no guardians to anticipate and pay for their wants, must have a little pocket-money. It was here that Suresh was in a fix.

On his return Suresh, one day, paid a clandestine visit to the Kareya house, when Grish and Kailas Babus were away at office, and his mother who was always, rather partial to him, gave him a sum of money, unknown to the other inmates, to serve him as pocket-money till such time that he could get some employment or other. Indeed, she offered to help him privately with small sums now and then if he applied at reasonable intervals.

Naturally, therefore, had Suresh ample leisure to devote to study and self-improvement if he liked. And though he could not give close application to his books or read for any considerable length of time, he began to perceive that there were no prospects for him if he did not make some improvement in his mental calibre. This new thought changed his habits considerably. He now began to spend some portion of his time at least in reading—not fiction which pleases and enthral the superficial mind, but thoughtful works of the masterminds of the world.

Gradually his store of knowledge increased, but no outward show marred its beauty. All this time, however, the idea of making a pilgrimage to the shrine of western civilisation never left him. He sought for an opportunity, but that opportunity never presented itself. He applied to many persons, but from none did he receive any hopes of support. He spent his leisure hours in walking aimlessly about the jetties and the strand. Sometimes he would pick his way into the Sailors' Home and make friends with the jolly Tars, whose tongue he would loosen with drops of nectar and hear from them stories of travel and adventure by land and sea. The more he heard of the perils of the deep, of the habits and customs of different peoples in different parts of the world, the more enamoured he became of a sea-faring life. He became, indeed, so very partial to a jolly life on the sea, that he had no objection even to serve as a common sailor, though his position in society and his education were of a superior kind. Indeed, he applied to several firms of shippers for a berth on board any sea-going vessel, but as usual with no result worth the name. Some laughed at him, others took him for a fool, while some there were, who did not seem to have any time to bestow on him, and so asked him unceremoniously to withdraw.

Chapter XX.**ADIEU TO HIS NATIVE LAND.**

THUS passed days and weeks, and yet Suresh was by no means nearer the goal. At last he chanced one day to meet a Captain in the service of the British Indian Steam Navigation Company. His vessel had just come into port ; and what with discharging cargo, painting the sides, and re-loading, she was to stay at her moorings for over a month. Her Captain seemed a kind-hearted, good-natured man of the old school who had no prejudice against an Indian, just as he would have had no prejudice against an Egyptian or a Haytian. To him Suresh was a man like himself—an interesting bit of humanity who could talk with him in his own language.

Suresh took care to ascertain the name of the ship, and hence he could see the Captain every day on the deck of his own vessel which to an English seaman is his home and empire. The friendship begun by accident ripened into intimacy in a short fortnight's time, for the minds of both parties to the contract were open and transparent. When he thought that he had been sufficiently intimate with the Captain, to speak of personal affairs, and when, indeed, the latter had begun to unburden himself before his young friend, Suresh broached the subject which was always near his heart.

At first the Captain would not entertain the idea of his friend's leaving home at so early an age for an

adventurous life elsewhere but the latter's entreaties moved him at last and he consented to take him, Suresh, to London, the port of his destination, in return for his service on board as Assistant Steward.

The day dawned at last when the good ship—left her moorings at the Prinsep's Ghât and proceeded down stream towards the Bay of Bengal. Young Suresh, he was scarcely sixteen or seventeen then, stood on the deck, leaning on the bulwark, looking wistfully towards the Strand where a crowd of natives had collected even at that early hour to watch the operations necessary for the unmooring of a big vessel. Among the crowd standing on the Strand there was none who was anybody to the poor convert lad, who was leaving his native land and all that he held dear, to throw himself entirely and unreservedly on the tender mercies of an unsympathetic world. No friend, no relation was there to wave even a rag in token of adieu. Suresh heaved a deep sigh as his throbbing breast pressed against the cold hard wooden bulwark which gave no response to the beatings of his own heart. An awful moment it was for him, who was leaving his home and friends to take a big jump into the unknown there-after—a jump that might either land him on a bed of roses or hurl him precipitately on sharp jutting rocks which will lacerate and kill him. He knew not where he was going or what was in store for him. What was sure was that he would soon find himself a stranger in a strange land in the midst of aliens

and strangers whose hearts would perhaps never be moved with pity by his wants and sufferings.

We have heard many England-returned gentlemen describe their feelings at the moment of departure, and we must admit quite sensational and moving these descriptions are. But considering that they leave their mother-country only to return a short while after, it may fairly be presumed how terrible that moment was for Suresh. Big pearl-like drops of tears fell from his eyes into the river as if they were the last offerings of this child of Hindu parents to mother Ganges—that sacred stream which rises from among the colossal *Jatas* on the head of the God of Gods, *Devadideva Mahadeva*.

It was not long, however, that Suresh could stand thus contemplating for the last time the city that had seen him grow from a child to the estate of a young man. He was not a passenger, nor was therefore his time his own. As Assistant Steward he had multifarious duties to attend to, and so, wiping his face with his handkerchief, to obliterate all traces of his agitation, he descended to the pantry below, there to be initiated into the duties of his office.

Chapter XXI.

THE VOYAGE OUT.

The vessel which carried Suresh away from the land of his nativity to climes and regions unknown, was a passenger steamer, crammed with passengers

of both sexes and all ages. All of these belonged to the ruling race,—merchants, or members of the Services. There were several ladies on board,—some old, some middle-aged and some young. Some of them had their husbands, others were returning home for health or pleasure.

The crew was European with a few *lascars* under their *serang*; but with these Suresh could by no means associate. They were low-class Mahomedans from Chittagong and the country around and had nothing in common with our hero. With the English seamen, again, he did not at once become friendly, for something like jealousy did they feel at his stepping into a coveted post. No one, however, dared interfere with him or try to do him a bad turn, for the Captain continued to take the same interest in him as before, when he was not one of the crew. At first, naturally therefore did Suresh feel bored and realise what it was to be severely alone with his thoughts, to have none to talk to, confide in or sympathise with, to know that he should stand or fall by himself without any one to encourage him by even so much as a nod or sign.

Gradually however, the mist cleared up, and Suresh came to find that all was not inky dark for him, that he had yet hope of making friendship and enjoying life. The only one for whom his heart still bled was his sorrowing mother, his other relatives not claiming any the least portion of his thoughts, for according

to him, they had treated him very shabbily. His duties often brought him in contact with the passengers, and though some there were among them, who would not even speak to him, there were others who took some interest in him owing to his colour and age. He was always neatly dressed, while his manners were polished like those of a gentleman. More than that he could speak English without the native intonation and accent. Hence, some of the lady passengers, too, became partial to him.

They would now and again summon him before them and chat with him in a friendly spirit, for there was something in his conversation which interested them greatly and at times amused them highly. The male passengers too were not unkind to him. They, of course, knew not the rank he rightly belonged to, but took him to have been sprung from the classes from which *khalasis* and *khansamas* are drawn. That, however, did not make any difference in their treatment. Europeans, in those pre-Ilbert-Bill days, were more attached to the land of their banishment, than their successors are at the present day, and hence on the voyage home, after taking leave of India, they evidently liked being reminded of their Indian associations.

The voyage was, therefore, a pleasant one, and the thirty-three days passed on board were rather days of peace and contentment to Suresh. He was approaching the goal of his ambition, every day was

lessening the distance between him and London. This was, in itself, a sufficient reason for the rest and quiet he had not known for many days previously. His hopes, too, ran high, for he argued that when he received such kind treatment on board the vessel, he would experience no difficulty in obtaining the sympathy of people at home and securing something, either in the shape of service or scholarship, which would enable him to carve his career.

Naturally, therefore, was Suresh happy,—happier than what he had been for months. The seamen who had at first appeared to have been rather jealous of him and his influence with the Commander, gradually lost much of that cold reserve which had marked their behaviour in the beginning. Jack Tar has always enjoyed a reputation for being simple-minded and light-hearted, and no wonder, if in a few days, his brother sailors received Suresh with open arms into their bosom, and became so many protectors of the young Indian.

The passage of the good vessel was unattended with any serious accident. She reached London in due time, and the passengers all left her, eager to be at home again, in the midst of those dear ones from whom they had been separated for many long years, for in those days Englishmen in India could not afford to visit their mother-country as often as we find them doing now.

Chapter XXII.**EARLY STRUGGLES IN LONDON.**

OUR readers have, we fear, no very large acquaintance with London and its people—at least most of them have not,—not much to speak of, save what is derived from a cold perusal of books without the living reality in it. It is impossible for one to form an idea of this modern Babylon from the cities of Bombay, Madras or Calcutta, neither of its extent, nor of its population, nor again of its roads, railways and houses. We will not try to attempt at even a slight description of this huge city, for we know it will be merely love's labour lost. It is to see, and not to be told, to be convinced.

As we have already said all the passengers on board the B. I. S. N. boat were in a hurry to leave the wooden house they had been occupying for over a month, so great was naturally their anxiety to join the home circle from which they had been absent for a long time. The meeting of friends and relatives on the deck was most affecting, especially to a lad of Suresh's age and disposition. How his heart yearned at that moment for the old house at Kareya and the old family residence at Nathpur! How great was his longing to be united once more to the family he had cut and to be embraced by the mother to whom he owed his being! Oblivious of his own duties, he leaned against a mast with his hands crossed on his breast, watching the departure of passengers whom he had served for so many days.

Many were the smiling nods and other signs of recognition that was bestowed on him ; he acknowledged them all though in a half-dazed way.

• The scene was one of extreme bustle and activity. The Customs officers were there prying into the luggage and effects of the passengers and the crew for any contraband or prohibited article. Porters and messengers too were on board for sundry jobs on which they lived. Add to this, the preparations that were necessary for the dropping in of the anchor, and you will form some idea of the hubbub, attendant on the arrival of a vessel in port, that was going on. The Captain himself was too busy in arranging and making over his papers to the Port authorities and the representatives of the owners, to mind what Suresh might have been doing. The sailors and officers were similarly too much occupied with their own duties to pay any attention to him.

So, immersed in his own thoughts, which at that moment at least were not of a particularly pleasant character, Suresh stood leaning against the mast, while tears trickled down his cheeks, despite all his attempts to look gay and unconcerned. Suddenly he gave a start ; some one had tapped him on the shoulder. A lady stood beside him—a middle-aged lady—stylishly dressed and well rouged, to conceal the havoc caused evidently by age and disappointment,—a spinster coming home after a number of years, during which she had been to every canton-

ment and centre of trade in India to seek out a mate, in vain,—a woman of limited means and large pretensions. She had uniformly been kind to Suresh on the voyage ; and now that she was leaving the vessel for the cottage in Kent, bequeathed to her by her farmer parents, she could not go away without bidding him good-bye. Having none in the world to love—though she had in love two scores of times and more—and to be loved by, she had allowed herself unconsciously drawn to the waif who had first worked his passage to London to earn a name and fame, if possible.

When at last the vessel was emptied of its temporary population and quiet was again restored, the good Captain called Suresh to his cabin and enquired what he meant doing. Would he enter into fresh articles or stay behind in London either to prosecute his studies at some University, or learn some profession.

“I have not decided, yet,” replied Suresh. “We have not been in London, if I can use that expression at all, considering that I have not yet touched land two hours or so ; and so I have had hardly any time to judge what should be the best course for me to adopt.”

“Very well. All that I need impress on you that, in me you will ever find a firm friend. You are welcome to make the vessel your home so long it is here ; and that is for about three weeks. In the mean

time you can explore all the regions, dark and white, of London to your heart's content."

"Thank you, sir. You have done for me what my own father did not; and I take God to be my witness that while life remains in me I will remain ever grateful."

