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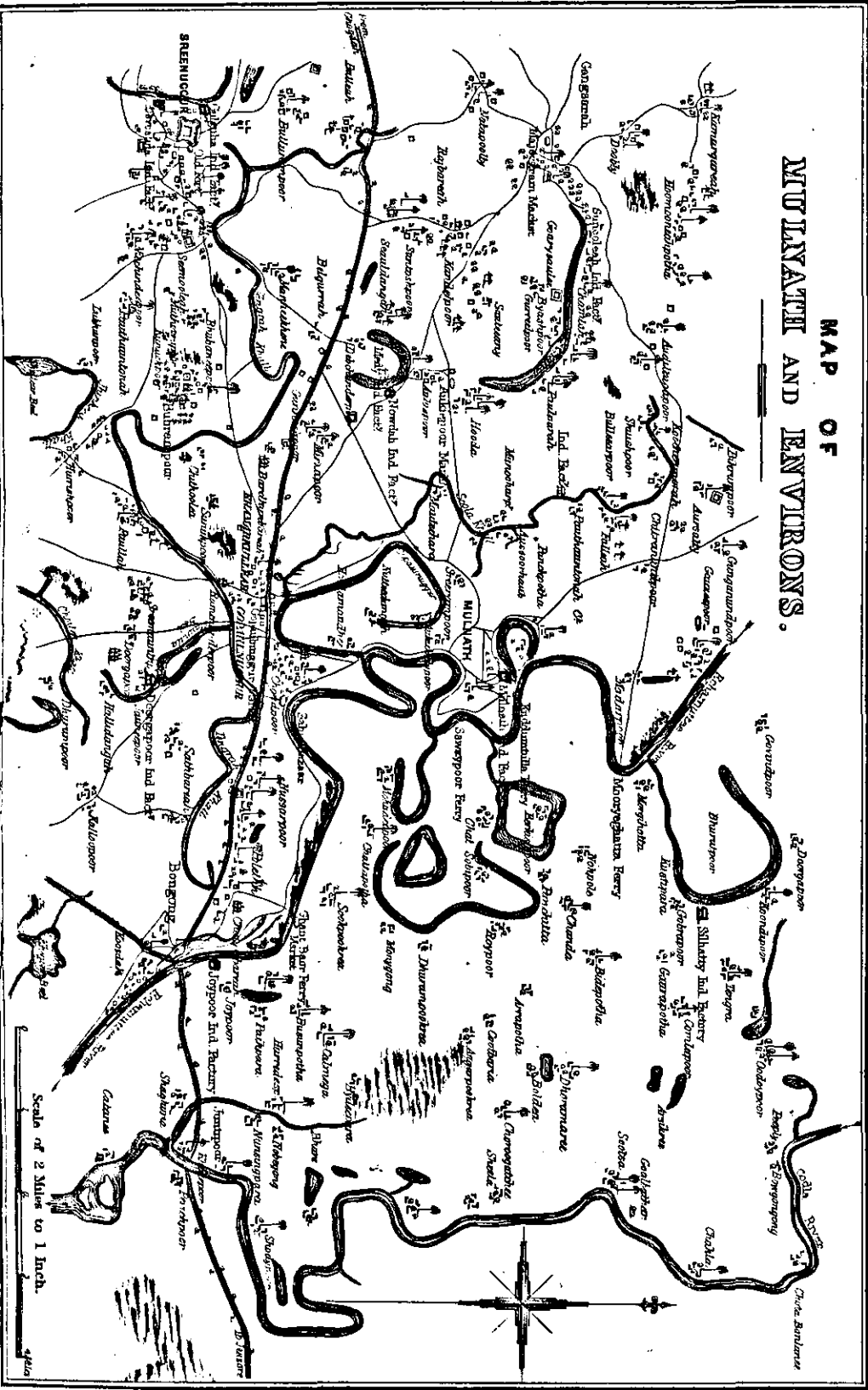


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To
Mr. Fred. J. Mount
with the very kind respects
of the Author

Calcutta
February 1860.

MAP OF MULNATHI AND ENVIRONS.



Published by W. Thacker & Co., London, Calcutta & Bombay.

