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Sangam Boo

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Sangam Books

Sangam Books
a Division of
Orient Longman Ltd

First published by George G Harrap & Co Ltd, London, 1954

Published in Sangam Books by arrangement with George G Harrap & Co., 1977

Reprinted 1982

Registered Office
3/5 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 110 002

Other Offices
Kamani Marg, Ballard Estate, Bombay 400 038
17 Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 700 072
160 Anna Salai, Madras 600 002
1/24 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 110 002
80/1 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bangalore 560 001
3/5/820 Hyderguda, Hyderabad 500 001
S. P. Verma Road, Patna 800 001

Published by
Sujit Mukherjee
Orient Longman Ltd

Printed by
P K Mukherjee
S Anooj & Co. Private Ltd
91, Acharya Prafulla Ch Rd.
Calcutta-700 009

Cover Design Manjula Padmanabhan

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Meet Krupasindhu and His Child-Wife

It was a great day in the life of Krupasindhu Mahanty when he spoke with the Collector Sahib face to face for the first time.

It was not the first time he had seen a white man. That happened about five years before, when a Sahib came to the High School to distribute prizes. Krupasindhu had marched to the dais rather shyly to receive his prize, and had got the impression that the Sahib was very big and very kind; and that impression stayed with him all his life. For experience had confirmed it: an impression of bigness; bigness of mind and body; immense strength and courage, immense good nature. And when he had distributed the prizes the Sahib had made a speech, as custom required, and Krupasindhu had heard English spoken by an Englishman for the first time, and he had hardly understood a word.

The next time he saw a white man was when he went to Calcutta for the examination. Then he had seen many, though he had not had occasion to speak to them. And he had not only seen white men, but English soldiers, marching through the streets in scarlet coats and white helmets. He had watched them carefully, and they had made an impression. They were not a bit like what he supposed. They carried no swords and no spears, but

each man had a great knife in a sheath, hanging from his waist-belt and near his left hip And on his shoulder every man carried a clumsy brown thing. Krupasindhu wondered what it was, and stared harder. It was a sort of gun.

Now, Krupasindhu had seen a gun before. The landlord of their village had a double-barrelled gun, and used to come once a year when the wild-fowl came to the paddy-fields and shoot snipe And there was an old man in the village who had a long muzzle-loading gun He had shot many crocodiles Once he had shot a panther and got a reward And once when dacoits came to the village he had fired into the air to scare them away. Since then the robbers had not troubled them, because they knew that one of the villagers had a gun

So these things which the English soldiers carried were guns That, thought Krupasindhu, explains how the English had so easily conquered so many countries The heroes of old had fought with swords and spears and bows and arrows, but the English fought with guns Well, it took a white man to think of a thing like that

And now Krupasindhu was to meet the Sahib face to face, and no less a man than the Collector Sahib Vacancies had occurred in the Collector's office for two apprentices, and Krupasindhu and many others had applied The Collector had set them an examination paper, and Krupa and one Khurshed Ali had got the highest marks Khurshed Ali had been a schoolfellow of Krupa's, and there was a warm friendship between the two boys, in spite of the difference of religion But the Sahib would not appoint them until he had spoken with them, and for this they had been prepared by one of the clerks

'He will ask you your names, your fathers' names, your caste, your homes and your ages, and you must be ready to answer promptly'

And truly the questioning had begun according to programme.

'What is your name?'

'My name is Krupasindhu Mahanty.'

'What is your father's name?'

'My father's name is Madhu Sudan Mahanty.'

'Caste?'

'Karan.'

'Where is your home?'

'My home is village Basudeopur, Police Station Remna, District Balasore.'

So far so good. But then the Sahib departed from the programme.

'How old are you?'

Krupasindhu stared and gaped, understanding nothing. The Sahib repeated the question. Krupa thought he understood, but how to answer? He wanted to say that he was not old at all, he was quite young, but he felt that was not the right answer. He stood silent. The Sahib smiled a little and repeated the question in a different form.

'What is your age?'

The lad brightened up at once.

'My age is nineteen years, two months, and three days.'

The Sahib smiled again, and sat back and looked at him hard for a minute At last he spoke.

'You'll do,' he said. 'You are appointed as an apprentice. After a few years, if your work is satisfactory, you will be admitted permanently to the service of her Majesty the Queen-Empress.'

The lad started and gaped with astonishment, and the Sahib perceived his trouble.

'You didn't quite understand me,' he said in a fatherly manner. And he repeated what he had said in Oriya.

Krupasindhu had always thought of the clerks in the

Collector's office as the servants of the Collector. But now he learnt that he had a chance, if he proved worthy, to enter the service of that great, remote, almost divine person, Shri Bharateshwar the Empress of India.

'You will join on the first of next month,' said the Sahib. 'Now you may go.'

And Krupasindhu withdrew, swelling with pride.

When Krupasindhu left the Collector's office he bought some puris for his midday meal and mithai for the evening meal. He then bathed in a tank, ate his puris, and sought a shady place to rest during the heat of the day. As soon as the sun began to sink he set out on the long walk to his village home, and walked steadily until it was dark. In the darkness he sat down by the side of the road and ate his mithai, begged a drink of water at the nearest cottage, rested a little, and then walked on till he came to the ferry over the Old Twister. There he slept under a tree till dawn came.

At the first sign of daylight he rose and washed his face in the river, and then sat down on the bank until the ferryman was ready to make the first trip of the day.

Old Twister was to Krupasindhu something more than a mere river. He had a personality. In his changing waters—shrunken, but clear as crystal in the hot weather; swollen and brown with silt in the rainy season—Krupa had bathed every day of his childhood. In them he had learned to swim and to fish. Old Twister was an old friend, a very intimate friend, a part of his life.

Part of his life also was the humble village, hidden by abundance of trees, which now appeared through the morning haze as a smudge of dark green above the high bank of Old Twister. As the boat drew nearer he began to be able to recognize the trees: here a feathery clump of bamboos, there a sober-coloured mango orchard. There was the great pipal-tree where the peasants used

to meet and gossip after the day's work. There were palm-trees: tall, slender coconut-palms, and short, podgy date-palms. There were jackfruit-trees, papita-trees, and plum-trees for food, nim-trees for medicine, and bel-trees that gave food and medicine both. And notably there were bananas: a great many of them, for every cottager had a few. And, as the boat drew nearer, he began to get here and there a glimpse of a thatched roof, and here and there a mud wall visible through gaps between the trees.

And now he was able to see clearly the flight of stone steps leading down to the river, which was the men's bathing-place. And a little way off he could see the other flight of steps which was the women's bathing-place, and women going up the steps out of the water after their morning wash.

Near the men's bathing-place was the rickety wooden landing-stage where the ferry-boat would stop. Above it on the high bank was the little stone shrine of Mahadeo. All these things were to Krupasindhu parts of his life. Together they made his home; which he loved as a man can only love a home which has been his home ever since he was born, and the home of his forefathers from time immemorial.

Because the current was strong the boatmen had steered for a point half a mile upstream, and now they were idling while the boat was carried slowly downstream to the landing-stage. As the boat slid past the village Krupasindhu stood gazing and remembering things. He was come to a turning-point in his life, and now it was natural that he should turn his thoughts back and dwell on the memories which all these familiar sights brought out.

First he thought of his mother. For, though he had been but five years old when he had lost her, she was

still his loveliest, holiest, and strongest memory; so strong that he would sometimes say to himself, 'You mustn't do that; Mother would not approve.'

Of his father he thought with pride, for old Madhu Sudan was both educated and prosperous. He cultivated ten acres of land, he possessed many fruit-trees, and he often earned good silver by helping the landlord's servants to write their accounts.

Next he thought of his elder brother, Dayanidhi, and his younger brother, Haribandhu. Their father had been careful to give them all good and holy names. Dayanidhi means 'merciful,' Krupasindhu means 'full of grace,' and Haribandhu means 'friend of Hari,' who is Jagarnath. And that is very important, because there is nothing like a good name to bring a fellow good luck.

How clearly he remembered the day when his father had announced that Dayanidhi was to go to school! He had begged that he might go too.

'May not I also learn to write, Father?' he asked.

'Certainly I shall have thee taught to write,' their father had replied. 'It would be a great sin if I did not, seeing that we are by caste Karan. But thou art not yet seven years old.'

But Krupa begged so hard, and little Haribandhu begged that he might go too, and at last their father yielded, and next day the three little boys trotted off to the village school together.

A year later their father commanded them to write the consonants (they had not yet begun to learn the vowels) on their slates and bring them to him to see. Little Haribandhu (he was not much more than a baby) produced only a meaningless scrawl. Dayanidhi's letters were ragged and unsightly. But Krupasindhu had written his letters as clear as print.

The next great event in his life was his marriage. His

bride was only five years old and he was only ten, and he didn't fully understand what it was all about, but he felt very important. And there was no end to his delight when he saw the dainty little creature who had been given to him for his very own. There was never anything so pretty, so sweet, so soft, plump, and smooth, as little Nirmalabala. And she had been well taught. Very gravely and meekly she gathered her new white sari about her and made namaskar to each of her new relations in turn.

Nirmalabala soon won the heart of her father-in-law, who loved her as if she had been his own daughter, and she adopted him easily and naturally as her new father. Dayanidhi and Haribandhu she treated with great respect as her elder brothers, but for Krupasindhu she felt no awe. She accepted him frankly as her own particular playmate. And Krupa found a special delight in playing with her. There were many other little girls in the village, but they were just ordinary little girls, whom he had known since they were babies. This was a new little girl, who came from another village, many kros distant, and, what was more, she belonged particularly to him. So the two children grew up together and loved each other with every fibre of their little hearts and every throb of their innocent souls.

The years of childhood passed happily in the peaceful village, where life was constantly diversified by the succession of seasons, crops, hopes, fears, and varying activities. Every year there was the time of great heats, when the peasants watched eagerly for the first rain, that the ploughing might begin. Every year Old Twister overflowed his banks, and sometimes he drowned some of the paddy, and sometimes all of it. And then the rains would abate, and the floods would subside, and the peasants would wait eagerly for the later rain to fill the ears in the paddy.

Then came the cold weather and the harvest, and the sowing of rabi crops for those who had land that was too high and dry for paddy, and the time of repairing the thatch and rebuilding the mud walls which the rains had damaged, and the rabi harvest, and the mango season, and again the great heats and the time of idleness, when the peasants amused themselves with theatricals and gambling until the rain should come and set them to work in the fields again. All these years Krupasindhu was happy in the constant variety of the peasant's life. In the village school he was taught to read and write, and he learnt all about cultivation without being taught, and his leisure he spent with Nirmalabala, and they went fishing together, and he taught her to swim.

2

Boyhood—A Stranger Comes to the Village

Now, when Krupasindhu had been taught to read and write Oriya, and to do simple sums, and the beginnings of history and geography, his father sent him to the High School, where he had sent Dayanidhi the year before. But he did not send Haribandhu, because he meant him to stay at home and cultivate the family holding.

The nearest High School was in another village at a distance of six kros, and there Krupasindhu and his brother, with five other boys, lived in a little hostel kept by one of the masters. And they began to learn English and Sanskroot and all the other things that are necessary for the matriculation examination of the University of Calcutta. Every year they came home twice for the holidays, and Krupa spent his time swimming and fishing and playing with Nirmalabala.

But as the years passed he began to look on Nirmala with new eyes, and to think of her with new thoughts. She also became self-conscious, and sometimes she put on her sari like a grown woman, so as to conceal the upper part of her body. And, therefore, the children went less often to fish from the bank of Old Twister, where all the village could see them. Instead they loved rather to take long rambles across the fields, and to seek quiet spots where they could sit together unobserved.

And Krupa used to thrust his hand under her sari to feel if her breasts were beginning to grow.

When Krupa was fifteen years old he came home for the holidays as usual, but when he thought that he was going to meet his wife again he felt a new thrill. So he began to think if he knew of a secret spot where he could take her and play with her and no one would intrude. Then he remembered that there was, not far from the village, an old deserted ruined monastery around which jungle was grown thick. Nirmala and he, in the course of one of their rambles, had explored the jungle, as children would, and found in the midst a smooth grassy spot. On all sides it was hidden by thick jungle, and above it was roofed over by the joining of the branches of the trees.

Here he took Nirmala one day when the rest of the family was dozing after the midday meal, and they crept through the jungle to their secret spots and lay down on the grass and took off their clothes, and so played together all the afternoon. And as they played they twined their limbs together and delighted each other with the touch of their smooth, warm bodies. But at last Krupa rolled over on his back, satiated and exhausted, and a feeling of great peace came over him, and he went to sleep.

But Nirmala rested a little while, and when she saw that her husband was asleep she got up and put her sari on and walked home. And she was frightened because there was blood on her sari.

And when Krupasindhu woke up he put his dhoti on and began to walk home joyous and triumphant. But when he came in sight of the house he began to feel a little abashed. He knew that his mother would not have approved, because the gowna ceremony had not yet been performed. But his father took it easily enough. He

sent Nirmala back to her parents at once. Then he sent for the family priest and asked him to fix an auspicious date for the gowna, but the priest said the season was passed, and the youngsters must wait till next year. The parting and the waiting grieved Krupa, but he would endure anything for Nirmalabala, because they loved each other now with the whole of their hearts and their souls, and their bodies, too.

And the end of the holidays came, and Krupa went back to school. But when he came in sight of the schoolhouse it seemed to him that everything was different, but really nothing was different, it was he who was different. He was no longer a child.

Next year the gowna ceremony was performed, and Nirmala came back to her new home, which was now to be her home for the rest of her life. And very joyful was the meeting of Nirmalabala and her husband, because she would never go away again, and now they were allowed to sleep together and play at love whenever they liked.

It was during these holidays that a stranger came to the village, and Krupasindhu got his first taste of politics.

The villagers were sitting under the pipal-tree at sunset when the stranger came and sat before them and began to talk. He talked about Magna Charta, and the English Parliament, and King Charles, who had had his head cut off, and King James, who had been driven into exile, and many of those present had never heard of these matters and did not know what the stranger meant. Krupasindhu had read about all these things at the High School, but he did not know what the stranger was driving at any more than the rest. For it had never occurred to him that these events might concern him in any way. It had never occurred to him that it was of any use to learn about them, except that it was necessary for the

purpose of passing exams. So he listened intently, wondering what was coming next.

'The English,' the stranger said, 'will not submit to be ruled by anybody, but they rule themselves by means of men whom they choose for that purpose. They are a free people. But we are not free. We are ruled by the Sahibs. And naturally the English who come to Bharat to rule us are not willing to give up their power and their places and their fat salaries. But the English who are in England are generous, and they love freedom for themselves, and, therefore, they will give us our freedom too, if only we can make them understand that it is right that they should do so. For surely we have as much right to rule ourselves as they have. It is not right that we should be ruled by foreigners, as if we were slaves.'

'Where do you come from?' asked Madhu Das the village accountant.

'I come from Hijli in the district of Midnapur,' the stranger replied.

'Then curse you for a foreigner,' said Madhu Das, and he spat at the stranger's feet.

'There are too many of these fat foreigners in our land of Utkal,' said Krushto Mahapatra, who had spent all his life looking for a job and had never found one. 'Bengalis come from the north, and Telugus come from the south, and they take the bread out of our mouths. Why can't you stay in your own country and leave us in peace?'

There was a group of low-caste men who sat a little apart. One of them stood up and asked to be heard. He was a tall man with broad shoulders and very large hands.

'Who is this low-caste fellow,' said the stranger, 'who presumes to speak in an assembly of gentlemen?'

'I am a fisherman,' he replied, 'and a better man than any fat Bengali sala.'

'The fisherman is an honest man,' said Madhu Das. 'Let us hear him.'

'Listen, my masters,' said the fisherman. 'When the Victorious Battalions came to Orissa and the Mahrattas fled before them, all the fishermen got boats ready to carry the soldiers across the rivers. And first they came to the Chilka Lake, and the fishermen ferried them across. Then they marched inland till they came to Katjuri river, and there all the fishermen had collected boats, and they ferried the Victorious Battalions across, all at once, together with their baggage. And the Victorious Battalions marched quickly to the great fort and took it. Then the Commander of the Victorious Battalions ordered that the fishermen should be given jagirs, and their descendants hold them still. My father-in-law is one of the jagirdars, and he is a prosperous man and eats good rice. He has boats and nets, and he also has good jagir land, for which he pays no rent. And if ever the Sahibs require boats to ferry their soldiers across the rivers we fishermen will supply them, and we are contented with the Sahibs, and we do not want to be ruled by anyone else.'

'Have you not heard,' said Janardhan Jethi the silversmith, 'how it was in the days of Mahratta Sardars? What oppression was done in the land of Utkal? In those days no rich man dared to eat ghee, for the Mahrattas would come and pour water on his cooking-pots, and if they were greasy they would dig up the floor of his house and pull out the thatch until they found the place where his silver was hidden. And if they could not find it they would torture him until he told them. But if his cooking-pots were not greasy they would think him a poor man, and pass on.'

'And have you not heard,' said another, 'how it was in the Garhjat? I know, because my daughter is married

in the Blue Mountain, and her father-in-law has told me. Nowadays, when a Raja dies, his son succeeds him without trouble But in the days of the Sardars the succession went by favour and bribery, and that is how in most of the States sons of slave-girls became Rajas'

'What were you Bengalis doing,' asked Krushto Mahapatra, 'when all these oppressions were being done in our country? Why didn't you come with Victorious Battalions and deliver us from the Sardars?'

So the stranger gave it up as a bad job and went away But Krupasindhu pondered what he had heard, and decided that politics was a bad thing All the rest of his life he would have nothing to do with it

Next year Krupasindhu's first child was born He was at school at the time and his father wrote and told him all about it Poor little Nirmalabala had laboured three nights and three days, and they had given up hope of her life Yet she lived, and the child lived too, but she was very weak and might not live long

As soon as he had read the letter Krupasindhu went to the Headmaster and begged three days' leave Then he went to the Doctor Babu who kept a little dispensary near the school and promised him a big fee and took him with him At first the neighbours objected that it was not proper that a man doctor should see a young married woman of high caste, but Krupasindhu would not listen to them, and his father supported him When the Doctor Babu had seen her he came out and made his report

'She is very weak,' he said, 'but I think she will live She must rest on her bed for a full month, and you must get a maidservant to do all the work for her Then she will live, but I do not think she will ever conceive again, and if she does she will die'

'Why is this?' said Krupa, weeping bitterly 'Is it a

new thing that a young woman should give birth to a child?'

'What is the lady's age?' the Doctor Babu asked.

'She is not quite thirteen,' Madhu Sudan replied.

'That is why,' said the Doctor Babu. 'She is too young for childbearing.'

So Madhu Sudan borrowed money from Janardhan Jethi and paid the Doctor Babu, and hired an old widow woman for a servant.

The child was a girl, and they called her Nishibala, and they all loved her dearly.

And Krupa went back to school with a heavy heart.

Next year Krupasindhu went to Calcutta for the Matriculation exam. His brother had passed the year before, and Dayanidhi was an idle boy who had often played truant to go fishing. But he was clever, and after all he had passed his exam very well. This gave Krupasindhu great confidence, for he had studied diligently, and surely he could do as well as Dayanidhi. And so he did.

When the lists were out, and he knew that he had passed, Krupasindhu thought it proper that he should go to the landlord, as Dayanidhi had done the year before, to pay his respects and receive his congratulations. So Krupa went, and his father went with him.

Now, Jadunath Mahapatra, their landlord, was an old-fashioned man, and very courteous, and he greeted them well. After all, Madhu Sudan was a good tenant, who was seldom more than one year in arrears with his rent. But his son Somnath Mahapatra, was proud. After the necessary greetings and compliments Jadunath put a polite question to Madhu Sudan.

'In what subject did your son distinguish himself?'

'In English,' replied Madhu Sudan.

'I can speak English fluently,' said Krupasindhu.

Then he addressed himself to Somnath, because they

were both of the same age and they were of the same caste, and he did not see why he should not treat him as an equal.

'Can you speak English, Somnath Babu?' he asked.

'Am I a poor man's son,' Somnath replied, 'that I should trouble to learn the language of monkeys?'

'I have not had my son educated,' said Jadunath, 'because it isn't necessary. He will inherit my estate, and will not have to seek employment. But for young men who are less fortunately situated, it is very useful and very meritorious to learn English.'

Then Madhu Sudan and Krupasindhu took their leave. But Krupasindhu felt that Somnath had been insolent, and he resented it, and determined to remember it against him.

On their way home Krupasindhu questioned his father about his future.

'Will you send me to college now, Babu, so that I may take a degree and become a Deputy Collector?'

'No, my son. That would be very expensive, and after all you would only get two or three hundred rupees a month. You shall be a clerk in the Collector's office. You will get less pay, but you will make more money, and I shall not have to get into debt. I have thought it all out after worshipping the village goddess. Your brother Dayanidhi I shall put into the police. He is a scamp and a liar, and will make a very good policeman. Your brother Haribandhu will stay at home and cultivate our ancestral holding, and he and his wife will nurse me in my old age.'

And so it was. Dayanidhi was soon appointed a sub-inspector of police on probation, and Krupasindhu stayed at home for a year, nursing his beloved wife, and not neglecting to keep up his studies until vacancies occurred in the Collector's office. And now he had secured one

of the vacancies, and was going home to receive the felicitations of all the village.

So the ferry-boat came to the landing-stage, and Krupasindhu leapt ashore, and walked home with his head in the air.

3

Krupa Becomes an Apprentice in the Collector's Office

When the proper time came Krupasindhu proceeded to Balasore to begin to work in the Collector's office. But first he arranged to share a lodging with two of the junior clerks who were also Mahantys, and as they were drawing small pay they kept no servant and took it in turns to do the cooking. Next morning he put on a new shirt and a new dhoti and went to work at the Cutcherry for the first time; but on the way he called at the lodging of the head clerk and tendered the customary offering.

The head clerk, who was also a Mahanty, bade him wait and go with him, so that he might show him where to go and what to do, and Krupasindhu felt that he had gained a friend and patron.

When he arrived at the Cutcherry the head clerk set him to work in the English office beside his friend Khurshed Ali. All day long he worked making fair copies of letters in his best handwriting, for typewriters were not then known at Balasore. Then he helped the dispatching clerk to get the letters which the Sahib had signed ready for the post, and after that the files that were ready to go to the Sahib for orders were put in a great waterproof sack and sent to his bungalow, and most of the clerks

went home. But Krupasindhu did not dare to go till the head clerk gave him leave, and the head clerk was still working. Presently he called him and said, 'Here is an urgent file which was not ready to be sent to the Collector with the rest. Take it to his bungalow, and don't be late to-morrow morning.'

So Krupasindhu took the file, and walked to the Collector's bungalow and made it over to the orderly in waiting. When he began to walk back to his lodging it was already dark, and as he walked along a deserted road a police constable suddenly appeared out of the darkness and stopped him and demanded eight annas.

'Why should I pay eight annas?' Krupasindhu asked.

'Because you have committed a nuisance by the side of the road,' said the constable, 'and that is an offence under Act 5.'

'But I haven't,' said Krupasindhu.

'Will the magistrate believe you or me?' said the constable.

'I am also a Government Servant,' said Krupasindhu.

'What is your appointment?'

'I am an apprentice in the Collector's office.'

'In that case,' said the constable, 'it will be four annas.'

So Krupasindhu paid and passed on. And as he went he pondered on what had happened, and made up his mind to learn how to make money.

For a year Krupasindhu continued to work diligently, doing the simplest of the routine work, sometimes in one department and sometimes in another. And whenever he could get three days off he went home to see his father and his beloved wife. This should indeed have been a happy year, but it brought him his first sorrow.

Nirmalabala seemed to have recovered her health and strength, and she was pregnant again, but when her time came she had not strength to bring forth, and she died.

Krupa got the news in a letter from his father, and wept all night and all the next day and was absent from office without permission. But when the Collector heard the reason he forgave him at once.

When he had wept till he could not weep any more Krupasindhu went back to work, and a steady gloom settled upon him. He had lost the little woman whom he had loved so truly. He had lost the half of his life, and he was only twenty years old. How would he live another twenty, it might be another forty years? But he still had little Nishibala to provide for. Henceforth he thought less of happiness and more of promotion and making money.

And when the year drew wearily to its end he was officiating in a vacancy, and drawing a clerk's pay and not only the subsistence allowance of an apprentice, and he had a little money in his pocket. And when he went to the Collector's bungalow with an urgent file he sometimes met the Collector's wife and her little girl, who was just the same age as Nishibala. The Memsahib was always very polite to him, and the little girl was very friendly. When he salaamed to the child she would imitate him exactly, so that her mother laughed. The child seemed to know instinctively that he was a father and had a little girl of his own. He began to love the child, and brought her garlands of flowers. And the Memsahib always spoke kindly to him.

But when he saw this child so happy with her mother he began to feel that it was very hard that his little one had no mother, and very hard that he who was yet so young should have done with love and getting children. And he began to have strange moods and sulky tempers. But when his friends urged him to marry again, and pointed out that he was a high-caste Hindu, and had not yet begotten a son, he would not listen to them; some

day perhaps, before he got too old, but not yet.

But his moods got more troublesome, and he turned quarrelsome, and he dreamed terrible dreams, and disgusting lustful dreams, and his health suffered and his work suffered, till one day Khurshed Ali took him in hand.

'Come out with me this evening, Krupa,' he said; 'you need cheering up. Come with me, and I will show you some sport.'

Krupa went with him. And first they went to the grog-shop and drank some daru. There were many people there, talking and laughing, and Krupa began to feel merry. And he drank more daru, and began to feel reckless. And Khurshed Ali said, 'Come away now and I will show you something else.'

Then they went out of the grog-shop and walked down a side-street until they came to a house that had a large veranda in front. On the veranda were three very young girls sitting on a bench. They sat with their hands folded in their laps, staring straight before them and taking no notice of anybody. There was also a large man on the veranda, walking up and down. The upper part of his body was bare, showing great muscles on his shoulders and chest, and Krupa felt a little afraid of him. But the man spoke civilly enough.