The Captain laughed a hearty English laugh, and patted his young *protege* on the back. "It is not your gratitude that I want so much," said he, "as your welfare; and I will be glad to hear that you are doing well in life. Consider this your home for the present, and if you take my advice, you will not draw your wages so long the ship is in port, for you don't require any money just now. But when we are once more afloat, you will need all your resources and available cash to keep yourself above water in this strange city where not even a green leaf or a blade of grass is to be had without paying for it."

Thoroughly sincere as this advice was, Suresh felt all the more grateful,—so grateful, in fact as scarcely to keep back the tears that welled up to his eyes. One after another, in quick succession, as the tears rolled down his brown cheeks and fell on the planked floor of the State cabin, the Captain too could hardly suppress his own feelings. His eyes too moistened, for old as he was he was, not without a heart.

It was a sight for the gods to see that weather-beaten old tar and that youthful Indian in his sailor suit crying simultaneously—and crying for mere senti-

ment, for, indeed, there was no other cause for this outburst on their part. They looked into each other's countenances and a feeling of shame came over them both.

The Captain then dismissed Suresh and set out for the office of the Agents to report himself, as was the custom of the service. Suresh on the other hand was taken in tow by the boatswain, who had taken a peculiar fancy to him, even from the start. They two left the vessel and set their feet on the soil of old London which had passed through so many vicissitudes to reign at last among the great cities of the world.

Suresh had never expected to see so much splendour, so much bustle, so much traffic, so very crowded thoroughfares, so high buildings as what now burst upon his astonished gaze. He found himself in the midst of a scew the like of which he had never dreamt, much less see. All around him were people, some on horse back, some in carriages, and the majority on foot, all looking equally busy—all seeming to have but one object in view—to hurry on. Jostled by English crowds, in the streets of the English metropolis, with white English faces regarding him with a curious eye everywhere, with English beggars standing hat in hand before him, bawling out his claims to charity, with English drivers asking him for a fare, was a very novel experience for the Indian lad who is accustomed to regard every European in his own country to be a demigod.

For sometime Suresh was so lost in wonder that he could hardly move a step. He leaned on a lamp post, and stood for sometime deep in *revere* while his companion was growing rather a little too impatient, for he had returned to London after several months and wanted to make the most of his time on land. One moment was to him an hour lost.

The two roamed that day through one of the most congested and low quarters of London, for naturally enough the home instincts of the boatswain first led him to the quarter to which he rightly belonged. Even this part of London excited the wonder of Suresh, hailing as he was from backward India.

This sort of sightseeing and promenading in the streets of London continued for several days; during which Suresh only returned to the vessel to sleep at night, his days being invariably spent on land. All the hundreds of sights of London were thus seen by Suresh, till he became familiar with them; but still it was impossible for a stranger, and especially for an Indian to keep himself well posted in the topography and street directory of London in so short a time.

At last the time came for the departure of the vessel on the outward voyage; and Suresh was of necessity obliged to seek lodgings. In this his whilom guide helped him with his superior knowledge, and obtained for him an apartment—it was more a hole than a room—though the pompous landlady would never, even by mistake, call it by any other than

the dignified title of apartment in one of the dingiest alleys in the east end. It was a large stone built house,—a relic of the Stuart period,—with hundreds of improvised apartments like the one rented by Suresh, and a large mass of humanity—all sunk in the lowest depths of debauchery and vice.

Suresh could have nothing in common with the population of this huge dingy house, and in fact he felt rather afraid of his co-lodgers, both male and female, for while the former were either all ruffians, whose very sight was enough to strike terror into a peaceful citizen's mind or little urchins who had become hideous and cadaverous by early debauchery and excessive drinking, the latter were painted pieces of frailty who seemed to fasten themselves like leeches on the male population of the house—in the worst possible grade of vice and immorality.

These could never be meet companions for a youth of respectable parentage, much less for an Indian who had scarcely any experience of London and London ways. The first night that Suresh passed in his new quarters was enough to tell him what sort of life he would have to lead in his present environments. Though he was by no means a young man of culture or education, he was yet strong in morals and as far removed from the precincts of depravity as the strict discipline of the mission boarding house at Bhowanipur could make him. He had no doubt already learnt to drink, but he was by no means a habitual drunkard.

The orgies of the night,—the coarse jokes, the rival songs, the obscene language, the hideous revelry—were all too much for the Indian youth, and he resolved upon leaving his lodgings the first thing in the morning.

As he lay on his pallet of straw, which was doing duty in his case for couch, quilt and cushion, thinking of all this, the darkness of the room seemed to be suddenly intensified. He was terrified, a sensation of awe crept over his frame, and large beads of perspiration stood on his forehead. He was fully dressed, simply, for he had no change of linen. It appeared to him that the room contained another occupant besides himself. Who could the intruder be—and what could be his intentions? Naturally fearless and strong of frame he was surely not to succumb to the first advance of fear. He regained his presence of mind, opened his clasp-knife, and awaited further developments. This was really his first night in London; for ever since his arrival he has, till now, always slept in his bunk on board the vessel. His eyes too became accustomed to the darkness, and it then appeared to him that a tall shadowy form, a little denser than air, was pacing all round his bed.

Several minutes passed, and still nothing happened further to disturb him. By degrees he became thoroughly himself again and yawned. The sound of that yawn dissolved the apparition, as it were, for he could see nothing of it again. Suresh then dis-

missed the idea that his natural visitor was a person of flesh and blood. Was it then an apparition? He was not a believer in ghostology, and he laughed out right at the thought that he had just been visited by one of the astral beings who are at times said to shape human destinies.

The night passed without any more adventures. In the morning Suresh left his lodgings in search of employment, but he was not aware of London ways, and no wonder if he returned late in the evening quite exhausted, but without being able to secure anything. He felt thirsty, and as he stepped into the bar for a drink, he was surrounded by some urchins and painted women, to whom he looked like a curiosity. His colour, his features,— all proclaimed him to be an oriental, and hence the curiosity of those who were gathered there, indulging in all sorts of obscenities; and this was heightened by his extreme youth and nautical suit.

Two women came closer and pressed him to join them in drinking a bottle of strong rum they were then discussing. They had no male companion, and were not, therefore, averse to having an interesting stranger like our hero for the time being. They pressed him hard, and he assented to their proposal. Fatigued and exhausted as he was, he had certainly no great inclination to mix with such low company, but the sparkling rum was too great an attraction for him.

The three then went to a table at a corner, where the women plied him with wine and questions about his nationality, native land, and so on. After that bottle another was ordered, and yet another, till all the three were deastly drunk. They then adjourned to the room occupied by one of the women, and there stupe fied with wine, they lay till noon the next day.

It was Suresh's first debauch, and when he awoke, he found his head aching and giving great pain. Naturally he felt ashamed of, and disgusted with, himself. A pang of remorse shot through his brain as he recalled all that had happened over night; how he had joined two vulgar women, and had not only drunk in their odious company, but had made an exhibition of himself by imitating their obscene example. His companions still lay on the bare floor, very scantily dressed,—a fact he had not noticed before, the paint on their faces half rubbed off, their mouths grinning as if they were dreaming pleasant dreams.

At first their very sight was repugnant and shocking to him. But by degrees, as he kept surveying them and recalling all the expressions of endearment and the caresses they had lavished upon him while in a state of drunkenness, he gradually lost that aversion, and was in fact so much moved, that he approached the two women and kissed them in turn. The kiss roused them, and then followed a repetition of the night's orgies till another day dawned.

Suresh was going down hill, young and inexperienced as he was; and unfortunately there were none to check or warn him against the consequences. In a few days his wages were all spent, and he was penniless. The two women who had not left him all these days for even an hour, now disappeared, for they found that he had nothing more to be fleeced of. It was then that he realised the terrible position he was in, homeless, friendless, moneyless in a strange land, where, as in India, beggars were not regarded as real objects of pity and consideration.

He left his lodgings almost in a state of desperation and sauntered along the streets in an aimless way. At last turning into Hyde Park, he threw himself on a bench in a clump of trees, to think of heaven and earth, of what there was in the future for him, of what he could do to eke out a miserable existence. It was a grave question anyhow, on the proper solution of which depended not only his future, but also his very life itself.

Soon sleep crept over Suresh's eyes, and reclining on the bench he fell into a pretty doze. Suddenly he was awakened by the sound of a hearty laugh close by, and opening his eyes he found a newsboy standing close to the bench with his mouth wide open owing to the excess of mirth that filled him at the sight of the sleeping "Darky." Suresh, sat up, while anger rose apace in his breast, at the thought of having been made the laughing stock of a mere

urchin. Whether the boy read his thoughts aright, he ceased laughing, and hailed him with the simple question—"Whence d'ye hail, comrade?"

The simplicity of the question and the natural tone it was asked in, disarmed Suresh of any rising feeling of anger in his breast.

"I come," he replied, "from far India, friend."

"The land of the tiger and the cobra?"

"Yes, and the land of the ancient Aryan civilisation."

"Knows nuthin aboot that. What is it like, eh?"

Suresh laughed in his turn at the exhibition of ignorance made by the newsboy, whom, as a member of the ruling race, he was willing to invest him with all the knowledge which was for man to attain to.

"I was speaking of the civilisation that existed in India, the land of my birth, long before the people of these islands learnt to clothe themselves or eat out of dishes."

"Care nuthin for it, I am shoor, "What's it that brings you here?"

"I worked my passage on a vessel bound from Calcutta to London; and here I am without so much as a penny in my pocket, or a friend to help me with a loan. I know not what to eat to-day and where to get it from."

The boy, with true British instinct, looked at Suresh in silence for about a minute, and then asked—"What is your plan of action, then?" There was so

much anxious enquiry in the tone that Suresh could not help confiding in the boy whom he had not known for even half an hour.

"You see" observed the newsboy, "idleness will ne'er do; in this country every man works for his living, and no one likes to remain a dependant on the charity or labour of another. Why don't you work, comrade?"

"Who told you that I am not willing to work? But where the deuce do I get work."

"You make me laugh. What, is there any dearth of work in the first city in the world? Why, man, you can get work in plenty here, whenever you like, provided you have the necessary pluck and perseverance"

"I've tried, friend, for I too had that idea when I first left my country. But here I find a contrary state of things. There is, in fact, no chance of a foreigner doing aught in this country so far as I can see."

"Why, I do not live in no palice, but shoonly I don't starve. And if I don't starve I don't see why you too should starve?"

"But where's the manager who is to trust me with his paper? If not, where am I to get money to purchase papers with?"

"If you want to be a newsboy, why I can help you to be sure."

"I would ever remain grateful to you should you think of helping me to secure some job, however diffi-

cult, so that I can earn a living, no matter how humble."

"Keep your thanks for better folks, comrade. It is not such as we as deserves thanks. Let us go to our manager, and I've no doubt that we'll soon arrange everything to our satisfaction."

Thanking him again, Suresh accompanied his newly found friend to the office of his paper, where the boy's representations induced the manager to accept Suresh's offer of service as a newsboy. Then came the question of lodgings. Suresh was most loath to return to the house he had left in the morning with the determination of never crossing the threshold again. He knew no other house which would suit him. Again, did the newsboy come to his help. He said that, if Suresh had no objection they might share the same room—a plan which recommended itself most readily to the acceptance of the latter.

Thus Suresh became a newsboy for want of a better occupation, and managed to eke out a miserable existence. For months he served as a newsboy—and a successful one too. But his restless habits stood in the way of his permanent employment, for in his heart of hearts he deemed it derogatory to his education and birth to stoop to so low an occupation. But though he had now been several months in London, and had become in a manner familiar with it, he gave up his occupation and sought an appointment in some other line. But as before, he was not at once

successful, and had for a time to have recourse to many make-shifts for bare sustenance. During this time he was a constant visitor at the house of the Ashtons—the parents of the Rev. Mr. Ashton, of the London Mission in Calcutta ; and they took great interest in him. But all the same, they did not succeed in putting him in somewhere, to earn an honest living.