Map & Son, Ltd. to the Press.

RURAL LIFE IN BENGAL.

RURAL LIFE IN BENGAL;

ILLUSTRATIVE OF

Anglo-Indian Suburban Life;

MORE PARTICULARLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE PLANTER AND PEASANTRY,
THE VARIED PRODUCE OF THE SOIL AND SEASONS, WITH COPIOUS DETAILS
OF THE CULTURE AND MANUFACTURE OF INDIGO.

LETTERS FROM AN ARTIST IN INDIA TO HIS SISTERS IN ENGLAND.

By the Author of

"ANGLO-INDIAN DOMESTIC LIFE,"

"ROUGH NOTES OF A ROUGH TRIP TO RANGOON,"
ETC."

Illustrated with One Hundred and Sixty Six Engravings.

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TO
MY SISTERS

In England,

THESE LETTERS

ARE

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS,

DRAWN BY THE AUTHOR.

ENGRAVED BY J. AND G. NICHOLLS.

LETTER I.

	<i>Page.</i>
1. Map of Mulnath Environs	v.
2. Dedicatory Page.—Floral wreath: Three varieties of Jasmine,—the <i>Gundraj</i> (or Cape); the <i>Motee Bêl</i> (or Great Double-flowered Arabian, or Tuscan); and the <i>Bun Mulika</i> (or Single-flowered Arabian). Foot wreath of other Indian white flowers,—the <i>Bhent</i> , the <i>Jooes</i> (two species, Jasmīnes); the <i>Kaminee</i> , and the <i>Shwet Kamullutta</i>	xii.
3. Sprig of Indigo	1
4. Mulnath House	3
5. The Equirotal Carriage.	4
6. The Pinnace	5
7. The Bujra	5
8. The Planter's Bhouluya	6
9. The Putelee.	7
10. The Pulwar	9
11. Baboo Ghât.	10
12. The Dengee and Punoées	11
13. The Dengee-puller	12
14. New Cremation, or Burning-Ghât, Calcutta.	14
15. Agâpârah, on the Hooghly	15
16. Kirdah Temples for the worship of Shiva	16
17. Government House, Barrackpore	17
18. General Cooper's House, Barrackpore	18
19. The Rhinoceros Enclosure	19
20. Serampore, from Genl. Cooper's residence.	21
21. Chandernagore; from the river	22
22. Chinsurah " ditto.	23
23. Hooghly Imâmbarâh, or Mohammudan College; from the river	24
24. Bandel; ditto	25
25. The Oolâk	26
26. Hay and Straw Boats, or Bhurs	27
27. Fishing Net.—Hilsa Fishing Boats in the distance	28
28. The Small, or Hand-fishing Net	29
29. Sookaâgur House	30
30. Sookaâgur Ruins. Vignette.	31

LETTER II.

31. Mulnath Garden	32
32. Entrance Lodge, Mulnath Grounds	33

LETTER II.—(Continued).

	<i>Page.</i>
33. The Lake and Aqueduct	34
34. The Aviary, and Mâlees' House	37
35. The Kitchen	37
36. The Young Bamboo	38
37. Village of Panchpotha	38
38. Moosnes, or Linseed in Flower	38
39. Rye Snsra, or Mustard, ditto	38
40. Huldee, or Turmeric Root	38
41. Tobacco Plant	39
42. Flower of ditto	39
43. The Chillies	39
44. Teel, or Sesame	40
45. The Stables	41
46. Mulnath Hospital.—Men's ward	42
47. Ditto. Women's ward	42
48. Dr. Deenonath Dhur	45
49. School and Drying-room	47
50. The Schoolmaster's Dwelling	47

LETTER III.

51. Sketch on Luckypore Lake	51
52. Assistant Magistrate's Bungalow, Kishnaghur	57
53. Kishnaghur Church	58
54. Kishnaghur College	59
55. Ditto Dâk Bungalow	60
56. The Post Coming-in. Vignette	61

LETTER IV.

57. The Ploughman, carrying his Plough and Harrow	62
58. The Indigo Plant	72
59. Bengalee Anchor. Vignette	85

LETTER V.

