

CHAPTER II

HISTORY

EARLY HISTORY

THERE can be little doubt that the delta through which the Ganges flows was built up from the sea in prehistoric times by the silt which the various distributaries of that river brought down from the plains and mountains far inland. As Sir William Hunter has remarked, the "inundations still add a yearly coating of slime to vast low-lying tracts, and we can stand by each autumn and see the ancient secrets of landmaking laid bare." Ptolemy's map of the second century shows the southern portion of the Gangetic delta as cut up to such an extent by rivers and waterways as to consist practically of a succession of islands. This marked the first stage in the reclamation of the land from the sea, and Nadia in those days appears to have been a fen country intersected with rivers and morasses, and probably inhabited by a few scattered settlements of fishermen and boatmen. In course of time each successive distributary of the Ganges deposited silt along its banks, and raised the level of the country until it no longer afforded sufficient fall for the escape of the drainage of the hinterland into the sea, when it broke a fresh channel for itself to the east, to repeat the same process further on.

According to the references in the Mahabharata, the Raghubansa and some of the Puranas, the delta lay on the boundary between two powerful kingdoms, namely, Suhma, corresponding to Western Bengal, and Vanga, or Eastern Bengal, and it is probable that the Nadia district was under the control of the kingdom of Vanga in the time of the Raghubansa, *i.e.*, about the fifth century A.D.

When the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsiang visited Bengal in the seventh century, he found two large kingdoms in the lower delta, namely, Samatata and Tamralipti. From the general description which he gives of the former, it seems clear that it must have included what is now known as the Nadia district. Samatata appears to be another name for Vanga, given to it on account of its flat and level aspect.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries the northern delta seems to have formed part of the empire of the Pal kings, and it is certain that it was included in the kingdom of the Sen Rajas, who were masters of both Vanga and Radha. The town of Nabadwip is said to have been founded by Lakshman Sen, son of Ballal Sen, and it is probable that Ballal Sen himself used to visit the locality, as his name is still connected with a mound and a tank in the village of Bamanpukur which is close by Nabadwip.

THE SEN DYNASTY

The Sen dynasty is said to have been founded towards the close of the tenth century by an adventurer named Samanta Sen, who is believed to have come from the Carnatic and established a kingdom on the banks of the Bhagirathi. Samanta had a son by name Hemanta, about whom very little is known, and it is doubtful whether he ever actually ascended the throne: he appears, however, to have been a man of valour, for in one of the *slokas* it is said of him that his enemies withered at sight of him. Hemanta's son Bijay ruled for a time, and was succeeded by his son, the famous Ballal Sen, who drove the Pal Rajas out of Bengal and conquered Bihar. Ballal Sen was succeeded by his son Lakshman Sen, towards the close of whose lengthy reign the incursion of the Muhammadans under Muhammad Bakhtiar Khilji took place. It seems that Lakshman on being driven out of Nabadwip, retreated to Subarnapur, near Dacca, and it is said that from there he and his successors continued

to govern eastern and southern Bengal until the middle of the fourteenth century. There has been some controversy as to the caste of the Sen kings. The name Sen is now generally borne by Baidyas, but in ancient times it appears to have been borne exclusively by Rajputs. The Baidya caste is found nowhere in India except in Lower Bengal, and there can be no doubt that the Sens referred to in the Mahabharata (*e.g.* Bir Sen) were Rajputs and not Baidyas. In the work Dan Sagar, the authorship of which has been imputed to Ballal Sen himself, it is expressly stated that the Sen Rajas were Kshattrias. On a stone tablet found by Mr. Metcalf at a place near Rampur Boalia, there is an inscription to the effect that Samanta Sen was a descendant of the Lunar Dynasty; his forefathers were reigning kings in the Deccan, and his grandson Bijay Sen conquered Kamrup, Gaur and Kalinga. Two copperplates of Lakshman Sen have been found, one in Dinajpur, and the other in the Sundarbans; both of these trace the descent of the Sen family from the Moon, *i.e.*, proclaim them to be of the Lunar Dynasty, feuds between the two branches of which caused the celebrated war of the Mahabharata. Again a copperplate of Kesav Sen, son of Lakshman Sen, was found in Bakarganj, in which the same claim as to the descent of the family is set out, and the genealogy is carried down from Samanta to Kesav Sen. In this latter plate Lakshman is said to have constructed triumphal pillars in Guzerat, Benares and Tribeni. All these copper plates purport to make grants of land, etc.; they are of different generations, and were found in different places, but they all unite in saying that the Sens were the descendants of Kshattrias of the Lunar Dynasty, and in each is an invocation to the moon. There can thus be little doubt that the Sens were not Baidyas. The copper plate of Kesav Sen, in which he is described as an independent king, is of further interest as showing that the Muhammadans had not forced their way into Eastern Bengal during the first half of the thirteenth century at any rate.