It was a critical time with Suresh. He was almost starving ; his landlady threatened him with ejection ; his socks and boots needed mending, his linen stood in need of a visit to the washing-tub ; his whole appearance was untidy and unkempt. He had written home, but his parents refused him any help. So he was entirely dependent on his own exertions. Now, man has always been the creature of circumstances. Considering, therefore, the awful situation he was in, it was not quite unnatural to expect that he would go down and sink to a life of vice and depravity. Necessity, which acknowledges not the supremacy of law, might lead him to evil ways and render him a fit occupant of the backslums of the modern Babylon. It was, therefore, a most critical time with him.

But Providence saved him. One night as he lay thinking on his mattress,—the room was dark as before,—he thought that he saw the same apparition as he had done on his first night in London. As before, the shadowy form walked round his bed for sometime. What followed was, however, unexpected.

The ghost, if we might so call him, at last took his stand at the foot of the bed and lifted his hand as if as a warning. Soon after the apparition vanished, and Suresh composed himself to sleep.

The next morning Suresh made up his mind to become even a street porter than to starve ; and he actually became one without caring a straw for the lowly nature of the work. For some months he worked as such, and found that it was at least more paying than that of a newsboy. Bitter experience had told him that if he earned a shilling he should put by at least two pence out of it, to provide for the rainy season.

As before, he tired of a portership in a few weeks and had to remain unemployed for some time. This time however, he kept himself afloat without much difficulty with his savings. At this time he went into new quarters. It was a house occupied by a class of semi-respectable people,—not actual roughs nor thoroughly honest men. Indeed, they were a lot of suspicious characters, and the detective police had again and again to swoop down upon it like the hawk on its prey. As elsewhere there were a number of frivolous women whose morals would not bear much searching.

Suresh became a general favourite with this class, because he could entertain them with tall stories of the east, some real, some invented. What appealed more to their friendship was his medium complexion

and the power of his nerves and muscles. He had kept up his habit of manly exercises ; though a slight-built man of medium height, it was soon found out that he had muscles of steel and no little strength. Indeed, he earned a reputation as being a very tough customer, not easily to be tackled by any one Englishman.

Among his female acquaintances was one who seemed to be particularly fond of him. She was senior to him by several years and was a married woman, whose husband was a journey-man carpenter. This woman, who always evinced the liveliest interest in his welfare, at last ended by declaring her unholy and unsanctified passion for him. So much so, that he ran no inconsiderable risk of figuring as a co-respondent in a divorce suit. It must however, be said in justice to him that though pursued in this fashion by a woman he maintained the purity of his character. Not that Suresh was an anchorite, devoid of all human frailties,—not that he did not at times feel drawn towards the creature whose warm blood waxed warmer at his sight, but he exerted his best to avoid falling into the trap. As he was without employment, he remained the greater portion of the day at home, and hence the opportunities were great and many.

One night while the husband was away at his Club, Suresh was reading a book in his unfurnished sixth-floor attic, when the key turned in the lock

and the door was noiselessly opened by some one on the outside. Suresh was too engrossed in his studies to notice the opening of the door and the entrance of a half-dressed woman. Suddenly the smoky candle that lighted but dimly the room was extinguished as if by a gust of wind, leaving him in complete darkness, to be hugged by somebody. An exclamation of terror and surprise rose to his lips but a hand was placed over his mouth, and the cry was stifled.

“Who art thou?” Asked our hero in a choked voice.

“One who seeks thy favour, cruel oriental” came the reply in a whisper, as a pair of warm moistened lips glued themselves to his. Suresh understood the situation at once, and trembled all over at the prospect of terrible retribution that might be awaiting this unforeseen escapade. He had never given any encouragement to the carpenter’s wife, and so he was not at all prepared for the experience he was passing through.

“You here, Mrs. L——? What mean you by such an insane course?”

“I am mad, that I know, but who’s made me mad? Why should you blame me after having stolen my heart and made a wreck of it? If any body is to blame, it is you—and you alone?”

“How so, Mrs. L——? I’ve never given you any encouragement—I’ve never shewn by word or gesture

that you are anything to me, and yet you charge me with so heinous an offence as robbery. Go to your room. It is dangerous—dangerous to us both. Your husband may awake at any moment, and then——”

“No fear of that, dear. Toby is not at 'ome. He will not return before morning, and 'tis only midnight now. You speak of danger; but what's danger compared with life? I have told you again and again that life is not worth living outside the sunshine of your love. Say that I'm not indifferent to you, say that you will love me, and I am thy slave.”

“Do not, I pray, speak in such language. It is a sin for you to speak and for me to listen. You are a married woman, and all thy love should be centred in your husband, who has given you his name and who supplies you with all that you need. Take my advice, pluck out my image from your heart and be a true woman.”

“You speak of impossibilities. I am willing to leave home and husband, children and reputation and follow you to the end of the world but to leave you, oh my god——” She burst into tears; and Suresh hardly knew what to do. The woman was kneeling beside him, with both his hands in hers.

“I tell you, Mrs. L——. there is no hope of your ever getting my love, do what you might. It is only to avoid a scandal which would go very hard with you that I ask you so patiently to leave me; but if you are obdurate, why I must rouse the whole establish-

ment, for I cannot consent to victimise myself for thy sake."

These were cruel words, and Suresh knew it. So while he was speaking these harsh words, there was the faintest pressure on his part against the body of the kneeling woman. This was enough. She fell on his breast and tried to kiss him, he struggling to disengage himself, when our old acquaintance, the newsboy called out from the next room—"Not to bed yet, chum?"

"About to," replied Suresh, as he pushed his nocturnal visitor off.

"That enquiry of the newsboy proved most welcome and opportune, for Mrs. L—— found at last that it was better for her to leave, at least on that occasion. As she stood up she whispered—"Don't be cruel again, Hem ; Let us fly from here and I'll make you happy."

"We will consider," replied Suresh, "about that at some other time. In the meantime, don't tarry here long. He may come in, you know, to have a few minutes chat, as bachelors will when sleep does not visit their eyes."

"One kiss and I go," said she, and the next moment she issued out of the room as noiselessly as she had come in.

It was a strange experience for Suresh—one that left no pleasant impression on his mind. True, he pitied the woman, who, devoured by her ungovern-

able passions could so far forget herself as to take leave of her womanly pride and solicit the love of a man who himself was cold and indifferent. But he was not ready to accept the position of her lover, and incur great personal risk. What was he to do? Once he thought of taking counsel with his friend and neighbour, the young precocious newsboy, who was the type of a London urchin, wise beyond his years, with a high opinion of his own intelligence and shrewdness. But then he realised how very mean and dishonourable it would be, to play with the honor of a confiding woman whose one fault was that she loved him but too well. He therefore summarily dismissed the idea and put on his thinking cap to solve the problem as how to avoid the pursuit of Mrs. L—, who besides being a married woman was much older than he was.

At last he resolved on leaving not only his present quarters but London itself for a time to allow his innamorata to recover her self-possession. He had one pound and odd shillings with him with which he determined to make a tour of the provinces and see if peddling would suit him.

Suresh was, if anything, a man of decision; and the next morning found him rummaging salerooms and the stocks of second-hand dealers to make a few purchases.

Chapter XXIII.**A TURN IN FORTUNE.**

SURESH became a pedlar of rare curios, and antiquated articles likely to catch the fancy of county collectors, who might not be very well posted in matters of antiquity. He was an Indian, and hence he could invent plausible stories for common articles to pass them off as Indian relics of respectable antiquity. He made it a point to avoid railways, because thereby he ran the chance of meeting with the infatuated Mrs. L—who might take it into her head to pursue her, especially as her husband was not expected back in a day or two and she was at least, for a time, the mistress of herself.

Suresh walked on foot,—not only to avoid Mrs. L—but also to see more of English country-life, with which up till now he was not at all acquainted. From village to village he went, entering the country seats of local magnates and the cottages of farmers with equal ease and freedom. This venture on his part did not altogether prove a failure, for after a week's travel he found his capital, after paying his way, increased to £2. This was something. He returned to London by night, made his purchases and again went out.

Thus during the next five months he made a dozen

trips with the nett result of the swelling of his insignificant capital to over £ 10, which to him appeared to be quite a fortune. Whenever he visited London he would make it a point to see the Ashtons who were always very kind to him. It should here be stated that during all these visits he did not happily cross the path of Mrs. L——.

The profession of a pedlar, though it left Suresh sufficient time to read and store up much useful knowledge in various branches of study, was one of terrible hardships. But all the same, he continued sticking to it. He made satisfactory progress in education, though now he had no one to supervise it and make his way smooth by explanations and suggestions. His favourite subjects were chemistry, mathematics, including astronomy, astrology, medicine, and so forth—all serious subjects requiring no small amount of assiduous application, thorough attention and good intelligence.

The classics too were no sealed book to him. For he even mastered ancient Greek and Egyptian, just to be able to read for himself what they contained of alchemy and kindred sciences. Always of a thoughtful nature, he very well assimilated all the lessons that he derived by study.

Suresh continued a pedlar, going about from one village to another, everywhere receiving a warm welcome, for besides being an Indian, it appeared to all that his education and information were far

superior to the lowly profession he followed. He made many friends everywhere, but none of them could render him any help in obtaining for him either a respectable situation or admission to some learned profession. If, Suresh was now making every effort to improve his mind, he did not neglect his body, for his opinion was that intellectual progress must go hand in hand with the physical, and make up a harmonious whole.

Suresh had always been an athlete, and so even after coming to England he did not give up physical exercise. True, he had not here the same ground that he had in his native country, but he got himself elected a member of an athletic club and soon made himself so proficient in the European method, as to create a name for himself in the athletic world. though short-statured and rather spare of figure his muscles were like knots of steel wire, while his power of endurance was almost extraordinary.

In one of his visits to the county of Kent, he came one evening across a travelling circus troupe doing the provinces. It was by no means a first class troupe. In the evening when the members of the party assembled in the public room of the village inn, Suresh had an opportunity of entering into conversation with them, and very interesting appeared their talk ; so much so that if Suresh's own life had not been altogether free from adventures, theirs were full of romantic incidents, hairbreadth escapes, un-

comfortable situations, etc. The glowing description some of them gave of life in the ring ; of its joys and triumphs, created so strange an impression on the easily impressionable mind of our hero, that all that night he lay awake in his bed, seriously thinking of giving up his present occupation for a little circusing.

The next morning the first thing that Suresh did after breakfast was to seek the manager of the circus troupe who were to leave that day for Sussex, and offer his services as a gymnast and weight-lifter. His proposal was received by the Manager with a sly smile on his lips, for the latter could by no means divine that the slim figure before him could have sufficient strength to perform feats of strength though it might, to a certain extent, give evidence of skill.

"Try me," asked Suresh, "and see if I'll do."

Willing to enjoy a little fun, the Manager summoned to his presence the chief acrobat of the troupe, a man of herculean size and proportionate strength. "Would you like trying conclusions with Sam here ?" asked the Manager.

"In wrestling, yes," rejoined Suresh, with the utmost *Sangfroid*.