60. A sprig of Dasee Indigo	86
61. The Seed Golaha	89
62. Dhân, or Rice (about one 4th natural size)	94
63. The Dhanke, or Rice-husking Mill	96
64. The Bengalee Plough	97
65. Ploughing	97
66. Harrowing	98
67. Group of Jumna Pares Goats. Vignette.	99

LETTER VI.

	<i>Page.</i>
68. Village of Mulnath.	100
69. The Haut, or Market-place.	102
70. Residence of Head-servants	108
71. Soobulla, the Insane Mendicant	104
72 to 82. Varieties of Sola Topee. 11 figs.	105-106

LETTER VII.

83. The Ganges Comp.'s Steamer, "Mirapore"	107
84. Ghonee, or Fish-trap	110
85. Sun, or Soon.—Varieties of the Hemp Plant	112
86. Koosta	112
87. Mesta	112
88. Map of Mulnath Grounds	113

LETTER VIII.

89. Bringing in the Indigo in Carts	114
90. River flowing into the Lake	115
91. The Factory, Office, &c.	116
92. Cutting the Indigo	116
93. Bringing the Indigo in Boats	117
94. A Cart of Indigo	118
95. The Vats	119
96. The Neel Kola: carrying Indigo to the Vats	120
97. Women carrying the Plant to the Vats.	121
98. Arrangement for Pressing the Plant.	121
99. The Uprights, and Pressing Beam.	121
100. The Pressing Lever.	121
101. Pressing the Plant	122
102. Vat filled, and ready for Steeping	122
103. The Chinese Pump.—Top view	123
104. Construction of Scrapers	123
105. Chinese Pump working	124
106. Near view of Chinese Pump	125
107. Aqueduct Sluice Door	125
108. Carrying away the Dead Plant.	126
109. The Cetee Stack	127
110. Beating the Vat	127
111. Bhoona Coolie,—Vat-beater.	128
112. Plugs and Drains of Lower Vat.	129
113. Letting off first of Liquid	129
114. Indigo Reservoir: Mode of Drawing-off	129
115. The Furnaces	130
116. The Boilers	130
117. Plan of Straining Table	131
118. Straining the Indigo	131
119. Extra Straining Table, &c.	132
120. Bottom of Pressing-box	132
121. Lid of ditto	132
122. Pressing-box complete	132
123. Pressing-boxes lined	133
124. The Press, before screwing	133
125. Block of Indigo	134

LETTER VIII.—(Continued).

	<i>Page.</i>
126. First Cutting	134
127. Second Cutting Frame	135
128. The Cutter	135
129. Final Cutting and Stamping	135
130. The Carpenter's House and Grounds.	136
131. A Cake of Indigo. Vignette.	136

LETTER IX.

132. The Jemadar's Residence, and Seed Golahs	137
133. Hurrishunder Mookerjee, Gomastah	137
134. Ram Chunder Roy, Gomastah	137
135. The Nâib; Gunga Narain Mookerjee	138
136. The Jemadar, Ramdehall	139
137. Rodee Biahas, Sirdar of Coolies	139

LETTER X.

138. Alligator Ghât	142
139. The Dead Alligator.	144
140. Skull of ditto	146

LETTER XI.

141. Chowkeydar's, or Watchman's Dwelling	147
142. Village of Bhoona Coolies	152
143. Village near Mulnath	171
144. Koorea, or Watch Hut	177

LETTER XII.

145. Kapudangah Mission Church	178
146. Ditto ditto House and School.	183

LETTER XIII.

147. The Elephant equipped for Travelling	186
148. The Kapus, or Cotton Plant	187
149. The Teel, or Sesame Plant	188
150. Urhur Plant	188
151. Mâs Kulâee	188
152. Tekree Kulâee	188
153. Khessaree Plant	189
154. Mussooree ditto	189
155. Channa, or Grain ditto	189
156. The Mustard Plant	189
157. The Oil Mill	190
158. A Kârnâ, or Stacking Ground	191
159. Roodapore Bungalow	192
160. Carrying Letters in the Mofussal	195
161. The Ferry Boat	197
162. View at the Ferry	198
163. The Grove, Mulnath	199
164. Shepherd's Hut	200
165. The Garden Cemetery	202
166. Bengalee Reaping Hook. Vignette	204

ERRATA.