Lakshman, the last of the Sen dynasty, who exercised any sway west of the Bhagirathi, was driven from Nabadwip

by Muhammad Bakhtiar Khilji, when he captured and sacked the town in 1203 A.D. The latter was an Afghan by birth, but he took service at Delhi, and soon became well known for his activity, courage and abilities. About the year 1199 A.D. he was placed in command of an army destined to conquer Bihar. He carried out his orders with complete success and firmly established himself at Gaur, from which base he made preparation for an incursion into Bengal. It is said that the Brahmans and astrologers of Nabadwip warned Raja Lakhsman that the long appointed time for the subjugation of Bengal by the Turks was at hand, and begged him to remove his family, property and the seat of government from Nabadwip to a more secure and distant part of the country, where they would be safe from any sudden incursion from the enemy. The Raja, however, being very advanced in years and also attached to his capital, declined to listen to the advice, and took no steps to avoid the impending danger. In 1203 Muhammad Bakhtiar secretly assembled his army, and marched from Bihar with such expedition that he was at the gates of Nabadwip before the king had any warning of his near approach. The surprise was complete, and the Raja only escaped with his life. After sacking the town Bakhtiar retired to Lakhnauti, and firmly established Muhammadan sway in the neighbourhood. It is doubtful whether the whole of Bengal immediately fell into the power of the Muhammadans, as has frequently been stated. It seems that from Bakhtiar onwards there was for over 100 years a regular succession of Muhammadan Governors at Gaur or Lakhnauti, but the probabilities are that the part of Bengal in which Nadia lies did not entirely acknowledge the Mussulman Government until many years later. This point has been dealt with in an article by Manmohan Chakravarti, entitled "Disputed or Doubtful Events in the History of Bengal," published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, April 1898. The following extract is taken from the article:—"The nature of Muhammad-i-Bakhtiar's conquest appears to have been much exaggerated; the expedition to Nadia is only

an inroad, a dash for securing booty natural to these Turkish tribes. The troopers looted the city with the palace and went away. They did not take possession of that part, and if they had tried, they would have most likely failed, as their base in Behar was too far off and too recent to be of much avail. On removing the seat of Government to Lakhnauti, there was an attempt to secure permanent possession of some part of Bengal. On the north Diwkot, where he (Khilji) died on his return from the disastrous inroad to Tibet, was evidently in possession of Mussalmans. On the south Lakhnor was outside their jurisdiction, because Muhammad-i-Sheran had been deputed with a force towards it at that time. Diwkot is identified with Damdamma about 70 miles north-east of Gaur, Lakhnor is identified with Nagor by Stewart and with Lacarcondah by Blochmann, but neither identification is satisfactory, both being far away from the river Bhagirathi. Even if either of these identifications be accepted, it would not be more than 90 miles from Gaur. The tract between the two is thus hardly large, and forms an insignificant part of the Bengal Province. Tabakat-i itself carefully speaks of Lakhnauti only; it is only the later writers who dilate on the vaunted conquests of Bengal. In fact if such plundering inroads be magnified into conquests, and the Hindus of Bengal blamed and vilified for allowing the so-called easy conquests, then Muhammad of Ghazni has better claims for being credited with the conquest of all Hindustan."

EARLY MUHAMMADAN RULE

It seems probable that the hold of the Muhammadans upon the part of Bengal in which the Nadia district lies was very slight for the two centuries which succeeded the sack of Nabadwip by Bakhtiar Khan. It appears, however, that by the middle of the fifteenth century the independent Muhammadan kings of Bengal had established their authority, for there is in Bagerhat, in the Khulna district, a tomb bearing an inscription which shows it

to contain the remains of one Khan Jahan Ali, a Muhammadan governor who died in the year 1459 A.D. Very little beyond legend is known of this man. In the latter part of the sixteenth century the northern half of the Nadia district was probably under the rule of Pratapaditya, who exercised sway over the greater part of the Jessore and Khulna districts. Pratapaditya was the grandson of one Ram Chandra, a Kayasth of Eastern Bengal, who obtained favour at the court of Sulaiman Kararani, one of the last of the independent Muhammadan kings of Bengal. It is said that Pratapaditya went to the court of the Emperor at Delhi, and was granted a sanad making him a Raja, and that he thereupon returned and ousted his father. Before long he declared himself independent of the Emperor, and he succeeded in defeating several Mughal generals who were sent to bring him to subjection. Finally Man Singh, governor of Bengal, with the assistance of Bhabanand Majumadar, one of the Rajas of Nadia, surprised his capital, and captured him; he was sent off in custody towards Delhi, but he put an end to his life on the way, preferring death to the fate which he expected was in store for him.