'This is the place for young gentlemen,' he said. 'Come in, and fear nothing.'

The two young men stepped on to the veranda, and Krupa looked at the three girls. The first had a face that meant nothing, as if it had been carved out of wood. The second had a sulky look, as if she was discontented with her lot. But the third had a wistful look, as if she longed for some one to pity her. Krupa chose the third, and she smiled at him very sweetly, and took him by the hand and led him indoors.

After that Krupa visited the girl with the wistful look every week. When he was tired she would massage his legs, and if his head ached she would put scent on his temples and rub them gently with the tips of her slender fingers. Always he came away refreshed. So his uneasiness passed quickly, and he went about smiling and happy, and slept well and worked well, and everybody liked him.

So another year passed. But during this time several vacancies had occurred, and apprentices had been appointed to fill them, and now Krupasindhu was the senior apprentice.

Then one of the clerks took his pension and retired, and Krupasindhu hoped that the Collector would appoint him in the vacancy. Now it happened that the head clerk who was a friend of Krupasindhu was dead and a Bengali had been appointed in his place, and Krupa could hope for no help from him. And the record keeper went to the Collector and pointed out that the man who had retired was a Mohammedan and could read Persian, and as there were Persian records in the record-room it was necessary to appoint a Persian-knowing man in his place. And so Khurshed Ali was appointed and not Krupasindhu.

At this the Oriya clerks were greatly displeased, and they blamed the head clerk, who was a Bengali. One by one they spoke to Krupasindhu about it, and one suggested a meeting, and for greater secrecy Krupa arranged that they should meet in the room of the girl with the wistful look.

When they were met Bhagaban Mahapatra, one of the clerks in the English office, spoke first.

'These cursed foreigners,' he said, 'are ruining our country. They get all the best jobs. The head clerk is a Bengali, and so is the serishtadar, and so are the treasurer and the nazir and the accountant. The record

keeper is a Mohammedan and the tanzi navis is a Mohammedan. The Excise head clerk is a Telugu. Not one of the heads of departments is an Oriya. But we all know Haridas Bose takes bribes. Let us take steps to get rid of him.'

Haridas Bose was the head clerk, and Bhagaban Mahapatra hoped to be appointed in his place. It seemed to Krupasindhu a good idea, for then there would be a vacancy in the English office and he would get it.

'We might do it this way,' said Brajananda Das, who was one of the clerks who shared a lodging with Krupasindhu. 'One of us will go to Haridas Babu, as if from a party, and offer him a bribe. Haridas Babu will demand more, there will be an altercation, the witnesses will come to see what the noise is about, and they will report it to the Sahib.'

'When you are older,' said Bhagaban Mahapatra, 'perhaps you will have more sense. Do you suppose Haridas will trust any of us? He will know at once that it is a trap. No. We must send a Bengali to him.'

'But where will you find a Bengali,' Brajananda Das objected, 'who will side with us against one of his own countrymen?'

'I will tell you,' said Krupasindhu. 'I have noticed that there are certain Bengali families who call themselves domiciled Bengalis. Now, there is Babu Manmatho Nath Sen. The family has been settled in Orissa since the time of the Moghuls. They have almost forgotten how to speak Bengali, they worship the same gods as we do, and they hate the new immigrants as much as we hate them. He will gladly join us.'

'He is a pimp and a pleaders' tout,' said Brajananda Das, 'will Haridas Babu trust him?'

'Because he is a rascal,' said Krupasindhu, 'he is just the right man for the job. He will go to Haridas Babu

and speak to him in Bengali. And whom should a party employ to negotiate a bribe but a rascally tout?'

'Krupa Babu is right,' said another, 'but how to find a party? We might get help from one of the police officers who is a Mahanty.'

'Take no help from the police,' said Bhagaban Mahapatra. 'They will do nothing without payment. Manmatho Babu will do it because he hates the newcomers, and if he demands payment he will not expect much.'

Now the girl, who, after she had served the gentlemen with pan supari, had been sitting very quiet and demure, ventured to speak.

'I will find you a party,' she said, 'I know all the lawyers' touts. First they take the parties to a lawyer, and then they bring them here. And sometimes they come here first, and then the lawyers to whom we send them pay us.'

Among those present was an old mohurrir who, because he had little English, could only work in those departments where a knowledge of English was not necessary But if he had little English he had much experience.

'Brothers,' he said, 'you don't want a party. In any case, the party will deny that he sent the tout to offer a bribe, and whether the denial is true or not, nobody will believe it. It is better that the party should know nothing about it. All you want is a case.'

'I will find you a case,' said the girl.

A week later Krupasindhu went to her and asked if she had found out anything.

'Yes,' she said, 'I have found you a very good case. Listen, and I will tell you. There is one Jagarnath Parida who has a great estate. His father was an obscure person who made a fortune as a moneylender. When Jagarnath Babu inherited the estate he became ambitious. First, by

flattering the officials and giving much money to charities, he got the title of Rai Sahib. Then, desiring a higher title, he offered half a lakh to add a new wing to the hospital. Well, the new wing was built, and he got the title of Rai Bahadur. But there was something which the Collector Sahib who recommended him for this title did not know. When the contract for building the new wing was to be given out Jagarnath Babu submitted a tender in the name of one of his servants, and by spending a little money he obtained the contract. In this way he saved the contractor's profit, which was not less than a quarter of the price. When the Sahib heard of this he was very angry, and said that Jagarnath Babu had obtained the title of Rai Bahadur by cheating. And he wrote a confidential note, saying that this person should on no account be recommended for any higher title. Now the season for recommendations for titles is approaching, and Jagarnath Babu hopes to be recommended for the title of Raja, for which purpose he has spent much money on good works and flattered the Collector Sahib very skilfully. And we have now a new Sahib who knows nothing of the confidential note, and he likes Jagarnath Babu. Now, if the note is put up to him he will not recommend him, but if it is withheld he will be none the wiser, and Jagarnath will get what he wants.'

'And I can guess where the note is,' Krupasindhu said. 'It must be in the file in which are the papers relating to the granting of titles, and that file is in the confidential almirah in the English office, and Haridas Babu keeps the key. It all depends on Haridas Babu. It will only be natural if Jagarnath Babu sends a man to offer him a bribe. Sweetheart, your intelligence is equal to your goodness, and your goodness is only surpassed by your beauty.'

Krupasindhu went next morning and told Bhagaban Mahapatra what the girl had told him, and Bhagaban Babu sent for Manmatho Nath Sen, and all arrangements were made to lay a trap for Haridas Bose.

4

The Oriya Clerks Set a Trap for the Bengali Head Clerk

This is how the Oriya clerks laid a trap for Haridas Bose and caught him.

Manmatho Nath Sen, the tout, went to Haridas Babu's lodging early in the morning before it was time to go to office, and found him sitting on the veranda facing the street. And after greetings he explained his business.

'The time is at hand,' he said, 'when the Collector Sahib will submit his recommendations for granting new titles. Rai Jagarnath Parida Bahadur hopes to be recommended for the title of Raja'

'Why not?' Haridas Babu replied. 'He will no doubt do what is customary, and I will remind the Collector Sahib about *him*.'

'Babu, it will not be enough to remind the Sahib. There is a reason why he will not be recommended unless you help him.'

'What is that?'

'There is a confidential note that the last Collector left to the effect that Rai Bahadur should not be recommended for any higher title. You could suppress that note.'

Did Rai Bahadur send you to me?

'Yes. He will pay five hundred rupees'

Now Haridas Babu was a well-educated person, and at first he controlled his temper and answered calmly and in a refined manner.

'Does Rai Bahadur keep an elephant?'

'Certainly he keeps an elephant He is a very rich man.'

'Then go and tell him to take his money to the elephant and push it inside.'

'Indeed, Babu, is that a message that one gentleman can carry to another?'

'And, indeed, does that pock-stricken upstart think an honourable gentleman will do such a thing as he requires for a paltry sum of five hundred rupees?'

Babu,' the tout replied, 'Rai Bahadur is a very respectable man with a great estate, and it is a privilege to do him a favour, and who are you that you should not be content with five hundred rupees?'

At this Haridas Babu began to lose his temper and spoke without refinement.

'Son of a harlot, sala! Did you come here to insult me? Take care, or I will report you to the Sahib for a tout.'

Then Manmatho Babu also raised his voice so that the witnesses might hear.

'Alas, Babu! please to control your mouth when you speak to a bhadralok.'

'Did you say bhadra or bhadua?'

At this moment two of the Oriya clerks who had been chosen to be witnesses showed themselves. They had been waiting round the corner of the street, and now come up, as if they had happened to be passing, and stood below the veranda.

'What is the matter, Haridas Babu?' one of them asked. 'Has this tout been insulting you?'

'Yes,' said Haridas Babu. 'He has been so insolent as to offer me a paltry bribe.'

'Is five hundred rupees a paltry sum?' asked Manmatho Babu.

'If it is only a matter of spending money,' said one of the Oriyas, 'surely that can be arranged among gentlemen.'

'Babu has spoken rightly,' said the tout. 'If five hundred is not enough, perhaps Jagarnath Babu will give more. I will ask him to give a thousand.'

'For what you want me to do I would not take less than five thousand.'

'Perhaps he will give twelve hundred.'

'I will not listen to you. I say five thousand. Not a pice less.'

'Five thousand rupees is a great deal of money,' said a gentle, refined voice.

All turned round in surprise. It was Qazi Sahib, who had joined the group unperceived. Qazi Sahib was a pious and venerable old man who had nothing in the world to do but to celebrate Mohammedan marriages and read prayers. He lived on a small pension which had been granted to his family in the time of his grandfather for some service rendered to the Victorious Battalions.

Manmatho Babu saw at once that it was a stroke of luck that Qazi Sahib had turned up, because he was a very respectable man, and the Collector would believe whatever he said.

'I offered this gentleman five hundred rupees, Qazi Sahib,' the tout said, 'for a certain service, and he says he will not take less than five thousand.'

'I heard him say it,' said Qazi Sahib.

'Go and read your prayers, Qazi Sahib,' said Haridas Babu. 'You are a holy man, and money matters are not your concern.'

'I heard you demand five thousand rupees,' said the Qazi, 'and I say that five thousand rupees is a great deal

of money. But, as you say, it is no concern of mine. I am going to read prayers.'

'Well, well,' said the tout, when the Qazi was gone, 'I will go to the party concerned and tell him what you say, and let us see how much he will give.'

So the tout went one way and the two Oriyas went another. And the tout went straight to Bhagaban Babu, and Bhagaban Babu took him with him and went to the Collector, and the Collector took down his statement. And he sent for the two Oriyas and took their statements. And he sent for the Qazi and took his statement. And then he drew up proceedings against Haridas Babu and placed him under suspension and ordered Bhagaban Babu to act as head clerk in his place.

And the Collector held an enquiry, and allowed Haridas to cross-examine the witnesses, but he failed to shake their testimony, because most of it was true. And he called the Rai Bahadur as a defence witness, and he deposed that he had never spoken to Manmatho Babu, which was true, but the Collector did not believe it. And when he had completed his enquiry the Collector dismissed Haridas from Government Service for demanding a bribe.

And Haridas Bose retired to his native land with his savings and bought an estate. And he lived out his life in ease and dignity, and was greatly respected by all his neighbours. Then Bhagaban Mahapatra was appointed head clerk in place of Haridas Bose, and all the clerks in the English office were moved up one, and a vacancy was left at the bottom of the list, and Krupasindhu was appointed to fill the vacant place.

Thus Krupasindhu was admitted permanently into the service of Shri Bharateshwar, and he wrote at once and told his father. And his father was very pleased and proud.

And Krupasindhu was glad that his father was pleased, and he was glad that he had got a permanent job. And by this time everybody in the town knew him, and they all treated him with respect, because he was a Government Servant.

Not long after this the Easter holidays came, and Krupasindhu went home to his village. And it happened that there was a village meeting that day. It was the season when there is no work to do in the fields, and the meeting was held to decide how the villagers would amuse themselves. And some were for one thing and some for another, but the majority voted for a gamble.

The next thing to do was to elect two men to be complainants. And first they elected Bhikhari Charan Patnaik, who was a fairly well-to-do peasant, and he expressed his willingness to serve. Then they elected Krupasindhu, but he stood up in the meeting—a thing he had never dared do before—and protested.

'Neighbours,' he said, 'I have recently been appointed a clerk in the office of the Magistrate-Collector, and it will ill become me, as a Government Servant, to take a leading part in fictitious litigation. And if the Sahib finds out that I filed a false case only to give my neighbours something to bet on, he will certainly dismiss me from the service, and that will be a disgrace to the whole village. Therefore I beg you to excuse me.'

Then Madhu Sudan stood up and supported his son.

'My son has been very fortunate to secure an appointment in the service of Government, and he will rise to be a great man and he will be a credit to the village. But if he gets the name of being a litigant and a promoter of false cases his career will be spoilt from the beginning.

'Who is Krupasindhu,' said one of the villagers, 'that he should break the custom of the village?'

Then Krupasindhu stood up again.

'Neighbours,' he said, 'if you will let me off this time I will do one thing for you. I will take the complainants to the best lawyers in the town and see that their petitions are properly written, and I will do it better than any of the touts, and I will charge you nothing for it.'

Then the villagers decided to excuse Krupasindhu because he was a Government Servant, and they chose Braja Mohan Patnaik in his place. And each complainant chose seven witnesses.

When Krupasindhu went back to Balasore the complainants and the witnesses went with him. And he bade them wait in an orchard on the outskirts of the town while he went in search of the lawyers. He went to the mukhtarkhana, where mukhtars sit who practise in the magistrates' courts, and told the mukhtars that he had brought a complainant and a counter-complainant. And he sold the complainant to the highest bidder and the counter-complainant to the next highest bidder. Then he went back to the orchard and collected the complainants together with their witnesses and took them and delivered them to the lawyers to whom he had sold them.

And Krupasindhu was very pleased because he had made some money for the first time. And, indeed, he was glad of the money, because being newly appointed a member of the permanent establishment, his first month's pay was the customary perquisite of the head clerk.

But he was yet more pleased that his neighbours had treated him with respect and exempted him from service as complainant because he was a Government Servant.

5

Krupa Learns to Make Money— His Second Marriage

Now, Krupasindhu and his two messmates, being more prosperous, hired a Brahmin boy to cook for them, and they were able to give all their thoughts to their work. And Krupasindhu worked diligently for four years, and his life was peaceful and regular. Most of the time he worked in the English office, but sometimes he was sent to work in other departments, and gradually he learnt the routine of almost every part of the office of the District Magistrate and Collector.

Three times a year he used to go home—for the Easter Holidays, the Puja Holidays, and the Christmas Holidays —and this was enough for him, and he never took any leave. At these times he used to see his father and his brother Haribandhu, and sometimes his brother Dayanidhi, who was now a junior sub-inspector of police, and his brothers' wives and children and his daughter, Nishibala.

It was always a pleasure to him to revisit all the familiar places: the ghat where he used to go down to bathe in Old Twister (and where he had learnt to swim) and the shrine of the village goddess, and the great square well which they called the Mahratta Well because it was square,

and not round like the wells that ordinary people build.

But now the pleasure of revisiting all the familiar places was tinged with sadness because his dear Nirmalabala, who had been the delight of his boyhood, was no longer there. Sometimes the familiar places brought back the memory of her so strongly that he could not but weep. And though the old home was now filled with the merry noise of his brothers' children, yet there was sadness about it; for both his brothers had lost their first wives, and for the same reason, because they had begun child-bearing too young. But now his brothers were both married again.

Krupasindhu was doubtful whether the pleasure of revisiting his village home was not exceeded by the sadness, and when the time came to go back to his work, to the busy, regular, peaceful life of a clerk, he used to go gladly enough.

All day long he used to work, and in the evenings he amused himself with other junior clerks, smoking and gossiping and listening to music. And sometimes he used to visit the girl with the wistful look. And for his health's sake he used to go for walks, but he gave up fishing, because it made him think of Nirmalabala.

The regularity and security of his life gripped him, and almost compelled him to be happy, whether he would or no. He felt that it was better not to disturb and upset himself by going home too often. Therefore he decided that in future he would not go home for the Easter Holidays, which were short, but only for the Christmas Holidays and the Pujas. Instead he asked Haribandhu to write once a month and tell him the news.

And when Krupasindhu had completed five years' service as a clerk, besides his apprenticeship, the gun-licence clerk happened to die, and Krupasindhu was ap-

pointed in his place And this was done on the recommendation of Bhagaban Babu, who had been his friend and patron since the affair of Haridas Bose At this Krupasindhu was very pleased, because he knew that it was a place in which it was easy to make money Only he did not know how to begin He might have found out by asking some of the senior clerks, but he would not trust them He thought it more prudent to find out for himself, and first it was necessary to learn the routine

Now, the routine was like this At the season of renewal of gun licences, which was just before the Christmas Holidays, the officers in charge of police stations used to report if they had any objection to anybody's licence being renewed And when an application for renewal was received Krupasindhu would put it up to the Deputy Magistrate and if there was no objection he would renew it as a matter of course And with each such application Krupasindhu received a small gratuity But when some one applied for a new licence the order was passed not by the Deputy Magistrate but by the District Magistrate himself First Krupasindhu had to examine the application and see that it was in order, and then he would put it up to the Deputy Magistrate with a note and the Deputy Magistrate would write a remark and send it to the District Magistrate He would sometimes reject it at once, sometimes grant it at once and sometimes order an enquiry by the police When he had ordered the licence to be granted the application came back to Krupasindhu and he wrote out the licence and sent it to the Sahib for signature When the Sahib had signed it, it came back to Krupasindhu and lay in a drawer in his desk until the licensee called for it

Now this seemed to Krupasindhu to be the time to make money So, when the Sahib had granted a gun licence to a rich young zemindar and his agent came to

get it, Krupasindhu told him it was not ready.

And when the agent came a second time, he said, 'The Sahib is overwhelmed with work, and there are many papers lying on his table awaiting signature.'

And when the agent came a third time he got the same answer. But that evening he came to Krupasindhu's lodging.

'Krupa Babu,' he said, 'I am come to enquire about my master's gun licence. Do you think it will be ready tomorrow?'

As he spoke he pulled a bundle of ten-rupee notes out of his pocket and handed it to Krupasindhu. Krupasindhu counted the notes and found there were only five.

The Sahib is very busy, he said. 'I do not think it will be ready to-morrow.' And he handed back the bundle of notes.

The man pulled some more notes out of his pocket and counted them, and handed the bundle to Krupasindhu.

'Babu,' he said, 'don't you think you could get it signed to-morrow?'

Krupasindhu counted the notes and found that there were ten. He put them in his pocket.

'The licence,' he said, 'will be ready to-morrow.'

As soon as the man was gone Krupasindhu went to Bhagaban Babu, the head clerk. And Bhagaban Babu received him quite graciously and asked him if he wanted anything.

'Bhagaban Babu,' said Krupasindhu, 'that young Babu's man came to see me this evening about his gun licence. I told him it would be ready to-morrow.'

As he spoke he handed the head clerk five of the ten-rupee notes.

'So you only took a hundred rupees,' said Bhagaban Babu. 'You ought to have taken five hundred.'

Krupasindhu was glad when he heard this, because

he knew that he had done right in giving the head clerk half.

After that Krupasindhu used to demand five hundred rupees from every man who was granted a new licence. Sometimes, if the man was not well off and protested that he could not pay so much, he would take less. But less than two hundred rupees he would not take.

Then it occurred to him that the best time to settle the amount was at the beginning. So, when he received an application for a new licence he would demand a promise to pay five hundred rupees, and if the promise was not given he would keep the application and not put it up until the amount to be paid had been settled. And if the party would not agree to pay more than two hundred rupees he would note on the application, 'The applicant seems to be a poor man of humble position and not a suitable person for granting a gun licence.' Then the Deputy Magistrate would write, 'Not recommended,' and the District Magistrate would reject the application. For the Sahib was very hard-worked, and had not time to attend to every detail.

Now that he was making money Krupasindhu decided to use some of it to get his daughter married, as she was ten years old. So he wrote about it to his brother Dayanidhi, who had recently been placed in charge of a police station for the first time.

For Dayanidhi with all his faults was very intelligent. He had quickly made himself expert in police work—so expert, that as soon as he had taken charge of his police station, he organized a gang of very skilful burglars. And he prepared a list of persons who were exempted from burglary. And he divided it into two parts: the paying list, for those who were exempted because they paid money, and the free list, for those who were exempted for some other reason.

After a little while Dayanidhi wrote back to his brother saying that he had found a suitable bridegroom for Nishibala, and the boy's father would not exact a large dowry, because he had a great respect for the police.

But Krupasindhu, remembering what had happened to his wife and his brothers' wives, stipulated that after the wedding Nishibala should stay only a short time in her father-in-law's house, and that she should not go back to live with her husband until she was fully thirteen years old.

On these terms the marriage was arranged, and Krupasindhu took leave for the first time in his service and made his daughter's wedding as magnificent as he could. And all the village admired, and his neighbours treated him with great respect.

Now, Krupasindhu found that the respect of his neighbours was very sweet to him, and he conceived an ambition to be genteel and to be treated with respect by everybody. He was twenty-eight years old; he was a Government Servant; he was making money; and he had a brother who was a sub-inspector of police. He felt that it was unbecoming to visit a bawdy-house like a young student. Moreover, the girl whom he used to visit had contracted a foul disease, so that he dared not touch her. He remembered also that he was a Hindu and a Karan, and he had not yet begotten a son to see to his cremation when he should die, and to do all the other things that have to be done when a Hindu dies. So he decided that he would marry again. And first he obtained the approval of his father, and then he wrote again to Dayanidhi.

And Dayanidhi wrote back and said that he would make enquiries, and he would meet his brother during the Christmas holidays.

When the Christmas holidays came Krupasindhu went

home very eager to meet his brother and hear what he had done And, as soon as he could, he drew his brother aside and began to question him

'What about it, elder brother? Is there any news?'

'What about what, brother? About what thing do you expect news?'

'About my marriage, elder brother Have you found me a bride?'

Yes, brother She is virtuous and beautiful But there are certain drawbacks She is not very young She is fourteen'

That's just as well, elder brother Perhaps she is old enough to bear children without danger to her life'

'Listen, brother There is a Deputy Magistrate whose home is in my elaka He has got a decent estate, but it is heavily mortgaged He is so unfortunate that he has seven daughters Having mortgaged his estate and spent a great deal of money, he has got six of them married. But he has not succeeded in getting the youngest one married For why? Because he has spent so much money on the marriages of his first six daughters that he is now in very straitened circumstances That is why his seventh daughter remains unmarried, although she is fourteen years old'

'Is she fair?' asked Krupasindhu

'I have not seen her, but I hear that she is very fair, and the family is highly respectable, and the caste is all right'

'Then I will take her without a dowry'

'You are wise, brother It is a good thing to be connected with a Deputy Magistrate, even if he is hopelessly in debt'

'He will not always be in debt,' said Krupasindhu, 'if he follows my advice and yours'

'That is true, brother Shall I negotiate a marriage?'

'Certainly, of your kindness you will do so, elder brother. And if there is any favour you can show the girl's father. . . .'

'I will transfer his name from the paying list to the free list.'

And so Dayanidhi arranged the marriage for Krupasindhu. But he had to wait till the marriage season when the family priest fixed an auspicious date. And he took a month's leave for the second time.

Now, Krupasindhu was very pleased with his new wife. She was good, and she was beautiful, and she was fair-skinned, and she was well connected. But he soon discovered that she was proud.

'Sir,' she said to him one day, soon after they were married, 'it would be proper to buy some slave-girls to wait on me.'

'Sweetheart,' Krupasindhu replied, 'we are not Rajas, and there have never been any slave-girls in our house.

'When I was a little girl,' she replied, 'and my father was rich, there were many slave-girls in the house, just like the house of a Raja. And when my eldest sister was married my father sent ten slave-girls with her. And when my second sister was married he sent eight. But the others got only two or three each, because my father was hard up. And I got none at all. And there remain only two in my father's house to wait on my mother. It is a great shame to me that I have not brought you any slave-girls.'

'I don't want any. I only want you.'

'It is a question of respect. There ought to be slave-girls in the house.'

Then Krupasindhu told his father what his new wife had said. His father did not approve at first, but afterwards he considered that his sons were now rising in the world, and it was proper that their wives should be treated

like the wives of important people. So he sent for an old widow woman of the village who lived by any work she could get to do for the ladies, and by such work as the young gentlemen gave her to do, and she promised to look around and find that which Madhu Sudan Mahanty wanted. And after a few days she found a poor woman of the Gopal caste who had so many children that she didn't know what to do. And from her Madhu Sudan bought two girls, and they played in the house with the other children until they were old enough to work.

And Krupasindhu was very pleased and proud, because his father-in-law was a Deputy Magistrate, and his wife had slave-girls in the house, like the wife of an important person.

6

Krupa Hears Good News

Like all Indian schoolboys, Krupasindhu had received as one of his prizes a copy of a bowdlerized edition of Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, and, like most Indian boys, he had studied it carefully in hopes of discovering some hint that might be useful to him in his future career. He had read it with sincere admiration for the elegance of the style and the solid prudence of the matter, but there was one point on which he found himself unable to agree with the noble writer. To Lord Chesterfield friendship was an affair of the reason and not the affections, and ought to be based on serious considerations of common advantage and mutual support. For the warm and spontaneous friendships of youth he expressed contempt and even disapproval.

It was on this point that Krupasindhu doubted the wisdom of the noble earl. For he felt that his friendship with Khurshed Ali was one of the best things in his life. He knew that it was a healthy thing and would be lasting. Periods of silence made no difference to it. A long separation would not have broken it. They would have met again on exactly the same terms as before. Frequent meetings were not needed to keep it alive. And, indeed, they met, now that they were working in different departments, very infrequently. Yet when the monthly letter from Haribandhu brought him a notable piece of good news it was not to his messmates or his

caste-fellows that he wanted to tell it first, but to his old school chum.