The impossibility of submitting proofs of this work for correction by the author in India will account for a variety of errors, chiefly typographical (many occurring in words foreign to English compositors), having crept into the text, and be accepted as apology for Errata so numerous as the following:—

- | Page. | Page. |
|--|--|
| 2. last line—for <i>floats</i> read <i>flats</i> . | 112. 4th line from bottom—for <i>stor</i> read <i>star</i> . |
| 5. under illustration—for <i>Bhouliya</i> read <i>Planter's Bhouliya</i> . | 113. 2nd para. 9th line, after the word <i>decreasing</i> , add <i>in number</i> . |
| 7. second line—for <i>Residency</i> read <i>Presidency</i> . | 114. Letter VIII. 3rd line—for <i>its</i> read <i>the</i> . |
| 13. Foot Note. 5th line, also page 33, 4th line, after the word 'Albeit' omit the comma. | 129. 2nd para. 15th line—for <i>ready</i> read <i>readily</i> . |
| 14. First line of last para. after the word 'eastern' insert a comma. | 132. under illustration—for <i>lids</i> read <i>lid</i> . |
| 25. 3rd line—for " <i>low steeple or belfry</i> " read <i>porch or gateway</i> . | 134. 2nd para. 9th line—for <i>depth</i> read <i>depths</i> . |
| 28. Under illustration—in <i>Hand and Fishing Net</i> , omit the word <i>and</i> . | " last line—after <i>themselves</i> insert <i>one</i> . |
| 35. 4th line—for <i>Smith</i> read <i>Smyth</i> . | 139. Para. 3, 6th line—after <i>Sirdar</i> insert <i>or</i> . |
| 37. 4th line below figure for <i>fields</i> , read <i>field</i> . | 140. Para. 2, line 1—for <i>cart</i> read <i>carts</i> . |
| " 7th line from bottom—after the words "whole length" substitute a comma for the full stop, and continue the sentence. | " In Tabular Statement—4th line from bottom—for <i>mougee</i> read <i>mungee</i> . |
| 38. 5th line from bottom—for <i>pendant</i> read <i>pendent</i> . | 149. First line—for <i>amber</i> read <i>umber</i> . |
| 39. 4th line—omit the quotation marks. | 152. 2nd para. 5th line—after the words "of their minds," instead of a comma, insert a full stop. |
| " Second para. 11th line, also under illustration—for <i>Jeel</i> read <i>Teal</i> . | 154. 3rd line from bottom—after the word <i>letters</i> insert a dash, and omit the word <i>that</i> . In next line also, after the word <i>people</i> , omit the word <i>that</i> . |
| 45. 5th line—after the dash following the word <i>discussed</i> —insert the word <i>and</i> . | 155. 7th line from bottom, for <i>instances</i> read <i>instance</i> . |
| 51. Two lines from bottom, and in last line—for <i>Nuclees</i> read <i>Nuclei</i> . | 156. 12th line from top—omit the word <i>been</i> . |
| 53. 5th line, 4th para. for <i>cultivators</i> read <i>cultivations</i> . | " last para. 3rd line—for <i>Brahmun</i> read <i>Brahmans</i> . |
| 77. 2nd para. 12th line, for <i>necessary</i> read <i>necessarily</i> . | 157. last line—for <i>one</i> read <i>our</i> . |
| " Foot Note, first line—for <i>severity</i> read <i>security</i> . | 159. Transpose the foot notes and their references in this page. |
| 80. 9th line—in ' <i>dustorees</i> '—omit the final <i>a</i> . | 165. 2nd para. 5th line—for <i>dispute</i> read <i>despite</i> . |
| " 15th line—for <i>fatten</i> read <i>batten</i> . | " Next line—for <i>doctrins</i> read <i>doctrines</i> . |
| 88. 2nd para. 5th line from the end—for <i>dependents</i> read <i>dependants</i> . | " 4th line from bottom—for <i>this</i> read <i>the</i> . |
| 101. 2nd para. in list of <i>Chattels</i> —for <i>kherag</i> read <i>cherag</i> . | 167. Foot note—end of 3rd line from bottom, insert <i>own</i> . |
| " 5th line from bottom—for <i>Bengalees</i> read <i>Bengalees</i> . | 174. 13th line—after the word <i>twig</i> omit the word <i>and</i> . |
| 104. 3rd para. 8th line—omit quotation marks. | 175. 10th line from top—in <i>Nourmathall</i> omit the <i>t</i> . Same line, for <i>Guin</i> read <i>Guire</i> —or <i>Geer</i> . |
| 107. Letter VIII. 2nd para. 1st line, for <i>would</i> read <i>could</i> . | 176. 2nd para. 8th line—for " <i>The Orient</i> " read <i>British India</i> . |
| 108. 3rd para. 4th line—for <i>its</i> read <i>their</i> . | 184. In 12th line—after the words—"to be nothing" insert— <i>to which they are</i> . |
| 109. end of 3rd line—after the words <i>believed the</i> , insert <i>grinning</i> . | 188. 2nd line—for <i>with</i> read <i>will</i> . |
| | 189. 3rd line for <i>grain</i> read <i>gram</i> —The like correction also in first line of Foot Note. |
| | 190. 2nd line—for <i>cap</i> read <i>cup</i> . |
151. *Note*.—7th line from top. "*germinate in the Hindoo*."—The author's meaning in this passage is not sufficiently defined. He is speaking of the Hindoos of *Bengal*, and intended to confine his observations (though with no very narrow margin perhaps) to the class of which his little subject *Bonomalee* is supposed to form the type. There have been thousands of heroic "Hindoos"—or the fame of *Rohilla*—*Rajpoot*—*Goorka* and *Seikh* warriors—for all these are Hindoos—of the North, has been a myth, and the glory of British victories suffers a corresponding declassification. There can be little honour in conquest over cowards; nor in a Dispatch which declares that "every inch of the ground was disputed"—is it possible to exclude the concession of that valour to the foe from superiority over which spring the laurels of the victor.