MUGHAL RULE

In order to keep some hold upon the greater *zamindars*, and to endeavour to secure as far as possible the regular and prompt payment of the revenue by them, the country was parcelled out into districts, each under a military governor, called the *Faujdar*, with a small force of soldiers under his command. The *Faujders* were responsible to the Nawabs for the maintenance of order and the realization of the revenue. The Nadia district fell within the Jessore *Faujdari*. In 1696 Subha Singh, a zemindar of Bardwan, rose in revolt, and, having induced Rahim Khan, the leader of the Afghans in Orissa, to join him, advanced on Bardwan, seized it, and killed the Raja. The latter's son escaped to Dacca, and laid his complaint before the Nawab, who directed Nurullah Khan, the *Faujdar* of

Jessore, to punish the insurgents. "But that officer," says Stewart, in his History of Bengal published in 1813, "who, instead of attending to his own business, had long employed himself in commerce and in amassing wealth, and possessed nothing of the military character but the name, having with much loss of time, collected a few of the 3,000 horse of which he was the commandant," marched from Jessore and crossed the river; but on the approach of the rebels, he shut himself up in the fort of Hooghly and implored assistance from the Governor of the Dutch settlement of Chinsura. The rebels convinced by this pusillanimous conduct that they had little to fear from the merchant soldier, advanced boldly, and laid siege to Hooghly; they carried on their attacks with such vigour that the *Faujdar* became alarmed for his personal safety, and during the night, having crossed the river in a boat, made his escape to Jessore. The garrison finding that their commandant had fled, opened the gates, and the rebels got quiet possession of that opulent city without any loss." The rebels then proceeded to harry the districts of Nadia and Murshidabad. In the meantime Subha Singh was stabbed by the daughter of the Raja of Bardwan, and Rahim Khan was unanimously elected as the leader of the rebel army. When tidings of these affairs reached the ears of the emperor Aurangzib, he appointed his grandson, Azim-us-Shan, as Governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and directed that Zabardast Khan, the son of the disgraced Nawab, should at once take the field against the rebels, with the assistance of a number of troops from up-country. The operations, in the course of which Maharaja Ram Krishna of Nadia appears to have given material assistance, were finally successful (though the Nadia district was in the meantime plundered for the second time), Rahim was killed, and the Afghan raiders were finally hunted down and destroyed.

REVOLT OF SITARAM RAI

Some fifteen years later, during the viceroyalty of Murshid Kuli Khan, the north of the Nadia district was again

pillaged, during the revolt of Sitaram Rai, the following account of which is taken from the Riyazu-s-Salatin:—
 “Sitaram, *zamindar* of pargana Mahmudabad, being sheltered by forests and rivers, had placed the hat of revolt on the head of vanity. Not submitting to the Viceroy, he declined to meet the imperial officers and closed against the latter all the avenues of access to his tract. He pillaged and raided the lands adjoining to his *zamindari*, and also quarrelled with the imperial garrison and *Faujdar*s. Mir Abu Turab, *Faujdar* of the Chakla of Bhushna, who was the scion of a leading Syed clan, and was closely related to Prince Azim-us-Shan and the Timuride Emperors, and who amongst his contemporaries and peers was renowned for his learning and ability, looked down upon Nawab Jafar Khan. Mir Abu Turab tried to capture Sitaram, but was not successful. At length he detailed his general, Pir Khan, with 200 cavalry to chastise Sitaram. On being apprised of this, Sitaram, concentrating his forces, lay in ambush to attack the aforesaid general. One day Mir Abu Turab with a number of friends and followers went out for hunting, and, in the heat of the chase, alighted on Sitaram’s frontiers. Pir Khan was not in Abu Turab’s company. The *zamindar* (Sitaram) on hearing of this, fancying Mir Abu Turab to be Pir Khan, suddenly issued out from the forest with his forces, and attacked Mir Abu Turab from the rear. Although the latter with a loud voice announced his name, Sitaram, not heeding it, inflicted wounds on Abu Turab with bamboo clubs, and felled him from his horse.