He saw him walking back to his lodging when the day's work was finished, and ran after him, waving the letter in his hand.

'Khurshed Ali!' he cried. 'Stop and listen! I have got a wonderful piece of good news.'

'What is it, Krupa?' Khurshed Ali replied, stopping and waiting for his friend to come up to him. 'Have you won a bet?'

'No. Guess again.'

'Has somebody left you some money?'

'Guess again.'

'Then it must be that your wife has given birth to a son.'

'You have guessed right, Khurshed. I have now got a son.'

'Hearty congratulations, friend o' mine. And I hope the child and his lady mother are doing well.'

'As well as can be expected.'

'Isn't that splendid?'

'Yes, isn't it? You see how wise I was to marry a girl who was not too young. She's fifteen.'

'Well, I'm mighty pleased to hear your good news. No wonder you're looking proud!'

'Well, shouldn't I be proud?'

And Krupasindhu walked on with his friend eagerly discussing his plans for his son's education. When he came to Khurshed Ali's lodging he left him and walked back to his own, rejoicing in his friend's ready sympathy and complete understanding. For a minute he thought of sending his wife a congratulatory telegram, but thrift prevailed, and he sent a postcard.

For a month Krupasindhu went about with his head in the air, feeling that his luck was as good as his merit;

and then the next letter came, and this time the news was not good. Again he sought the sympathy of his chum.

'What's the matter, Krupa?' Khurshed Ali asked. 'You look very depressed.'

'I have got another letter from home.'

'Well, I hope the news is good.'

'No, it is not so good.'

'Sorry to hear that. I hope the infant and the lady, his mother, are doing well.'

'As regards them, indeed the news is good. My wife has made a good recovery, and the baby is plump and healthy. But there is another thing that makes me sad.'

'What is that?'

'My brother Dayanidhi is home again.'

'Is he indeed?' said Khurshed Ali, looking very grave, for he guessed what was coming. 'And why is that bad news?'

'I am ashamed to tell. He has been accused of taking a bribe. The Police Sahib will hold a departmental enquiry. In the meantime he is under suspension.'

'Don't be frightened at that,' said Khurshed Ali, trying to comfort him, 'and don't distress yourself about future events that may never happen. These enquiries often lead to nothing, and a charge of bribery is very difficult to prove.'

'But think of the disgrace! If he is dismissed from the service he may never get another job. It would not matter so much if he had made his fortune like Haridas Bose.'

'Hasn't he made any money?'

'Not very much. You see, he only really began to make money when he was put in charge of a police station. If he could have held his job for another ten or twelve years he would have made a fortune, but now,

as soon as he has spent his savings, he will be a burden on the family for the rest of his life.'

'Never fear! The charge will not be proved, and he will be reinstated, and all will be well.'

So Khurshed Ali tried to comfort his friend, though really he felt that there was very little hope.

The departmental enquiry dragged on slowly, as such things often do, and Dayanidhi engaged a good pleader to defend him, and tried to bribe the witnesses, and spent much money. At last orders were passed, and he was dismissed from the service. Then he submitted an appeal, and paid more money to the lawyer who wrote his petition. And it was found that there had been some irregularity in the proceedings and so the enquiry had to be held all over again. And when the enquiry had been completed and he had been dismissed for the second time, he tried every appeal he could, right up to the Lieutenant-Governor himself, all without any result, except that the lawyers had got most of his money.

So Dayanidhi lived fretfully at home with nothing to do but help his father and his younger brother with the cultivation, and to look out for another job.

But while the proceedings against Dayanidhi were still going on the Puja holidays came, and Krupasindhu went home and saw his son, who was then five weeks old, for the first time. And when the baby saw his father he smiled, and Krupasindhu was very pleased and proud.

And when the Christmas holidays came he went home again. And now he loved his wife very dearly, because she was good and beautiful, and had good sense, and she was strong and healthy, and had borne him a son, but he could not love her with the same love with which he had loved Nirmalabala. And when the holidays were over he went back to his work, charging his younger brother to write every month as he was accustomed to.

And in February Haribandhu wrote and told him that his wife was pregnant again.

At this Krupasindhu was very pleased, and he wondered whether it would be a boy again, and he was always thinking of his wife and his son and the baby that was to be. He seldom thought now of Nirmala and her child Nishibala. But not long after he received another letter which gave his thoughts a new direction.

It was a letter from Nishibala's father-in-law. The wedding season, he said, was now approaching, and the girl was now old enough to go and live with her husband. Krupasindhu thought she was too young—she was only twelve—and would have liked to put it off till the next year, but his father told him that she was old enough according to the custom of their caste, and he consented. So it was decided that when the priests had fixed an auspicious day her husband should come for her, and, when the proper ceremony had been performed, take her back with him to his home.

When Nishibala heard that she was to go and live with her husband she was very proud and excited at first. Then she was frightened and unhappy. She did not want to leave her home and her grandfather, whom she loved dearly, and her uncles, and her cousins, who had been her playmates ever since they were born. She did not want to go to a strange house and live with strange people and be the plaything and possession of a lad whom she scarcely knew. She knew that she would be homesick, and she feared childbearing.

But when the date had been fixed and the preparations were nearly complete one came to Madhu Sudan from the house of Nishibala's father-in-law and broke the news that her husband was dead. Then Haribandhu wrote at once and told Krupasindhu. And he was very sad when

he heard of the misfortune that had befallen his beloved daughter. Poor little Nishibala! She was a maid and yet a widow, and a widow she must be for the rest of her life. Then Krupasindhu wrote to his father and his brothers and charged them to keep Nishibala in the house, and cherish her, and make the burden of widowhood as light for her as possible, and not to let her go to her father-in-law's house, where her life would be miserable. But now her father-in-law did not want her.

When Nishibala heard that she was become a widow she broke her bangles, and changed her pretty coloured sari for a plain white one, and put away the silver ornaments which had been prepared for her, and all the gay clothing she gave to her stepmother and her cousins, and she wept and mourned for her husband according to custom. But secretly she was glad that she was to remain in the home that she loved among the people she loved and who loved her. She knew that now she could never have a husband, yet she did not fear widowhood. She was too young to understand fully what it meant, and she was a maid, and had never felt the desire for man's love.

But Krupasindhu went on working and making money, and sadness and gladness were mingled in his life. Sometimes he was sad when he thought of his widowed daughter, and sometimes he was glad when he remembered that he had a good wife and that she was going to bear him another child, and he hoped it would be a boy. And Haribandhu wrote every month and told him about the health of the family and the state of the crops. And Dayanidhi sometimes wrote and told him about his case and his petitions, and grumbled about the greediness of the lawyers. And so the months passed till the time was fulfilled and another son was born to him, and he

told Khrushed Ali, and they rejoiced together. And the names of his two sons were Guru Charan and Sadhu Charan.

But together with this new joy there came a new vexation, for that happened to Madhu Sudan which happens to every Indian peasant at least once in his life, and that was a dispute about a field. Madhu Sudan put Dayanidhi, who had experience in these things, in charge of the litigation. And when the paddy in the disputed field was ripe Dayanidhi went to reap it with a hired mob, and the other party went there to reap the crop at the same time, and they fought with lathies, and men were hurt on both sides. Then there were cases and counter-cases, and Dayanidhi went to the four men who held the adjacent fields on the four sides of the disputed field and flattered them and paid their expenses handsomely for going to Balasore to give evidence. And they went and swore that the field had always been in the possession of Madhu Sudan. But the other party set up four other witnesses who swore that the adjacent fields belonged to them, and not to the four men who had given evidence for Madhu Sudan. So the dispute spread from field to field till half the village was involved, and the peasants were always quarrelling with one another, and sometimes they came to blows, and then there were more criminal cases and yet more. And the dispute became so complicated and there was so much swearing and forswearing that the Magistrate could make no sense of it. But the more complicated it was, the better the lawyers were pleased. And the dispute gave the police a great deal of work, of which, however, they did not complain, because they found means to make the villagers pay for it.

At first the villagers thought it was all great fun, and had bets on the results of the cases; but later they found

it vexatious and very expensive. And Dayanidhi spent so much money, feeing lawyers and hiring witnesses, that Krupasindhu had to contribute, which he was fortunately able to do from the money he was making in the gun-licence department. And so the year ended in trouble and worry and useless expense.

7
Famine

The next year was the year 1907. All went well till the month of June, and then the rains broke, and when the fields were well wetted the peasants began to be very busy ploughing and preparing their seed-beds and sowing paddy. And all went well till the month of July, and the peasants wanted only a little more rain to begin the transplantation of the seedlings from the seed-beds to the paddy-fields. And then it began to rain very heavily. In the plains it rained well, but in the hills it rained excessively. On the Ranchi plateau, and on the Garhjat hills, and on all the hills of Chota Nagpur there was excessive rain, and all the rivers came down in flood: first the Mahanadi, and then the Brahmini, and then the Subarnarekha and Old Twister. And all the rivers were in flood at the same time, and all the plains of Orissa were covered with water. And here and there people were drowned, and cattle were drowned, and mud houses collapsed. But there was yet time to save the paddy. And then rain ceased, and the peasants sat and watched the water going down, inch by inch and foot by foot, ready to transplant their seedlings as soon as the water should be low enough.

Then it rained again in the hills, and it rained heavily and incessantly, and all the rivers came down in flood again: first the Brahmini, then the Mahanadi, and then Old Twister and Subarnarekha. And all the rivers were in flood at the same time, and the flood-water rose higher

than it had ever been known to rise before. And many people were drowned, and much cattle was drowned, and all the houses that were built on low-lying land collapsed, and at places the banks of the rivers crumbled away and whole villages fell into the water. And the people took refuge on the great mounds which the Government had caused to be made to be a refuge in time of flood. But Krupasindhu was comforted because his village had been built on high ground where the flood-water never rose high enough to ruin the houses.

Now the rivers were rushing down from the hills with fearful force, and at places the flood-water of one river, rushing across the country, would meet the flood-water of another river, and the waters met with a great crash, and went swirling and eddying over the plains in every direction. And the paddy seedlings were washed out of the seed-beds and carried out to sea, and the paddy that had been sown broadcast was drowned. Even the tingijia paddy, which grows a long stalk, and the stalk growing longer as the water rises and contracting as the water subsides, so that the ear is always held above water—even the tingijia paddy was drowned.

And again the rain ceased and the floods subsided. And it was still not too late to sow paddy, and old peasants who were wise in such matters, and had observed the stars, and understood the relations between the stars and the land, said it was a good time to sow and to plant, and the asterism was favourable. And the peasants who had lost their seedlings began running hither and thither to buy seedlings to plant in their fields, but there were no seedlings to buy.

Then those who had stores of grain resowed their fields, and those who had none mortgaged their holdings and borrowed seed-grain or money, and the Government lent money to the peasants at a low rate of interest, and at

last most of the land was sown again.

And the need of money to buy seed put an end to the disputes in Krupasindhu's village, because the people could not afford to go on with them. And the magistrates were sitting idle in their courts half the day because the peasantry could not afford the luxury of litigation.

Now the rain, having stopped, did not begin again, and the flood-water ran back into the rivers, and the rivers shrank until they were no bigger than they had been in the hot weather before the rains began. And the flood-water that had been left in the hollows when the floods subsided dried up, and the wells began to run dry, and there was shortage of drinking-water, and many of the beasts dried up and died for want of water to drink. And the weather became exceedingly hot, and the earth in the fields was getting dry. And many of the seaside villages where the fishermen live were abandoned, because there was nothing to drink but salt water, and their inhabitants went to the east in search of work.

So the Great Flood was followed by a Great Drought, and the earth grew drier and drier, till all the paddy died in the ground, and a great fear fell upon the people, because they knew that there would be no paddy crop.

And when it was come to the end of the rainy season the wise old peasants said, 'Now it is the asterism when we ought to get the last rains.' And in every village the peasants worshipped the village goddess and prayed for rain, that they might plough their fields again and sow rabi crops. And many borrowed money to sow rabi crops as soon as the rain should come. But no rain came.

And the cold weather came, and Christmas came, and still there was no rain. And now the people knew that there would be no rabi crop.

Then the people began to be in distress, and many thousands of Oriyas went to the east to work, some as coolies,

some as gardeners, some as palki-bearers, some as domestic servants.

And from the seaside villages many of the fishermen went to the east, but those who remained took to making salt, and there were many prosecutions. But the Collector, knowing that the people were in distress, ordered that the prosecutions should cease. After that if an Excise man saw a poor fisherman making salt he looked the other way and passed on. So the poor fisherfolk were able to earn a little money and fill their stomachs by making contraband salt.

Now the Oriyas who went to the east earned good wages, and they sent money by postal money-orders to their families, and in this way much money came to Orissa, and many of the poor folk were able to live. But many others were in distress, and the old widows, and the lame and the halt and the blind and the lepers and the idiots and the lunatics, all those who were accustomed to depend on the piety of their relations or the charity of their neighbours, began to wander about the country begging. And the authorities opened kitchens here and there, and in some places they opened testworks, and set the people to work making new roads or mending old ones. But the distress increased, and poor people abandoned their children or sold them, and sometimes children ran away from their parents, because they were not getting enough to eat. And there were many children wandering about, begging and stealing.

And one day, shortly after the Christmas holiday, Krupasindhu came to the office and found a great crowd of half-naked people sitting in the Cutcherry compound. And he went and told the head clerk, and the head clerk came out and asked them what they wanted. But they demanded to be fed. And they explained that they were come from one of the Tributary States, and their Raja

had made no arrangements to feed the people who were starving; and so they were come to Moghul territory, because they had heard that in the Moghul territory the authorities had made proper arrangements. And when Krupasindhu saw this he knew that there was famine in the land.

But when the Commissioner of Orissa heard of it he wrote to his esteemed friend the Raja and compelled him to make proper arrangements.

And now the towns began to be filled with beggars and homeless children, and the Collectors of the districts imported rice from Rangoon, thousands of tons of rice, and they gave out grain to the village panchayats to be distributed to people who were starving and were not able to work.

Every month Haribandhu wrote to Krupasindhu and told him the news of the village. And he wrote that their father was a member of the committee which had charge of the distribution of rice, and that the responsibility was great, because when the people knew that rice was being distributed free they would not go to the testworks to work, and the order was that nothing was to be given to anyone who was fit to work. Wherefore some of the poor people were purposely starving themselves till they should be too weak for work, and so become qualified for the free distributions.

And all through the year 1908 the distress increased; and some went to the east, and some worked at the testworks, and some received gratuitous relief, and the district officers imported tens of thousands of tons of rice, and nobody was allowed to die of starvation. And the officers in charge of police stations were strictly charged to see that nobody died of starvation. And they understood that dying of starvation was forbidden. And when

anybody disobeyed this order they reported that he had died of cholera.

But when the beginning of the rainy season drew near the Government ordered a great deal of money to be distributed to the peasants in loans at a low rate of interest, so that they might be able to plough and sow as soon as the rains should break. And this year the rain came timely, and all the workers left the testworks to go and work in the fields. And they ploughed, and prepared their seed-beds, and sowed paddy.

And then the rivers came down in flood, but not all at the same time. And the floods were not excessive and did not last too long. And when the floods had subsided the peasants transplanted their seedlings.

Then the rivers came down in flood a second time, and when the floods went down they left a deposit of fertilizing silt, and soon the whole land was green with young paddy. But all this time the people would have had nothing to eat but for the care and labour of the local officials.

And sometimes the rain stopped, and sometimes it came on again, and at last harvest time came, and there was such a crop of rice as had not been seen for twenty years. And the people said there was a blessing on the crop, because it had been sown with the King-Emperor's money. And some said it was the railway which had brought the blessing, because a steam-engine is a holy thing, being driven by fire. And the women worshipped the railway by bowing down to the ground when a train passed and putting red paint on the permanent way. And perhaps they were right, because it would not have been possible to import such a mighty quantity of rice before the railway came to Cuttack, which was not many years before.

While some were reaping the winter rice others were sowing rabi in the fields that were more suited for rabi crops. And at Christmas time there were showers so that the rabi crops grew well. Then hope returned to the people, and many came back from the east, and the fishermen went back to their villages, and the testworks were closed down, but gratuitous relief had to be continued for some months more.

Now it happened during this cold weather that two Sahibs came from England who were politicians and Members of Parliament. And certain Babus who were also politicians, desiring to discredit the Government and the officials, told them about the famine. And they told them that the people were starving, and there were no crops, and the local officials were doing nothing about it. Then these two Sahibs went to Cuttack and saw the Collector, and he told them that the famine was nearly over, and the crops were good, and they said they would like to see for themselves. So the Babus provided two tonjons (a tonjon is something between a plankin and an office chair) with eight bearers to each, and carried them down the middle of the bed of Katjuri river.

Now in the rainy season Katjuri is a mighty river full of rushing brown water, but in the dry season it is only a little stream meandering through the middle of a vast bed of sand. And on each side of the river is a high bank, and on the tops of the banks embankments have been raised to keep floodwater out of the villages and sand out of the fields, so that one who stands in the middle of the river-bed cannot see the crops that are in the fields beyond the embankments. And these fields are very fertile, and the crops that were in them very valuable crops, beans and sugar-cane. But the two Sahibs knew nothing of this. They did not know that they were in the middle of the bed of a river. They could see nothing

but vast stretches of sand. And so they wrote to the newspapers and stated that the whole country was a howling wilderness.

When Khurshed Ali saw this in a newspaper he took the paper and went to consult Krupasindhu. And he found him sitting in his parlour with Brajananda Das, his messmate. And he showed them the newspaper.

'These men,' he said, 'are English Sahibs. Why do they tell lies like black men?'

'You don't understand,' said Braja Babu. 'These fellows are not Heavenborn Sahibs like our Sahib. They are only Parliament men. It is not to be expected that they should be truthful and honourable like the Heavenborn.'

'Braja Babu is right,' said Krupasindhu. 'If they are politicians then naturally they must be liars. It would be foolish to expect them not to be.'

'I suppose you are right,' said Khurshed Ali.

And he agreed with Krupasindhu that it was better for an honest man to have nothing to do with politics.

And again in 1909 the rains broke in due time, and it rained abundantly, and the floods came, but they were not excessive, and the crops were good. And so the famine came to an end, and all the officials heaved a great sigh of relief, and turned their attention to the winding up of the accounts.

8

How Dacoits Came to the Village

When the famine was at its height there had been a great increase of crime. For, while some went to the east and some went to the testworks and some went a-begging, there were others who would neither beg nor work. And if these were low-caste folk, or folk who were thieves by caste, they committed thefts and burglaries. But there were others who would not demean themselves by committing ignoble crimes. These were young peasants of good caste. They were too proud to beg, and they would not go to the testworks to work for a mere pittance in a crowd of stinking low-caste people, and they would not go to the east for service because they were independent men, accustomed to live by cultivating their own land, and they had never served any man. Therefore, when they resorted to crime the crime was robbery. And they formed gangs of dacoits, twenty or thirty to a gang, and every gang hired a Brahmin boy to cook for them.

And when a gang of dacoits looted a rich man's house they sometimes won gold and silver enough to keep them in comfort for months. And because of this, and because to the younger men a dacoity was fine adventure, some of the gangs continued to meet and commit dacoities even after the famine was over.

It happened to be at Christmas time when Krupasindhu

was home for the holidays that a gang of dacoits came to the village. They came at sunset to the ruined monastery and hid in the jungle where Krupa had played with Nirmalabala. There they rested while their Brahmin cook prepared a meal for them, and when they had eaten they waited till near midnight, and then set out to loot the house of Janardhan Jethi. But before starting they tied turbans on their heads so that they looked like Hindustanis. Their plan was that when they had looted his house, which was near the ferry, they would cross the river by the ferry and march to Balasore and go away by train. When they had started the Brahmin boy broke the earthen pots, according to custom, and collected the rest of their gear and went to the ghat and hid in some bushes, ready to join the others when they came to the ghat to cross the river.

Now Janardhan Jethi, silversmith and moneylender, was growing rich. He had bought some landed property, and he was ambitious to become a landlord and a man of position, and he thought it necessary to his prestige to have a gun licence. So he asked Krupasindhu to come to his house for a talk in the evening. And Krupasindhu went when he had his supper (because he could not eat in the house of a silversmith) and Janardhan gave him pan to chew, and they sat talking till far into the night.

Janardhan wanted to find out how much he would have to spend, and he did not know the custom, and he feared that Krupasindhu would ask too much. And Krupasindhu was waiting for Janardhan to make an offer, but Janardhan would not make an offer, because he knew that whatever he offered Krupasindhu would demand twice as much. So neither of them was willing to open the subject, and they talked and talked, and there was no mention of money.

And while they were talking the dacoits came. Half

of them surrounded the house and began striking the ground with their lathies and shouting, 'Kill! Kill!' to intimidate the villagers. The rest began to strike the front door, shouting that if somebody didn't open the door they would set fire to the house. As soon as they knew that dacoits were come Janardhan ran inside and hid in a granary, while Krupasindhu slipped out of a side-door that was unguarded and ran home.

After a few minutes a boy who was one of Janardhan's servants, being frightened, opened the front door and let the dacoits in. And they beat him severely, because he could not tell them where the treasure was hidden. Then they forced their way into the women's apartments, and prodded the women with the butts of their lathies and threatened to torture them unless they told them where the treasure was hidden. But the women were too frightened to do anything but huddle themselves together in a corner and scream. Then the dacoits went raging through the house, bursting open the doors of all the rooms, looking for Janardhan Jethi.

While the dacoits were doing these things Krupasindhu ran home and roused Dayanidhi and Haribandhu.

'Ho, brothers!' he cried. 'Ho, Dayanidhi! Ho, Haribandhu! Get up quickly and bring lathies! And you, Dayanidhi, put on your police uniform. Come quickly, a dacoity is being committed in the house of Janardhan Jethi! A dacoity is being committed! Wake up!'

Then Dayanidhi and Haribandhu got up and Dayanidhi put on his sub-inspector's uniform, and they all took lathies in their hands and went quickly to the house of Popsi Khandara, the village watchman. And they roused him and made him put on his uniform and take his poleaxe in his hand, and they all went through the village rousing the villagers and shouting, 'Thieves! Thieves! Kill! Kill! A dacoity is being committed!'

And while Dayanidhi, Haribandhu, and the watchman were rousing the villagers, Krupasindhu ran to the ghat and found the ferryman. And he bade the ferryman take the great ferryboat to the other side and leave only one boatman and one small boat, so that the dacoits could only cross the river two at a time, and then the boatmen would easily overpower them as they landed on the other side. But the ferryman said he would not send the small boat back again, for if they could catch two of the dacoits that would be enough, because the police would know what gang they belonged to, so that to catch one or two was as good as catching the whole gang. And so he did. And when he reached the other side he sent a man to the police station on a bicycle, and he roused all his men and bade them take their lathies and stand by to overpower the dacoits as soon as they landed. And he prepared ropes to bind them with and pieces of cloth to gag them.

Now it sometimes happened that great rough fellows, skilled in wrestling and lathi play, would come to a ferry and try to enter the boat by force and cross the river without paying the fare. Wherefore every ferryman had to be ready to deal with tough customers. And this ferryman kept a strong man who had been a professional wrestler as his assistant, and all his boatmen were chosen for their strength and courage, and they were not afraid of dacoits.

And the dacoits searched every room and every outhouse and every nook and cranny in Janardhan Jethi's house, but could not find him. And while they were searching the villagers came to the door shouting, 'Thief! Thief! Kill! Kill!' And when the men who were on guard outside saw Dayanidhi and the watchman in their uniforms they thought the police were come, and one of them ran in and told the leader. Now the leader of

the gang, not finding Janardhan anywhere else, was just about to order his men to break open the granaries, but when he heard that the police were come he called his men off and they all ran to the ghat.

And when they came to the ghat they found only one boatman and only one small boat. The boatman offered to take them across two by two, but the leader told him to go and fetch the great ferry-boat. But the boatman said the ferryman would not send the great boat across at night unless he was compelled to. So the leader of the dacoits sent two of his men across in the small boat to compel the ferryman to bring the ferry-boat.

Now, the villagers had followed the dacoits, and came upon them as they were waiting by the ghat. And the dacoits fought with the villagers. Some of the villagers also were hurt, but Dayanidhi knocked one of the dacoits down, and before he could get up Topsi, the watchman, smote him with his poleaxe and broke his thigh. Then the leader called to his men to rally round him, and they all rushed upon the villagers together, and the villagers turned and fled.

Then the dacoits went back to the ghat to wait for the ferry-boat, and listened intently, in case they could hear what was happening on the other side. But when the small boat reached the other side and the two dacoits had landed the boatmen fell upon them and beat them and overpowered them and tied them back to back with ropes and gagged them and laid them under a tree. But before they were overpowered they fought desperately, and there was a great noise of shouting and clashing of lathies, and, the wind being from that direction, their comrades on the other side of the river heard the noise. And they waited a little longer to see if the ferry-boat was coming, and then they thought that their comrades had either been taken or had run away. And they de-

cided themselves to run away eastward along the bank of the river. And they left the man with the broken thigh where he lay, because he could not run with them.

All this time the villagers had been standing a little way off shouting, 'Thief! Thief! Kill! Kill!' And when they saw that the dacoits were running away they advanced again and they came upon the man with the broken thigh. Then Topsi, the watchman, called for a lantern to see if he could identify the man. But the dacoits had cut off his head and carried it away with them, so that he might not be identified.

Then the villagers set a watch upon the corpse and upon the ghat and went back to their homes.

And at daybreak the police came. They loosed the two men whom the boatmen had arrested and handcuffed them, and came across the river and caught the Brahmin boy, who had been hiding all this time in the bushes. Then the sub-inspector went to the house of Janardhan Jethi and Janardhan sent a chair out for him to sit on, and the sub-inspector sat in the shade of a tree doing and saying nothing, and he had his swordbelt on.

Then all the villagers gathered before the sub-inspector, ready to give their evidence, but the sub-inspector continued to sit there, doing and saying nothing.