The room was cleared and the two combatants took off their coats and shirts. Hercules as the acrobat was in strength he soon found that he was no match for the cool nimbleness of the Indian. In a few rounds Suresh's superior skill was manifest

Both to the Manager and the members of the troupe who happened to be present. Then our hero offered to perform on the horizontal and top bars. But his word was now taken as sufficient and the Manager came to think that it would be a good catch to have him, if for nothing else, at least for the fact of his being an Indian. A bargain was struck then and there, and Suresh became a member of the itinerent Circus troupe. This was then the opening of the profession in which he was destined to achieve such world-wide celebrity. His salary, as a beginning, was fixed at 15 shillings per week, all expenses found. This was of course, a nominal salary considering the open liberality generally exercised by Theatrical and Circus Managers towards artistes, male and female. But Suresh was a novice and he was perfectly satisfied with the arrangement. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the conditions offered were beyond his expectations.

Suresh made his first bow to an English audience at a small town in the county of Sussex. It was a most successful night ! for half the town was there, attracted by the promise of "the marvellous feats of the Indian boy acrobat, whose wrestling contest with big, burly Britishers was sure to charm one and all." Every actor or artist or orator knows it full well the nervousness that attends the first *debut* on the stage or the platform. When, therefore, Suresh found himself in his novel circus dress, in the pre-

sence of an expectant English crowd, he felt a certain twitch of the muscles, a certain nervousness creeping over him, a certain something which can be imagined but not described. But it was a successful first night so far as the neophyte was concerned.

After that, every performance, at every place, was an unqualified success, such as would be desired by the most eminent performers. Suresh continued making marked progress with every succeeding day. This went on for a considerable time. Suresh was no longer a boy ; he had entered into man's estate and was making satisfactory progress in his studies which embraced every branch of science and almost all the known literatures of the world. His time was taken up either by professional duties and exercises or by study. Thus he had no time to think either of love or pleasure. True, among the members of the troupe there were some who preferred pleasure to pains attendant on study ; but with them Suresh would by no means associate. There were also some female artistes—young and handsome, girls with some degree of education and culture, whose one object in life seemed enjoyment and pleasure. These, somehow, proved a thorn in his sides. They would not allow him to devote as much of his time to the improvement of his self and development of his faculties as he would wish. Whenever they found him alone poring over his books or working out sums in his slate, or handling his crucibles and test glasses

they would let in a flood of hilarity and with which would drown all his serious thoughts.

Thus passed his days. As yet he had never failed to maintain a regular correspondence with his uncle in Calcutta, and every letter would be full of affectionate references to his mother, who, naturally enough, held the most sacred and secret recess of his heart. At this period of his self-imposed exile he would yearn at times for home—sweet, dear home, and pine for the companions and associations of youth, which to every man remain dear to his dying day. His letters, some of which are published in form of an appendix, will shew how much he wished to revisit the land of his birth and how his thoughts still travelled homeward.

Suresh was in a manner happy—happier by far than he had been during the last few years. The only cause of complaint he had, was in the attentions paid to him by one of the female members of the troupe, a handsome young girl of eighteen who was herself an athlete of no mean reputation. She was a tight-rope-dancer but her education was much above her station in life. Faultless was her symmetry, and rather dark was her hair which enhanced her beauty in Suresh's eyes. She was German by birth though she spoke English without the least foreign accent never replacing "d" by "t" in her conversation. Many were her suitors, but none so happy as to receive the least encouragement from her. Among these was

was a young country squire, with a rentroll of several thousand pounds, who was so infatuated as to follow the troupe from town to town simply in the hope of being near her.

This girl, she was a curious character, in as much as she was always very reticent of her past, and rather shy before the public, learnt unaccountably to love Suresh, though she would not easily let the world know aught of her secret feelings. In public, she was cold and reserved to Suresh as also to the other members of the troupe, so much so, that none dared ever to take any liberties with her. On the other hand, often would it so happen that when the members got rowdy or quarrelled among themselves, it was her stern voice and air of authority which would prove the veritable oil on troubled waters. Everyone who came in contact with her was struck with her gravity.

Such was the girl who honoured Suresh with a certain amount of attention,—a fact which he could never dream of. It was, however, very rarely, —when the two happened to be alone, that she would throw off the mask of cold reserve and unbend herself. Of course, it would be unjust to say that she hurled herself at his head or that she reversed the natural order of things by wooing instead of being wooed. But the way she pried into his secrets, into his past, encouraged him in his studies, and held out hope of a bright future before him—the simple, un-

ostentatious interest she evinced in him—the wise counsels she gave—all bespoke of true womanly affection without the glow of transitory passion which ordinarily went by the name of love. Suresh was not blind to this state of things and try as he might he could not pluck her image from his heart. On the other hand, it gradually filled it in a manner which filled him with fear.

Suresh was not willing to be drawn into the fatal whirlpool of love; He was quite young; he was without resources; he had no home to take his bride to. The more he thought of the circumstances he found himself surrounded by, the greater became his desire to get away and escape the effects of a mutual attraction. He tried his best to conceal his own feelings but that was no easy matter. Now and again, a word, a book, a gesture would open the lock of his heart and expose the contents thereof to the thankful and expectant gaze of the girl.

Thus were they both happy, though not a word of love passed between them. No one of their acquaintances suspected the truth and Suresh had not consequently to suffer the pangs of jealousy. One day at last Suresh brought home some articles packed in a sheet of German newspaper. When he came in, no one else was in the room save his in-amorta, who with womanly curiosity untied the package to have a look at the things. After which the torn newspaper claimed her attention. It was a

German paper, and hence naturally she looked over the columns till her eyes were riveted on a particular passage in the "wanted" column. It was a message to a straying child to return home to soothe the pillow of her dying surviving parent. Tears trickled down her eyes, while the paper fell from her hands. Suresh was looking in another direction then. He turned round and found her weeping. Coming close to her, he took her hands in his—this was the first time that such a thing had happened—and asked her in almost a whisper, why she wept. This enquiry on his part affected her all the more, for throwing her arms round his neck she burst into a more copious flood of tears and shewed him the bit of paper. Under her tuition Suresh had learnt a little of German and French; and so he learnt the contents at once.

"But why," he asked, "do you cry?"

"Can't you guess?"

"Ah," a light broke in upon him. The girl came of a respectable family who had left home at the age of fourteen surreptitiously to learn rope-dancing. She was the only child of her parents, one of whom had died before her leaving home, and the other was now on his deathbed, anxious to have her by his side.

We need hardly say that the girl interviewed the manager and under the escort of our hero left the provincial town for London where she embarked on

a Dutch ship. On the deck of the ship, at the moment of parting, she could keep it down no longer but confessed to her tender feelings for him. There was a mutual avowal though Suresh had nobleness enough to request her to try and forget him, for the social gulf that existed between them was too wide to be bridged over.

Chapter XXIV.

THE ROAD TO FORTUNE.

IT was not, however, as a gymnast or acrobat that Suresh succeeded in making a name for himself. He first came prominently before the public as a tamer of wild animals, his reputation in this profession being undimmed even by his later achievements in the field of battle, at the mouth of the cannon or in the hands of the wild tribes of America.

While yet a member of the circus troupe, chance threw him in the way of Professor Jamrach, a well-known tamer who had paid several visits to the sunny East and had passed some time in India, attracted by the number, beauty and ferocity of the denizens of its trackless jungles. The professor, a good man had no Anglo-Indian prejudices and felt no scruples to take Suresh in as an apprentice to learn the dangerous though more honorable profession of training wild animals. Suresh became a member of his establishment and soon proved to his master that he would do no discredit to him.

Tiger and lion-taming came naturally to him, although the taming of other equally ferocious animals never proved any serious matter to him. After staying for two years with Professor Jamrach, Suresh began to look out for himself. At first he joined certain circus companies and made a tour of the continent, winning laurels wherever he went and performed. His tigers and lions seemed to be quite docile and did his bidding like pet cats. The ease, the grace and the total want of fear that he exhibited quite astonished the people in every land he visited. He performed before Princes those dangerous feats which elicited applause even from Royal lips. Indeed, so great became his renown that he was allowed to give an exhibition of his wonderful mastery over the most ferocious and intractable brutes in the World's Fair held at the Royal Agricultural Hall at London, in 1882—a no mean honour to any tamer or acrobat, not to speak of an Indian, who is naturally looked down upon by his European brother. Suresh obtained many medals and certificates, a list of which would hardly prove of any real interest to our readers.

It was in one of these tours that Suresh met Mr. Gazenbach, of Hamburg, a very well-known tamer of wild animals and contractor for many Zoological Gardens in Europe. He would obtain animals from the East or the West, and after training them sold them to various circus companies. Mr.

Gazénbach took a great fancy to our hero and offered him an appointment on his own large establishment at Hamburg on a higher salary than what he was in receipt of. He accepted the proposal and became the Master-trainer. He managed these creatures so cleverly that they became strongly attached to him and would not even eat save at his bidding. There was one tigress which Suresh had named Fannie, and which he had, in a manner, brought up from its infancy. This animal became as docile as a cat and would pur and lick his hand whenever he came near its cage. Another of Suresh's favourite in Gazénbach's collection was a young elephant which went by the name of Bosco. It was the best player of the six elephants all of which had been trained by Suresh for the proprietor. Mr. Joge Carlo, the owner of a very big menagerie, purchased Bosco from Mr. Gazénbach for 5,000 francs. When the animal was removed by its new master and was thus separated from Suresh, it felt the separation so keenly that for several days together it refused to take any food whatever. This obliged Mr. Joge Carlo to make a handsome offer to Suresh, and to induce him to leave Mr. Gazénbach and join him.

In 1885, we find Suresh making a tour of America with Wombwell's Great London Menagerie in Brazil, and Mexico, where subsequently he stayed on and made himself still more famous by entering the Brazilian army. Everywhere the chief attraction of

the show, as is evident from placards, handbills and newspaper notices, was Suresh's play with lions. But it was not only as a tamer of wild animals that Suresh became known in the cities he visited with the menagerie, but also as a public-speaker. We have it on record in the *La Cronica*, the most influential and widely circulated newspaper in Buenos Ayres, for instance, that he addressed large public meetings of intelligent people on subjects at once abstruse and metaphysical. His lectures, again, were not delivered in English but in the vernacular of the country visited by him, for he spoke fluently, not only in English but also in French, German and Portuguese. We have already said that during his leisure hours, he not only mastered these different languages but carefully studied the philosophies of the West and the East. Nor did his studies terminate here. It would be natural to expect him reading novels, romances and books of adventure, but correctly speaking it was these which he eschewed altogether. Frivolity was quite foreign to his nature. He loved to remain alone with his thoughts and his books and instruments. He did not freely mix in society nor speak much or without purpose. In the solitude of his own room he liked to commune with the master-minds of the world, past and present, to learn from them what they had to teach, to profit by and emulate their example. They were his friends, his intimates. In them he found that

companionship and solace for which he had been hankering for long years.

Chapter XXV.

A LOVE EPISODE.

THERE is no man born of woman who has not one love episode to credit to his account, except, perhaps, those Indian Sadhus who give up society at a tender age and pass their days in devotion and pursuit of knowledge—not material but spiritual knowledge. These men, by their prayers and exercises (*jog*), subdue their senses, control their carnal appetite, and lead a life of purity and devotion which brings them in the end to the footstool of the Most High, the Lord of Lords. In no other country in the world, are to be found celibates who, like the Indian *Sadhus*, disdain all material and physical enjoyments, curb their desires, and casting off the trammels of society, live far away in the heart of jungles or on the top of hills, or again in the bowels of the earth, full of the one idea of annihilating themselves as it were, and merging into the One Universal and Eternal Soul, which pervades this and the other innumerable Universes that fill Infinite Space. They may, therefore, be fairly left out of the question in a discussion of this subject.