“When this news reached Nawab Jafar Khan, his body trembled from fear of the Emperor’s resentment. Appointing Hasan Ali Khan, who had married Jafar Khan’s sister and was descended from a noble family, to be *Faujdar* of Bhushna, and supporting him with an efficient force, Nawab Jafar Khan directed him to capture that troublesome villain (Sitaram). The Nawab issued mandates to the *zamindars* of the environs insisting on their not suffering Sitaram to escape across their frontiers, and also threatening that should the latter effect his escape

across the frontiers of any one, not only would he be ousted from his *zamindari* but he punished. The *zamindars* from all sides hemmed him in, when Hasan Ali Khan arrived and captured Sitaram together with his women, children, confederates and adherents, and sent them with chains round their necks and hands to Nawab Jafar Khan. The Nawab, enclosing Sitaram’s face in cowhide, had him drawn to the gallows in the eastern suburbs of Murshidabad on the highway leading to Jahangirnagar and Mahmudabad, and imprisoned for life Sitaram’s women and children and companions. Bestowing his *zamindari* on Ramjiban, the Nawab confiscated to the State Sitaram’s treasures and effects, and extirpating his family root and branch, he sent an account of the affair to the Emperor.”

SUBSEQUENT HISTORY

The execution of Sitaram Rai took place in 1712. Maharaja Krishna Chandra of Nadia came to the *gadi* in 1728. During his administration the district was constantly oppressed by Marhatta raids, and he was forced for a time to transfer his residence to Sibnibas in the Kissengunge thana. In 1757 Clive defeated the Mughals at Plassey, and in 1765 the East India Company obtained the *diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. An account of the early British administration of the district will be found in the chapter in this volume dealing with Land Revenue Administration.

FIRST COLLECTOR OF NADIA

In March 1787 the President of the Board of Revenue Mr. John Shore, submitted proposals to the Board for the “abolition of the present division of the country into thirty-six different establishments for the collection of the revenues, eight of which have been created since my departure from Bengal in February 1785,” and for the establishment in place of them of twenty-three Collectorships. In the proposed rearrangement it was suggested to annex “the greatest part of the Hughly

Collectorship to the district of Kishenagur", the President added that "to this disposition some objections may be made, but I know not any other that is preferable," The proposals were approved by the Board of Revenue and submitted to the Governor-General in Council on 13th March 1787, and accepted in their entirety at a meeting of the Council held on the 21st of the same month. In accordance with these orders Mr. F. Redfearn was appointed as the first Collector of Nadia, with Mr. G. Cherry as his assistant. It was resolved at the same time by the Supreme Council that a commission upon the nett collections, at a rate to be subsequently fixed, should be paid to the Collectors, as "at present it is well known that their allowances are in few places equal only to their unavoidable disbursements, and, in general, inferior to them."

LAWLESSNESS IN BEGINNING OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In the year 1808 the crime of gang-robbery or dacoity was very prevalent in the district. Mr. Lumsden, in a minute recorded on 13th June of that year, stated "that the existing system of police has entirely failed in its object, and that the detestable crimes of gang-rubbery and murder are now equally prevalent in every part of Bengal (the Division of Dacca, perhaps, excepted) as at any former period, are truths of too much notoriety to admit of dispute. The details of the enormities which are still committed with impunity in the immediate neighbourhood of the capital of British India, as described in the report, are not too highly coloured." In the course of a report upon the police submitted by Mr. Secretary Dowdeswell in 1809, abstracts are given of three Nadia cases which had recently come before the Calcutta Court of Circuit. A short account of one of these cases may be given, as it is concerned with the last exploit of a famous outlaw, by name Bishwanath Sardar, who had for years terrorized the district. Bishwanath and eight companions were charged with being concerned with others in a robbery which was committed at the residence and factory of

Mr. Faddy, and indigo planter in the district on which occasion Mr. Faddy's servant was murdered, and Mr. Faddy himself, and a Mr. Lediard, who was staying with him, were wounded, and property to a considerable amount carried off. Three of the prisoners under trial were convicted criminals, who had been sent to the Dinajpur Jail, but had succeeded in making their escape and returning to the scene of their former depredations, where they had formed a numerous and powerful gang, which committed the most daring robberies and cruelties, and reduced the whole country side to a state of terror. Mr. Faddy had been most active in communicating to the Magistrate such information as he could procure for the detection and arrest of the leaders of the gang, and had succeeded through his head *paik* in compassing the capture of one of the principals. The gang then determined to wreak their vengeance upon him, and, between 3 and 4 A.M. on 27th September 1808, they attacked Mr. Faddy's house. He and Mr. Lediard were awakened by the report of a gun, and, on rising, found the house surrounded by dacoits, who, in spite of all resistance (in the course of which one of the gang was shot dead), forced their way into the bungalow from all sides, and four of them seized Mr. Faddy after a considerable struggle in which he was nearly strangled. Mr. Lediard's gun having repeatedly missed fire, he received a severe spear wound in his breast, and was disabled from further resistance. Bishwanath then called upon Mr. Faddy to deliver up his head *paik*, who appeared to be the immediate object of the vengeance of the gang, and to point out where his own money was. The dacoits repeatedly dragged Messrs. Faddy and Lediard to a short distance from the house, treating them with great insult and indignity, some proposing to put them to death, and others to cut off their ears and nose. At the approach of day the dacoits retired, carrying off with them all the arms in the house, about Rs. 700 in cash and other property to a considerable amount. On their way they set fire to the house of the head *paik* and murdered two of his relatives. The Court found them all guilty, and sentenced them to death.