In the concluding sheets of the work, which have not yet reached India—other inaccuracies may probably be found to occur—but where they originate in the mysteries of Indian names or local circumstances they will as readily be detected by old Indians as, where they are of ordinary character, they will be understood by the general reader.

Calcutta, Jan. 28th, 1860.

PREFACE.

THE following Letters—with two exceptions—were written about five years ago. Travel and pressing duties long delayed their publication; whilst the desolating insurrection of the past twenty months, spreading its leaden pall over the face of the country—carrying bereavement to countless homes—and banishing nearly every thought but that of the one terrible drama—the all-absorbing romance of reality around, in which every Christian seemed called upon to play some part, however petty or remote, may well be supposed to have extinguished for the time nearly all interest in any subjects less exciting than the alarms—the carnage, and the din of war. But the hydra-spirit of Revolt is now crushed;—“Rebellion is rebuked;”—faint and more faint becomes the sound of strife—hushed by the gentle tones of womanly and royal mercy. Returning Peace, with Spring’s “ethereal mildness,” now resumes her wonted smile,—and like the loosened Dove of old, in search of resting for its feet—alights once more on our deserted plains, to “make fair weather in this blustering land.”

Thus protected and encouraged, and trusting to the liberality of his Queen’s “Amnesty” to include free pardon for *his* offences also, the Author ventures to bring in this petty tribute to Her Courts of Peace.