Thus in the life of every man there occurs something which may be called a love episode, for

love is a passion implanted in the human breast by the loving hand of God, though it does not, as in the case of fruit or flower trees, yield the same fruit in every case. We have seen grafts of the same mango-tree produce sour fruit on one soil and sweet in another. In the same manner love produces different results in different cases—good in some and bad in others,—results over which man can never exercise any control. To be or not to be in love rests with no man—it is clearly the will of God. To force the instinct of love is as impossible a feat as to cross the crest of the lofty Himalayas, the abode of eternal snow, in a carriage and pair, or to reach the man in the moon.

We have before said that, though he did his best to hide it from himself, there was something like love in Suresh's heart for the young German lady who, he knew, loved him in preference to many richer and handsomer suitors, one of whom we have seen following her like a shadow. After their separation, Suresh did his level best to forget the beautiful face which haunted him day and night, now that she was away; but he did not succeed. He even went so far as to let her letters remain unanswered. She wrote to him several letters, and gave up the practice only when she found that not one of them elicited a reply, perhaps in despair, perhaps, because, she had found at last some one to replace his image in the sanctuary of her pure womanly heart.

But as fate would have it, in one of his many Continental tours, Suresh one day met her in a German city after the lapse of several years. The meeting was quite accidental, and neither of them had any idea of such an event, for Suresh was not then with the Company in which they had both served. It was in a general store that they came suddenly face to face with each other, and for a few minutes they remained standing without any sign of recognition or a single word of greeting. They kept looking into each other's eyes as if to read hearts before re-opening the acquaintance of former years. There had, no doubt, been changes in the appearances of both of their persons—changes that were inevitable with the advance of years. Suresh was no longer the beardless youth, he had grown a fine pair of moustaches, though his chin was clean shaven. On her side the tight rope-dancer that had been, was now a fine young lady with her charms matured, the grace and Sylph-like symmetry of early youth, giving place to the beauty and majesty of glorious womanhood.

Long and scrutinisingly did they look into each other's countenance passing thence in survey, the whole body from the top of the head to the sole of the foot. The survey over, simultaneously did they extend their hands for a hearty and cordial shake, mixed with the tremor and vibration of love's electricity. Without exchanging a word however, hand

in hand, did they pass out of the shop into the street, and it was not till then that did they think of conversing with each other.

Well, that was the first meeting, but it was not the last; the lady was residing in the town, and so frequently did they meet and stronger grew their attachment. The course of true love never runs smooth, says the poet. When it was found that the lady, who was then a tempting catch for many an adventurer, and pauper lord, had bestowed her heart and affections on the Indian lion-tamer, her friends and relatives began to bring pressure upon her to cease meeting him in public and break off the engagement. But that was easier to say than to obey. Leaving womanly modesty aside, for the emergency was great, she reasoned with them to allow her to follow the dictates of her heart.

The friends and the relatives of the lady were, however, inexorable, and nothing she could say or urge, moved their stony heart.

The result was that Suresh and his lady-love began to meet clandestinely, while the opposition they had met with, served to increase their passions. As the waters of a river angrily dash against the dam thrown across it, so did they grow more rebellious towards the commands of the lady's relatives.

Unfortunately, their attachment did not long continue innocent, and when this became known, Suresh's life was threatened, and so imminent was his danger that he had perforce to leave Germany

and place France and the wide Atlantic between himself and his foes. It was now that Suresh came out to America with Wombwell's Royal Menagerie. This was the first true love episode in the eventful career of our hero. The second that he had, ended more naturally in marriage, but of this hereafter.

Chapter XXVI.

LOVE IN A HOSPITAL.

AT Buenos-Ayres, that city of sunshine with its mixed population of dark, brown and white Suresh found himself in 1885 in the course of a tour through America with the Royal Menagerie. His skill as a lion-tamer, his command over different languages, both modern and ancient, his knowledge in different sciences and his wide information soon made him a noted figure and brought him both fame and friendship.

He liked the place very well, so much so, indeed, that he soon formed the resolution of making it his permanent home. Thus when the charge of the Zoo was offered him he did not decline it, for he was getting tired of a roving life with shows and circuses. His heart—well, it was a Hindu heart despite his conversion to Christianity—yearned for a home—a home which would be his home, and where he would be able to hide his joys and sorrows, where he would know what peace was. He became the

Director or Superintendent of the Zoo and stayed on for several years, till a happy circumstance induced him to join the medical profession.

We have before said that, if he had been brought up in the dangerous profession of a trainer of wild beasts, in his leisure hours he devoted himself to the study of the various sciences which had a charm for him all their own. He knew something of medicine, a good deal of mathematics and the allied sciences and was quite familiar with classics and literature. He was also a bit too fond of speculative philosophy and mystic lore, magic and alchemy being two of his most favourite studies. Far into the depth of night would he sit summer and winter in his snug little study, to pore over his books or carry on experiments with his glasses and crucible. Quite unconscious of the flight of time which waits for no man.

It was quite by accident that he met the daughter of a local surgeon and fell at once in love with her. With him it was, indeed, a case of love at first sight, though the same cannot be said of the lady. There was as usual the formal introduction—with him quite a matter of form. After the introduction they two met often at shops, in streets, in public conveyances, and in the drawing-rooms of mutual friends. His attentions became more and more marked every day, but the lady did not seem to give him much encouragement. Her father was a

surgeon. It was she who changed the whole tenour of his life and career, and filled the void that was in it.

Women as a rule are given more to romancing than men ; and hence it is, that ever since the days of Adam and Eve they are so partial to deeds of arms and acts of heroism. Instances are not rare in the history of every nation to shew that given free choice, a woman would wed poverty in preference to wealth, if there is aught of romance in it, and invariably there is romance in such matches. Just fancy, the German tight rope-dancer declined the suit of a young landlord to throw herself into the arms of an unknown Indian, whose profession was one of danger in the company of man-eating animals.

Though, at first, the Surgeon's daughter gave no encouragement to the ardent Indian lion-tamer, she could not long resist the appeal of that strong nature to mate itself with hers. As for Suresh, he had never any great amount of that precious commodity—fear, in his constitution ; and death which has its terrors for all, failed to excite any in him. Death he has faced ere this, in many forms, one more horrible than the other. He recked not whether it was pestilence which might carry him off, or death was dealt to him by the fangs of the serpents he played with, by the claws of the tiger or lion he tamed, or the tusks of the elephants he

had trained. Life had now but one attraction for him—love; and if he failed in that, death, he thought would be far more preferable. These, we should here tell the reader in confidence, are no empty remarks made without a purpose. The lady Suresh loved was, as we said before, rather romantic in nature, and what made her at all partial to him, was the reputation he enjoyed of being a dare-devil, reckless of life, for whom neither the ferocious tiger nor the cruel gliding snake, neither the huge tusker nor the fierce little lynx had any terrors, to whom the wild denizens of tropical jungles appeared to be as docile and obedient as domesticated animals to others; and before the magic of whose eyes their wildness and ferocity would always disappear as disappears mist before the rising sun.

As their acquaintance slowly and gradually—oh, how slowly for Suresh!—ripened into friendship, she began little by little to throw off the cold reserve that had marked her behaviour towards him. Womanly modesty, the acme of which is only to be found in India, was by no means so rare among the Spanish and the Portugese, as among the French or the Americans. Precocity in a woman is even now regarded as a social sin in Brazil, where girls are not permitted to mix as freely with men as in some other Western countries we know.

But in the case of Suresh and the Brazilian Surgeon's daughter, gradually the two hearts, so far

removed by virtue of birth and nationality, came closer to each other by the magic influence of that naughty little God Cupid. Often would she ask him to recount his adventures in different lands, and almost in whispers would he pour out his fund of stories into her eager and willing ears. How her bosom would heave under the tight-fitting frock of a nurse's uniform, how her cheeks would glow and how her eyes would open wide and get more lustrous as she listened to his tales of adventure and achievement,—yes, her hands would tighten over his, and the look she would bestow upon him was one of confidence and admiration.

Now, she confessed one day, more in play perhaps than in seriousness, that she would like to see her lover in the uniform of a soldier; and this half playful, half serious remark led Suresh to think of entering the army. He wanted to prove his love and so cheerfully did he undertake to pass through all the rigours and discipline of a soldier's life. He joined the army and now he found himself bound to serve out his three years' term even if he chose to relapse into his former mode of roving life. Once he had signed the bond of indenture he had no escape, for desertion in every country is punishable with death or imprisonment. Perhaps there was a lurking desire in his heart to test the constancy of her, for whom he was willing to enter fire as it were or swallow molten lead.

He began as a common soldier, and the lot of a common soldier is the same all the wide world over.

Suresh was now a soldier of the Emperor of Brazil, for Brazil had not then become a Republic that she is now. He was certainly a superior man to his fellow privates; no doubt he spoke seven languages and claimed an education much in advance of the ordinary run of mankind, although he did not boast of belonging to any University, Eastern or Western. All his knowledge, and it was of no ordinary kind, was self-acquired—acquired in the intervals of dangerous games and tiring exercises. But for all that his complexion and nationality stood for some time in the way of his promotion to the rank of an officer, for the crime of colour found its way, in his case at least, into Brazil. For sometime he had to undergo the drudgery of a common soldier in a cavalry regiment, grooming his own horse and furbishing up his own arms.

In 1887 we find him at St. Cruz, no longer a mere soldier, but already in command of a squad—a corporal in fact. At St. Cruz the Emperor had a grazing ranch for his horses and Corporal Suresh Biswas was placed in charge of the guard over the horses kept there for grazing. Here he remained for a long time, having little to do by way of duty and passing his days in study, experiment and in the thought of her whom he had learnt to love so well. She was not present there in person, but in

spirit she was ; and this kept him up.

Next we find Suresh, a non-commissioned officer as before, detailed for duty to a hospital at Rio-de-Janeiro. It was here that he learned a good deal of practical surgery, though of medicine he had acquired a sufficient knowledge by study. Indeed he became so skilful a surgeon that he used to make major operations with the utmost *sangfroid* and unconcern. What was more, the medical science which had always been a favourite with him, now became a greater favourite if possible. Indeed, he spoke in rapturous terms of it in his letters to his uncle in Calcutta and to his friends in various quarters of the globe. Medicine, in fact, brought him closer as it were to his lady-love who was herself the daughter of a well-known surgeon.

His three years' term expired in 1889, and Suresh might then have obtained his liberty, free to follow any profession he chose. But three years' soldiering instead of damping his ardour for the military profession only increased his enthusiasm, and he remained in the army. From the cavalry regiment he got an exchange to an infantry regiment and soon he learnt all about musketry and infantry drill.

If Suresh had left the army after his first three years' term, the world would have lost sight of the extraordinary courage of a native of India at the head of American troops and of his success against



Mrs. SURESH BISWAS.

Americans in the face of tremendous odds. Whether as a surgeon or even as a lion-tamer he would never have been able to achieve what he has achieved and reach rank and position which has covered him with world-wide fame and glory. But he was destined by High Heaven to distinguish himself by the memorable charge at Nitheroy, of which more anon, and prove to the world that despite the calumnies of Macaulay and other detractors, the Bengali is not without his courage ; and that though his English master will not trust him with arms, he can yet wield the sword to some effect in the defence of his Empress and his home.

Fate ordained that Suresh would attain a high military rank and renown in the Brazilian army and he continued to serve as a soldier. And though he was still a corporal his position in society was assured, for he had amassed by then considerable wealth and used to move in the highest circles. It was while he was yet attached to the hospital at Rio-de-Janeiro that there occurred a serious outbreak of yellow fever—that pestilence of America which accounts for so many deaths every year. To add to this, there was a revolution in the country just then, and the hospitals were full with the dying and the dead. Men died fast, while the groans of the wounded resounded through the old halls of the hospital making life there any thing but pleasant. They had a terrible time of it and Suresh graphically

described the horrors he passed through on that occasion.