In speaking of the atrocities committed by this and other gangs, Mr. Dowdeswell observed: "But robbery, rape and even murder itself are not the worst figures in this hideous and disgusting picture. An expedient of common occurrence with the dacoits merely to induce a confession of property supposed to be concealed is to burn the proprietor with straw or torches, until he discloses the property, or perishes in the flames, and when they are actuated by a spirit of revenge against individuals, worse cruelties (if worse can be) are perpetrated by those remorseless criminals. If the information obtained is not extremely erroneous, the offender hereafter noticed, who was apprehended through the agency of Mr. Blaquiere's *goyendas* at Patna, himself committed fifteen murders in nineteen days, and volumes might be filled with the recital of the atrocities of the dacoits, every line of which would make the blood run cold with horror."

Mr. Blaquiere, the Magistrate of Nadia, dealt very vigorously with this state of affairs, and in the course of a year succeeded in almost freeing the district of these criminals. But those who had escaped arrest merely went over the borders and recommenced their depredations in the neighbouring districts. Mr. Blaquiere was then given jurisdiction over Jessore, Hooghly and Bakarganj, in addition to his own district, and he extended his system to those districts also with great success. In a letter of commendation which he received from Government it was said that "the Honourable the Vice-President in Council considers it only an act of justice to record on the public proceedings and to communicate to you, the high sense which he entertains of your services in the suppression of the heinous crime of gang robbery, and in the amelioration of the general state of police in those districts in which you were appointed to officiate as Magistrate, especially in the district of Nuddea, where that crime was most prevalent, and attended with the most fatal consequences." In token of the appreciation of Government Mr. Blaquiere was granted a bonus of Rs. 6,000, and an extra permanent allowance of Rs. 500 per mensem.

Up till the end of 1808 the police in each district had been a purely local force, with no departmental head with power to co-ordinate their efforts in the suppression of crime, but the success which attended the experiment of placing Mr. Blaquiere in charge of the police of four districts, led to the appointment of a Superintendent of Police (subsequently the Inspector-General), with powers over the whole police force throughout the Province.

One of the chief weapons used by Mr. Blaquiere was the employment of *goyendas* or spies. This practice led to a good deal of controversy at the time, and was strongly denounced by one or two of the Magistrates, and some of the judicial authorities, especially by the Judge of the Court of Circuit of the Murshidabad Division. It was, however, approved by the Government, and also accepted by the Nizam-at-Adalat, from whose register the following extract, dealing with the manner in which *goyendas* should be employed, is taken:—"The established duty of *goyendas* is to discover the haunts of the dacoits, to watch their movements, to mix with them occasionally, with the view of obtaining accurate intelligence respecting their operations and designs for their employer, to communicate to him the result of their observations and enquiries, and, finally, to point out to *goyendas*, who are usually regular police officers, the persons of the individuals whom the Magistrate, in the discharge of his public functions, may order to be apprehended."

THE MUTINY

The Mutiny affected the district very slightly. In the article on Kapasdanga in Chapter XVI of this volume an extract has been given from a letter written in 1857 by the Manager of one of the largest indigo concerns in the district. There was a certain amount of trouble in the sister district of Jessore, but practically none in Nadia. In his minute on the Mutiny dated September 30th, 1858, the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir F. J. Halliday, wrote: "In

the Nadia Division, Berhampore, garrisoned by native troops, both cavalry and infantry, was rescued from threatened danger, first by the rapid despatch of European troops by land and by steamer, and secondly by the prompt and well conceived measures for disarming the native garrison. An uneasy feeling meanwhile extended itself through Krishnagar, Jessore and the whole Division. The districts generally have been perfectly tranquil, and furnish little matter to remark upon."