During the protracted interval which has thus elapsed, however, even the great storm and strife of Mutiny, at which one-half the world has gazed in wonder, was insufficient to keep down smaller disputations nearer home; and hence, upon returning to his task, the Author found that he, too, had wandered into disputable fields. The question touching Indigo—the Planters, and the Ryuts, discussed fully thirty years ago, had been by different parties twice revived,—augmented, and swollen into controversy. For himself, however, the Author finds nothing to lament in this. It has

enlarged his information and his views, without affecting his design, which it was unnecessary to disturb by anachronisms. This design—apart from under purposes that fear no scrutiny—was manifestly not controversial, but descriptive and pictorial. It will hardly be supposed, therefore, that he would have selected a subject for his pictures, intended to please the feminine eyes and gentle spirits of his sisters, with any conception that all his “pretty houses” and “Noah’s-arcs and things” were convertible, by a sort of phantasmagorial shifting, into “whitened sepulchres” and ghastly skeletons. It is with the hope that his picture has no such destructibility of element within, that he does not now anticipate such a fate by committing it at once to the fire; as he assuredly would do if he thought himself in danger of being found, in the forcible language of Scripture,—“fighting against God,”—that is drawing Utopian pictures of the relationship between the strong and the weak, and, by so doing, glossing over the state of the poor with false impressions as to their condition,—their wants—their sufferings, and their claims.

With one thing elicited in course of the dispute, the Author has been so greatly struck, that he ventures prominent re-allusion to it, as commentative on that one great evil which he cannot but regard as *chief* in its oppressive operation on the poor,—although, strange to say, it has been, of all things, *least dwelt upon*,—*i. e.*, the infamous system of *Dustooree*. A writer, whose position and character lend all possible weight to his enquiries and opinions, declares that it is universally assumed in one district (Pubna), that the Ryuts retain but a *half*—or *third*—or *less than a third* of the advances paid to them,—the chief, or a large portion, being absorbed by the Factory Establishment!—Let imagination but transport this iniquity to British shores! What would the workmen in the Royal Dockyards, or elsewhere, say, (or *do*), if *two-thirds* of their emoluments from contract work were abstracted from their pay by the officers commanding them?

If such a system, then, and to such extent—nay, if but one half,—exist upon our Indian fields, how little wonder is there that the poor should groan;—and how much wonder if the Government and Educational philanthropist together are not encouraged five-fold to pursue their efforts for that gradual elevation of the minds of the peasant classes which shall “give sight to the blind,” and

enable them to slip the yoke of bondage to systems of craft and villainy which impoverish and debase them.

If (to use a modern phrase) ventilation be of service to the cause of truth, the Author, whilst pursuing his own object, will rejoice if he has lent one iota of aid to its establishment. In all that trenches upon matters in dispute—describing principally what he saw,—and, in those things which he could *not* see, taking his information from sources deserving implicit confidence, he believes himself secure from all charge of partiality. Not intending to be Essayist, he has written simply of things which fell under his observation and enquiry, within the limits of his design; but he has not *avoided* any subject from fear or consciousness of its being dangerous to the “prettyness” or smoothness of his delineations. In short, his desire in publishing has not been to exalt individuals, or to paint “faultless monsters whom the world ne’er saw”—but to place the conduct which it was his gratification to witness, and which he believes to be so well worthy of imitation, in the light of that wholesome *example* which is more persuasive than *precept*,—and more reclamatory than *reproof*.

The Author indulges the hope and belief, therefore, that he shall be found enlisted under the banners of the poor. He merely reserves to himself the privilege of fighting after his own fashion. Deprived of this hope and this privilege, he can only say that the following pages would, in his mind, lose half the inducement for their publication.

In conclusion—with no fresh experience to bring into the field, he has no necessity to re-open angry questions,—and earnestly hopes that he will not be the means of re-awakening angry discussion—upon interests which he is sure are infinitely better served by friendly *coalition* than by *dispute*. If to rural scenes belong—“Peace and content, twins of the sylvan shade,” and—

“Bless’d seclusion from a jarring world”—

it were pity they should furnish theme for discontent or strife. There, in the midst of the people, and, generally, acquainted intimately with their language, live the Planter and the Missionary; and who so capable of being the expositors of that truth which no righteous mind would stifle, or of advancing those

interests which no true English heart but must desire to see improved? It may well be added, who so hardened as to defy the fearful denunciations of the Almighty against the oppressor of the poor?"—"For the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them."

May the Missionary and the Planter be seen united more closely in the bonds and strength of that friendly unity which ought to work out alike temporal comfort and eternal prosperity to the countless poor of this vast—this 'wide wide' land!

CALCUTTA, 1859.



BRANCH OF INDIGO.