Chapter XXVII.

THE REVOLUTION.

FROM the rank of Corporal Suresh was promoted to that of First Sergeant in an infantry regiment—an office he held till 1893. He himself says that though the duties he was called upon to perform were always of a nature not ordinarily entrusted to subordinate officers of his rank, his promotion was yet delayed on account of his colour. Many were the gallant deeds credited to his account, great was the distinction he won, eminent were the services he rendered, and yet for four years he remained nothing but a Sergeant; often was his name mentioned in despatches, for the country had been passing through a series of revolutions, giving rise to frequent skirmishes and engagements, in many of which he took part. It was only a small command—of a mere squad—that he had, but his personal bravery was uncommon, so much so, in fact that he excited not only the envy and admiration of his fellow-soldiers, but even struck terror into their hearts. They feared him—yes, friends and foes alike feared the short statured, thick set man from the banks of the Ganges in the ancient land of Hindusthan.

It was not easy for him to raise himself to the command of a brigade, which he did in 1893 after

the revolution had broken out. The revolution broke out on the 6th of September, 1893, when the navy revolted against the authority of the Central Republican Government ; and twenty war vessels blocked the beautiful bay of Rio-de-Janeiro. This is how Suresh himself describes his promotion, it is an extract from a letter which will be found in its place in the Appendix :

“ Uncle ! think not the military post I hold was so easy for me to win. I never thought of being an officer. Often and often they talked of my promotion, but always my name was cancelled from the list, for the simple reason of my being a foreigner. Lately the revolution broke out, and I and my other companions were under the orders of a General ; and this General, though he knew me not, saw how we behaved ourselves during the skirmishes, and found out my military valour in leading my platoon gallantly against the fire of the enemies. He did not care to know, nor did he pause to consider whether I was a foreigner or not. It was sufficient for him to see what I was worthy of, and reported my case to the Marshal Vice-President of the Brazilian Republic ; and I was promoted to the post of a Lieutenant, and as such, you know that I have assisted to the last decisive battle of Nitheroy.”

That the promotion did not come too soon, or come undeservedly will be made apparent when the

reader has read the following lines which we quote from the same letter:—

“ Herewith I send you a rough sketch of the battle of Nitheroy, where I was feared even by my own comrades though I never ill-treated them. You all express your wishes that I should relate to you all the details. Ah, uncle, it is horrible to relate the horrors of war, where life, which we so much prize, is sold as if it were the cheapest thing in the world ; and he who cares for it the least, saves it the most. What is courage after all, but the tranquil resolution to offer it (life) most willingly in exchange of the thing you wish for ?

“ It is all very well to use your prudence and calculations when the enemies are far away, but when they are near and in offensive position, there is only one way to proceed—it is to muster all your forces and advance ; and the more energetic your advance, the more it will intimidate your enemies.”

These are the instincts of a truly heroic soul, both tender hearted and brave. It is an admitted fact, that none but the truly heroic can excite the loyalty and enthusiasm of a human being to such a pitch, as to lead him to follow the other like a dog or slave. Now, we have it on record that during his residence at St. Cruz a Brazilian Indian became so very attached to him that not to leave his side, he enlisted in Suresh's regiment and served as a common soldier, so as to be able to be near him.

Before we close this chapter and come to a description of the battle of Nitheroy—that crowning chapter of his eventful life, we should state something of his domestic life during the years that he was struggling to earn his epaulettes. The reader is already aware that he had been in love with a beautiful damsel, almost ever since he set his foot in Rio-de-Janeiro, to prove whose fidelity he entered the military service as a common soldier and fought literally his way up. This lady was the daughter of a surgeon of reputation and extensive practice. They loved each other truly and well; and though years elapsed since their first meeting, the rather long courtship only served to deepen their love, and lend it a charm peculiarly its own. She had many suitors among the best and richest of her countrymen, but she preferred the dark Indian lion-tamer that had been, who had come among them as a stranger and whose people she knew nothing about. For Suresh, she had waited all those long years and perhaps, would not object if she had to wait very much longer. At last the marriage was celebrated with great *eclat* and really happy was the pair of lovers, who now had their reward for the patience, with which they had waited for this happy day. Their wedding was graced by the *elite* of the capital, though the groom was yet only a Sergeant and a foreigner, whose own people were then so far away. But Suresh, as we said, had made many friends in the

higher walks of life. Among these was one Mr. Limos, whose houses were many and domains extensive. So that, scarcely did Suresh feel the loneliness of his position, surrounded as he was by warm friends who loved him as a brother and who would not even hesitate, to place all their resources at his command should he need them.

Happy was the union in every respect, and Suresh at last found what he had so long been hankering for—a home. A son was soon born as a pledge of their mutual love and marital happiness—a tie between two hearts, hailing in this case from two countries on the opposite sides of the globe. The child was born in the latter end of 1892, so that he is now in his seventh year.

Chapter XXVIII.

THE BATTLE OF NITHEROY.

IN September 1893, there broke out a revolution in Brazil, the like of which either in depth or extent, had not been seen in that land of intrigues, conspiracies and revolution within recent years. The Navy revolted and twenty ships of war of various tonnage and displacement hoisted the rebel flag. They were all well equipped for the deadly game of war, their crews and marines were in a high state of efficiency. On the other hand, the legal forces of the Republic of Brazil were not in the same state of efficiency. The result was, there was panic or

consternation among the citizens of the capital Rio-de-Janeiro.

Anyhow the fortresses were put in order, all defensive works were repaired, Volunteers were called out, and every other necessary preparations were made to meet the enemy—the rebel seamen of the Republic. The beautiful bay of Rio-de-Janeiro, already crowded by the shipping of every nationality, was packed by the revolted men-of-war. The dread tocsin of war was sounded in earnest, and the ships opened fire on the devoted city. Suresh was there in charge of a brigade, under a General who was just and sympathetic.

While the guns of the ships poured volleys after volleys of broadsides into the city, the guns of the fortress were not silent. They, too, returned the fire of the ships, and awful was the spectacle that presented itself to human gaze. The deep waters of the bay were torn up as it were, by the shot, that came in scores and hundreds from the battlements of the fortress.

For hours continued the cannonade; it got hotter and fiercer as time wore on. Of course, the fire of the rebels from their ships, was more effective than the execution of the heavy fort batteries. There were casualties on both sides, and along with the booming of guns and the loud command of officers, were mingled the groans of the wounded and dying, and the exultant cries of the combatants.





Hours passed, the air became thick and dark with smoke and soot, fires broke out in many parts of the beautiful city, the water of the bay became disturbed and agitated as if torn up by one of those terrible hurricanes which visited the coast at times. But the Government did not shew any signs of weakness. The rebels had thought that the Republic was ill prepared for their sudden and terrific onslaught; but they found that they had counted without their host, that it was no easy matter to make any impression on the well-defended capital, with its gallant defenders ready to meet them at every point.

The ships made several ineffectual attempts to land large bodies of insurgents, so as to attack the city on both sides; but so watchful were the Republican officers, that they failed to carry out their project. The bombarding yet continued for some time, there being no laxity in the return of the fire from the land batteries. At last, the rebels thought of creating a diversion. They had scarcely any hope of capturing the capital; and so they resolved upon making a descent on the beautiful suburban town of Nitheroy.

But hostilities were not merely confined to exchange of shots between the heavy land batteries of the strong fortresses of *Santa Cruz*, *Lago* and *San Joao*, and the twenty men of war that blocked the gate. There was skirmishing everywhere and they invariably ended in bloodshed, for neither party was

willing to give in. In these skirmishes, Suresh had to bear his part and that he did so with credit to himself and the race he belonged to, may be guessed from the fact of his brilliant achievement a short while after.

The revolted mariners in their twenty ships of war, turned their attention to Nitheroy, and began to bombard it with a zeal and earnestness worthy of a better cause. It was here that Suresh was stationed with his brigade, and though it was almost nothing that he could do during the bombardment save directing the fire of the batteries now and then, he and his comrades had no pleasant time of it to be sure, for shots and shells were being poured into the city like hail. One—two—three—six hours passed and still the bombardment went on. It was night and the world was enveloped in semi-darkness. Sulphurous smoke filled the air and made it almost difficult for non-combatants to scarcely breathe in it. This smoke again added to the density of the darkness and made night hideous. The poor city had by this time been almost razed to the ground ; magnificent houses became heaps of ruins, the streets became blocked, while there was the glare of conflagration rising up to the skies, dispelling the darkness for a time and exposing at times the awful scene below.

When the rebels thought that Nitheroy had been destroyed, they wanted to make the most of the victory, and so a landing was effected, and a

considerable body of troops made a *detour* to attack it from behind. Awful then became the condition of the gallant defenders of Nitheroy. Placed between two fires, they had to maintain an unequal fight, and that too in the darkness of night, when it was difficult to distinguish a friend from a foe. The besiegers who were approaching from the land side, had revolver-cannons with them and with these they made tremendous havoc among the soldiers of the Republic.

For three mortal hours did the sanguinary fight continue and immense was the carnage that followed. Heavy, very heavy indeed was the loss on both sides. Unchecked by the volleys that were poured into the ranks, the rebels came on in a solid compact mass, dealing death with their portable pieces of artillery, while the defenders of Nitheroy saw no chance of meeting their onslaught successfully. At last the General Commanding called for volunteers for a difficult and desperate job. He wanted that somebody would lead a detachment of only fifty rifles to silence the revolver-cannons of the advancing enemy, which were doing such terrible execution among his men. Suresh accepted cheerfully the difficult work demanded from him. And with fifty chosen comrades he undertook to capture the enemy's guns.

It was the depth of night and nature herself was sleeping, but still in uncertain light of the waning

moon, the gallant fifty with the Bengalee Lieutenant at their head, issued from the ruins of beautiful Nitheroy that had been in search of the advancing column of the enemy. In the darkness so close had Suresh and his detachment come to the lines of the enemy, that soon were they challenged with a "who comes there." Instantly did Suresh reply—"The brave soldiers of the legal force of the Republic."

"Render yourselves or you die," shouted the voice again to which our hero gave the memorable and proud reply. "The brave soldiers of the Republic, render not"

Turning to his men Suresh ordered them to march up at the double quick, himself leading the way, sword in hand and waving his plumed helmet to encourage his men. But so hot was the fire from the enemy, so determined their attitude, so well directed their volleys, that the soldiers of the Republic could hardly withstand it. They halted in their march. Too withering was the fire for them to advance. They were wavering. They would break, and then what would keep the enemy from advancing?

The Lieutenant looked back upon his men, perhaps there passed across his features just a shade of contempt and uneasiness. Then, above the din of battle and the groans of the wounded, rose his voice in all its manly sonorousness. "Comrades,"

he cried, " the enemies have revolver-cannons, and the distance is too near from us ; the sons of our beloved Brazil have a heart that fears not to die, and you will see how a son of the holy land of Hindusthan can be the master of these cannons in five minutes."

They shewed signs of rallying ; and then Suresh shouted " Prepare." It sent an electric spark through the frames of the survivors of the detachment and they halted with a determined air as if to say—" here we are, ready to follow you even unto death." Then came the order—loud and distinct—" Follow." Suresh precipitated himself on the enemy, and this time he was not alone. His men followed him with a determination which it was not for the rebels to withstand. The charge was a memorable one—like the charge of the light Brigade at Balaclava. The rebel ranks broke. Suresh and his men fought and looked like heroes ; they not only captured the guns but sabred and bayoneted the artillery men at their posts. Terrible was the massacre but it turned the fortunes of the day ; it gave the victory to the legal forces of the Republic. What Indian is there, who can read the above without being filled with pride and gratitude to God, at the heroism displayed by a countryman in a far off clime, in the midst of foreigners and at the head of soldiers belonging to a race to which their masters belong ? If Suresh covered himself with glory

that glory is certainly reflected on his nation.