Now, when the villagers saw that the sub-inspector was wasting time some of them went to Dayanidhi, and one asked him why the sub-inspector did not begin the investigation. And Dayanidhi replied, 'Because he is discommoded by his swordbelt.'

But the villagers had not yet understood, and they turned to Krupasindhu.

'Krupa Babu,' said Bhikari Charan Patnaik, 'why is the sub-inspector wasting time while the dacoits are escaping?'

'Brother,' Krupasindhu replied, 'cannot you see that

his belly is very fat and his belt is very tight?'

'But if his belt is uncomfortable,' said Braja Mohen Patnaik, who was a simple man, 'why does he wear it? Why doesn't he take it off?'

'That is why he wears it,' said Krupasindhu, 'in order that you may persuade him to take it off.'

Then the villagers quickly made a collection among themselves, and offered the sub-inspector a humble offering of sweetmeats and money. And when the sub-inspector had graciously condescended to accept of their offering he took his belt off and began the investigation.

That evening Krupasindhu went again to see Janardhan Jethi. And Janardhan was very grateful, because Krupasindhu had roused the villagers to drive the dacoits from his house, and he gave Krupasindhu one of his masterpieces—an ittardan in silver filigree work, formed like a peacock.

'It is a good thing,' Janardhan said. 'It is pure soft silver, not rubbishy sterling stuff like Government rupees.'

And when he had thanked him, Krupasindhu brought the conversation back to the matter of the gun licence.

'Now, Janardhan Babu,' he said, 'you must be regretting that you had no gun in the house.'

'But, indeed,' said Janardhan, 'I thought of keeping a gun only for the sake of prestige. I don't think I should ever want to fire it off.'

'That would not be necessary,' Krupasindhu replied. 'There are many licence holders who keep guns, but no ammunition. If the dacoits know that there is a gun in the house, that is enough.'

'And do you think Magistrate Sahib would grant me a licence if I applied?'

'I think I could manage it. But it would have been easier last year. And you will have to spend money.'

'Why should it be more difficult this year than last year?'

'Because we have got a new Sahib. The former Sahib used to grant licences easily, but this Sahib is a hard man. Moreover, when the annual report was submitted Commissioner Sahib remarked that the number of gun licences had increased beyond measure. Therefore, Magistrate Sahib grants new licences very sparingly.'

'But you think it could be managed by spending a little money?'

'I think I could manage it Last year it would have cost you five hundred rupees Now it will cost you one thousand.'

Janardhan Jethi, who knew nothing of the ways of the Magistrate's office, believed this, and after a little talk he promised to pay the money next day. In the morning Krupasindhu went to him again, and he counted out one thousand rupees, and Krupasindhu carried the money away in a bag of netted string, which one of the peons had stolen for him from the Treasury.

9

Krupa Learns Shorthand and Typewriting

When men had ceased to talk about the famine, some of them began to talk politics. Krupasindhu never talked politics, but he used to listen to what he heard. The rumour was that the King-Emperor had decided to grant certain Reforms. And Krupasindhu noticed that all the Bengalis said one thing and all the Oriyas said another. The Bengalis were saying, 'It is something, but it is only a little. We must keep on agitating, and one day we shall get more.' But the Oriyas were saying, 'The only reform we want is to turn all the Bengalis out of Orissa.'

The Reforms, he heard, were to come into effect on the 1st of January, 1910. So he waited till the 1st of January to see what would happen. Nothing happened. A few months later he remembered this, and he thought he would like to ask his friend Khurshed Ali about it.

'I have heard,' he said to Khurshed, 'that Lord Morley-Minto—and who he is, God knows—has persuaded the King-Emperor to grant certain Reforms.'

'I have heard the same,' Khurshed replied, 'but I haven't noticed any difference.'

'Neither have I, said Krupasindhu, and thought no more about it.

Now it was about this time that typewriters began to be used in Collectors' offices, and shorthand began to

come into fashion, and the Collector promised an increase of pay if any of the clerks could write shorthand. But the head clerk told him that none of them could, and that there was no one in Balasore who could teach it. And one of the clerks took long leave and went to Calcutta to learn.

But Krupasindhu did not want to go to Calcutta, yet he knew that it would be advantageous to him to learn. So he cudgelled his brains, and he asked himself if the head clerk had been right when he said that there was no one in Balasore who could teach shorthand. And he bethought him of the missionaries.

Now there were three churches in Balasore. There was a great church which was in charge of the Jesuit Fathers, and the people who frequented it were native Christians and Eurasians. And there was a little church where the Sahibs worshipped. But the missionaries went to neither of these churches. They had one of their own. And Krupasindhu understood that there were many sects of Christians, just as there were many sects of Mohammedans, and he enquired and learnt that the missionaries belonged to the sect called the American Baptists. He had heard that the Americans were clever and progressive people, and he thought that perhaps one of them might know shorthand.

So he went, feeling very shy and diffident, to the house of the head of the mission. And a Memsahib received him. She was very large and fair, and very kind, and she said, 'Do you want to speak to my husband? He is busy dictating letters. Just wait here a minute; he'll be pleased to see you.'

So Krupasindhu waited on the veranda. And while he waited he peeped into the house, and it seemed to him to be very beautifully furnished and not at all like the house of a religious man, who ought to be poor like the

Jesuit Fathers. And he heard the voice of the old gentleman who was the head of the mission dictating letters, as he peeped through an open door. He saw that the old gentleman was standing and dictating while one of the young missionaries was taking it down in shorthand.

And when the old gentleman had finished dictating letters he came out and shook hands with Krupasindhu.

'My dear friend,' he said, 'I'm sure mighty pleased to see ye. But I haven't time to talk to you, much as I should like to, because I've a conference I must go to right now. But we've a prayer meeting to-morrow, and one of our native evangelists will deliver a lecture, and everybody is cordially welcome. So I hope I'll have the pleasure of seeing ye there, and I'll be right glad if you'll come and have a chat with me after the meeting, and so good night my dear friend, and God bless you.'

Krupasindhu felt that he had no choice but to attend the meeting next day. And he did so.

The meeting was held in the open air, in the mission compound, so that people passing by in the street could stop and look over the wall and see what was going on and hear what was said. The native gospeller, who was an Oriya-speaking man from Ganjam, stood on a small platform, and there were many people squatting on the ground around the platform and many standing in the street looking over the wall. Krupasindhu was one of those who were squatting on the ground.

When one of the missionaries had read a prayer the gospeller began to speak in Oriya.

'My dear friends,' he began, 'you will understand that this gospel that I bring you is something really worth having, when you consider that I am come all the way from a foreign country to bring it to you.'

Now it seemed to Krupasindhu very proper and very natural that people who were American by birth should be

American Baptists by religion But it seemed odd to him that they should want to convert Oriyas and turn them into Americans Therefore he was not interested in this gospel which the gospeller had brought to him all the way from Ganjam, so he dozed, and day-dreamed, and waited as patiently as he could, until the lecture was finished When the lecture was finished the missionaries and their converts sang a hymn, and it seemed to Krupasindhu insipid compared with a Hindu bhajan, and when it was all over he sought out the old gentleman who was the head of the mission And the old gentleman took him by the hand and led him to his house and spoke to him very kindly

'Come right in, my dear friend,' he said, 'and sit down. And first tell me how you liked the lecture.'

'Sir,' said Krupasindhu, I listened to the lecture with the most intense interest But there is one thing about which I desired to speak to your Honour'

'And what is that?' the old gentleman asked.

'Sir,' said Krupasindhu, 'I am a clerk in the Collector's office, and the Collector is in need of a steno-typist, and I am anxious to qualify myself for this appointment And I understand that your Honour is capable of imparting the necessary instruction'

When the old missionary heard this he looked displeased, and he sat for a minute in silence stroking his beard Then his smile reappeared upon his face.

'Well,' he said, 'I think that's not a bad idea. I guess there are other clerks in the office who would like to learn too so maybe we could arrange for a class to meet here evenings'

'Sir,' Krupasindhu replied, 'we Oriyas are lazy men, and we are not enterprising Moreover, we are afraid to come to the mission, for fear of offending our caste-fellows and I do not think any of the other clerks will

come.' This he said, not because he was afraid of what his caste-men might say—nobody would ever suspect him of wanting to be a Christian—but because he wanted to be the only man in the office who could write shorthand.

'That is very true,' said the old missionary. 'And you sure have shown some courage, and you deserve credit for it. Now I'll send for my assistant who knows stenography, and we'll just see what we can arrange.'

And at last it was arranged that Krupasindhu should go to the mission three times a week to learn shorthand and typewriting. The missionaries would not accept any payment, but he was invited to contribute to the mission funds every month, and did so. And for the next six months he went three times a week to learn typewriting and shorthand.

Krupasindhu looked forward eagerly to the time when he would be proficient, and he was confident, that he would become the Collector Sahib's own particular stenotypist. In the meantime he continued making money in the gun-licence department. And he was satisfied with his lot; only it distressed him to hear that his father was not keeping well and often having fever. And just when he was most satisfied something happened that seemed to him to be really very unfortunate.

And this is how it happened. The Sahib who was Collector when the famine began thought more of saving the lives of the poor people than of organizing the accounts. And when the famine was over and the accounts had to be finally closed it was found that there was a considerable degree of disorder, and it was suspected that there had been a good deal of leakage. The new Collector put one of the Deputy Collectors in charge of this business, and the Deputy Collector asked the serishtadar to give him a good clerk for the purpose.

Now, while the famine lasted all the clerks had been working overtime, and it had been very difficult to get leave. And now there was a great demand for leave, and nobody wanted the job of straightening out the famine accounts. The first clerk who was appointed worked for a while, and then applied for leave on the ground that his wife had died in child-bed, and he must go and make arrangements for the care of his children. And the next applied for leave on the ground that his wife was a chronic invalid, and it was necessary that he should go home to make proper arrangements for her treatment. And the third applied for leave on the ground that his wife was a chronic invalid, and it was necessary that he should bring her to Balasore, that she might be treated properly. And the fourth, who prided himself on his knowledge of English, put in an application stating that his wife was afflicted with gynæcological disturbances. And when the Collector had read that he read no more, but granted the leave applied for, and sent for Krupasindhu.

'Krupasindhu Babu,' he said, 'I hear that you are one of the most diligent and promising clerks in the office, and I have decided to put you in charge of the famine accounts. So far every clerk who has been entrusted with this duty has applied for leave on the ground that his wife is either dead or a chronic invalid. But I hope you will not fail me in the same way.'

Krupasindhu was not pleased when he heard this, but he had no choice but to obey, and he thought it prudent to make a virtue of necessity.

'Sir,' he said, 'I also lost my first wife, who met her death at an early age because she had begun child-bearing too young. But now I have a wife who is strong and healthy because she was not very young when I married her. And I hope I shall always be able to discharge

the duties with which I am entrusted to the entire satisfaction of your Honour'.

Krupasindhu began to work hard at the famine accounts, and he went on working very diligently until he received Haribandhu's next letter. Haribandhu had written that their father was very ill, and he was getting fever frequently and his belly was swollen. Then Krupasindhu applied for leave. The Collector granted the leave very unwillingly and advised him to bring his father to Balasore and put him in the hospital.

Now Krupasindhu feared the hospital, because it seemed to him a foreign institution. But he went to the Doctor Babu and described his father's symptoms as Haribandhu had described them in his letter, and the Doctor Babu said it was a case of chronic malaria, and prescribed a mixture. The mixture was to be taken three times a day, and there were eight doses in a bottle. So he had four bottles made up and took them with him.

When Madhu Sudan had taken two bottles of the mixture he was much better, and Krupasindhu returned to Balasore. But first he left the two remaining bottles with Haribandhu, charging him to see that his father took the mixture regularly until it was finished.

But a month later Haribandhu wrote again to say that their father was worse, and his belly was more swollen than ever, and he desired Krupasindhu to take leave again that he might see his favourite son once more before he died. So Krupasindhu wrote out another application for leave, and when the Deputy Collector told him that the Collector would certainly refuse it he decided to take it to the Collector himself, for he did not believe that any Sahib could be so hard-hearted as to refuse him.

But when the Collector read the application he was angry.

'If you had taken my advice,' he said, 'and brought

your father to Balasore, and put him in the hospital, you could have seen him every day, and he would have received proper treatment. But now the work is in arrears and you cannot have leave until it is finished. It ought to be finished by now.'

'Sir,' said Krupasindhu, 'the work is very heavy and very difficult, and it could not be finished in a short time.'

'It could have been finished by now, only the clerks are lazy and are always applying for leave.'

'Sir,' said Krupasindhu, beginning to shed tears, 'it is not for my own sake that I applied for leave, but for the sake of my father.'

'I don't care whether it's your father or your grandfather. Your duty comes first. You cannot have leave until the work is finished.'

Then Krupasindhu tottered out of the room and across the veranda and down the steps, feeling dazed, as if some one had struck him on the head. And he staggered down the drive, swerving and swaying like a man that is drunk, for he supposed that he would never see his father alive again. And he went staggering and swerving and swaying down the drive till he came to the gate of the compound. There he leant against the gate-post and wept aloud.

And when the Sahib heard the noise he went out on to the veranda to see what was the matter. And when he saw Krupasindhu leaning against the gate-post howling like a little child his heart was touched, and he called him back.

'Now, Babu,' he said, 'please stop crying, you may have your leave. And I advise you to bring your father to the hospital, and I will speak to the Civil Surgeon, and ask him to attend to the old gentleman himself and see that he is properly treated.'

When he heard this Krupasindhu was a little comforted, but he could not stop crying, only now the tears flowed easily and without noise. So he thanked the Collector as well as he could and went away, walking steadily.

Then he set out at once for his home. And when he came to the ferry he spoke to the ferryman, who was an old friend and a good neighbour, and the ferryman was kind and promised to do all he could to help. And Krupasindhu came to his home and told his brothers what the Collector had said. And they got a new charpoy and laid a soft mattress on it and laid their father on the mattress and carried him to the ferry. And they put their father on the ferry-boat, bed and all. And the ferryman had put a great bundle of straw in the boat, that Madhu Sudan might cross the river in comfort. And on the other side of the river the ferryman had a bullock cart waiting with plenty of straw, and the three brothers lifted their father on to the bullock cart together with the mattress.

Now, when it was noon the cartman wanted to rest during the heat of the day and continue the journey when the sun began to be low in the sky, but the three brothers compelled him to go on.

And at every jolt of the cart Madhu Sudan cried out with pain, and when they came near the town there was a great jolt, and the old man shrieked once. After that he cried out no more, but only moaned softly.

And they travelled all day and came to the hospital in the evening. And when they had laid their father in a bed, and the Doctor Babu had examined him, they asked what was the matter.

'The spleen is diseased,' the Doctor Babu replied. 'You ought to have brought him two months sooner.'

'Do you mean,' Haribandhu asked, 'that there is no hope of his life?'

'Babu,' the doctor replied, 'I do not think he will live till morning.'

So the three brothers sat by their father all night. And when it came to the hour before dawn, when the wind drops, and the heat is excessive, and men gasp for breath, and their skins become greasy with sweat, and the birds and the beasts are weary of the night, and all the world waits for the rising of the sun—in that hour Madhu Sudan died.

When Dayanidhi asked the Doctor what had caused their father to die, the doctor replied that his spleen had been ruptured by the jolting of the bullock cart.

Krupasindhu's messmates, being of the same caste, made all arrangements for the cremation; for the three brothers could do nothing but weep. And Dayanidhi put fire in his father's mouth, because he was the eldest son.

10

Krupa Becomes the Collector's Confidential Steno-Typist

When his leave expired Krupasindhu returned to the labour of winding up the famine accounts. He returned to it reluctantly, because he felt that it had brought him bad luck. And the Deputy Collector saw that his heart was not in his work and asked the serishtadar to give him another clerk. The serishtadar was in doubt what to do with Krupasindhu and asked him what department he would like to work in and Krupasindhu said he would like to be the Collector's stenographer. The serishtadar was surprised when he heard that Krupasindhu could write shorthand, but he went and told the Collector, and the Collector sent for Krupasindhu and tested him. First he tested him with a paragraph from a speech by Mr Winston Churchill, and Krupasindhu, who had never heard anything like it before, was completely baffled. Then the Collector laughed and tried him again with an official letter, and Krupasindhu got it all down perfectly

So Krupasindhu became the Collector's steno-typist and confidential clerk, and this was a post he liked because he was, as it were, one of the Sahib's personal staff, and his pay was doubled, and he worked in the peace and comfort of the Collector's house instead of the noise and

stink of the Cutcherry. Also he knew that it was a post in which there would be opportunities of making money.

As the Sahib's personal steno-typist he would not be bound to observe the usual office hours. He would have to be in attendance at any hour of the day or night when required. Sometimes he would have to work much longer hours than the clerks in the office, but on other occasions he would not be wanted, and might have a couple of hours to himself.

First he took care to make friends with those with whom his new appointment brought him into contact: the orderlies and the Sahib's servants, and the Memsahib herself.

He used to go to the Collector's house very early, before the usual office hours, and work in a small room in a corner of the house, and stay till the evening, when the Sahib went out for a walk before sunset. Some days the Sahib dictated a number of letters, and Krupasindhu had to work very hard. Other days he had little to do, and he brought the copy of Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son* to make use of the time when he had no work to do. And when the Sahib discovered that he was using his time so prudently he lent him English books—novels by Robert Hichens and Florence Barclay—and Krupasindhu laboured to improve his knowledge of colloquial English.

In the mornings most of the Sahib's time was occupied in granting interviews to the local gentry. Some came to give him information, and some to solicit favours, and some only to pay their respects, so that their neighbours might know that they were important enough to be granted interviews by the Collector.

But interviews were not granted to all comers. Some were told to go to the office, and some were told to write a letter or file a petition if they had anything to submit, and some were simply told to go away. And if a stranger

came the Sahib used to enquire who he was before admitting him. And Krupasindhu discovered that he could sometimes slip in a word that would decide the Sahib whether to see the man or not. Thus Krupasindhu got to know all the people who were of importance in the district, and they treated him with respect, because they believed that he had influence with the Collector.

Now the custom was that every caller who was not an official paid a gratuity to the orderly in waiting. The usual fee was two rupees, but some paid more. And Krupasindhu established friendly relations with the head orderly. And he kept a list of those who called every day, and settled accounts with the head orderly every week. For if anybody did not pay according to custom Krupasindhu would find an opportunity to poison the Sahib's mind against him, or to delay his business in some way and the orderlies gladly paid him four annas in the rupee. In this way Krupasindhu made not less than two hundred rupees a month. Occasions occurred when he was able to make more.

Before long the Sahib became so accustomed to dictating letters, instead of writing, that he dictated everything, even his private letters. But Krupasindhu never grumbled at the extra work. Sometimes the Memsahib also gave him work to do, and he used to help her with the domestic accounts. And the Sahib and Memsahib were very kind, and if anything ailed him the Memsahib used to give him medicine. And Krupasindhu began to be happy, and he received many offerings from those who were anxious to please the Collector, and all the other clerks envied him.

Yet he had hardly recovered from the blow of his father's death and settled down in his new place and begun to be happy when another misfortune befell him. For his wife died.

First she was taken ill with influenza, and then the influenza was followed by pneumonia, and she died. And it seemed to Krupasindhu very hard that he should lose his wife again, when he had been careful to choose a girl who was strong and healthy, and not too young. But, though he did not know it, her strength had been exhausted by bearing and suckling children before she was full-grown, and when illness attacked her she had no strength to resist, and died easily.

And Krupasindhu mourned her sincerely, because she had been a good and faithful and serviceable wife, though he had never loved her with the throbs of his soul as he had loved Nirmalabala.

Now Krupasindhu was thirty-five years old, and he considered that he was still young, and therefore he would marry again; but he was not very young, and therefore he would do it soon.

And the Sahib and his wife were very kind to him when they heard of his bereavement, and the Sahib asked him if he would like to take leave and go home, but the Christmas holidays were drawing near, and he knew that going home would only make him feel sad. And the American missionary heard of his bereavement somehow, and came to his lodging to comfort him. And he talked about Heaven and Salvation and the love of Christ and other things in which Krupasindhu was not interested, and asked him to come to the mission house and see him. But Krupasindhu had learnt from the missionaries all that he wanted to learn from them, and he would not go to their house again.

When the Christmas holidays came Krupasindhu went home, and the old house and the whole village were gloomy to him. And so another year ended sadly.

And when the Christmas holidays were over Collector Sahib went out on tour and took Krupasindhu with him.

And this was to Krupasindhu a delightful novelty. All the first three months of the year they toured; out for a fortnight, in for a few days, and then out again.

Now Krupasindhu knew his native village and the neighbouring villages; and he knew the village where he had been at school; and he knew the way from his native village to Balasore; and he knew the country round Balasore within the range of a walk; and he had been to Calcutta once; and that was all that he had seen of the world. But now they went north to the borders of Bengal, and south to the seaside jungles about the mouths of the Mahanadi, and inland to the borders of the Tributary States. Every day Krupasindhu saw something new: new places and new sorts of people—the border folk, whose speech is Oriya mingled with Bengali, and Sontals, who speak a language of their own, and wild-looking hill folk, armed with bows and arrows; and forests, and great rivers, and ancient mosques and temples, and the great houses of the landed gentry. And seeing new faces and making new friends, and the change and variety healed the sickness of his heart.

And everywhere the people courted him, and even the police were glad of his friendship, and he seldom had to pay for his food; and those who hoped for the favour or feared the disfavour of the Sahib secretly sent him presents. And in some places the local gentry arranged entertainments: conjurers or snake-charmers or fireworks or dances—boys dancing disguised as girls, according to the custom of Orissa—to please their Collector Sahib. And the Sahib sat and watched politely, being secretly bored but Krupasindhu enjoyed all these entertainments immensely.

And so much was his spirit refreshed by the changes of scene that he began to look upon the world with a new interest, and he began to apply himself to whatever he

had to do with a new zest, and he felt within himself a great renewal of life.

But at the end of March when the hot weather had begun he was tired of touring, and so was the Sahib. So the Sahib made an end of touring and settled down to pass the hot weather comfortably at Balasore. And Krupasindhu settled down again gladly to the peaceful and regular life of a clerk.

11

Krupa Marries a Third Time

It was in the following June that Krupasindhu married for the third time. And this time he married a poor man's daughter, because he did not care about her dowry, but was chiefly anxious that the girl should be strong and healthy and not too young. And he applied for a fortnight's leave so that he might spend a day or two at home before going to fetch his bride.

When all the arrangements were complete he received a letter from Dayanidhi He opened it with misgi ings, fearing that his brother had written to say that some hitch had occurred in connexion with his marriage. But when he read the letter he found that it was bad news of a different sort. Nishibala was with child, and she was so far advanced in her pregnancy, which she had concealed, that an abortion, Dayanidhi wrote, would be dangerous.

Krupasindhu when he read this was at first annoyed, but he was not angry. Then he felt sorry for Nishibala and sorry for himself, because of the disgrace. But he did not find it in his heart to be angry with his daughter. He had noticed that if any of the clerks or the Deputy Collectors had a virgin widow in his house this thing was sure to happen to her sooner or later.

Then Krupasindhu missed his father more than he had

ever missed him before, because if his father had been alive he would have turned to him for sympathy and advice. But now to whom should he turn? He was ashamed to tell it to his messmates. He would not tell it to any man of his own age. He would only tell it to an old man. At last he decided to go and tell it to Bhagaban Mahapatra, the head clerk.

'Bhagaban Babu,' he began, 'I have suffered a great misfortune. I would not tell it to one of the younger men, because it is a private matter. And I have no father to whom I can go for advice. So I am come to you, because your goodness and wisdom are known to me.'

'What is it, Krupa Babu?' Bhagaban Mahapatra replied, being pleased at the flattery. 'Tell me about it, and I will give you the best advice I can.'

'This is what has happened: my daughter, who is a widow, is with child.'

'How old is she?'

'She is nearly twenty.'

'It is but natural.'

'It is a disgrace.'

'Krupa Babu, listen to me, and I will tell you something. You have lost two wives, and your mother died when you were a child. And one hears the same story everywhere. The women who have husbands die young. It is only the widows who live to be old women. And I will tell you why. When a young girl becomes a widow she keeps her virginity until she is past the age when the married girls have begun to bear children. But when she is eighteen or twenty the desire for man's love becomes too strong for her, and she falls in love with somebody and becomes pregnant. For at that age girls are ardent, and they are ignorant of the world, and Love is stronger than Fear. Then for two years or more she has the baby constantly in her lap, and she can think of nothing else.

But when she has weaned the child, she thinks of the disgrace: the disgrace to herself and the disgrace to her family, and the disgrace that will haunt her child as long as it lives. And she learns to fear man's love. So that when the desire for man's love returns to her—and naturally it must return to her sometimes as long as she is young—she is able to resist it, because Fear is now stronger than Love. That is why it is seldom that a widow of good caste becomes pregnant more than once. And because she has only borne one child, and that when she was full-grown, her strength is not sapped by motherhood, and she lives to be old.'

'It is poor comfort, Bhagaban Babu, to be told that my daughter will live long, being a widow and an outcast.'

'Why do you distress yourself without need, Krupa Babu? I tell you this is an ordinary thing, and nobody really thinks anything of it.'

And Krupasindhu was comforted, knowing that what Bhagaban Babu had said was true.

'But,' he said, 'you have not given me any advice, Bhagaban Babu.'

'I will tell you what to do. Leave the neighbours alone, and they will leave you alone. Give the lady a room to herself where she may remain in peace and nourish her child. And when the child is four years old you will call a meeting of your caste-men and ask them to take her back into caste. If they have respect for you they will do what you ask.'

So Krupasindhu went away comforted, and wrote an answer to Dayanidhi's letter. And soon after he heard that the child was born.

When the time came Krupasindhu went home with a heavy heart. And he was minded to ask his daughter how it had happened and who was the father of the child.

And when he was come to the house Dayanidhi showed

him the room where Nishibala was nursing her child. And he went in, and Nishibala stood before him, hanging her head, with the baby in her arms. And she had covered the baby with a cloth. Then Krupasindhu bade her uncover the baby that he might see his face. And he took the baby in his arms. And then he felt that he loved Nishibala and her baby, for all it was a bastard, and he said, 'It is a beautiful child. It is like your mother.'

