

we expect oppression from the all-powerful zemindar—the dispenser of life and property—the owner of not only all the broad acres within his zemindary, but of all the men, women, and children existing thereon.

In the northwest, it was long popularly supposed that civilisation had made great strides, that European ideas were fast triumphing over Asiatic prejudices and eastern habits, and that, in fact, the people were comparatively free, enlightened, and happy. Never was error more complete. Doubtless, more had been done by the government of the northwest towards preparing the people for better things, but in reality as little had been accomplished there as elsewhere. None but those who have laboured in an eastern climate know what it is to bear the heat of the day; none but those who have striven against the darkness and corruption of the Asiatic mind know how sadly slow the work progresses. Even the men for whom you are striving, the poor ryot, the oppressed trader, the poverty-stricken villager, all are dead against you. So strange are they to any generous sentiment, so shut out from sympathy with the rest of the world, that they cannot, they will not, place belief in the labours of the European in their behalf. They spurn the proffered aid; they turn away from protection, convinced in the dark recesses of their own diseased minds, that behind all the fair language and pleasant promises of the white man, there lurks some secret plot for their more complete bondage and destruction.

In reality, then, the tyrannical zemindar possesses fully as much power in the northwest as in Upper or Lower Bengal. We have said that he holds the power of life and property. This is not a mere figure of speech, but a stern, everyday matter of fact. The British authority is supposed to reign paramount over every other power within the limits of the Honourable Company's territories. Outwardly, this is indeed the case; but in reality it is a mere fiction. When the collector or the magistrate of the district passes through with a small army of retainers and native officials on revenue or judicial tours of inspection, all is deep deference to the English name, and for the time it is highly convenient to allow the fiction to pass current; but once out of sight, all idea of British supremacy vanishes, and the reign of the native recommences: the zemindar is again all-powerful for good or for evil. Alas, how seldom the former.

The zemindar owns the land on which tens of thousands of his fellow-men have their being, dwell, toil, and die; but not only does he claim the soil by which they live—he insists on his right to everything it produces over and above their most pressing wants for the support of life; nay he even sets up a claim to their liberty and their life. All are his, according to the popular reading of the Indian Rights of Man. Woe to the Bengalee who dares to think otherwise! Sad and certain, indeed, would be his fate.

Of course, all of this class are not precisely similar in their characters, dispositions, and mode of managing their zemindaries. There are well-defined varieties of the species. I have known men of rather enlarged views upon general matters, who have had an English education, mixed much with European society, were *au fait* at European politics, and whom one might have expected to have governed their ryots not only with a lenient, generous rule, but in an enlightened manner: these men would have scorned any personal acts of oppression, yet they could never be brought to recognise the ryot's claim to anything beyond a mere animal existence, and often, by their indifference to their affairs, permitted the grossest acts of extortion and tyranny.

Short-sighted as their policy undoubtedly is, inasmuch as the ryot labours no more than he can possibly avoid under this exacting system, they cannot be brought to believe in the possibility of liberality inducing greater exertion, or in the European theory of a prosperous tenantry making a fat landlord. The screw is placed on wherever it is deemed expedient; and unfortunately for both landlord and tenant, it is generally thought to be expedient. When we speak of the 'screw,' we do so in no figurative language, but as having reference to the actual thing done and performed; not always, though frequently, by the zemindar personally, or of his own knowledge, but by the subordinates and middle-men of the estate, whose name is closely resembling that of 'legion.' The zemindar is feared rather than loved.

The Red Light.

The station-master and his men were at their posts, and did their duty timely and faithfully. There was an obstruction on the line; several carriages had to be removed from one place to another. A luggage train was expected shortly: the "red light" was turned toward that direction, and, as the night was clear, it could be seen for a long distance. Though these precautions were taken, it was fully expected that before the train became due, the alterations of the carriages would be fully completed. To the dismay of those engaged in this work, some minutes before the proper time, the train was heard approaching, and notwithstanding the warning of the danger signal, without any apparent slackening of speed. The whistle was loudly sounded, and every other means adopted, but on, on it came—dashed into the carriages, scattering them in every direction. Those who were removing them got clear out of danger, but the engine-driver and his companion were killed. The newspapers duly announced the accident—the line was soon cleared—the coroner's jury was held—and again everything went on as before. It should also be stated that the train

which ran into the carriages was conveying a vast quantity of earth and stones for the formation of a new branch line. Why the driver thus rushed on in defiance of the warning given, no one could tell. Many singular things had occurred, and it was useless to surmise. He had paid a fearful penalty for his neglect, and his history contains a very important lesson.

This occurrence has its counterpart in the moral world, where things are continually happening which would be quite inexplicable but for one sad point which God's book thus states: "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead."—Eccles. ix. 3.

Many, very many pass along the road of life, who rush on in spite of all warnings. The red light says, "Stop, there is danger ahead;" but how few take warning, though the wreck of those who have refused lies all around them!

See, the lover of pleasure comes. The red light says, "For all these things God will bring thee into judgment!" "The guests of pleasure are in the depths of hell." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption!" The beacon is unheeded. "I shall have peace," he says; and on he goes, feeding his evil desires, making provision for the flesh, walking after the course of this world; but in an expected moment the crash comes, the gay dream is over, the short and (so called) merry life is now ended. The verdict in this case is not difficult to find, though sad to pronounce: "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness."

Next comes one under the guidance of the *pride of reason*. He looks so high, surely he will not even see the red light. He can hardly help that; but then will he heed it? is another question. "O man, who art thou who repliest against God?" "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of Heaven." We hear a loud laugh of scorn, mingling with the shrill tones of warnings, and soon "the wreck of many a size" is around us.

Next comes the ambitious, panting after worldly honours and distinctions. They must "stand their chance, and do their best." Warning seems almost useless; yet to them the red light says: "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." "A proud look the Lord hateth." "He will bring down the high looks." It is done! How art thou fallen! Thine honour's in the dust—hope perished—the gay dream ended.

But see, others are coming. A long, long train—you cannot even see to the end of it. The love of money drives it, and it is going at a fearful pace, scorning even to carry a single "break." "Let us buy and sell, and get gain," is the