INDIGO

During the first half of the nineteenth century the manufacture of indigo was the most important industry in the district. It sprang originally from very small native factories which were bought up by Europeans. The district became gradually dotted with indigo concerns, owned by English capitalists, or by proprietors backed by money advanced by agents in Calcutta. A great impetus was thus given to the cultivation and manufacture of indigo. Large factories rapidly sprang up, taking the place of the smaller native ones. Money was plentiful with the planters, and the ryots eagerly took advances to grow indigo. The cultivation increased, and the high rates which the dye then commanded yielded large profits. One of the greatest difficulties which presented itself in the earlier days of indigo cultivation was the contention which arose between neighbouring planters as to the right to sow in the different villages. This difficulty, however, gradually righted itself, and boundaries were laid down between the different indigo factories, beyond which neither party could extend except under a penalty. At first the ryots were not averse to the cultivation, and as the country was then lower than during later years, and more liable to fertilizing inundations from the rivers, the plant grew more luxuriantly, and the crop was less liable to failure from drought. The European planter soon gained for himself an important position in the district, although at first he held but little property. The large native landlords, and

holders of sub-tenures, finding that their influence was interfered with by the planters, endeavoured to stir up a feeling against them, and to prevent the spread of indigo cultivation. This led to quarrels, and the planter, failing to get redress from or through the courts, had recourse to fighting the native landholder with bands of clubmen, according to the practice in Bengal at that time. The planter began also to buy real property (when it became legal for Europeans to hold land), even at fancy prices, in order to get rid of the annoyance and injury to which he was subjected by hostile native proprietors.

This, however, was but the commencement of still greater troubles for the European planter. He had got over his early disputes with neighbouring planters, and had surmounted the difficulty of inimical *zamindars* by himself becoming a proprietor, or at any rate by buying a sub-tenure upon the lands which surrounded his factory. But the greatest difficulty still remained. This was the native agency which he had to employ in carrying on the cultivation. The district was now dotted with large concerns, whose managers and sub-managers could give but slight personal supervision to their work, and had to leave it to native servants. A great deal too much was thus committed to underlings who fleeced the cultivators, and as the planter often declined to hear complaints from the latter and redress their wrongs, a very bitter feeling was engendered against the factories. This was intensified by illegal practices committed in the badly managed factories to enforce the cultivation of the plant, and also by a very marked rise in the price of other agricultural produce, which brought home to the ryots the loss which they sustained by the cultivation of indigo. Moreover, the commencement of the Eastern Bengal State Railway through Nadia at about that time led to a sudden rise in the price of labour, with which the planters failed to keep pace. Also the ryots were in a chronic state of indebtedness to the factories for advances, which went on in the books from father to son, and were the source of a hereditary irritation against the planters, whenever

a bad season forced them to put pressure upon the ryots to pay up. The dislike to indigo, thus generated, grew apace, and on a rumour being started that the Bengal Government had declared itself against indigo-planting, the whole district got into a ferment, which culminated in the disturbances of 1860. At first all the planters suffered equally, the good with the bad, and for some time the district lay at the mercy of the cultivators, and those of them who had acted on their own judgment, and sown their lands with indigo in the terms of the contract which they had entered into with the factory, were seized and beaten by the mob. The Bengal Government endeavoured to arrest the devastation, and eventually passed Art XI of 1860 "to enforce the fulfilment of indigo contracts, and to provide for the appointment of a Commission of enquiry."

This Commission sat during the hot weather of 1860, and its report was submitted in August of the same year. The report gave an account of the various systems of indigo cultivation in Bengal and Bihar, and divided the subjects of the enquiry into three heads:—(1) the truth or falsehood of the charges made against the system and the planters; (2) the changes required to be made in the system, as between manufacturer and cultivator, such as could be made by the heads of the concerns themselves; and (3) the changes required in the laws or administration, such as could only originate with, and be carried out by, the legislative and executive authorities.

The general conclusion at which the Commission arrived was that the cause of the evils in the system of indigo cultivation as then practised was to be found in the fact that the manufacturer required the ryot to furnish the plant for a payment not nearly equal to the cost of its production, and that it was to the system, which was of very long standing, rather than to the planters themselves, that blame attached. The only remedy recommended by the Commission which it was in the power of Government to apply was a good and effective

administration of the law as it stood. Accordingly new subdivisions were created, and various other steps taken to improve the efficiency of the Civil Courts.

The moral effect of the temporary Act of 1860, and the public assurance given to the complaining ryots that proved grievances should be remedied for future seasons, was such that most of the planters were able to complete their spring sowings, but, as autumn came on, the state of affairs became very critical. Lord Canning wrote: "I assure you that for about a week it caused me more anxiety than I have had since the days of Delhi," and "from that day I felt that a shot fired in anger or fear by one foolish planter might put every factory in Lower Bengal in flames." The intensity of feeling aroused among the ryots may be gauged from a note recorded by the Lieutenant-Governor in September 1860. Sir J. P. Grant wrote: "I have myself just returned from an excursion to Sirajganj on the Jamuna river, where I went by water for objects connected with the line of the Dacca Railway, and wholly unconnected with indigo matters. I had intended to go up the Matabhanga and down the Ganges; but finding, on arriving at the Kumar, that the shorter passage was open, I proceeded along the Kumar and Kaliganga, which rivers run in Nadia and Jessore, and through that part of the Pabna district which lies south of the Ganges [*i.e.*, the north-eastern corner of the Nadia district, as now (1909) constituted]. Numerous crowds of ryots appeared at various places, whose whole prayer was for an order of Government that they should not cultivate indigo. On my return a few days afterwards along the same two rivers, from dawn to dusk, as I steamed along these two rivers for some 60 or 70 miles, both banks were literally lined with crowds of villagers, claiming justice in this matter. Even the women of the villages on the banks were collected in groups by themselves; the males who stood at and between the riverside villages in little crowds must have collected from all the villages at a great distance on either side. I do not know that it ever fell to the lot of an Indian officer to steam for 14 hours through a continued