Then he gave the baby back to his mother, and she laid it on her bed and came and prostrated herself before her father, but he raised her up, and she hung on his neck and wept. And when she had been weeping a little while the baby began to cry, and she left her father and ran to the baby, and Krupasindhu went out of the room and asked no questions.

Then Krupasindhu begged his brothers not to talk about Nishibala and not to tell her anything or make any enquiries, but only to treat her kindly and see that she was well fed and had all she wanted. And they comforted him with the same words as Bhagaban Babu, saying that it was only to be expected, and that it was an ordinary thing, and it was foolish to fret about it. So Krupasindhu took courage, and cheered himself up for his wedding.

The next day he remained in the house, and spent much of the time with Nishibala, who was comforted when she knew that her father was not angry with her, and that he loved her baby.

And the next day he went to fetch his bride. Now, when he saw his new wife he was mightily pleased. She looked healthy and strong and plump and fair and, above all, placid. And when he brought her home he liked her more and more. Being a poor man's daughter, she was accustomed to doing all sorts of domestic work, and she had no false pride and did not expect to have servants to wait on her, but was always ready to put her hand to

any work that was to be done in the house. She was an excellent cook; and always she was placid and serene. And Krupasindhu found that he was able to catch some of her serenity from her, so that it was happiness to him only to sit beside her.

And when his leave expired he left her reluctantly, and thought of her all the way back to Balasore, and all that evening as he sat in his lodging with his messmates, so that he answered at random when they spoke to him. And he thought of her all the next day as he sat in the little room in the Collector's house waiting for the Sahib to call him to take down letters in shorthand. And, as there was not much work to do, he sat there pretending to read an English book, but really he was thinking and thinking; thinking always of Charubala.

And as he thought he discovered that he was in love as he had never been in love before. For he had loved his first wife with the heart of his boyhood, and for his second wife he had felt respect rather than love, but Charubala he loved not for lust nor for pride, but just for herself. He thought that he would do gladly for her whatever she might ask him to do. Any service that would be irksome if he had to do it for anyone else would be joy and pride to him if he had to do it for her. And after much thinking he thought that he could never be happy without her. So he arrived at an important decision, and when he went back to his lodging that evening he communicated it to his messmates.

'Brothers,' he began, as they were sitting on their veranda in the evening enjoying the cool breeze that came from the sea, 'I have decided to leave you.'

Brajananda started and sat up.

'You mustn't talk like that, Krupa,' he said. 'You have been fretting too much. After all, it is an ordinary thing.'

'You don't understand. I want to have a lodging all to myself.'

'We know that you are getting more pay and making money,' said Brajananda, 'but what about us?'

'I'm afraid you'll have to pay the rent between two of you instead of three.'

'It will be more comfortable,' said the other messmate, who was a silent man.

'Well,' said Brajananda, 'we also are getting more pay than when we first took this lodging. We can afford it.'

'Krupa is right,' said the other messmate.

'I think so,' Krupa replied, 'I thought about it a lot before deciding.'

'I suppose you are getting so rich you must have a grand house all to yourself,' said Brajananda. 'Perhaps you mean to build a mansion.'

'Yes,' Krupa replied, ' I do mean to build a mansion some day to live in when I retire. But not yet, of course.'

'But when you leave here where will you go?'

'I don't know. I haven't found a place yet. I shall start looking for one to-morrow.'

'We don't understand. What do you mean to do?'

'Only to take another lodging, a small house somewhere in the town.'

'And live there all alone?'

'No. I shall send for my wife.'

'Is that the idea?'

'Yes. You know I have been married again.'

'I see. Well, I suppose you know your own business best. Most of the clerks prefer to leave their wives in their villages. Very few bring them here. Perhaps it is because they don't want their wives to know everything they do, or because their wives are scolds, or because they are afraid they might flirt with the other clerks. But

you know best what suits you. Well, we shall be sorry when you go. And we hope you won't forget that we have been your messmates for years. We hope you'll remember us when you have made a fortune and built a mansion. We always knew that you would be a great man some day.'

And much more Brajananda said to the same effect, flattering Krupasindhu. For he supposed that Krupasindhu would not have taken a lodging to himself unless he had been prosperous, and a man who is making a fortune is a friend worth keeping. But the other messmate only said, 'We hope you will be very happy. We shall miss you.'

Next day Krupasindhu found a small house, a little way outside the town, but near the Collector's house. It was a mud-walled house with a thatched roof, built round three sides of a small quadrangle, with a veranda in front and a tiny garden at the back, which closed the fourth side of the quadrangle. It was just like his village home, only much smaller. There was a good parlour which had a door opening on to the veranda, so that male visitors could go into the parlour without going into the quadrangle. Besides the parlour there were four rooms, one to sleep in and one to cook in and one for a maidservant and one for a cow. And when the owner heard that Krupasindhu was the Collector's confidential clerk he let him have it at a low rent. Then Krupasindhu wrote to Haribandhu, and Haribandhu brought Charubala and one of the girls whom Krupa's father had brought from the poor woman, and Krupa hired an old woman to help in the house and keep his wife company when he was away at work. And he bought a cow and hired a lad to milk her morning and evening, because that is work that is never done by a female.

There Krupasindhu and his new wife lived together

very happily. Charubala was always in good health, always placid and smiling. And she gave much thought to her cooking, and devised new dishes and new flavours, and combinations of spices, to tempt her husband's appetite when he was tired after the day's work. And Krupasindhu began to get fat, so that everybody knew that he was prosperous. And he grew fatter and fatter and his neighbours respected him more and more.

12

A Conference at Cuttack

At the end of June the Commissioner of Orissa summoned the Collectors of all districts to Cuttack for a conference, and the Collector of Balasore took Krupasindhu with him. Krupasindhu had thought that Cuttack, the capital of Orissa, might be a great city full of palatial buildings like Calcutta, but as they drove from the railway station to the Collector's residence, where his Sahib was to stay, it seemed to him that it was, like Balasore, only an assemblage of villages.

But he was greatly impressed by the Collector's residence, a great two-storeyed house, very unlike the ramshackle tumbledown affair that served to accommodate the Collector of Balasore. It stood in a large compound, and the drive ran through a fine avenue, and there was a large mango orchard full of very old trees, which were taller than any mango-trees that Krupasindhu had ever seen.

When he had rested and breakfasted the Sahib set out in a borrowed carriage to go and call on the Commissioner, and Krupasindhu asked to be allowed to go with him. So he sat on the box-seat beside the driver. And first they drove down the Cantonment Road, and a cantonment was something that Krupasindhu had not seen before. It was a long, straight road with bungalows on each side, each bungalow standing in its own compound, surrounded by a brick wall. But there were now no

troops at Cuttack, and there were very few Sahibs, and some of the bungalows were empty, and some were in ruins, and some were occupied by Babus. Most of them were old-fashioned bungalows, built of mud bricks, with low thatched roofs, but there were fine trees and beautiful gardens.

The Cantonment Road went straight to the moat of the old fort. It crossed the moat on an ancient stone bridge, ran under an ancient gateway, and then past the Club to the Circuit House, and there it came to an end. His Sahib went into the Circuit House to see some officers who were staying there, and Krupasindhu had time to walk about and observe his surroundings. The great moat enclosed a large square space which the Sahibs used as a golf-course. In it stood the Circuit House and the Club and an old mosque that was used as an armoury. Of the great fort, once the palace of the Kings of Utkal, nothing remained but the old stone bridge, the half-ruined gatehouse, and a tall mound which marked the place where the keep once stood. But this square space was green and undulating and studded with magnificent trees. To Krupasindhu it seemed that it must be the most beautiful place on earth, and perhaps he was not far wrong.

When his Sahib had finished talking to the Sahibs in the Circuit House he got into the carriage again, and Krupasindhu climbed on to the box-seat, and they drove out of the fort and turned to the right and went through a fine avenue, past the tannery where lizard skins are cured to be sent to London and Paris to be made into ladies' shoes, past the Convent and the Catholic Church, through a street of mud houses that looked to Krupasindhu very like the only street in his native village, into the principal street of the town, and there was the entrance to the residence of the Commissioner.

While his Sahib went into the house to talk to the Com-

missioner, Krupasindhu had time to walk about and observe. The house was a handsome old-fashioned building with wide verandas and tall Ionic columns, which reminded Krupa of the old Sahibs' houses that he had seen years ago in Calcutta. The compound was very green and beautiful, and Krupasindhu would no doubt have likened it to Richmond Park, if he had ever seen Richmond Park. There was even a herd of tame deer grazing among the trees. And he walked to the compound wall and found that the house was built on the top of the revetment of the bank of the Katjuri river. And when he looked over the wall he looked down the ancient revetment, built of red laterite, and saw the great river washing the lower courses of the masonry.

When his Sahib had finished talking to the Commissioner they got into the carriage again and drove back through the town a different way. This time they went past the shops of the Marwari cloth merchants, and then through a narrow street of small shops—very like the bazaar at Balasore, thought Krupasindhu—past the mosque called Qadam Rasul, because there is in it a stone bearing the imprint of a man's foot, said to be the footprint of the Prophet, and so back to cantonments.

When they got back to the Collector's house the Sahib told Krupasindhu that he would not be wanted that afternoon; so Krupasindhu went out and walked across the compound northward till he came to a low wall. He climbed over the wall, and beyond was an embankment, on the top of the embankment was a road, and beyond the embankment was the great river—the Mahanadi. And this embankment is there to prevent the Mahanadi from flooding the town. So Krupasindhu bathed in the great river, and went back to his lodging and ate his dinner and slept a while.

And when he woke up he went out again and walked

along the road on the top of the embankment to the Jobra workshops. There he saw the slips where boats are built and repaired. There also, moored along the embankment, he saw boats of many sorts. There were dinghies and jolly boats and cutters and house-boats and a few steam-launches. There were also country boats of various shapes and sizes. There were the great black broad-beamed, wall-sided boats that ply up and down the rivers and the canals. And though their sides are painted black, their prows are gay with designs in white and vermilion; and many of them have a great eye painted on each side of the bows so that they can see where they are going. And there were other great boats built with bluff bows and a tumble-home. These are the boats that sail on the tidal rivers and estuaries where the wind and the tide sometimes raise great waves like the waves of the sea. And there were very long, narrow boats which came down from the feudatory States where they shoot the rapids. And chiefly Krupasindhu noticed some elegant slender rowing-boats, which the Sahibs used for pleasure and exercise, and he thought they were the prettiest boats he had ever seen. Here it happened that Krupasindhu met a clerk from the Commissioner's office who came from a neighbouring village, and he lent Krupasindhu a fishing-rod, and they spent the rest of the day fishing.

Next morning again his Sahib did not require Krupasindhu's services, and Krupa went out early and found his way to the street of silversmiths. He was surprised to find that it was only a row of mud and thatch houses, like the houses in his village. There he found the brother of Janardhan Jethi. And he greeted him well as an old neighbour, and gave him messages from his house, and saw the workshop where the masterpieces of silver filigree work were made and sold.

Then he went and called on his father-in-law the Deputy Magistrate (the father of his second wife), and with him he had a conversation which was afterwards to bear fruit.

That afternoon the Conference took place, and Krupasindhu accompanied his Sahib. The Conference was held at the Commissioner's office. This was a two-storeyed building, and the Sahibs met in a large room upstairs. On the south side of this room there was a large veranda, and while the Sahibs were talking Krupasindhu waited on the veranda. From there he could see the Collector's Cutcherry, and he saw that it was built like the Commissioner's residence on the embankment of the Katjuri leaning on the revetment. It is a fine old building, and the walls (though this Krupasindhu could not see) are very thick, and are not built of bricks, but of great blocks of stone. But Krupasindhu noticed that this Cutcherry was three or four times as large as the Collector's Cutcherry at Balasore.

While Krupasindhu was waiting on the veranda, the Sahibs were holding their Conference. After a time the Commissioner wanted to make a memorandum of what they had decided, and first he turned to the Collector of Puri.

'Have you brought your stenographer?' he asked. 'Mine is ill.'

But the Collector of Puri had not brought his stenographer, who, anyhow, was no use.

'I have not got a stenographer,' said the Collector of Cuttack. 'I have tried several of the clerks in my office who said they had learnt shorthand, but they were so slow, and made so many mistakes, I find it takes less time to write what I have to write than to dictate it.'

In short, nobody had brought a stenographer except the Collector of Balasore. So Krupasindhu was sent for,

and the Commissioner dictated to him slowly, and he got it all down without a mistake. And all the Sahibs said that Krupasindhu's Sahib was very lucky to have a competent stenographer.

That evening Krupasindhu thought long and carefully over what he had observed and what he had discussed with his father-in-law the Deputy Magistrate. Cuttack was a much larger district than Balasore. It was by far the largest and most important district in the country, and contained the largest number of wealthy and influential people. It would, therefore, afford the greatest opportunities for making money. It was divided into three subdivisions, whereas in Balasore there were only two; and it contained twenty-five police stations, while Balasore contained only sixteen. That meant there were three Subdivisional Officers, and their staffs, instead of two, and twenty-five officers in charge of police stations, instead of sixteen, all anxious to be on good terms with the Collector's confidential clerk. And the number of important landlords, lawyers, and politicians in the larger district was certainly more than double the number in the smaller district. It was unusual for a clerk to be transferred from one district to another, and when it was done the newcomer was apt to be regarded by the other clerks as an unwelcome interloper, but it was sometimes done. The outstanding fact was that he was the best stenographer in Orissa, and the Collector of Cuttack had no stenographer. And it was clear that his opportunities for making money would be doubled if he could get transferred to Cuttack.

But his father-in-law, who had wide experience of the ways of the Sahibs, warned him of one thing. If he applied for a transfer now his Sahib, who had been so kind to him would feel that he was being left in the lurch, competent stenographers being so scarce; and so Krupa-

sindhu would get a bad name among the Sahibs. Therefore, he must wait for a more favourable opportunity.

Now Krupasindhu's Sahib had decided that when he had finished his business at Cuttack he would take the opportunity to visit Chandbali. Chandbali is a small port on the estuary of the Mahanadi, and it is almost inaccessible from Balasore, because of the annual floods and the badness of the roads, although it is in that District. The easiest way to go there is by canal and river from Cuttack. So the day after the Conference Krupasindhu and his Sahib embarked on the river steamer that plies between Cuttack and Chandbali.

As the steamer proceeded slowly down the canal towards the sea Krupasindhu observed the country, and saw that it was very beautiful and fertile, and he talked with other passengers and learnt all he could about the countryside and its inhabitants.

And when they came to the end of the canal it was low tide, and they had to wait till high tide, and then the steamer slipped out of the canal into the great river. And the river was so broad and so deep and so strong that Krupasindhu was a little frightened.

All the time, as they were dropping down the river with the ebb tide Krupasindhu was observing whatever there was to be seen. He saw some of the wild folk who live in the seaside jungles, eating fish and wild fowl. There were two of them in a long dug-out canoe, one paddling at each end. In the middle of the canoe there was a fire, and so they cooked their dinner as they went. And he saw an island, which one of the sailors told him was really a ship. A tidal wave had carried the ship upstream and left it sticking there. And the river had piled mud on it, and the mud had turned to solid earth, and grass had begun to grow and trees to spring up, and so the ship had been turned into an island. But Krupasindhu

was not quite sure whether he ought to believe this story or not.

When they came to Chandbali his Sahib put up with the Port Officer, and Krupasindhu put up at the police station. The whole of one day the Sahib spent inspecting the Customs Office and the police station and everything else that had to be inspected, dictating his inspection notes to Krupasindhu. The next day the Sahib took his rifle and crossed the river before the daybreak in the Port Officer's launch and spent the day shooting in the jungles on the opposite bank of the river. And Krupasindhu, being left to himself, went first to the Assistant Customs Officer and collected a commission on the money which was made in the department, and then amused himself by walking about and observing things.

He had not seen a sea-going ship since his visit to Calcutta, and now he was able to see one at close quarters. He learnt to his astonishment that it was made of iron, but altogether it was such a wonderful and complicated machine that he got no impression from it, except that it was another example of the superiority of the white men, who made ships like that, while his countrymen, although they had lived by the seaside for countless generations, could only make the clumsy wooden boats which plied on the rivers.

Next day they started on their way back to Cuttack. Now, they had to spend half a day in Cuttack before catching the train to Balasore, and Krupasindhu used the time to carry out a plan which he had thought out at Chandbali. He sought out one of the clerks in the Commissioner's office who had married one of the sisters of his second wife, and he questioned him about transfers and postings.

'Our Collector,' he said, 'has been more than two years at Balasore. Do you think he will be transferred soon?'

'Who knows? But it is not unlikely. There are many officers coming out from leave at the beginning of the cold weather.'

'And what about the Collector of Cuttack?'

'He has been here fully three years. He is certain to be transferred as soon as there is somebody available to relieve him. But nothing is settled yet.'

'No, but when it is settled you will know about it in the Commissioner's office long before we shall. I want you to do one thing: let me know at once when you hear that any order has been passed.'

'Certainly I will do that for you, Krupa Babu, and more. I have a brother in the Chief Secretary's office, so that, when I want it, I can get information even earlier than the Commissioner.'

So Krupasindhu went back to Balasore, full of hope and new schemes, and he was very glad to see his wife and his little hired house again.

13

The Great Festival at Puri

Not long after his excursion to Cuttack and Chandbali Krupasindhu's Sahib had to make another excursion. It was the custom that the Commissioner and the Collectors of the principal districts of Orissa should assemble at Puri at the time of the Car Festival of the Lord Jagarnath. The Commissioner and the Collectors of Cuttack and Balasore put up at the Circuit House; and they brought their Memsahibs with them. The Collector of Cuttack also brought his Assistant Magistrate. There was no room for the Assistant Magistrate in the Circuit House, and so he was accommodated in a small thatched bungalow belonging to the Forest Department.

Krupasindhu accompanied his Sahib, and, as no Hindu woman will miss a chance of a pilgrimage to Jagarnath if she can help it, Charubala begged to be allowed to go with him. This was the first time she had asked her husband for anything, and, of course, he could not refuse.

The first day after their arrival the Sahibs were busy inspecting the pilgrims' lodging-houses, and the hospitals, and the water-supply, and all the other arrangements that had been made for the health and safety of the pilgrims. The second day they took their Memsahibs with them and, with the Superintendent of the Temple for guide, went round the town to see the sights.

These two days Krupasindhu had nothing to do: so first he went with his wife to the great Temple to make

darshan to Shree Jagarnath, the Lord of the World, who presents himself to his worshippers in the form of a great shapeless log of wood on which a face is painted roughly, because the Almighty has no need of arms or legs to do his will.

And they were led round the town, in company with some other pilgrims from the same neighbourhood, by one of the pilgrim-guides. They saw the great tank of Markande, of which the water (it is said) is always clean. And they saw another tank where the water is exceedingly holy, but so filthy that the pilgrims are forbidden to touch it. And they saw the tank where there are tame tortoises which come to the surface when they are called. And they walked down the Baradanda, which is the longest, the widest, the dirtiest, and the shabbiest street in the world. And they walked down, the narrow crooked street called the Gate of Heaven, where are the holy men who lie on beds of spikes. There they lie all the day long, beguiling their idleness by telling each other smutty stories; but they were Hindustanis who spoke a northern dialect, and Krupasindhu and his wife could not understand.

At first Charubala walked humbly behind her husband, according to custom; but he bade her walk beside him so that they could talk of what they saw. But Charubala spoke seldom, and Krupa said little to her, but they understood one another's silences. Only when the tortoises came when called she laughed and cried out with delight, childlike, and her husband laughed with her. And Krupasindhu thought it was the happiest day of his life.

And when they came to the end of the street called the Gate of Heaven they found that it led down to the sea.

Now, Balasore is but eight miles from the sea, and Krupasindhu had seen the sea before. The clerks used

sometimes to make up parties to go down and bathe in the sea on Sundays and holidays, and Krupasindhu had been with them once or twice. But on that part of the coast the sea is very shallow, and a man must wade out a long way to find water deep enough to swim in, and for the same reason there are no ships to be seen; and the sea seemed to Krupasindhu a very dull affair. But here he saw such a sea as he had not dreamed of: great breakers crashing on the beach, and line upon line of surf, and a noise like thunder. But there were hundreds of pilgrims bathing in the sea. At intervals along the beach Telugu fishermen had been posted, to go in and rescue anyone who might be in danger of drowning, for there are no swimmers in the world like them. And some of them had taken out their surf-boats, and were paddling slowly up and down beyond the breakers, ready to give help in case of need. When the pilgrim-guide told them that it was necessary for salvation to bathe in the sea, Krupasindhu was a little frightened. He himself was a good swimmer, but he feared for Charubala, so he gave one of the fishermen two annas to stand by in case of need.

When they had bathed in the sea they walked back to their lodging for dinner, and on the way they bought sweetmeats and fed the holy elephants, which are holy because they are the property of the Lord Jagarnath. And here again Charubala was delighted with the delight of a child. So they came back to their lodging as happy as two children after a day's outing at the seaside.

The second day also Krupasindhu took his wife out, and after they had made darshan to the Lord Jagarnath they walked about the town and saw whatever offered itself to be seen. Chiefly he noticed the crowds of pilgrims, and that year there were four hundred thousand pilgrims in Puri at the time of the Car Festival. And

among the pilgrims were great numbers of women—women from all over India and Burma and Kashmir—many of them very beautiful women and of the highest families (for there is no purdah in Puri), and not a few of them were ladies who had never appeared in public before and had never learnt to conceal their faces or their breasts, and Krupasindhu thought that if he had been twenty years younger it would have been a wonderful experience, but now he was middle-aged and not easily thrilled.

The third day was the day of the Car Festival, when the Lord Jagarnath proceeds in his car from the Great Pagoda all the length of the Baradanda to the Garden of Sweet Smells. And this he does every year for a change for the benefit of his health.

The Collector of Puri was required to go all the way with the car of Jagarnath, but the Commissioner and the other Collectors, and their Memsahibs, and the other Europeans who were in Puri at the time were accommodated by one of the local gentry on a balcony facing the Lion Gate, whence they could see it all in comfort. And Krupasindhu, because he was the confidential clerk of a high official, was accommodated with his wife on the balcony of an adjacent house, so that they could slip away when they had seen enough, and not get stuck in the crowd of pilgrims.

Now, the beginning of the business was very long and tedious. The Lord Jagarnath was carried out through the Lion Gate with much ceremony and set up in his car, and all the people were waiting for the procession to begin. But first a Brahmin came out with a pot of paint and a brush, and climbed on to the car and touched up the whites of His Lordship's eyes. And until this had been done all the people had to wait.

And all the time the crowd was worshipping with enthusiastic devotion, and there arose an incessant mur-

mur of prayers. But the Sahibs were getting bored, and began to comment on the proceedings.

'I cannot understand,' said one of them, 'how they can work up so much enthusiasm about an ugly wooden idol.'

'I understand perfectly,' said the Commissioner. 'The idol answers to the instinctive desire for a visible object of worship—a god locally present.'

'You seem,' said one of the Sahibs, 'to be comparing the idol to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.'

'Yes,' said the Commissioner simply. 'Old Jagarnath, sitting there on his car, serves the same purpose as the Blessed Sacrament displayed in a monstrance. And the crowds which are adoring him are doing exactly what we do when we go to Benediction.'

But at last the cars began to move, and there was a contest among the pilgrims as to who could get to the ropes and take part in the pulling. And when the pullers flagged, one of the Brahmins would step on to the platform on the front of the car and cheer them on with jokes and breezy yarns. But after a mile the pilgrims grew weary of pulling, and the hereditary pullers took the ropes. And it is their custom to pull a few hundred yards, and then stop and clap their hands. This is the signal for one of the Brahmins to come forward on the front of the car and tell a facetious story.

And when the cars had travelled a mile or so the Sahibs had seen enough and went back to lunch. And soon after Krupasindhu thought he had seen enough, and he and his wife went back to their dinner. All the time they were at Puri Charubala had no cooking to do, but they ate the holy food that is cooked in the Temple and offered to the god, and then sold to the pilgrims. And Charubala discovered that the cooks of the Temple knew certain dishes that were not known to her, and Krupasindhu paid the pilgrim-guide to bring him one of

the cooks, and he paid the cook to teach his wife how to prepare these dishes. He learnt also the secret, which is that these are really Mohammedan dishes, but the cooks of the Lord Jagarnath have given them Sanskrit names and make them and sell them to the pilgrims. After that Charubala was able to give her husband such meals as never he had eaten before, and he went on growing fatter and fatter.

When he had eaten his dinner Krupasindhu went to sleep, feeling immensely comforted; for he was sure that his pilgrimage had earned him absolution and indulgence for past sins, and good luck for the future. And I for one, dear reader, am inclined to believe that he was right and I shall tell the reason why in the next chapter.

14

Money for Love, and Love for Money

When Krupasindhu had slept enough he called to his wife to make him a cup of tea to clear his brain, and went out on to the veranda. And he was sitting on the veranda drinking his tea when a chuprassi, whom he recognized as the Assistant Magistrate's orderly, came. The chuprassi made a respectful salaam, and Krupasindhu returned his salutation courteously and asked him if he wanted anything.

'Babu,' the man replied, 'I have thought of a scheme that will be very profitable.'

'What is it, Mianji?'

'The assistant Sahib, you know, is quite young. It is less than a year since he came out from England. Now I noticed, when he was going round the town with the other Sahibs, that he kept on gazing at the female pilgrims. And I have noticed before that if he sees a pretty woman he cannot refrain from looking at her.'

Krupasindhu thought of the beautiful women he had seen among the pilgrims.

'I am not surprised,' he said, 'it is natural.'

'I have been thinking,' the chuprassi continued, 'that it might be very profitable to supply him with what he needs.'

'A proper job for a baseborn fellow like you!' said Krupasindhu indignantly. 'There was no need to tell me about it.'

