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Sugar-Making in a Bengal Village.

(By the Rev. T. R. Edwards, of Soory, Beerbhoom, Bengal, in the 'Juvenile Missionary Herald.')
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SUGAR PLANTATION IN A BENGAL VILLAGE.

On our way across the rice-stubbles we have to pass the sugar-cane plantations. These, you will observe, are protected with great care. The reason is, that the cane has many enemies both among bipeds and quadrupeds. Chief amongst the latter are Jackals and pigs. Hence the plantations are fenced round with a temporary fence of bamboos and thorns. And you may notice, too, that the cane-stalks are tied round with bandages of the lower dry leaves of the plant itself. These bandages not only serve to preserve the canes, but they tend to increase the accumulation of juice.

Before we pass on to the village, let us enter the plantation where the sound of voices is heard. Here we find men busy at work cutting down the long stalks and cleansing them of the leaves. You will observe now carefully the heads of the canes are cut off, and are then tied up in bundles by themselves. In the left-hand corner of the picture of a cane-plantation you will see a couple of bundles of these cane-tops. 'What is done with them?' you ask. They are carried away to the village, and put in a damp, cool place, where they may sprout. The sprouting takes place from the eyes of the stalk on its sides. When this is completed they will be brought back again into the fields and planted in well-filled and well-manured soils. From these cuttings next year's crop will be produced. Each one will bring forth half a dozen canes or more. It is on this account that such care is taken of them.

When the canes have been stripped of their leaves, and their tops lopped off, they are bound up in large bundles, and are

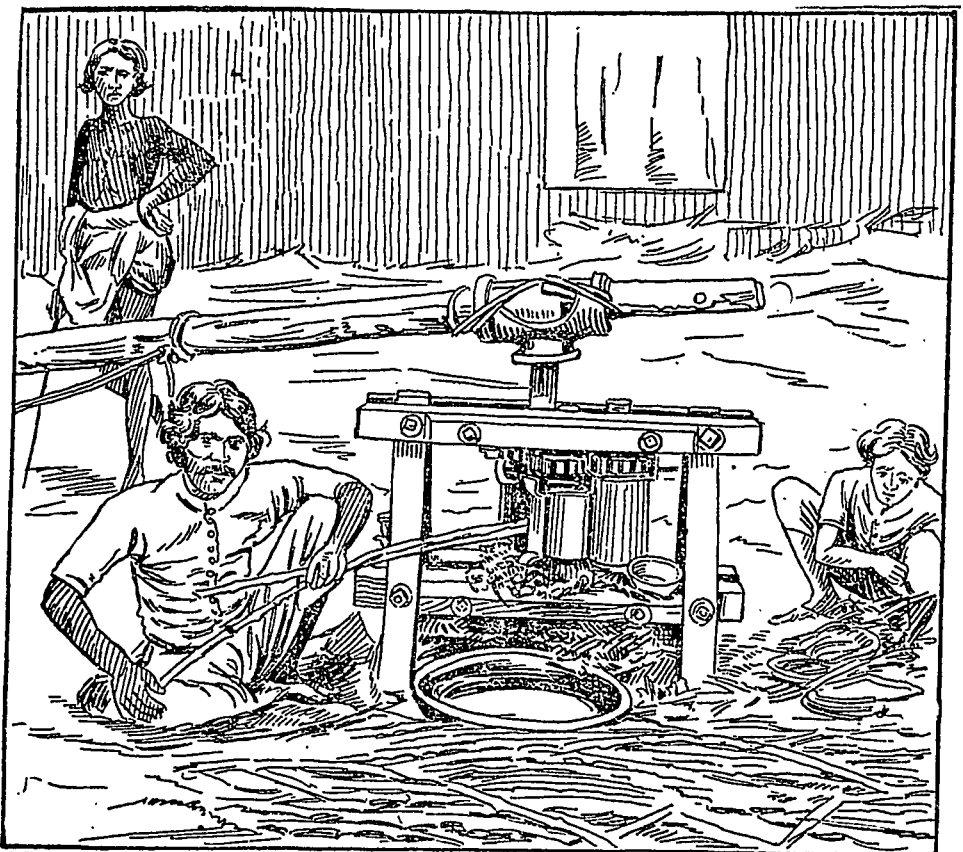
carried either on men's heads or on carts to the village.

Let us now follow the precious loads as they proceed to their destination. As we approach the village we shall behold a scene of great excitement. The whole community is in transports of glee. Old and young men and women have come out to hail the arrival of the canes. Eyes sparkle with delight and faces show eager expecta-

the cultivators cheerfully comply with the precept, 'Give to him that asketh thee.' No child so young and no person so despised but may claim and receive a cane. Should a cultivator refuse compliance with this time-honored institution he would become the object of the maledictions of the whole village. He would be told on all sides that bad luck would attend his labors, that his juice would burn in boiling, and that other misfortunes would inevitably befall him. Hence no peasant would dare to run such a risk. But here it is only fair to say that cultivators invariably comply with this custom, not so much from fear of disgrace as out of pure goodwill and a thankful heart. And as it tends to foster kindness and goodwill amongst the villagers, it is a custom which has our high commendation. It reminds us of the wise and beneficial Mosaic ordinances for the poor at harvest time.

As soon as each applicant has received the customary cane the process of crushing may at once begin. For this purpose cane-crushers of European manufacture are now universally used. By a glance at the illustration supplied it will be seen that the apparatus consists of three close-fitting rollers worked by cogs. They are set in motion by a horizontal beam, which is pulled round by a yoke of oxen. This machine, you see, is already at work, its long legs have been sunk deep in the ground to keep it rigid. On the one side of it a hole has been made to receive the vessel intended to catch the juice as it pours from the rollers. Beside the machine squats the person appointed to act as feeder, and close at hand is a bundle of canes ready for use. These he takes up one by one and passes them between the rollers.

Feeding the cane-crusher is a tedious operation, and one that requires some skill and a great deal of care. It not unfrequently



CRUSHING THE SUGAR CANE.