double line of suppliants for justice ; all were most respectful and orderly, but also were plainly in earnest. It would be folly to suppose that such a display on the part of tens of thousands of people, men, women and children, has no deep meaning. The organization and capacity for combined and simultaneous action in the cause, which this remarkable demonstration over so large an extent of country proved, are subjects worthy of much consideration."

Towards the end of September the Government of India authorized the issue of a notification in the affected districts to disabuse the minds of the rural population of the erroneous impression said to have been conceived by them, that Government was opposed to the cultivation of indigo ; to convey an assurance to the ryots that their position in regard to past arrangements would not be made worse than it was, and that, in future arrangements, their right to free action in regard to indigo, as in regard to all other crops, would be respected in practice ; to warn all parties concerned against having recourse to violent or unlawful proceedings ; and to announce the intention of Government not to re-enact the temporary law of 1860.

Reports that the ryots would oppose the October sowings led the Government to strengthen the military police in the indigo districts, and to send two gun-boats to the rivers of Nadia and Jessore, and Native Infantry to the head-quarters stations of these two districts. Subsequently in the spring of 1861, the planters complained of the difficulty of realizing their rents, of being forcibly dispossessed of their *nijabad* lands, and of danger to their own lives and those of their servants. The difficulty as to rents being undeniable, extra officials were appointed where required, and Messrs, C. F. Montresor and G. G. Morris of the Indian Civil Service were appointed special Commissioners, the former for the Nadia district, and the latter for Jessore, Pabna and Faridpur to settle the rent difficulty. Further steps were taken to prevent disturbances during the ensuing sowing season. For a long time there was a complete overthrow of the industry in Nadia and

the adjoining districts, but by degrees, as the excitement cooled down, those factories which had been most carefully managed before the disturbances, recovered themselves, and eventually most of the concerns which were well backed by capital succeeded in weathering the storm, and were carried on until the invention of synthetic indigo reduced the price of the natural dye to so great an extent as practically to destroy the industry. Throughout the whole district there is only one concern in which the manufacture of inigo is now (1909) carried on, and the outturn of the dye during 1908-09 was only nominal.

KRISHNAGAR AS DIVISIONAL HEAD-QUARTERS

Up till 1854 Nadia was in the Jessore Division, but, when the office of Superintendent of Police for the Lower Provinces was abolished in that year, a rearrangement of the Commissioners' Divisions was made, under which the Nadia Division was constituted, with head-quarters at Krishnagar. For various reasons the Commissioner did not take up his residence at Krishnagar for more than a year. In February 1855 he applied for permission to remain at Alipore, but after correspondence with the Board of Revenue, the Lieutenant-Governor decided that the head-quarters of the Division must be at Krishnagar. In 1860, however, the Murshidabad district having in the meantime been included in the Rajshahi Division, the head-quarters of the Nadia Division were retransferred to Alipore.

NADIA AS A LITERARY CENTRE

The district of Nadia was, for centuries, famous as a centre of literature and learning. In the article upon Nabadwip in the Gazetteer chapter in this volume will be found a short account of the best known among the men of learning who have brought fame to the district. Below will be found some remarks, based chiefly upon Mr. R. C. Dutt's "Literature of Bengal," on the connection of Nadia with the literature of the Province.

The earliest of all the Bengali poets was Jayadeb, who was one of the ornaments of the court of King Lakhsman Sen at Nabadwip, in the twelfth century. Many tales are told about him, but very little is definitely known of his life. He is chiefly famous as the composer of the Sanscrit poem *Gita Govinda*, which consists of a number of songs on the amours of Krishna and Radha. Mr. R. C. Dutt in his work referred to above speaks of "the exquisite music of the songs" and adds "and if the book is rich in its music, it is no less rich in its descriptions. The blue waves of the Jumna, the cool shade of the Tamal tree, the soft whispering of the Malaya breeze, the voluptuous music of Krishna's flute, the timid glances of the love-stricken milkmaids, the fond working of a lover's heart, the pangs of jealousy, the sorrows of separation, the raptures of reunion—all these are clearly and vividly described in the song of the immortal bard of Birbhum."