'Don't be angry, Babu. The girl I have in mind is not an ordinary girl, and the scheme is not an ordinary scheme, and there is a great deal of money to be made. Only a man like you is necessary to carry it out.'

'Sit down and explain it to me.'

The chuprassi came up and squatted on the veranda.

'Babu,' he said, 'there is a Hindustani gentleman who has a large estate, but he has no son, and when he dies his estate will belong to his cousin, whom he hates. He has recently married a young girl in hope that she will bear him a son. But he is elderly, and his parents were very indulgent to him when he was young, and he is not able to beget a son. Now, the young lady has been sent to Puri in charge of her mother-in-law and her mother. The gentleman's mother is a very wicked old woman and hates her nephew bitterly, and the young lady's mother is very anxious that her daughter should give her husband a son and heir, because that will be advantageous to her and her daughter both. And the plan is that while they are at Puri they will make an arrangement, and the girl will conceive; and as soon as they know that she has conceived they will take her back to her husband, so that he may be able to say that the child is his, and he will acknowledge the child, and if it is a boy, he will become the heir.'

'That is an old trick, Mianji. It will not be difficult to find some hearty young blackguard to do the needful. Why do you come to me?'

'Babu, I have been thinking that we might perform two acts of kindness at the same time. We might please the ladies, and, at the same time, please the Assistant Sahib.'

'Mianji, you are mad if you think the young Sahib will take part in a transaction of this sort.'

'He will not be told anything about it. But it is not a thing that could be arranged by a common person like me. And, Babu, consider this: if I brought an ordinary girl to the Sahib, he would give her a few rupees, and she would give me half. And if I brought an ordinary young man to the ladies, they would give me a modest sum. But if we can arrange it as I propose, whatever the Sahib pays will be mine, since the girl will not expect to receive anything, and whatever the ladies pay will be yours.'

'But I should be ashamed, Mianji, to go to the ladies with such a proposal. Can you arrange it so that they will be expecting me?'

'They have an old woman serving them. I will see her and come back and tell you what arrangement I have made.'

After an hour or so the chuprassi came back.

'Babu,' he said, 'you must go out for a walk on the beach to-night. You will meet an old woman who will speak to you. Follow her. The ladies will be expecting you.'

That evening Krupasindhu ate his supper early and went out for a walk after supper. And he met the old woman, and followed her to one of the houses on the beach, and she showed him into a room where two women were sitting. A very old woman with a dried-up, wrinkled face was sitting cross-legged on a charpoy and a fat middle-aged woman was sitting by her on a cushion on the floor. Krupasindhu saluted them very respectfully, and the old woman pointed to a chair and asked him to sit down.

'Babu,' she began, 'I understand that you know what we require and are willing to help us.'

'Lady, I am your most obedient servant. I have something wonderful to offer you. I have been thinking that the father of the heir to a great estate ought to be young and vigorous and fair-skinned and free from disease, and there could be no one better than a young Heavenborn Sahib.'

'That is a grand idea,' said the younger woman, who feared greatly for her daughter's health.

'That is no doubt an excellent idea,' said the old woman. 'Then there will be nothing to pay. The Sahib will do it for his own pleasure.'

'Lady,' said Krupasindhu, who felt that his ability to lie fluently and plausibly was being put to a severe test, 'do you suppose that the Sahib is a person of no importance and cannot obtain his requirements as often as necessary? Do you not know that whenever a young widow runs from her father-in-law's house, or a young wife runs away from her mother-in-law, or a new girl comes to a brothel, or a dancing-girl grows old enough to begin earning money, all these things become known to the police? Do you not know that those who live by this sort of commerce are always afraid of the police, and that they dare not begin to use a new girl for such purposes until they have first offered her to the Divisional Inspector? Why, the Sahib has only to say a word to the Inspector Babu! Beautiful, fresh young girls! And there are white women! Will it be any pleasure to him if I offer him an ordinary ugly black girl? Why, unless she is very fair-skinned, I don't suppose the Sahib will touch her.'

The two women looked at each other. Krupasindhu was watching their faces.

'My daughter is beautiful,' said the younger woman.

Krupasindhu decided to draw a bow at a venture.

'I have heard that she is rather dark-skinned.'

The two women looked at each other again.

'It is true that she is dark,' said the girl's mother, 'but she is beautiful.'

'That will make it more difficult,' said Krupasindhu, 'but I will try.'

'How much shall we have to spend?' the old woman asked.

'It will cost you ten thousand rupees,' said Krupasindhu.

'Then I think we had better get an ordinary man,' said the old woman.

'If you do that, lady, it will cost you more in the end. Consider this: the Sahib is honourable; your secret will be safe; I shall tell him no names, and he will ask no questions. But if you get an ordinary man you will never have done with paying. And consider this: when your son dies—and I pray God to give him long life—your nephew will certainly claim the estate; he will say that the boy is illegitimate; he will say that it is impossible that your son was his father. And perhaps the real father of the boy will go into the witness-box and tell the truth.'

'They will never find him.'

'They will not have to find him. If he is an ordinary person he will go to them himself and sell them the story for money.'

'We could have him poisoned as soon as he has done his part.'

Krupasindhu was horrified at the callous wickedness of this suggestion. But he concealed his feelings and answered calmly.

'That would be very imprudent, lady. There would be an inquest, suspicion would be aroused, and probably it would all come out.'

'I would rather it was the Sahib,' said the younger woman. 'Then my daughter's child will be strong and

beautiful and fair, and her husband will be pleased'

'I also would prefer the Sahib,' said the old woman. 'It will be safer But ten thousand rupees is too much'

'Lady,' said Krupasindhu, 'if you were not prepared to accept my terms, why did you seek my help?'

'Did we go to you, or did you come to us?'

'It matters little'

Then the two women understood that they had delivered themselves into Krupasindhu's hands by discussing their plan with him, because he could easily spoil it by telling the rightful heir

But, the old woman objected, supposing my daughter-in-law does not conceive? Or, if she does, suppose the child is a girl?'

'We will settle it this way, Krupasindhu replied 'When I take the young lady to the Sahib you will pay me one thousand rupees And when you know that she is pregnant you will pay me one thousand more. And when the child is born you will pay eight thousand if it is a boy If it is a girl you will pay nothing.'

To this the ladies agreed—they had no choice—and Krupasindhu promised to see the Sahib about it next morning

In the morning when the young Sahib had just finished his breakfast Krupasindhu came to the bungalow with the chuprassi The young Sahib was irritable that morning He had had a bad night, because he could not stop thinking of the beautiful women he had seen among the pilgrims But the chuprassi went up on to the veranda and salaamed and began to speak.

'Your Honour an idea concerning your Honour's welfare has entered the foolish head of this slave. The least of men has noticed that there are many beautiful women among the pilgrims, and if Your Honour will but give the order the least of men will bring one of them for

Your Honour's inspection. Your Honour will only pay a few rupees——'

At this point the young Sahib became angry, and jumped up, upsetting his chair with a crash. The old chuprassi turned to flee, and the Sahib ran after him and kicked him hard, so that he went rolling down the steps from the veranda on to the drive. The chuprassi picked himself up and ran away, the Sahib resumed his seat, and Krupasindhu came up and salaamed.

'Good morning, Babu,' said the young Sahib. 'Who are you?'

'Sir,' Krupasindhu replied, 'I am confidential clerk to the Collector of Balasore, and I came only to pay my respects to Your Honour.'

'Oh, I've heard of you. You're the champion stenographer.'

'Your Honour is very kind to say so. But, sir, I happened to overhear what the orderly was saying, and I was very much ashamed. If I may be permitted to say so, Your Honour was right to be angry'

'Yes, Babu, I thought it was awful cheek.'

'Sir, when Your Honour has been longer in this country Your Honour will discover that Puri is a very wicked place. There are women among the pilgrims, and women of the highest families, who come here not from a religious motive, but with a view to gratify their unbridled passions. The Temple of Jagarnath, I say it with shame, is the place where women go to meet lovers, and young babus go there in search of romance.

The young Englishman thought of the beautiful pilgrims, and wished he had been a young babu.

'Sir,' Krupasindhu went on, 'that chuprassi is a low-class Mohammedan fellow, and he will bring Your Honour dirty public women, only for the sake of earning a few rupees. But if Your Honour wishes, I will arrange

for Your Honour to meet a very beautiful high-caste girl——'

Here the Sahib was inclined to be angry again, but the temptation was beginning to be too strong for him.

'What the devil do you mean, Babu?'

Krupasindhu detected a note of indecision in the young man's voice, and went on boldly.

'She is young and ardent, and Your Honour has only to give the order, and I will arrange for her to come to Your Honour to-night.'

'And what do I have to pay?'

'Sir, Your Honour will kindly excuse me, but I will not bring her myself. The orderly will bring her. Your Honour will kindly remember to pay fifty rupees to the orderly, and not to the lady herself.'

'And what do I pay you?'

'I will take nothing from Your Honour. I do this only that Your Honour may become my kind patron, because we know that Your Honour is a brilliant officer and will one day become a Lieutenant-Governor.'

The young Sahib longed to kick him, but he had resolved to yield to the temptation, and he meant to stick to his resolution.

'Very well, Babu. Ten o'clock to-night.'

First Krupasindhu found the orderly and showed him one of the lamp-posts near the bungalow where the Assistant Sahib was staying and gave him certain instructions. Then he went to the house on the beach and warned them to have the money ready at nine o'clock that night.

At nine o'clock Krupasindhu turned up at the house on the beach, and when he had received a thousand rupees, counted out, and each rupee rung on the stone floor to prove that it was a good one, he took the girl,

and led her to the lamp-post, and there he handed her over to the chuprassi.

And a fortnight later a man came to him at Balasore and paid him another thousand rupees. And in due time he came again and paid eight thousand rupees. And Krupasindhu lent the ten thousand rupees on a mortgage to Jadunath Mahapatra, his landlord, at a high rate of interest, and Jadunath Babu, being anxious to preserve the estate for his son, paid the interest regularly as long as he lived.

15

Krupa is Transferred to Cuttack

A month after the return of Krupasindhu and his Collector from Puri the Commissioner came to Balasore for his annual inspection. He stayed at the Circuit House, and first the Collector went there to pay his respects. He took Krupasindhu with him in case his services might be required, and while the Sahibs were talking in the dining-room, Krupasindhu waited on the veranda, where he was able to hear what they were saying. And this is what he heard.

'Sir,' said the Collector, 'has anything been settled about the cold weather postings?'

'Nothing has been settled yet but I can tell you what I am going to recommend. How would you like to go to Cuttack?'

'I should like it very much.'

'Well, Smith has been in Orissa too long, and I shall recommend his transfer to one of the Bihar districts. Brown and Robinson will be coming out from leave; one of them may be appointed to relieve him. But I will recommend you.'

'Thank you, sir.'

'Balasore is a small district, and I think it is time you had a chance to show what you can do in a large district. You will find the work very heavy at Cuttack.'

'I'm not afraid of that, sir. I am sure I should like Cuttack.'

'Very well, then; I expect it can be arranged.'

Having heard this, Krupasindhu took the first opportunity to write to his father-in-law the Deputy Magistrate, and his father-in-law went and saw Mr Smith, the Collector of Cuttack.

'Sir,' he said, 'I understand that you are put to great inconvenience for want of a good stenographer. Now I have a son-in-law who is working as steno-typist under the Collector of Balasore. If I write to him he will submit an application, and I think his transfer to Cuttack could be arranged.'

'I don't suppose the Collector of Balasore will be willing to part with him,' Mr Smith replied. 'But I suppose there's no harm in asking.'

So he wrote unofficially to the Collector of Balasore, and the Collector of Balasore sent for Krupasindhu.

'Krupa Babu,' he said, 'would you like to go to Cuttack to work as the Collector's steno-typist?'

'Sir,' Krupasindhu replied, 'Your Honour has been very kind to me, and Memsahib is to me in place of my mother, and as long as Your Honour is here I will never leave Balasore.'

'Not even for higher pay?'

'No, sir. Not even for higher pay.'

'And supposing I am transferred?'

'Then I will follow Your Honour to any district in the province.'

'But suppose I take leave and go home to England? Will you come with me?'

'In that case, sir, I hope Your Honour would excuse me.'

'Why? Wouldn't you like to see England?'

'Sir, my two brothers and their families and my own

children all live together in our ancestral home. And twice a year I go home, during the Puja and Christmas holidays, and we three brothers consult together concerning the affairs of the family. And in this manner our joint affairs are conducted very harmoniously. But, sir, if I were to go thousands of miles away I would be afraid lest something might not become otherwise.'

'All right, Babu,' said the Sahib, smiling. 'I'm not thinking of going home. But it is possible that I may be transferred.'

'In that case I hope I may be privileged to accompany Your Honour.'

'What a good fellow our Type Babu is!' the Sahib said to his wife when Krupasindhu had withdrawn. 'So loyal! He won't leave us to go to Cuttack, not even on higher pay.'

'I believe he is honestly attached to us,' the lady replied.

'So do I. He says he will go with us wherever we are transferred.'

Not long after Krupasindhu received information from his friend in the Commissioner's office that it had been decided to transfer his Sahib to Cuttack. He sat down at once and drafted a petition. When he had revised it several times he typed it very carefully, and this is how it ran:

To the Collector of Cuttack through the Collector of Balasore

HONOURED SIR,

With due respect and humble submission I beg leave to be allowed to permit myself to take the liberty of depositing the following Humble Petition at Your Honour's gracious and benevolent feet.

2. That Your Honour's humble petitioner entered the service of the Benign Government as an apprentice in the year 1894.

3. That Your Honour's humble petitioner was appointed permanently in Government service in the year 1897.

4. That in the year 1911 His Honour the Collector of Balasore was pleased to appoint Your Honour's humble petitioner as his steno-typist.

5. That Your Honour's petitioner has all along been discharging his duties to the *entire satisfaction* of the noble and virtuous officers under whom, through the infinite goodness of Divine Providence, he has had the jolly good luck to serve.

6. That it is well-known and an undoubted fact that he is the best stenographer in Orissa.

7. That your humble petitioner has heard that Your Honour is put to inconvenience in the discharge of your Honour's multifarious and important duties by want of a competent stenographer.

8. Therefore, with due respect and humble submission, Your Honour's petitioner begs leave to submit the following humble

PRAYER

That the petitioner may be transferred from the Office of the District Magistrate and Collector of Balasore to the office of the District Magistrate and Collector of Cuttack, and appointed to serve as District Officer's steno-typist.

And Your Honour's humble petitioner, together with all his family, as in duty bound, shall ever pray for Your Honour's longevity and prosperity.

This is the heart-felt prayer of Your Honour's most humble petitioner.

KRUPASINDHU MAHANTY

Krupasindhu locked the petition up in a drawer in his writing-table until the proper time should come for submitting it. And next day his Collector received a demi-official letter from the Chief Secretary informing him that he was to be transferred to Cuttack. The Collector immediately informed Krupasindhu, and then he presented the petition, and the Collector was touched by his loyalty, and forwarded the petition with a strong recommendation. In this way Krupasindhu contrived to get transferred to Cuttack, where he hoped to make money more

quickly, and at the same time to win the hearts of his Sahib and Memsahib.

Through his friend in the Commissioner's office Krupasindhu arranged to hire a small house at Cuttack, not too far from the Collector's residence, and very like the little house he had occupied at Balasore. There he installed himself soon after the Puja holidays, together with his wife and the old serving woman and the cow, while his Sahib and Memsahib installed themselves in the great two-storeyed residence. Charubala was delighted with the change of scene and the great rivers and the great trees and the distant view of the hills. And she was always quiet and serene, so that her husband felt happy only to sit beside her. And, as their new home was not far from the Mahanadi, Krupasindhu bought fishing-tackle, and began to occupy his leisure with his favourite sport.

Nor did Krupasindhu by any means forget the main object which he had in view when he came to Cuttack. First he made friends with the Collector's orderlies, and made the same arrangements for callers as he had made at Balasore, so that the callers were made to yield a regular income. And, as Cuttack was a larger district, the callers were more numerous and more important. His next care was to make himself acquainted with all the most important people in the district, and especially the officials. Among these he discovered that one Gopal Krishna Mahanty, Deputy Superintendent of Police, on whom the Government had conferred the title of Rai Sahib, was related to his brother Dayanidhi's wife. On the strength of this connexion he called on the Rai Sahib, and found him very cordial and willing to co-operate. And the Rai Sahib had made good use of his advantages as a police officer, and collected a mass of intimate information about all the leading people of the district, and he promised to let Krupasindhu know if an opportunity

should occur to turn any of this information to account. And, because the new Collector had brought Krupasindhu with him when he was transferred, it was rumoured that Krupa Babu was a favourite, and had influence with the Collector; a rumour which proved advantageous to Krupasindhu.

So he settled down once more to the peaceful and regular life of a clerk, and he was contented with his lot, and especially with Charubala. For it was a daily delight to him to return from his work in the evening, not to the untidy lodging which he had shared so long with two other clerks, but to his neat little thatched bungalow, and his placid, amiable wife. And Charubala worked all day long to keep the little bungalow clean, to provide for him appetizing meals, and to make the daily home-coming a daily delight.

The regular life was, of course, interrupted by touring, but in this district the rainy season is the touring season, when the rivers are full of water and it is convenient to travel by boat. Yet the Collector made some tours during the cold weather, and one of them stuck always in Krupasindhu's memory. The Sahib and Memsahib went up the river in their motor-launch, while Krupasindhu, the servants, and the luggage marched along the embankment to the point where the river forks, and one prong of the fork is the Mahanadi and the other is the Katjuri. Thence they proceeded in boats. Now when his boat was under way Krupasindhu saw before them a great wall of mountain, and it appeared so steep and so high that it seemed to him that when they reached it there would be nothing to do but turn back again. But presently the boatmen changed their course a little, and suddenly there appeared a cleft in the wall, as if some giant had cut a doorway to let the river out. And when they came nearer he perceived that on one side there

was a berm at the foot of the mountain, a little berm of flat grassy land on which stood a small bungalow. There were the Sahib and Memsahib, and there they stayed a week.

When Krupasindhu saw what the place was like he was glad he had brought his fishing-tackle, and he wondered why they had built an inspection bungalow at a spot where there was nothing to inspect, and nothing to do but fish. But soon he discovered that the peacefulness and the freedom from distractions and interruptions—for there were no callers—enabled the Sahib to do a prodigious amount of work. And this is one of the uses of inspection bungalows.

When the weather began to be excessively hot the Sahib decided to do no more touring till the rainy season, and Krupasindhu enjoyed his regular and peaceful life for three months. It was during this time, in the month of May in the year 1913, that a great event happened: Charubala gave birth to her first child.

Now the birth of a child is an event which is always unique, like the rising of the sun. For a man who watches the sun rising is not watching a common happening that repeats itself daily, but a new and original event that has never happened before, and will never happen again, because each sunrise is a complete and individual work of art, an original masterpiece by the Supreme Artist. Therefore, all the sunrises of all the centuries cannot diminish the glory and wonder of the dawn. And so also the coming into the world of a new child is always a thing that has never happened before and will never happen again, a wonder that cannot grow less wonderful by reiteration, because every new child is a new person.

And whether Krupasindhu understood this or not, the birth of a child was to him always a marvellous and original event.

When the time came Krupasindhu sat up all night on the veranda, and a little before dawn he heard a thin cry, and knew that there was a new voice in the world. And he waited a little longer, and just as the sun appeared the midwife came out and told him that all was well. Then he went in and saw Charubala lying in the bed, and the child in a little cot beside her.

'O my husband!' she said, 'it is only a girl.'

'I have two sons already,' he said, 'and I am glad it is a girl. It is a pretty child, and will grow to be a beautiful woman.'

And when Charubala was up and about again he noticed how she had been changed by motherhood, as women always are changed, some one way and some another. She became less placid and more animated, and began to be self-assertive and masterful, and never hesitated to demand anything she wanted for herself or the child. But she loved her husband more than ever because he loved the child and was not disappointed that it was not a boy. And they named the child Dayabala.

When Krupasindhu went and told the Sahib of this event, the Sahib went and told the Memsahib, and the Memsahib sent for Krupasindhu, and asked after the health of his wife, and told him to bring the child for her to see as soon as might be.

And when a year and more than a year had passed peacefully, then—that is to say, in August 1914—Charubala gave birth to another child. Again it was a girl, and they called her Krupabala.

But when Krupasindhu went and told the Sahib, the Sahib took no notice, because he had just received the news of another event that seemed to him of greater importance, and that was the outbreak of the Great War.

16

1914

All over the country the news of the outbreak of the War aroused great interest and curiosity. And it happened that some men from Krupasindhu's village were come to Cuttack on account of some litigation which they had in the Court of the District Judge. And they came to Krupasindhu in the evening to see if he could tell them anything about the War.

'I have heard,' said one of them, 'that there are so many soldiers engaged, that if they were all assembled in one place the Collector's compound would not be able to hold them.'

'And I have heard,' said another, 'that there are not fewer than ten thousand fighting men employed on each side. But, of course, I don't believe everything I hear.

'Babu,' said Krupasindhu, 'in this War the soldiers are numbered not by thousands, but by hundreds of thousands.'

At this the villagers looked at each other sadly, as if they thought even their own neighbour was deceiving them.

'There is one thing that I do not understand, Krupa Babu,' said one who had been to school and learnt a little history, 'I supposed that when there is a war the armies march and march and march until they meet, and they fight a little, till one side runs away. And after that they rest. And after a long time they meet again, and

fight another battle. But in this War they seem to be fighting all the time. And I do not understand how any man can go on fighting hour after hour and day after day. I should think his arm would become too tired to lift his sword.'

'That,' said Krupasindhu, is a thing that I do not quite understand myself. Perhaps it is that there are so many soldiers that they take turns to fight, relieving one another. But one thing I have noticed. When the Sahibs practise firing at a target, they fire lying flat on their stomachs, and I suppose it is not so tiring to fight, if you can fight lying down.'

'I don't understand how a man could wield a sword lying flat on his stomach.'

'I have heard,' said another, interrupting, 'that there is iron in the hills of the Garhjat, and in olden times people used to dig it up to make swords and daggers and axes for the warriors. Now the Government will have great need of such weapons, I wonder if they will begin to dig the iron again.'

'O my brothers!' said Krupasindhu, 'with what weapons do you suppose the soldiers are fighting?'

'With swords and spears, of course,' said the man who had been to school. 'What else?'

'Babu, I have seen English soldiers. They had neither swords nor spears, but every man had a gun on his shoulder. The soldiers are fighting with guns.'

'You are a wag, Krupa Babu. You are making fun of us.'

'Babu, have you ever seen a soldier?'

'No, but I have seen a gun. Janardhan Jethi has a gun, but he only uses it for show. And Somnath Babu the son of our landlord, has got a gun, and he comes to the village every year to shoot snipe. That is what guns are for, not for waging war. Soldiers fight with swords and spears.'

'I tell you they are fighting with guns.'

'I tell you guns are meant for shooting birds. Who ever heard of men using guns to shoot one another? What a ridiculous notion!'

And they all laughed and laughed again.

Now, when the War began everybody was sure that the English would win and Krupasindhu never doubted it for a moment. His Sahib had a great map which he stuck up on the wall of his study, and he had a number of pins with little flags on them, which he stuck into the map to mark the positions of the armies. And one day Krupasindhu asked him if he had any news of the War, and he replied that the news was not good. And he explained to him the positions of the pins, and Krupasindhu understood that the Germans were advancing, and that the English and their Allies were being driven back. And after a few days he looked at the pins again, and it seemed to him that the English and their friends were running away. But he kept this to himself.

But after a while it became known to everybody that the English were being beaten. Then the politicians were pleased, and some of the Bengalis used to sit on their verandas of an evening reading the casualty lists aloud, as if it gave them much pleasure to know so many Englishmen had been killed.

Now, when it became known that all was not going well, and that the War would last a long time, all the Sahibs were very eager to join the Army. The Commissioner was too old, and the Collectors were not allowed to go, but the Assistant Magistrate went, and all the other Sahibs went. And their places were taken by Babus, so that the War was of some benefit to some people. And Dayanidhi was one of those who benefited.

There was a zemindar in Orissa who employed an

English Sahib to manage his estate. And this Sahib had been an indigo planter and knew all the tricks of his trade. If any of his servants or his master's servants ran away and refused to work, he used to send men to his house and seize his utensils, and he would keep the utensils locked up till the man came back to his work. And if any of the tenants was refractory, some misfortune was sure to happen to him. Either his house would catch fire, or somebody would poison his cow, or he himself would be waylaid by robbers and beaten severely. And many tricks the Sahib knew to compel the tenants to pay more than was lawfully due from them. And he served his master with admirable loyalty, and, as far as possible, allowed no one to steal but himself.

But when the War broke out he offered to serve, and he was appointed to the Supply and Transport Corps. And he went very gladly, because he would become an officer and a gentleman, and also because he knew that he would be able to steal from the Government now, instead of stealing from a 'damned native.'

And his employer was sore puzzled how to replace him. And after much thought he concluded that, for the sort of services he required, the next best thing to a Sahib who has been an indigo planter is a Babu who has been a policeman. Therefore he gave the job to Dayanidhi Mahanty, and it was a great comfort to Krupasindhu and Haribandhu to know their elder brother had got a job.

When the War had been going on for some months people began to notice that, though the English were being beaten, yet the War went on. And therefore they began to think that, in spite of reverses, the English were not so very much beaten after all. And Krupasindhu was more than ever convinced (though some of the clerks did not agree with him) that the English would win in the end.

And they noticed that the War made very little difference in Orissa. There were no more golden sovereigns, and there was much more paper money, and prices rose, and some of the common people went away to serve as labourers or officers' servants. And that was all. So Krupasindhu ceased to worry about the War, and turned his thoughts to his own affairs.

And when the War had been going on for nearly two years he decided that it was time to send his sons to school. Guru Charan was now twelve years old and Sadhu Charan was eleven. They were going to the village school and had learnt to read and write Oriya and some other elementary things, but now it was time they began to learn English. So he wrote to the Headmaster of the school where he had learnt English himself to ask if he would admit his sons; and when the Headmaster wrote back and said yes he wrote to Haribandhu and told him to send them.