Lieutenant Biswas' splendid charge decided, as we said, the victory ; but still throughout the day that had already broken, skirmishes went on between straggling parties, and many were the rebels that were made captive.

In the evening after the terrible hardships and labour of the day Suresh returned to his quarters with ten prisoners ; and soon came out again for an evening stroll to cool his heated brow. While sauntering along, unattended even by an orderly, he was accosted by a woman, decently dressed, and apparently belonging to the respectable classes of society. She enquired if he could shew her the way where corpses had been carried—perhaps she was seeking for the earthly remains of some dear and near one. Suresh willingly acceded and led the way to the cemetery, where the dead had been collected for the purposes of burial—at some distance from the spot where his soldiers had been picquetted. Suddenly two of the rebel marines sprang upon him like wild cats, with naked daggers in their hands shining weirdly in the pale moonlight. Suresh drew his sword and defended himself so gallantly that his assailants finding him no easy prey to tackle took to their heels, Thinking it undesirable to pursue them at that lonely spot and in the solitude of that hour Suresh was coming back to his quarters when a giddiness seized upon him, perhaps owing to the putrid smell

that filled the atmosphere. He grew so faint as to be obliged to sit on a rock to gather himself as it were. But in attempting to analyse his sensation he felt cold at the feet. "The coldness," writes Suresh in a letter, "began to creep along my legs, it reached my knees, crept over my sides, and stopped on my breast; then I felt the same kind of cold in my ears it began to creep down my face and stopped on my breast." Then it was that he lost all consciousness and sensibility; and lay there an inert mass of clay at the mercy of every chance marauder or mariner. Three days passed and not till then that his senses returned. He was carried in the meantime by two unknown persons to a blood hospital, in a half-naked condition. The doctor in charge knew him not, and so for eight days, he remained where he was. At last when he could express himself he demanded to be taken to his quarters; and, of course, this was done. He had been given up for lost, and his friends in their anxious solicitude for him even went so far as to write to his family here mourning his disappearance and perhaps his loss. great was therefore the rejoicing among them when he reappeared once again."

Chapter XXIX.
CONCLUSION.

We have very little to add to this record of a strange and eventful life, much out of the common

as it is, especially to a Bengali with his proverbial cowardice and want of stamina. Since the battle of Nitheroy which procured him a First Lieutenancy in an Infantry Regiment, Suresh has not only taken part in many a sanguinary engagement but has improved his worldly position as well. He is now a man of consequence in Rio-de-Janeiro. Around him is growing up a young family of sons and daughters, the eldest of whom, a boy, is now six years of age. He has little to complain of, either in respect of riches or position; he has attained what may be called the goal of happiness, after struggling in the troubled ocean of life ever since he was fourteen. It is the calm after the storm—Fresh serene and beautiful.

It is with very great regret, however, that we have to add that all our recent enquiries about Lieutenant Biswas have failed to elicit any answer. Our letters to him have come back undelivered; and what this means we cannot, we dare not, say. We, however, believe that he is still an ornament of the Brazilian army, and that he has attained to a yet higher rank. It should here be stated that the rank of First Lieutenant in the Brazilian army is not one to be trifled with; it is the second in the regiment.

Here we will put in the letter of Mr. Punando Limos, the friend of Suresh Biswas, to whom we already referred, to provide something like independent testimony to what our hero has achieved in

Brazil, all the more necessary to silence the cavillers whose narrowness seems to blind them to the possibility of a Bengali rising so high in the military profession. The *Times*, the oldest and most powerful of all Conservative organs, itself admits that the Bengalis are not to be despised as a nation when they can in the same generation produce, a Suresh Biswas, a Jagadis Bose, and an Atul Chatterjee.

Mr. Punando Limos, who wrote this letter to Suresh's father in March 1894, is one of the foremost citizens of Rio, whose words must therefore carry weight with all and sundry :—

RIO-LE-JANEIRO, 12th March 1894.

“YOUR son, of course you must know already, was a military man serving the Government of Brazil. He held and holds yet the high post of the First Lieutenant of an infantry regiment of Brazil. Lately he renowned himself in the battle of Nitheroy by his undaunted courage, devotion and bravery. On the memorable night of the battle, when the said town was besieged by the enemies after bombarding it for six hours your son, our dear friend, who was unhappily there in the service with his regiment, was sent with 50 men to oppose the mighty march of the enemies, and like many other forces was sent in every direction. Soon, he was discovered by the enemies and the voice came to his ears “who comes there” the voice was instantly answered by him—“the brave soldiers of the legal force of the

Republic." "Render (surrender) yourself or you die" was the answer of the enemies. To this his arrogant answer was "the brave soldiers of the Republic render (surrender) not" and, then turning to his soldiers, ordered an accelerated march over the enemies; this march was received by a heavy discharge of portable cannons which the enemies had with them. He (Suresh) halted, looked at his men and said:—"Comrades, the enemies have revolver cannons and the distance is too near from us; the sons of our beloved Brazil have a heart that fears not to die, and you will see how a son of the holy land of Hindustan can be the master of these cannons in five minutes; prepare" and giving a few hurrahs he cried out, "follow," and precipitated himself against the cannons. Once there, he was truly the master of the cannons, but then ensued the massacre and the result was his victory.

He (Suresh) has been with us at the end of February as he is a great friend of our house, and told me that if some day he should disappear from here, I should do him a great favour as to write to Calcutta, that his name was honoured wherever he was, and that his son should know how to keep up that name after his death. He has left his newly-married wife and a son of one year and four months old in our house, and, of course, they are sacred people for me as long as they will live. He has left enough for them to live on, and my houses are

many and my domains are vast—more than they could wish.

In the society Suresh Chunder was a very quiet man, very polished in manners, well-educated, his head full of new ideas, always in pursuit of science, indifferent to danger, and very addicted to philosophy. His scientific knowledge is so great that he cured my wife of a paralyzed leg, which no doctor could cure, in a week, by what he called animal magnetism. He gave her no medicine except now and then passing his pointed fingers over her well-covered members."

APPENDIX.

“THE following letters of Lieutenant Suresh Chunder Biswas were received by his uncle here at different times, there were others, but they are unfortunately lost.”

I.

ST. CRUZ, 8th FEBRUARY 1887.

Dear Uncle,—By the name of St. Cruz you will know that I am no more in the Court of Rio-de-Janeiro, because I am transferred from there to here. This St. Cruz is a small village which was, a few years ago, the private estate of the Brazilian Emperor cultivated by his slaves, but now that he, through his well-known benevolence, had given them their liberty, it is in a very neglected condition, only fit for pasture for the cattle. I am in the detachments as they call it, which means a kind of military station, to take charge of the horses of the cavalry regiment to which I belong. These horses are sent here to pasture on the immense mountainous fields which surround this village. Dear uncle, I am very glad to say that I have risen one grade in the military rank, and I am no more a soldier but a Cabo de Esquadra as they call it here, in French they call it caporal and I can always command soldiers. You once, or more than once told me to give you an account of the places and nations that I have seen, but in going to do that I must write volumes. Many of my European friends tell me to do the same when they hear me

talk and give informations and explain things by experience. I have studied a great deal. I know almost all the sciences and 7 languages; I speak English, German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and a bit of Italian, Danish and Dutch, which I don't count, and in all these countries I have been. I left home without a farthing in my pockets, though pockets I had none. I left home almost naked. I had always a good desire to see my mother and crown her head with diamonds, and, if I could correspond with her, I would have done it long ago, for I had them already about me, but my Heavenly Father willed it otherwise, and I know I shall never see her again. I stood and stand alone in this world, ever careless as to what will happen to me. Ah! to roam alone and free in the boundless creation of the Almighty, enjoying the sweets of our grand and charming mother, Nature, is the best happiness for me. Real friendship and real love do not exist in this world, that is why the philosophers say, "to leave in this world is to create another," I create mine, and some day I will be there to see that dear face, the only soul that loved me—my mother! You all think I am a heartless vagabond. But Aha! Uncle! before that vagabond, thousands have kneeled and bowed, even the most ferocious of wild creatures of creation, stood terrified in front of the vagabond's eyes. Beggars came with their hats off a second time and that a vagabond am I, your forlorn and de-

serted poor Surry. Uncle, I like the word vagabond I almost love it, it is a sweet word to me, because, what you call vagabond is a sacred truth to me ; because vagabonds are those who have not a place to rest their heads on, nor they care for it, wiser than all they look for a far better home, and happier still which this world cannot give. They walk the world singing, thinking all world is their natural heritage from God, the Creator and Father. What great minded men ever cared for this world with all its sweet contents? Look from Pausanius, the conqueror of Plataea down to Wilhel'm, the German Emperor, and among the poets and philosophers, from Zoroaster, Plato and Horace down to Shakespeare, Schiller, Goethe and Goldsmith ; They all had a gigantic intellect and a very sensible heart which cannot bear even a cross-word, together with a pure soul or a vivid imagination. . . . They care for nothing that belongs to family, nor do they want to learn what others are so anxious to learn, they have their own idea and tastes and they follow them. They seem, as if they want, to fly in the air and with their imaginative power they think, imagine and dive in the depths of all things and mysteries, at least they want to make such sorts of experiments. Common, social and family everyday-things have no charm for them. They ever want to go high-away from all things below, because their spirit, which is the essence of God—the supreme intelli-

gence—is in high Now leaving these things of higher region for a minute, let me say that as to fulfil my father's desire by going there to Calcutta to see him and you all, I will not be able ; there is nothing for me there. The thing I loved and love and loved and loves me is not there. I will now wait patiently till I can join that beloved pilgrim that waits for me far, far away in that golden portal hidden amongst the clouds that blind and forbid my gaze.

Remember these from your
long lost but living, SURESH.

II.

RIO-DE-JANEIRO, 5-1-89.

DEAR UNCLE,—When you receive this letter, you must have had received one that has gone before this. I wrote this with a heart full of sorrow and disgust. In our hospital, they are dying fast of yellow fever. We are obliged to change the house for another. Just imagine the work we have to do in this hot weather. We have here now 93 to 95 degs. F, besides this, we have revolutions, that have brought some of our soldiers wounded with gunshots. At this moment I am hearing their groans. You cannot imagine uncle, how horrible looks our old hospital, which is not far from the new one. Our old hospital is an old church belonging to the Jesuits. I have my room there still, because I

cannot transfer all my things to the new one, and I have to prepare medicines there yet, (I have learned to be a pharmacist) and have all the instruments of surgery. If I stop here long I will be a good surgeon. I can do nearly all the operations and the surgeons all approve of them. But as I was talking of the hospital, it is a big arched hall with high sky-lights. It looks like a catacomb as it is empty. Everybody is frightened to enter there, in fact, no body dares to go there. I am obliged to pass through it often and often. I am not frightened at all, because I am the last to believe that departed souls will ever condescend to molest us. If there are stories afloat about departed souls, they are all creations of our own imagination, though I grant the existence of elementary spirits, which are very different things altogether. But an infected house has a terror in it. Uncle. I am not frightened of death. I have treated the affected before they died. Others caught and gone, I am still here, if I go, it is all the better. If God preserves me, happy that I will see you all some day again. No more on it, it is an unpleasant subject.