The first Bengali poet to write in his own vernacular was Chandidas, who was born in the Birbhum district in the fourteenth century. In the fifteenth century came Krittibas, who was born at Fulia near Santipur. His great work was a translation, or to be more accurate, a rescript, in Bengali, of the great Sanscrit epic Ramayana. Mr. Dutt writes, "It will thus appear that Krittibas' is not a translation of the Sanscrit work. A class of reciters called *Kathakas* have flourished in this country from olden times; they recite legends before large audiences, they amuse and entertain their hearers by their wit, or move them to tears by their eloquence; and they thus teach the unlettered public in the traditions of the past, and preserve from age to age the literary heritage of the nation. The Ramayana is a fit subject for *Kathakas*; and the recitation lasts for a month or more, the speaker taking up the story every day from the point where he left it on the preceding day. It is supposed with reason that Krittibas learnt the story of the Ramayana from *Kathakas*, and that, without attempting to translate the Sanscrit epic, he has given his version of the story as he

heard it. The poet has himself told us in several places in his work that he has composed it as he heard it recited." Mr. Dutt then proceeds to give an interesting comparison between Krittibas' Ramayana and the Mahabharata of Kasiram Das, who also flourished in the fifteenth century, and who was born at Katwa, on the opposite bank of the Bhagirathi to Nadia. "But if Krittibas fails us as a translator, as a poet and composer he rises in our estimation. His narration is fluent and easy and often sparkles with the richest humour. Kasiram Das is a pious and learned student, who has endeavoured to give his countrymen a condensed translation of the Sanscrit Mahabharata; Krittibas is a sprightly story-teller who tells the story of the Ramayana with his own native wit. Kasiram Das is anxious to teach his countrymen in the sacred traditions, the undying legends, and the didactic narrations which compose the bulk of the Mahabharata. Krittibas delights in depicting in vivid colours the deeds of Hanuman, the fierce rage of the Rakshasas, the marvellous prowess of the god-like Rama. Kasiram Das approaches his subject with reverence and writes in a chaste and dignified though simple style; Krittibas delights in the somewhat primitive battles between monkeys and giants, colours his description with his wit, and writes in the style of ordinary villagers. Kasiram Das' work is the favourite study of pious Hindu ladies, and of religious and elderly men of the upper classes; Krittibas appeals more effectively to the million. The village *Mudi* (confectioner) reads his Ramayana when waiting for his customers, and the village *Kalu* (oil-manufacturer) chants the story of Rama and Sita as his bullock turns his primitive oil-mill with a slow creaking sound. To the upper ten thousand Kasiram Das' work is the repository of all the sacred traditions and moral lessons of the Hindus; to the class of vendors, shopkeepers and the like, as well as to the upper classes, Krittibas' work is a joy which endureth for work (? ever). For the millions of Bengal, the two works have been a means of moral education, the value of which cannot be over-estimated."

None of the writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are particularly connected with the Nadia district, but in the eighteenth century, when the famous Krishna Chandra Rai was the Maharaja of Nadia, literature flourished at his court. The two chief poets of this period were Ram Prasad Sen and Bharat Chandra Rai. Ram Prasad Sen, who was a Baidya by caste, was born in Kumarhatta in the Kushtia Subdivision. He commenced life in a merchant's office in Calcutta, but having shown distinct literary ability his employer allowed him to return to his native village on a small allowance ; here he devoted himself entirely to writing poetry, and his fame spread until it reached the ears of Maharaja Krishna Chandra, who sent for him to his court and favoured him with his patronage. He excelled principally in short poems. Mr. Dutt says of him, "One great charm of his poetry consists in the simple homely similes, always drawn from familiar objects of lowly village life. The cultivated rice-field, the ferry-boat, the village market, the oil mill, such are the objects of his similes, round which he entwines his feeling songs with the most touching effect." Bharat Chandra Rai was a man of good family in the Bardwan district. Owing to various misfortunes he was compelled to leave his home, and after many vicissitudes he came to the notice of Maharaja Krishna Chandra, who took him to his residence at Krishnagar, and appointed him as a pundit of the court. Mr. Dutt has no great opinion of his abilities ; he describes him as a somewhat unsuccessful imitator of Mukunda Ram, who flourished in the seventeenth century ; at the same time he says that he was a complete master of the art of verification, "and his appropriate phrases and rich descriptions have passed into bye-words. It would be difficult to over-estimate the polish he has given to the Bengali language." After the death of Maharaja Krishna Chandra, the connection of later writers with the district became very slender, and descriptions of them and their works would be outside the scope of this volume.