When they were ready to go Haribandhu thought it was his duty to give them some good advice. And this is what he said.

'Boys, remember always that you are boys of high caste, and come of an honourable family. We are peasants, although we are writers by caste. Your father also is a peasant, although he is working as a clerk. We are a family of peasants, and we have been cultivating the same land for twenty generations. Now, cultivation is the most honourable of all professions, and it behoves men who belong to an honourable profession to behave honourably. Therefore remember always to be honest and truthful, to obey your masters, and to love and honour your father.'

When the Pujas came Krupasindhu went home and saw his two sons, and spent many happy hours talking to them about their school life. And at the end of the holidays

he took them back to school himself. And on the way he thought it his duty to give them some good advice.

'My sons,' he said, 'remember always to be very diligent in your studies, because unless you work hard you cannot pass your Matric; and unless you pass your Matric, you cannot enter the service of Shri Bharateshwar. And games are very important too. You must learn football and hockey as diligently as you learn your lessons.'

'Babu,' Guru Charan asked, 'why is it so important to learn the English games? Cannot a boy keep healthy by fishing and swimming and wrestling?'

'Son,' Krupasindhu replied, 'you must understand that games are to the English in place of a religion, and they have as great respect for a man who plays games as we have for a man who is holy and religious. Therefore, you must know games. Then the Sahibs will be pleased with you and give you good jobs. So be good boys, and mind your games and your books, and some day you will win honourable positions, like your father, and make lots of money.'

All this time Krupasindhu had been making money steadily in fees and gratuities, but he had not met with another good opportunity since his visit to Puri. So he went one day to his kinsman Rai Gopal Krishna Mahanty Sahib and asked him if he had not found an opportunity to do somebody an act of kindness. And Rai Sahib replied that an opportunity had occurred, but he did not see how he could make use of it without danger of being found out.

'What has happened is this, he explained. 'Some months ago a baby was born in the house of one of the Bengali Magistrates, and he did not report the birth as he ought to have. He told me that he had no intention of concealing the birth of the child, he had only forgotten to report it. Well, I went and told the Sahib and the

Sahib asked some questions, and when he heard that the mother of the child was Deputy Babu's daughter, and that she was a widow he began at once to suspect that the baby might be illegitimate and that the Deputy Babu had tried to conceal the birth out of shame. And you know that to conceal a birth is a criminal offence. Well, the Sahib said it was a delicate matter, and he did not care to speak to the Deputy Babu about it, so he ordered me to find out the date of the death of the lady's husband. I have found out the date of the death of the lady's husband and compared it with the date of the birth of the child—and it is quite impossible that he can have been the father of the child. Now the Deputy Babu is very frightened, and is willing to pay me a thousand rupees to save him. Only I don't quite see how I can do it.'

'If he had been an Oriya,' said Krupasindhu, 'we might have done it for a thousand rupees. But he is a Bengali. we will take two thousand rupees.'

'By all means. But I don't see how it can be done without danger. I dare not submit a definitely false report.'

'We shall do it this way. You will write a report, and you will not have it fair-copied or typed by one of the clerks, but you will submit it to the Sahib in your own handwriting, which is exceedingly bad. And when the Sahib sees it, he will call me, and he will say, "Babu, I can't read this muck. Take it away and type a copy." And in typing a copy I shall change the name of the month in which the lady's husband died, so as to make it appear that he might have been the father of the child. And if the change is found out, I shall take the blame on myself and say that I made a mistake in copying, because your handwriting is so exceedingly bad.'

And so it was done. And the Sahib was satisfied and

suspected nothing. And the Deputy Babu was satisfied. And Rai Sahib was more than satisfied. For he thought that with Krupasindhu for his ally he would be able to make a great deal of money. Wherefore he looked out diligently for opportunities to do acts of kindness.

17

Acts of Kindness to Worth-while People

When Krupasindhu's Sahib had completed three years at Cuttack he was transferred to a district in North Bihar. This time Krupasindhu did not offer to go with him, and when the Sahib asked him jokingly if he wanted to go, he answered that he had heard that there was a good stenographer at the place to which the Sahib was going.

And when the Sahib and Memsahib departed the Deputy Magistrates and Deputy Collectors, and the leading local gentry, and many of the clerks, and all their servants (except one, whom they took with them) went to the railway station to see them off. And the local gentry and the Deputy Magistrates and Deputy Collectors said good-bye with much flattery and flowery language, but the chuprassies and the servants stood silent on the platform and wept. And Krupasindhu wept sincerely, because the Sahib and Memsahib had been very kind, and treated him almost as a member of the family.

The new Collector was a Sahib who had never served in Orissa before, and soon after he had taken over charge he sent for Krupasindhu.

'Babu,' he said, 'the cold weather is beginning, and we must start touring as soon as my horses arrive. And as I'm new to this country, you'll have to help me prepare my tour programme.

'Sir,' Krupasindhu replied, 'this is not a horse-riding country. Your Honour does not require horses for touring.'

'Gawdstrewth! Then how do we tour?'

'Sir, it depends on the time of the year.'

'Well, I suppose we ought to begin as soon as we can.'

'Your Honour will not find it convenient to go out on tour before Christmas.'

'Good God! Why not?'

'Because it will be difficult to cross the rivers. In the rainy season we can cross them in boats. In the hot weather the zemindars make temporary roads, and Your Honour can cross in a motor-car. But at this season there is too much water for a motor-car, and not enough for a boat.'

'Then I can cross on horseback.'

'Sir, that is very dangerous because there are quicksands in the river-beds.'

'My God! What a beastly country.'

'Sir, we shall manage this way. The places which are accessible by road may be visited during the cold weather, and the places which are on the railway may be visited at any time. The rest of the district can most conveniently be visited by touring the rivers and canals in boats. That is why in this country the rainy season is the touring season.'

'And what sort of boat do I get?'

'Sir, the motor-launch has been sent to the war in Mesopotamia, and Your Honour will have to use the accommodation boat. There is only a small cabin, and there is no room for a bed. Your Honour will have to sleep on the table.'

'That sounds damned hard.'

'It is no doubt hard, sir, but at any rate it is flat.'

'Gawdstrewth!... Well, I suppose I shall get used to it.

'Sir, if Your Honour so wishes I will prepare a programme for the year, so that we shall visit every place that has to be visited, and each place at the season when it is most accessible. And I will note against each place the police stations and other things that have to be inspected.'

'Please do that, Babu. I can see that you are going to be useful.'

Now, Krupasindhu had been working at the tour programme in his spare time for the last month, and he presented it to the Sahib next day. In this way he established a routine of touring, so that it was done with as little inconvenience as possible. And Krupasindhu loved the security and regularity of his life, and rejoiced that he was saving money. For whenever he went home for the holidays he used to bring back a good supply of rice, and dal, and spices, and other things from the produce of the land, and sometimes Haribandhu sent him more, so that he spent little money on food, and the allowance of sixty rupees a month which he drew as stenographer was more than enough for his expenses at Cuttack, and what remained sufficed for his two sons at school. And their holidays cost nothing, because they spent them in the family home and lived on the produce of the land. Thus Krupasindhu was able to save all the money that he made in fees and gratuities. As for the pay that he received as clerk, that was a trifle hardly worth taking into account. So Krupasindhu took stock of his financial position, and was satisfied.

Now, about three years after the beginning of the War Krupasindhu heard that Mr Montagu, the Secretary of State, had made a Declaration, and he went to his Sahib and asked him what it was about. But when he understood that it was something to do with politics he was not interested, and would not bother his head about it

any more.

About this time the Police Sahib was transferred, and so many police officers had joined the Army that there was no British officer available to relieve him; and Rai Sahib was appointed to act as Superintendent of Police. Thus it came about that Rai Sahib got charge of all the confidential papers, and he set to work at once to set them in order. And he prepared a double set of confidential papers, one for the use of inspecting officers, neatly docketed, and containing all the information that such officers expect to find; the other for his own use, and this contained a mass of information about all and sundry, which would certainly have surprised the inspecting officers, if they had been allowed to see it.

When he had completed this task he sent for Krupasindhu and asked him if he would like to gratify one of the local gentry with some genteel act of courtesy. Krupasindhu, of course, was willing.

'First,' said Rai Sahib, 'there is Raja Mansingh. He is always quarrelling with his neighbour Raja Harichandan, and oppressing his tenants, and getting into hot water with the officials, just as his father did before him. The late Collector took away his gun licence, and didn't invite him to the last durbar, and humiliated him in various ways; but now there is a new Collector he hopes to be restored to favour.'

'Are there slave-girls in his house?'

'There are scores.'

'Then let him send a man to me for instructions. Next time we go that way on tour he will invite the Collector Sahib to his house, and if he does as I tell him he will make the Sahib his friend, and be restored to favour. The Sahib is a bachelor.'

'Good. The Raja will pay well. Then there is Harichandan Raja. He is a rich man. It would be very

good for our health if we could do something to please him.'

'He also is not in favour. They say he hates the English and the Government. Therefore he must have a grievance. We have to find out what his grievance is, and consider whether it can't be removed.'

'I have found that out. The family is a very old family. They have held the estate since the time of the ancient Kings of Utkal, and they have always been called Rajas. But in 1872, when the Government prepared a list of titles that were to be officially recognized, his father's name was not included in the list. So he is never styled "Raja" officially, though he is always called "Raja" by courtesy.'

'Then I will show him how to win the favour of the officials, and get his title recognized. But he will have to spend a lot of money.'

'That's his look-out. If he won't pay, he won't get it. Then there's the Salepur murder case. Have you heard of it?'

'No. Criminal cases seldom come my way.'

'Well, the sub-inspector took such a long time to send the body for post-mortem that it got decomposed, and the Civil Surgeon could not give an opinion as to the cause of death. Now the case will fail for want of medical evidence. The sub-inspector has been making money for a long time, and he will pay well if we can save him. The Sahib is very angry about it.'

'Take none of his money. We can't save him. He will be sacked.'

'Then there's Charu Babu the Deputy Collector. He persuaded the Collector that the work in the ledger department was more than the clerks could cope with, and this he did only to make a job for his son-in-law. And when the Collector obtained sanction for another clerk,

Charu Babu put in his son-in-law, who is really quite useless, without disclosing the relationship to the Collector, which is against Regulations.'

'That's easy. I have only to go to Charu Babu and tell him that unless he does what is customary, and does it handsomely, the Collector will find out.'

'Not quite so easy as that. I have only heard this from an unreliable source. We must make sure of the fact and that is not so easy, because Charu Babu comes from the District of Midnapur and his son-in-law comes from Balasore.'

'Then I will find out through my brother.'

'Good. Then there is the case of the Raja of Parika and the new island. Have you heard of it?'

'Yes. A letter came from the Commissioner's office the other day. Tell me about it.'

'This is what has happened. A new island has formed itself in the sea near the mouth of the Great River, and Parika Raja, whose estate runs down to the seaside, claims it as belonging to his estate. But the Commissioner thinks it belongs to Government. Now, it seems to me very difficult for us to help Parika, because the law on the point is quite clear. As the island is in the sea and not in the river it belongs to Government. I don't see how we can persuade the Collector to report that it be longs to Parika.'

'I wouldn't dare to try. But have you got a map?'

'Yes, here's the map. The position of the island is marked in pencil.'

Krupasindhu studied the map in silence fo a minute.

'You see this dotted line?' he said. 'That's the district boundary. Now, if that line is produced—so—you see, it touches the island. Therefore, the island might be in this district . . . or it might not.'

'How does that help? Do you mean that it will be

easier to bribe the Collector of Balasore than the Collector of Cuttack?'

'Certainly not. But I can suggest to our Collector that the island is not his concern. He will be only too pleased to get rid of the dispute and pass it on to somebody else. He will report that the island is not in his district. Then the Commissioner will ask the Collector of Balasore if he accepts the island as belonging to his district. If he says "No," the question will be referred to Government, and Government will have to decide to which district the island belongs. That will take time.'

'But what if the Collector of Balasore says, "Yes"?'

'Still the correspondence will make at least a month's delay. In the meantime Parika Raja can send his men to take possession of the island. He is a great favourite with the higher officials. Perhaps they will let him keep it. I don't suppose it is worth much.'

'I expect he will have to give it up in the end. But he will gladly pay for the delay. And I think that is really the best we can do for him.'

'I would not advise you to try to do more.'

'Then there is a case in which Krishna Chandra Babu is interested. You know he is an oppressive landlord and always at loggerheads with his tenants. Well, not long ago his elephant died, and he tried to raise hathiana at two annas per acre, to buy a new elephant. And some of the tenants came to Cuttack and consulted a lawyer, and he advised them that this was an illegal cess. Then the tenants formed a union to resist this exaction, and their leader is one Haribandhu Behera. One of the Babu's men has instituted a false case of cattle-theft against Haribandhu Behera, and the Babu is willing to pay ten thousand rupees to secure a conviction, and get Haribandhu sent to jail.'

'It would be cheaper to pay for his elephant out of his

own pocket.'

'That is true, but he wants to cow the tenantry and break their union, because he fears that otherwise they will never submit to illegal exactions again.'

'Then I'll have nothing to do with it,' said Krupasindhu. 'Let Krishna Chandra Babu keep his money, but never will I help him to send an innocent man to jail.'

'As you please,' said Rai Sahib. 'And anyhow, I think I have given you plenty to do.'

Next year the Armistice was declared, and everybody was very pleased to hear of it, and Krupasindhu was especially pleased, because, after all the English had been victorious, as he had foretold. And he hoped that trade would improve, and prices would fall and all sorts of agreeable things would happen. But they didn't Trade seemed to get worse and worse, and prices continued to rise, and it was hard to see that the beginning of peace had really done any good.

And some time after the Armistice the men who had been serving in the War began to come back, and they brought plenty of money with them, and were all praising loudly the generosity of the Government. And one of them came to Cuttack, and Krupasindhu questioned him about his experiences. He had been to a place called 'Marse'. This, he said, was a great city, and though there were no cows in the streets, yet there was milk for those who could afford to buy it. And he said he had seen a fog so thick that a man could not see his hand before his face. And he had been out to villages and seen how the French peasants cultivated their land. They had no rice, but they grew a great deal of wheat and other rabi crops. And he described their methods of cultivation—how they ploughed with horses instead of oxen—and Krupasindhu was exceedingly interested. But

the man went on to say that in all France there were no buffaloes, and that Krupasindhu could not believe, and he concluded that after all the man was a liar, and his talk was nothing but travellers' tales.

18

A Communal Riot

Peace, when it came to the war-weary nations of Europe, brought no peace to India, but rather the beginning of strife. For about four months after the Armistice Krupasindhu, who never read a newspaper, began to hear rumours of riots and disturbances in various places. And the rumours got more and more alarming, till at last Krupasindhu went to his Sahib and borrowed the English newspaper which the Sahib received every day from Calcutta. Then he understood that the people of the Punjab had risen in rebellion and were killing all the English they could come at, men, women, and children. At this Krupasindhu was not much perturbed, because he thought the insurrection would not spread all the way to Orissa, and the Government was sure to suppress it.

But after a little while a change came over the rumours. Formerly the talk had been about atrocities committed by the insurgents. Now the talk was about atrocities committed by the soldiers who suppressed the insurrection. But Krupasindhu was not perturbed, and he advised all who spoke to him about these things not to worry about them, because, he said, they were Oriyas, and what happened in the Punjab did not concern them.

Then there was talk about Swaraj, and one of the clerks came to Krupasindhu one evening to get his opinion about it.

'Krupa Babu,' he said, 'have you heard that we are to

get Swaraj?'

'No, I haven't, and I don't believe it.'

'But it's true. The English Parliament has passed an Act granting Reforms.'

'I remember that there were some Reforms about ten years ago, but they never did me any harm. Why worry?'

'But this time we are going to have parliaments and elections like the English; and we shall have votes.'

'It won't make any difference to me. I shan't vote.'

'But it will make a lot of difference to us all, because Collector Sahib has got to prepare the electoral rolls, and that will make extra work for the whole office.'

'In that case we shall have to tell the Sahib that the work is too heavy and he will get sanction to employ more clerks. The more work the better!'

'That's very true. But one thing we are anxious about. If the English Raj is really coming to an end, will it be a Hindu Raj or a Mohammedan Raj?'

'What nonsense! I have always said that politics is a nasty thing. So now the politicians want to set us and our Mohammedan friends by the ears? Why can't we be good neighbours as we always have been in Orissa?'

'I wish we could! But if you heard the way some of the politicians are talking, and the way some of the Mohammedans are talking!'

'It just confirms what I always say: have nothing to do with politics, and keep on good neighbourly terms with the Mohammedans, and the Christians too.'

'You're quite right, Krupa Babu, of course; but mark my words, there will be trouble in Orissa before long.'

About a year after the troubles in the Punjab this prophecy was fulfilled. Krupasindhu was walking home from Cutcherry when he met a Hindu marriage procession with a band near Qadam Rasul. Some Mohammedans came out of the mosque, and asked them to stop the music.

because they were reading prayers and the noise disturbed them. The Hindus refused, and more Mohammedans ran out of the mosque and stopped the procession, and there was cursing, threatening, and bad language on both sides. Then Krupasindhu came forward and stood between them, and exhorted them to control their tongues and settle the matter in a neighbourly way. But one of the Mohammedans confronted Krupasindhu defiantly, and Krupa recognized him. It was Khurshed Ali.

'Son of a frog!' he said, 'who gave you leave to speak in the presence of gentlemen?'

'*Pig-eater!*' *Krupasindhu retorted.* '*And if I speak in* thy presence, what is that to thy father?'

'Sala! Father of a whore!'

'Son and brother of harlots!'

'In what brothel wast thou conceived?'

'*Tu kis khet ki muli?*'

'Thou art a thief, and thy sister is a bawd!'

Now Krupasindhu began to fear that he might lose his temper. And he remembered that he was a genteel person, and had a reputation to maintain. Therefore he would not look Khurshed Ali in the face, lest he might catch the fire from his eyes, so he turned to the bystanders and spoke in a refined manner.

'The gentleman is angry, because his mother has forgotten the name of his father.'

'The wife and the sister of the Babu!'

'The gentleman speaks in a vulgar style, because he has a grandmother as well as a mother.'

But while this altercation was going on a boy ran to the street where the Mohammedans lived, and they ran together in a space beside the mosque. And the women came out of the houses with armfuls of cudgels and hatchets and choppers, and began to serve them out to the men for weapons. And when they were ready they

came out into the street and all together rushed upon the Hindus. And the Hindus turned and fled. And Krupasindhu was knocked down in the press, and the mob rushed over him.

Then more Hindus came up, and most of them were armed with one thing or another, and they all ran together and charged the Mohammedans and drove them back to the mosque. And again the crowd passed over Krupasindhu as he lay on the ground. And when they were passed he picked himself up and ran home.

And as he was running the police came and dispersed the mob and arrested some of the rioters. But Khurshed Ali ran away, for fear of being arrested.

After a little while he came to Krupasindhu's lodging. He had a great gaping gash on his head from which the blood was running down one side of his face, and his left arm hung limp by his side. He came up on to the veranda and sat down without a word. Krupasindhu ran inside and got him water to drink. When he had drunk water Krupasindhu asked him where he was staying, and he said he was staying with some relations near Qadam Rasul. Then he lay down, overcome by pain and loss of blood, and fainted.

Now Krupasindhu began to think quickly. It was necessary to have his friend's wounds attended to, and he debated whether he should take him to the place where he was staying and fetch a doctor, or take him to the hospital. And he reflected that if he took him to the place where he was staying he would be taking him towards the scene of the riot, and they might meet the police and be arrested but if he took him to the hospital he would be taking him away from the scene of the riot. So he went and called some of his neighbours, and they laid the wounded man on a charpoy and carried him to the hospital. There Krupasindhu left him, and went and

told his relations, and one of them walked back to the hospital with Krupasindhu to nurse Khurshed Ali.

From this man Krupasindhu learnt that Khurshed Ali had taken short leave to come to Cuttack for a consultation with his relations about some family affair, and now he would be compelled to overstay his leave. Next morning Krupasindhu went to the Collector's residence early, and wrote an application for an extension of leave, and fair-copied it on the typewriter and went to the hospital and got it signed by Khurshed Ali. And he got the Assistant Surgeon to write a certificate, and dispatched the application by registered post. And he went every day to see Khurshed Ali as long as he remained at Cuttack.

Many other such quarrels between Hindus and Mohammedans occurred in many places from time to time, and distrust between them was increased, but it all made no difference to the friendship between Khurshed Ali and Krupasindhu.

In the month of August the news came that Gandhi Maharaj had ordered that everybody should practise non-co-operation, but nobody took much notice until agitators began to wander about the country explaining what it meant. And it happened that when Krupasindhu went home for the Puja holidays one of the agitators came to the village. And the villagers met under the great pipal-tree to hear what he had to say. And he explained that if they would all abstain from liquor and opium and other things that pay duty, then the Government would be deprived of the excise revenue; and if they would settle their disputes among themselves, instead of going to law, then the Government would be deprived of the revenue from court fees; and if all those who were in Government service would resign, then the Government would collapse for want of hands to do the work.

But to Krupasindhu all this seemed very silly. And he remembered how an agitator had been to the village years ago when he was a boy, and he waited to see if any of the villagers would remember to speak of the oppression of the Mahrattas, from which the English had delivered them. But the tradition seemed to have faded, and nobody spoke. So he decided to speak himself.

'Babu,' he said, 'before the English came to Orissa our forefathers suffered fearful things under the tyranny of the Mahratta Sardars, and when I was a little boy I was taught that the English were our friends and deliverers. And now I do not understand why we should turn against them.'

Then the agitator spoke of the wrongs of the Punjab and the wrongs of the Khilafat; and Krupasindhu answered him.

'Babu,' he said, 'the Khilafat is a Mohammedan affair, and this is not a Mohammedan village, so that is no concern of ours. And as for the Punjab, we know that the Punjabis began killing English people, and then the English came with troops and began killing Punjabis. What else would you expect? And we are not Punjabis. We are not concerned with what happened in a foreign country hundreds of miles away.'

And the villagers, who had great respect for Krupasindhu, thought he was talking good sense, and they told the agitator that they did not want to hear any more.

'If you want to talk nonsense,' they said, 'you had better go away and talk it somewhere else.'

On his way back to Cuttack Krupasindhu called on the Collector of Balasore and told him about this, and the Collector was pleased, and told Krupasindhu that he wished all the villagers would treat agitators like that. And he asked Krupasindhu to use his influence to keep agitators out of the village, and Krupasindhu wrote to his

brother and gave him instructions. Haribandhu told his neighbours what Krupasindhu had written, and next time an agitator came to the village they beat him severely and threw him into the river. Now this man happened to be a man from Eastern Bengal, which is also a land of many rivers and he could swim as an Oriya, and he swam across the river and escaped with his life.

And when the authorities understood that there were many agitators wandering about the country giving the people bad advice, they decided to try the effect of counter-propaganda. So they encouraged such of the local gentry as were loyal and eager to please the officials to spend a little money and engage counter-propagandists. And one of these came to Krupasindhu's village, and the villagers met together to hear him.

This man was an old soldier who came from Agra, and he spoke to them in Hindi. He exhorted them to be law-abiding and to be loyal to the Kaisar-i-Hind.

'We have heard of this Kaisar,' said one of the villagers. 'He is a German. He is the enemy of our King. We will have nothing to do with him.'

'The Kaisar is a very wicked man,' said another. 'We have heard that he eats children.'

'And I have heard,' said one, 'that he keeps a glycerine-factory, and after a battle he does not allow the bodies of the slain to be cremated, but has them gathered up and taken to his factory, to be made into glycerine.'

'But, gentlemen,' said the old soldier, 'I am not speaking about the German Kaisar, but our own Kaisar.'

'We have no Kaisar,' said the villagers.

'I mean the Badshah Sahib.'

'Badshah is a Mohammedan name,' said one of the villagers, 'and we are not Mohammedans, and our King is not a Mohammedan.'

'Then who in God's name is your King?'

'Our King is Shri Bharateshwar,' the villagers replied, 'and we want no other. And if you must talk nonsense, you had better go away, you and your Kaisars and Badshahs, and talk to those who are willing to listen to you.'

So the counter-propagandist also gave it up as a bad job and left the village.

And all the time the agitators continued no agitator dared to show his face in the village and the Collector knew of this and he knew that it was due to the influence of Krupasindhu. And he wrote and informed the Collector of Cuttack, who made a note of it, intending that Krupasindhu should be duly rewarded.

And when the day of the first General Election came near, it was given out that Gandhi Maharaj had ordered that nobody should stand for election and nobody should record his vote. And when the villagers heard of this they concluded that the Government wished them to record their votes. And when the day came the village watchman rose very early and put on his uniform and went round the village summoning the voters. And they all marched to the polling station together, led by the village watchman. But when they came to the polling station they found that they had to choose between two candidates, and they consulted together which they should vote for. But as they knew nothing of either of them they decided to take it in turns. So the man who went in first voted for one candidate, and the next man for the other, and so on, until they had all voted; and then they all went back to the village feeling pleased that they had done their duty.

19

Krupasindhu's Son Goes Astray

Although Krupasindhu had determined not to have anything to do with politics, and not to allow any political movement to disturb the regular pattern of his life, yet the movement disturbed it against his will and in a manner that touched his deepest affections. The Headmaster wrote and told him that his elder son had run away from school, and he suspected that he had joined the non-co-operators. Haribandhu also wrote and said that the boy was not at home.

Krupasindhu went to his Sahib at once, and took leave and went to Balasore. And first he went to a gentleman who he knew was the local leader of the non-co-operators. And this gentleman was very respectable, and he received Krupasindhu very courteously. But when Krupasindhu asked him about his son he could tell him nothing.

'I would be glad to help you, Babu,' he said, 'but it is impossible for me to remember the names of all our workers, and I keep no record of them, in case the police should search my house and seize my papers.'