Dear uncle, I will soon go away from here and invent something that will enable me to travel, because, by travelling only I am happy, for, this gives the idea and nourishes it, of reaching home some day. I must keep moving, for motion is the law, as well as the sign of life, and besides, my objects and motives

for being in Brazil in the military line are fulfilled. The first object was to experiment the fidelity of the most loathsome of things—we call woman—and the other was vengeance for an insult offered to a friend of mine by a military man. The first one I have spat upon, and the second one has deserted through fear. It has cost me dear, these experiments. I have forshaken the happy theatre life and willingly subjected myself to the rigour and hard discipline of military life for 3 long years. I will finish my time on the 10th of May 1889, and then good bye to old and welcome to new life. I will be off where I like best, and as I have said, I will invent something that will enable me to keep myself as a gentleman, as I have always been. Through all my life I have always acted straight and upright, preserving all the laws of nobleness of heart and mind ; though I was in some point a wicked boy at home. Oh how my heart leaps with joy, that I will be once again free and joyful like the birds of the sky, seeing different lands and different enjoyments. I will choose science again for my invention or rather imitation, but the science will be physical. Training lions, tigers, bears, hyenas and elephants is not physical science as I have done. I am going to put up a speaking head, an electric girl, the table turning and table rapping, and a transparent girl who shall have holes through her body to see through. These four things or rather novelties, will pay me well in this country and others like this. Dear

Uncle, money is very cheap in this world, if a man has a head enough to know how to collect and a heart enough to dare. Everyone for himself and God for all, and I am in the world and the world is for me, and God's power is too high, so I must take the God's world as it is, and so the things go with me as I go. Medical science is the noblest science of all. I have studied it delligently, I have been up to the threshold of its mysterious temple and have learnt many secrets. I adore the science itself, but I hate the professors of it, because they have no benevolence in them. A doctor without benevolence, is like an angel without wings. The first and highest of all sciences is psychology or the philosophy of the soul, that goes to seek, to find and know the Creator of all things, God. I will make no comments on it, for I have the idea of terror in remembrance of it. The few experiments I have made of it, have left only the idea of terror in me. *In terrorem* let us give *lans Deo* and *jure divino ad jure humans* let us say *pace in per perpetuum*.

Yours affectionately,

SURESH.

III.

RIO-DE-JANEIRO,

EM, 12 DE MAIO DE, 1893.

DEAR UNCLE,—It is a long time, yes, long time that I have not received any letter from

you. Last year I wrote to you relating an account of a revolution in which we took part, but as yet without any answer. I am getting on well in the military line. I have risen from the post of First Sergeant to that of a Brigade. I could have been an officer of rank long ago, but I am a foreigner, which has been highly prejudicial for me ; but I am already 6 years here in Brazil and I am a popular man. These, I hope, will speak very much in my favour. And then, as you all know they speak here in Portuguese, which when I came here, I did not know, nor could I speak, but I have studied and to-day I hold an office which very few in our regiments, have the capacity of doing. Some day I will let you duly know of my promotion which will be officially published by the President of the Republic. I have many good services registered in my name, and much military eulogy and no prison, during six years of military service. Now, we have war and revolution in Rio Grande de Sule. I wished very much to go there, but as yet we have no order to march. How is my father getting on. Does he remember of me? Tell him especially that I am getting on well, as God will so have it. I have grown up a man esteemed in society and respected by all ; for him who is a cut-throat I am a cut throat, for a robber I am a robber, for a gentleman I am a gentleman; for a philosopher I am a philosopher. I have learnt to be an accomplished

man on my own account, for no body ever cared for me since I was 14 years of age. To-day, I think I am between 32 and 34. I know not exactly which, and I am surprised to see my hair growing all white, not only of the head, but of the beard and moustache too, and on the top of my head there is no hair at all. Remember me to all and write to me soon, giving me an account of all that know me.

Yours affectionately,
SURESH.

IV.

RIO-DE-JANEIRO, 10-1-94.

MY DEAR UNCLE,—This letter was neglected once again, for I was laid up since then with an attack of rheumatism. It is nearly one year that I am with this disease. Last week I felt the pain cease after taking an immense quantity of mercury and iodide of potass, but I am obliged to stop them, because they produced symptoms of poisoning. The doctors tell me that it will take a long time before I can get rid of it altogether.

Herewith I send you two photographs of mine, one for you and the other for my father. I have a vague presentiment that he is living no more. I know not if this presentiment be true or false. At any rate it belongs to him, for it will please him to look at his son in his first uniform of a Brazilian

Infantry Lieutenant. You will wonder when I tell you, that this uniform cost me one thousand dollars, because it is made of fine cloth, feather, silk and gold lace. I send you also a photo of my wife before I married her. I have not yet photographed my son, so I cannot send you any.

As to my disappearance, it happened in the following manner. In the evening of the day when the battle took place, I marched back to our quarters with ten mariners as our prisoners and went for a walk alone. In my way, a woman decently dressed asked me if I knew where the dead were carried to I willingly went with her to show the place. There I was surprised to encounter two mariners who, without giving me time, attacked me with dagger in their hands. I drew my sword and defended myself. They finding me strong enough both for defensive and offensive purposes, took to their heels. I immediately thought of coming back to my quarters, a little far from the place where I had left my soldiers, but I felt myself uneasy, perhaps, because of the bad smell of the place. I had not gone yet fifty steps when a kind of giddiness came over me. I was obliged to sit down upon a stone and naturally began to analyse my sensation. Everything seemed to me dusky and I felt cold on my feet. The coldness began to creep along my legs, it reached my knees, crept over my sides and stopped on my breast; then I felt the same kind of cold in my ears, it began to

creep down my face and stopped on my breast and I lost all sensibility ; it took three days for the return of my senses. I was carried to the blood hospital half naked by two unknown men. The doctors knew not who I was. Eight days afterwards when I could express myself, I wished to return to my quarters and I was found again as I was considered lost.

Yours affectionately,
SURESH.

V.

RIO DE JANEIRO, 3rd September 1894.

MY DEAR UNCLE,—I received your letter the other day and in it I see I have pleased some countrymen of mine with my Military achievements. For me there is nothing extraordinary for what I have done,—it was so natural in me then ; but many other officers had done more, some of them, alas ! I will never see again. As for my Military education, I have served in the Cavalry Regiment for three years as a soldier and five years in the Infantry as a graduated soldier. When the revolution broke out on the 6th of September last and all the war vessels joined together to block our beautiful Bay of Rio-de-Janeiro and began to bombard the strong fortresses of *Santacruz*, *Cage* and *Sao Joao* then we began to feel that there was work to be done. The fortresses gallantly responded

with their heavy artillery to the better artillery of the men-of-war. There was recruiting and concentration of forces everywhere throughout the country. Every elevated place was fortified all round the bay. There was skirmishing everyday and everywhere, bombarding once here and once there. The revolted marine, with their twenty men-of-war, turned all their attention to the city of Nitheroy, when they could not bombard the town of Rio-de-Janeiro, because of thousands of strangers that lived in there. The poor city was razed to the ground and at last they landed, thinking that we must be fatigued, or we were not sufficient for them. So the battle took place on the 9th of February, when after three hours of hard fighting, the marines we defeated and some of them fled and got safe to their boats, and rest of them were our prisoners. Uncle! think not the Military post I hold was so easy for me to win. I never thought of being an Officer. Often and often they talked of my promotion, but always my name was cancelled from the list for the simple reason of my being a foreigner. Lately the revolution broke out, and I and my other companions were under the orders of a General; and this General, though he knew me not, saw how we behaved ourselves during the skirmishes; he found out my military valour in leading my platoon gallantly against the fire of the enemies.

He did not care to know, nor did he pause

to consider whether I was a foreigner or not. It was sufficient for him to see what I was worthy of, and reported my case to the Marshal Vice-President—of the Brazilian Republic, and I was promoted to the post of a Lieutenant, and as such, you know that I have assisted to the last decisive battles of Nitheroy.

Herewith I send you a rough sketch of the battle of Nitheroy, where I was feared even by my own comrades though I never ill-treated them. You all express your wishes I should relate to you all the details. Ah! Uncle, it is horrible to relate the horrors of war, where life, which we so much prize, is sold as if it were the cheapest thing in the world, and he who cares for it the least, saves it the most. What is courage after all, but the tranquil resolution to offer it (life) most willingly in exchange of the thing we wish for? It is all very well to use your prudence and calculations, when the enemies are far away, but when they are near and in offensive position, there is only one way to proceed—it is to muster all your forces and advance; and the more energetic your advance, the more it will intimidate your enemies. You wish to know more details of my life. Have I not always written to you from different parts of this world wherever I had been. Have I not told you that I have travelled all through Europe as Lion-tamer, managing these animals in a cage in menageries and circuses? Herewith I

send you a newspaper of Buenos Ayres where my life was published.

Yours Affectionately,
SURESH.

VI.

RIO., *12th April, 1897.*

MY DEAR UNCLE,—I am very sorry that I have not received any answer yet to my letter dated 15th November last, along which I sent a packet of Newspapers and other documents. As about my health I am getting on better. I am glad to tell you that I have much advanced in writing my own life, which of course will take time. I have as much occupation that I hardly find any time to accomplish it, but in time I will finish it I hope. Uncle, I am very much fond of studying astrology, in which I have begun to dive since long, and I wish very much to know the exact date of my birth, which, of course, you will take the trouble to furnish me with. I wish to erect an Astral House, with the exact situations of the planets, in their proper positions on the day that I was born, that I might by that way evade disaster and disease, that might be yet reserved for me. I have other arts and sciences that would give identical results, but I will compare them with that of Astrology. By the study of Chiromancy and Chronology I know that I am very much influenced by Venus, Mars, Mercury and Luna. The Luna or

Moon made me a dreamer and a voyager. Mercury gave me the address and knowledge how to carry out my ideas. Mars gave me the audacity and the hardihood of a soldier, and Venus that brought so many women in my way. But I know that I have other influences, and wish to know the exact positions of these planets in relation to others, such as Jupiter, Saturn and the Sun. You know my Uncle, that I have had the good luck to be initiated in these sciences during my wanderings through the continent of Europe, by the most eminent masters that Europe ever produced, whose names I reserve for future communications ; but if God will give me a long life, I will some day develop my knowledge on the sciences of magnetism ; chiromancy ; astrology and other occult sciences, by which our Indian savants reached that highest aspiration of humanity called the "Nirvana," and by which our Indian Sannyasis come to work wonders ; such as burying themselves underground as long as they like, making a plant grow from the seed within a few minutes and bearing fruits and so forth. I know not if these things interest you, if so, I will divert you with a accurate analysis someday ; if not, I will at least guide the rising youths of our family to fame and glory. Please let me know something about my father, I know he must be very ill, though not bodily, at least mentally, and who knows that I might be in some way useful to him. I do no

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write to him because I know not if he is at home.

I have had several letters addressed to me by many youngmen of Calcutta, asking me if there is no means of coming here in Brazil. I shall answer them separately.

Please give my best compliments to our relatives and friends.

Yours Affectionately,
SURESH.



The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. This ensures transparency and allows for easy verification of the data.

In the second section, the author outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze the data. This includes both primary and secondary research techniques. The primary data was collected through direct observation and interviews with key stakeholders. Secondary data was obtained from existing reports and databases.

The analysis of the data revealed several key trends and insights. One of the most significant findings was the impact of market fluctuations on the overall performance. The data shows a clear correlation between external economic factors and the company's internal metrics.

Based on these findings, the author proposes several strategic recommendations. These include diversifying the product line to reduce dependency on a single market, improving operational efficiency through automation, and strengthening relationships with key suppliers.

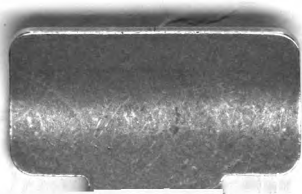
Finally, the document concludes by highlighting the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation. The market is constantly evolving, and it is essential to stay updated on the latest trends and adjust the strategy accordingly.

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