

**LIFE IN THE MOFUSSIL;  
OR, THE CIVILIAN IN  
LOWER BENGAL. VOL. II**

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Life in the Mofussil; or, The civilian in Lower Bengal. Vol. II by An Ex-Civilian

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**AN EX-CIVILIAN**

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*LIFE IN THE MOFUSSIL;*

OR,

THE CIVILIAN IN LOWER BENGAL.

BY

AN EX-CIVILIAN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *ACTING AS JOINT MAGISTRATE AT KISHNAGHUR.*

NATURE OF COUNTRY.—INDIGO CULTIVATION.—KISHNAGHUR STATION.—MUTTON CLUB.—ICE CLUB.—CATTLE POUNDS.—POSTAL SYSTEM.—THE JAIL.—CASTE DIFFICULTIES.—AMUSEMENTS.—RAJAH OF KISHNAGHUR.—MONKEYS.—SNAKES.

AS I drove along the dusty road, I felt a certain sense of freedom in having cast off the official cares of the place, and thought of many things that my successor would find both difficult and laborious to unravel and bring to a satisfactory conclusion, *e.g.*, Bunwarree Lall's case; but I knew that the man I was about to succeed at Kishnaghur would leave similar worries to me; so that my lightness of heart would be only temporary.

Indeed, my heart was heavy enough on leaving Mozufferpore, after a couple of days' stay there, and saying good-bye to all the friends I had made during the last three years. This is one of the disagreeable phases of Indian official life. We are thrown for two or three years into daily contact (it is only the subdivisional official who lives alone) with the same very limited number of people; and we get to know each other so well, that the very smallest details of our lives become subjects of mutual interest, when one day there comes an order in the *Gazette*, and we are torn apart, perhaps never to meet again.

Nevertheless, I always retained a most affectionate recollection of my friendships at this my first station; and I do not think that any formed afterwards under analogous circumstances, took quite such deep root. My journey to Calcutta was very easily performed, as the railway was now open all the way; and as I flew past the scene of my meal in the platelayer's cottage, and thought of the very slow progress I then made, I was in a frame of mind fully to appreciate the blessings of Western civilization, notwithstanding anything that Mr. Ruskin may say to the contrary.

On leaving, I had disposed of everything except my table and bed linen; so that a good deal of my time in Calcutta was passed in making purchases in that extraordinary place, the China Bazaar, where Hindus vie with Chinese in endeavouring to dispose of their wares stored up for European consumers, and where, if you ask for a pot of jam, an effort is made to tempt you with a batch of Indian gauze vests; and if you demand some netting for mosquito curtains, you will probably be offered a mahogany dining table.

This necessarily makes getting one's real wants satisfied rather a long business; but a couple of days' patience and perseverance in the stifling atmosphere of these narrow lanes enabled me to accomplish this; and having seen a boat start with a tolerable load to find its way up to Kishnaghur by the network of streams with many names, but which are all offshoots of the mighty Ganges, flowing down to the sea by the various routes cut for themselves through the soft alluvial soil, I rested for a couple of days in Calcutta.

It was somewhat melancholy to find that almost all my former friends had disappeared. All the officials, from the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal downwards, seemed to have been changed, and I was glad to get away to my new appointment. Kishnaghur was much more accessible than Mozufferpore, for I started at 7 a.m. from the Calcutta terminus of the Eastern Bengal Railway, and reached Bug-goolah, the station for Kishnaghur, between fifty and sixty miles distant, in three and a half hours. There I found a buggy of the Collector Sahib's waiting my arrival, which was to convey me over the twelve miles of metalled road leading to Kishnaghur, the capital of the Nuddea district.

I found myself in a country very different in its features to Tirhoot. The road was a very heavy embankment the whole way. In some places the water was still lying, though it was the driest part of the year, viz., the end of May; and it was evident that in the rainy season a good deal of the country through which I drove would be seventeen or eighteen feet under water. To the north of the Nuddea district, of which Kishnaghur is the capital, there is some high land; but in this part, and the neighbouring district of Jessore, rice is the principal crop, and has the faculty apparently of growing from floating roots and rising as the water rises. When ripe, it is cut by men in boats, and the stalks attain an enormous length.

Another important crop is indigo, which is grown, however, on a totally different system to that pursued in Tirhoot. In the dry season all the various streams filtering down to the sea are merely silver threads winding among innumerable sandy islands, the soil of which is specially