Then Krupasindhu went to an Inspector of Police, who was an old acquaintance and a caste-fellow. And he gave him useful advice.

'That man,' he said, 'is only a figurehead. They have made him their leader because he is considered respectable,

but their real headquarters are not in his house.'

Then he told Krupasindhu that in a certain small town in the district, which he named, there was a doctor Babu who kept a private dispensary, and this was the meeting place of the non-co-operators.

'Next to the shop,' he explained, 'where he sells medicines is the compounding-room where he makes up his prescriptions, and behind there is a large room which he uses as his consulting-room. That is where they hold their committee meetings. And young men and students go there of an evening and hear lectures on the principles and practice of non-co-operation.'

'How do they induce them to go?'

'Not far from the dispensary there is a bawdy-house of which the Doctor Babu is secretly the owner. That, you know, is a very profitable sideline for a doctor, because the young men who visit the bawdy-house contract diseases and then come to him for treatment. Sometimes he sends for some of the girls, and they dance for the amusement of his visitors, and so he attracts young men to the back room, and opportunities occur for the non-co-operators to teach their doctrine.'

Krupasindhu thanked him, and determined to go to the dispensary in search of his son. But first he provided himself with a khaddar shirt and a Gandhi cap. And when he came to the place he went boldly to the Doctor Babu and told him who he was and asked if he could tell him anything about his son.

'He has been here sometimes,' the Doctor Babu replied. 'Come to-night. Perhaps he will be here.'

'But your friends will know that I am a Government Servant, and then perhaps I shall not be welcome.'

'There are many Government Servants who are in sympathy with our movement, though they dare not join it openly.'

'And do they come here?'

'Not in such clothes as you are wearing.'

'Then I'll come in khaddar.'

'That will be better.'

'But they'll want to know who I am.'

'We never ask names. A day may come when it will be convenient not to know.'

So Krupasindhu turned up as arranged, dressed in khaddar. And he looked round the room and observed the company that was present. There was a lean elderly man with gold-rimmed spectacles who was one of the local leaders, and a short fat man, and half a dozen lads who were talking to each other in English, for practice, by which Krupasindhu knew that they were students. All these were dressed in white khaddar shirts and dhoties and Gandhi caps.

There were also two young girls, and a couple of musicians to make music for the girls to dance.

And when Krupasindhu had saluted them all and sat down the dancing-girls began to change their clothes in the presence of all the company according to their custom, and the doctor passed round pan and cigarettes on a brass tray. And when the girls had finished changing their plain everyday clothes for their brightly coloured dancing-clothes, and put on their jewelry, the musicians struck up a tune, and one of the girls began to dance.

And after a little while, when the eyes of all the company were fixed on the dancer, the little fat man stared Krupasindhu in the face until he caught his eye, and then he made a secret sign, by which Krupasindhu knew that he was a C.I.D. man. Krupasindhu wondered if the man had recognized him, but he did not respond, because the sign was a secret that he was not supposed to know.

When the girls were tired of dancing and singing they sat down among the students, and the doctor opened

another tin of cigarettes, and also a bottle of whisky and they all drank and smoked and talked. And the lean elderly man spoke to Krupasindhu.

'Do you intend to join us and work in this district?'

'No,' Krupasindhu replied, 'I am on my way to Midnapur. I came here to look for Guru Charan Mahanty, son of Krupasindhu Mahanty who is one of your workers. His father, you know, is a clerk in the Collector's office at Cuttack, but he is in sympathy with the movement. He has entrusted me with a letter and money for his son.' As he named his own name Krupasindhu looked at the C.I.D. man. But he was looking the other way, and did not appear to be listening.

'Guru Charan is not here,' the lean man replied. 'He is gone to work in the Cuttack district, and, as his duty is to wander about the villages talking and collecting money, I can't tell you where exactly he is.'

'Never mind,' said the doctor, 'have some more whisky, you haven't taken enough to drown a fly.'

'Babu,' said Krupasindhu, 'these cigarettes were made in England, and the whisky was made in Scotland, and whoever imported them must have paid customs duty to the Government, and the grocer who is licensed to sell whisky pays a licence fee to the Excise Department. So you are using foreign goods, and contributing to the revenues of the Government. I don't understand how you can find it consistent with the Mahatma's teaching to use these things.'

'I think there is no harm, the doctor replied, 'when we use them for a patriotic purpose. We want the boys to have a good time when they come here.'

'The stranger is right,' said the lean man. 'Boys, let us all take a vow never to use such things after to-night.'

And he took the opportunity to lecture the students.

After this meeting Krupasindhu went back to Balasore.

and he went to the railway station to wait for the next train to Cuttack. And while he was waiting a policeman in plain clothes came up and questioned him.

'Are you Krupasindhu Mahanty clerk in the Collector's office at Cuttack?'

'Yes.'

'We are looking for you. You are to go to the District Magistrate at once.'

Krupasindhu went.

'Babu,' the Sahib began, 'I hear you were present last night, dressed in khaddar and a Gandhi cap, at a meeting of non-co-operators. I am afraid I must report this to your Collector. But I hope you can explain matters.'

'Sir,' Krupasindhu replied, 'Your Honour knows that I am a loyal subject. But a great misfortune has befallen me. My son Guru Charan, who is a very promising boy, has been led astray by some unscrupulous person, and joined the enemies of the Benign Government. I came to this district to find him and lead him back by parental authority to the right path. I regret to state that I have not been successful.'

'Is that it?' said the Collector. 'I thought there must be some explanation. I knew you were loyal. Well I'll make a note of the boy's name, and tell the police to look out for him.'

'Sir, I have found out that he is not in this district. He has been sent to work in the Cuttack district. So, with Your Honour's permission, I propose to return to Cuttack by the next train.'

'That's all right. I think I need not report it. You had better report it yourself.'

Krupasindhu hastened back to the station and caught his train to Cuttack. And, taking the Sahib's advice, he went at once to his own Sahib and told him all about it. Then he went to Rai Sahib.

'I will do all I can to help you,' Rai Sahib said, 'but I'm afraid I can't do as much as I could have before. because I've got to revert. You see, all police officers who served in the Army were granted leave when they were demobbed, but most of them had to wait, because passages were not obtainable. But now most of them are back again, and one of them is coming here.'

'Tell me about him.'

'His name is Captain Winston. That is all I know.'

'And has he really been battle-fighting in France?'

'Of course not. He served with the police battalion at Nathnagar.'

'Then why is he a captain?'

'Because he served with the police battalion at Nathnagar.'

'When will he take over charge?'

'The day after to-morrow.'

'Then I will pay my respects the following day.'

Next Krupasindhu went to Mansingh Raja, who happened to be in Cuttack. Now the Raja, having taken Krupasindhu's advice, had been restored to official favour, and it was rumoured that he was an intimate friend, and even a boon companion, of the Collector, whereby his prestige, and his opinion of his own importance, were greatly enhanced. And Krupasindhu had to wait a long time before he was admitted to the Raja's presence, and then he found the Raja rather distant and haughty.

'Raja Sahib, he began, 'I was once of some service to you. Now I am come to ask you a small favour.'

'You were well paid for your service,' the Raja replied. 'What do you want now?'

'Sir,' said Krupasindhu, 'you would not have paid for my services if you had not known that I was able to help—or not to help.'

The Raja took the hint and changed his manner a little.

'Well, well,' he said, 'it would ill become a nobleman to be ungrateful. What can I do for you?'

'Sir, my son Guru Charan ran away from school and joined the non-co-operators, and I hear that he is working in this district. He may be working among your tenants. I want to find him in order that I may exercise my parental authority.'

'Very well. I will give orders to my staff. I won't have any nonsense of that sort among my tenants. If we catch him we'll give him a good thrashing and keep him locked up till you come for him. Or shall we hand him over to the police?'

'Sir, do not beat him too severely, and please do not hand him over to the police.'

'All right. Is there anything else?'

Krupasindhu took his leave and went to see Harichandan Raja. Him he did not find, because he was accustomed to live on his estate, but he found his manager, from whom he learnt that the Raja was still hoping to get his title recognized by Government. And the manager was very cordial and promised to write to the Raja, and assured Krupasindhu that the Raja would gladly help.

Next day Krupasindhu had to go back to work, but he got up very early in the morning and went and saw Parika Raja first. He also promised to help. And he was very bitter against the non-co-operators, because, he said, they were setting the peasantry against the landlords, and teaching them not to pay anything over and above the rent that was legally due.

And when his day's work was finished Krupasindhu did not go fishing, as he was wont to, but went to the town to see if there were any more influential people who might help him to find his son. And he did the same again next day.

The day after he paid his respects to the new Police

Sahib. And he was sympathetic, and made a note of the boy's name and some other particulars and promised to try and find him, and Krupasindhu felt that he had made a good impression.

Now, Krupasindhu felt sure that with most of the principal landlords of the district, and the police too, all trying to help him, his son would be found before long. But after a fortnight, when nothing had been heard of the boy, he began to fret grievously. And one morning, when the Sahib sent for him to take down some letters, he saw that Krupasindhu had been shedding tears.

'Babu,' he said, 'I can see that you have been fretting about that boy of yours. Am I right?'

'Sir,' Krupasindhu replied, 'we have always been a loyal family, and this is a great disgrace.'

'Don't be so pessimistic, Babu. The boy's quite young, isn't he? He'll turn up one day, and he's got plenty of time to redeem his character.'

'Sir, but we have always enjoyed the favour of the English officials. Your Honour is very kind to me, and Your Honour's predecessor was very kind to me But my son——'

'Don't be so silly. How old is the boy?'

'*Sir, he is only sixteen.*'

'Then there's nothing to worry about. Plenty of time for him to pass his Matric and get a job in Government service. We'll easily forgive him for playing the fool a bit at his age.'

'He was to have sat for the Matric this year, but now he will miss his chance.'

'Never mind. He can pass next year.'

'Your Honour is very kind. I am very much ashamed that my son should have been led astray.'

'I'm afraid he's not the only one.'

'*That is why I am ashamed, sir. I am ashamed that*

so many of my countrymen are taking part in this objectionable movement. To think that men who are Oriyas should behave as if they were Bengalis!'

'Well, don't worry any more. As soon as your son is found we will send him back to school, and that will be all right.'

'But, sir, he has not been found. Where can he be?'

'Oh, he'll turn up all right some day.'

'Sir, he has been missing so long, I am afraid lest something may not have happened to him otherwise.'

'Don't be a pessimist, Babu. He'll turn up all right.'

'Sir, he was a very intelligent boy, and I was sure he would have passed his Matric this year, and now, where he is, or what he is doing, God knows.'

'I'll remind the police to look out for him. Now get on with your work and don't worry.'

Krupasindhu was a little comforted for a while by the kindness and sympathy of the Sahib, but when the day's work was done and the Sahib went to the club to play rackets Krupasindhu as usual took his fishing-rod and went to the bank of the Mahanadi, but he did not fish. He laid the rod on the ground and sat with his head in his hands, moaning, 'My son, my son, why don't you come back?'

And when it was dark he went home, but he would not eat his supper, and Charubala knew that she could not comfort him because Guru Charan was not her child. And she sat weeping quietly within the house, and he sat on the veranda with his head in his hands, moaning, 'My son, my son!'

20

Krupasindhu Finds his Son Again

At the beginning of the cold weather Collector Sahib decided to make a tour on the inland side of the district where the Emperor's territory marches with the territory of the Feudatory Chiefs. The first part of the journey they made by railway, and when they left the railway the Sahib proceeded by motor-car along a good hard road and the rest by carts to the first camping-ground.

The country between the railway and the mountains, through which they were now passing, is different from the country between the railway and the sea. Here the land is higher and drier. At places there is soft land where paddy is grown, at other places the hard laterite rock comes so near the surface that there is hardly enough soil to grow grass; and at places there is no soil at all, and bare red rock comes out in great slabs and knobs. Here also are the beginnings of the mountains. They begin with isolated hills. Some of these are round in shape, and seem to rise out of the plain like the upper part of a boiled egg rising out of an egg-cup. On these the slopes are gentle enough to give a foothold for trees, and trees grow over them thickly. Others are more rugged, and the slopes are steeper and there are fewer trees, and here and there the sides are precipitous and there are no trees at all, only the naked rock.

Here they remained a few days, and then went on to the next camping-ground. After a few miles they came to a steep forest-covered ridge, and the road passed through a cleft in the ridge. The road went up with a steep slope and then came down with a long, gentle slope to another stretch of flat country. Sometimes the road ran through paddy-fields but most of the way it ran through high and dry land covered with scrub jungle, where the villagers send their cattle to graze. And because of the cattle there are few trees. For, whenever a baby tree rises a foot above the earth the cattle eat the leaves, and the tree withers, but the stock remains alive in the earth. And next year the tree springs up again, and the cattle browse it down again, and so a would-be forest remains in a state of suppression.

Through this country they came to a river which was still full of water (a fact which Krupasindhu had been careful to find out beforehand) and they crossed by a ferry. And because there were no means of taking the car across the river the local zemindar had sent two elephants which were waiting on the other side of the river. So they journeyed on to the border, and camped in the jungle among the foothills.

Here they stayed three days. One day the Sahib took his gun and went shooting in the jungle and came back with a good bag of jungle-fowl. The Sahib kept one for his own dinner, and gave the rest to his men, and all the Mohammedans and low-caste people in the camp had a feast of roast chicken, but Krupasindhu could not eat of it because of the rules of his caste. And one night the Sahib sat up in a tree for a leopard, but nothing happened.

The third day the Sahib gave orders that they would break camp next morning, march back to the first camping-ground, halt there two nights, and then return to

headquarters. That night the servants and the orderlies sat up late, packing, so as to be ready to make an early start, but the Sahib went to bed early. And he was already asleep in his camp-bed when the ferryman came into the camp and announced that the non-co-operators had stopped the ferry.

One of the orderlies went and roused the Sahib, and he came to the door of his tent in his pyjamas to hear what the ferryman had to say.

'Sir,' the ferryman reported, 'this morning two men in Gandhi caps came to me and told me that I must not pay any more rent to the Government for the ferry, but pay it to them, or they would stop the ferry. Then my boatmen threatened to beat them, and they ran away. This evening they came back with a number of their comrades, and as they were too many for us we ran away. And now they have stopped the ferry and will allow no one to cross the river unless he shouts "Victory to Gandhi Maharaj" and pays them money.'

'Have you informed the police?' the Sahib asked.

'Yes, sir. I sent a man across in the small boat as soon as they came, with orders to run on to the police station.'

Then the Sahib gave orders to wake him an hour before daybreak and to have the elephants ready at the same time and went to bed again.

And the Sahib started before daybreak, taking with him only Krupasindhu and the chuprassies, with two elephants.

The servants he left behind to pack up, and the Khalassies to strike the tents, with orders to bring everything down to the ferry as soon as possible.

And when they came to the ferry they found a score of men in Gandhi caps. And the police were waiting on the other side of the river, but they could not cross because the men in Gandhi caps had brought all the boats to their side of the river.

Now, it was not the policy of the non-co-operators to use force to the Sahib, so they told him that he might take a boat if he liked, but nobody would be allowed to row it for him. Then Krupasindhu offered his services.

'Sir,' he said, 'if Your Honour will give the order, I will take a boat across.'

'You, Babu! Why, you're too old and too fat, and what do you know about boats?'

'Sir, I have no doubt become somewhat fat and scant of breath, but to steer a boat is second nature to me.'

Now, Krupasindhu had been born, as it were, on the bank of Old Twister, and he had learnt to swim and to manage a boat almost as soon as he had learnt to walk, for the dwellers in the riverside villages take to the water like ducks. So he picked two of the orderlies who were also riverside men and good watermen, but at first the men in Gandhi caps threatened them with their lathies, but the Sahib stood between with his gun in his hands.

Then they got into the boat, and the two orderlies took the oars, and Krupasindhu took the great steering-paddle, and though he puffed and grunted and sweated grievously, he brought the boat safe to the other side. There the police had impressed some of the villagers to serve as boatmen, and two of these took the oars, but Krupasindhu stuck to the steering-paddle. And the sub-inspector and half a dozen constables with their heavy brassbound lathies got into the boat. And Krupasindhu steered the boat back again. And when the non-co-operators saw the police coming they ran away.

Then the ferryman and his boatmen came back, and they took all the boats to the other side and brought over the rest of the policemen and some village watchmen. And some of the villagers, who had armed themselves with spears and bows and arrows, came with them. And the police and the watchmen and the armed villagers went

off in pursuit of the non-co-operators, and the ferryman recovered possession of the ferry, and the Sahib crossed the river with all his men and all his gear.

And when they came to the camping-ground the Sahib praised Krupasindhu.

'Babu,' he said, 'you have done a useful bit of work to-day. I did not know you were a good waterman. And I never saw a Babu that was such a sportsman.'

But all this time Krupasindhu was still fretting about his son, and there was no news.

Next day a report came from the sub-inspector. The non-co-operators, he said, had fled north-east into the jungle. In the jungle he had found some men from whom he had learnt that there was a house hidden in the jungle where the non-co-operators lived. He had arranged to surround the place where the house was said to be, and he hoped to capture them that night.

The Sahib sent back orders that the men who might be caught were to be brought to his camp. And he decided to postpone his return to Cuttack until they came.

On the third day after Krupasindhu had steered the boat across the river the police came, bringing six prisoners. And the sub-inspector made his report.

'Sir,' he said, 'we followed the tracks of the fugitives, questioning the inhabitants as we went, which way they had seen them go, until we came into thick jungle. There we happened to meet some men who live by collecting jungle products. In the hot weather they gather the fruits of the mahogany-trees, and in the cold weather they lop branches and prepare bundles of firewood, and at other times they collect jungle products according to the season, and——'

'Cut it short,' said the Sahib. 'I don't want to know what they do all the year round. I want to know what they told you.'

'Sir, the jungle folk showed me a round hill covered with very thick jungle, and they told me that in the middle of the jungle on the top of the hill there was a clearing, and here the non-co-operators had built some huts, and this was their ashram. It was a rest-house and a hiding-place for them, and also a place where young men were trained to be agitators. So I arranged to surround the place. And when all was ready we advanced through the jungle from all sides. But, whether it was that some of the villagers were careless, or that there were not enough men to surround the place thoroughly, we only caught six, and the rest may have slipped through the circle and escaped.'

'Well, I think it's not a bad haul,' replied the Sahib. 'Now let's see them.'

The six prisoners were lined up for the Sahib to see. Two of them were very young—merely schoolboys. The others looked like ordinary hired ruffians. But one of the school-boys was Krupasindhu's son.

When he saw his father he ran to him and fell on his neck, and Krupasindhu forgot to be angry, he was so glad to see his son alive and well. But one of the constables grabbed the boy by the shoulder and forced him back into his place in the line.

'Is that the missing son, Krupa Babu?' asked the Sahib.

'Yes, Your Honour,' Krupasindhu replied. 'By Your Honour's kindness he has been restored to me.'

'Don't thank me. Thank the sub-inspector. And I'm not so sure he has been restored to you yet. Sub-inspector, what evidence is there against the prisoners?'

'Sir, the ferryman and his boatmen identified them all as members of the unlawful assembly which took possession of the ferry.'

'These boys were not at the ferry when I came there.'

'No, sir. But there is ample evidence that they were

there the day before when the ferryman was driven away. Moreover, they have not denied it.'

'Sir,' said Krupasindhu, 'these boys are of tender age. There will be no harm if they are released.'

'I'm not so sure about that. These youngsters who wander about the villages talking sedition can do a lot of harm, especially when they are high-caste boys of respectable families. The villagers listen to them and believe what they tell them. But let us see if they will tell anything.'

So the prisoners were taken away and made to sit in a row outside the camp, and then brought one by one and questioned by the sub-inspector in the presence of the Sahib. And when it came to the turn of Guru Charan he admitted his guilt, but would not tell anything, saying that he was afraid the men in Gandhi caps would kill him if he gave any information.

'Perhaps he'll speak more freely to his father,' the Sahib said. 'Send him to Krupa Babu.'

So Guru Charan was taken by a constable to the little tent where Krupasindhu lived with the typewriter and the office files. And he stood before his father.

'O my son!' said Krupasindhu. 'Why have you done this? You were to have sat for the Matric this year, and if you had passed you would have been qualified for Government service. But now you have disgraced yourself and the whole family. Why have you done so?'

'Babu, I wanted to be a patriot and serve my country.'

'Son, when you had passed your Matric I would have got you appointed a clerk in the Collector's office, and you could have served your country as I am serving. Or I might have got you into the police, and you might have served your country as a policeman.'

'Babu, is that serving the country or serving the Government?'

'What nonsense! Have you forgotten that you are a Hindu and a Karan? Our duty is to do the work of our caste. When we had a Hindu King it was enough to learn ka, kha, ga, gha, but when there was a Mohammedan Government our ancestors learnt alif, be, se, and now we learn A, B, C. But, O my son, know that your mother prayed for you while you were yet in her womb; and she prayed that you might be a boy, and that you might be strong and healthy and clever and quick to learn, so she prayed to the Lord Jagarnath, standing and praying with outstretched hands. Has not the Lord answered her prayer?'

'Babu, those things indeed the Lord has fulfilled, but now I have been made sad by hearing of all the woes and tyranny with which Bharat is oppressed.'

'Son, somebody has been telling you lies and nonsense. Now tell me why you ran away from school and what you have been doing since.'

'Babu, I left school because I wanted to be a patriot. And first I went to Balasore, and there they told me to go to a place where there is a doctor Babu who keeps a private dispensary. There they gave me some instruction and sent me out with a man, and for a week we went about the villages, talking and collecting money. Then they sent me here to be trained. And more than that I dare not tell, Babu, because they would kill me.'

'How can they kill? Their rule is to be non-violent

'Babu, they say that Gandhi Maharaj teaches non-violence, but some of them don't believe in it. They say it is useful as a trick to hoodwink the Government. But, they say, we cannot drive out the English without killing, and one day we must begin to kill. And, Babu, some of them have got revolvers.'

'Son, do you not see that it is wicked to associate with such men?'

But Guru Charan hung his head and said nothing.

'Son,' Krupasindhu went on, 'is it nothing to you that you were causing sorrow to your father? Did you not consider that we were all weeping because you were gone astray and we knew not whether you were alive or dead? But now you will go back to school, and as soon as you have passed your Matric I will get you honourable employment.'

Then Guru Charan promised to go back to school and be a good boy, and the constable led him back to where the other prisoners were sitting. And Krupasindhu went to the Sahib and told him all that his son had said.

'Babu,' the Sahib said, 'I'm afraid your son will have to stand his trial with the rest. But you may give bail for him and keep him with you. I hope he will get off lightly.'

'It matters little, sir,' said Krupasindhu, 'because my son was lost and I have found him again.'

21

Punishment for Disloyalty

As soon as possible after his return to headquarters Krupasindhu took his son with him and went to see his father-in-law the Deputy Magistrate, who was Guru Charan's grandfather.

Now, this gentleman saw the boy's escapade from a different point of view from the boy's father. For the family to which Krupasindhu belonged was a humble family. It was their way to scrape a sufficient living—not much more than sufficient—from the ancestral acres—not very many of these—and to supplement this with what they could earn by the skill of their pens. Thus, they were peasants and writers, but peasants first. And as writers they had always been content with humble occupations, they were clerks or ledger writers, or the like. And Krupasindhu's father had taught him that the humbler position was to be preferred.

But the Deputy Magistrate belonged to a proud family. They were proud, because for generations they had been land-holders, and they depended for their livelihood rather on the rents they received from their tenants than on the produce of the land which they kept in their own possession. If they used their pens to add to the income derived from the estate it was by serving as Deputy Magistrates and Deputy Collectors, or in some such position. Moreover, the estate gave them influence and power over their tenants, so that district officers thought it worth

while to secure their goodwill; wherefore the district officers courted them by obtaining for them invitations to durbars, and interviews with higher officials. And the family valued these things, and liked everybody to know that they were important people who were invited to durbars and granted interviews by Lieutenant-Governors. And Guru Charan's grandfather was anxious to maintain the prestige of the family, in spite of straitened circumstances, and he feared that his grandson's escapade might alienate the goodwill of the officials.

Therefore the old gentleman asked Krupasindhu to let him have his grandson to himself for an hour, and when the father was gone the grandfather proceeded to give the boy a lecture.

'My boy,' he began, 'you know that when a girl is married she goes out of the family in which she was born and becomes a member of another family. But in the eyes of the world the severance is never complete, nor would a complete severance be tolerated by the natural affections of the human heart.

'And in our community a man would be thought very hard-hearted and undutiful if he did not take an affectionate interest in the welfare of his sons-in-law. And it is the usual thing that the father-in-law helps his son-in-law, or the son-in-law helps his father-in-law, as the case may be, and according to circumstances. For a return of affection is expected from a man's children and his children's husbands; and a good man honours his father-in-law as well as his own father. But in the next generation the bond of affection is even stronger, because there is relationship by blood as well as by marriage. And you ought not to think that you have no concern with the honour of my family because your mother went out of it when she was married. You ought on the contrary to consider that, being your father's son and my grandson, you have

in your keeping the honour of two families, so to say, and in a manner of speaking.

'Ours is a very honourable family, not only because we have an estate but because we are loyal, and well-wishers of the Government, and therefore all the officials treat us with respect. But now by your folly you have cast doubt and suspicion on our loyalty. And it is the tradition of our family to be well-wishers, and it is an unheard-of thing that an Oriya gentleman should act in a manner contrary to the tradition of his family. But that is what you have done, and . . . O my boy! cannot you see what a sin you have committed?'

And much more the old gentleman said to the same effect. And after an hour of it Guru Charan came away feeling bewildered. For at one moment he felt ashamed and inclined to be penitent, and at another moment he was sullen and felt inclined to rebel.

When Guru Charan's case came on for trial his father engaged a pleader to defend him, and the pleader advised him to plead guilty. And when the proper time came the pleader addressed the Court, and he urged that the boy was very young, that he had been led astray by designing persons, and that he was not likely to be misled again. And he spoke at length on the wickedness of politicians who take advantage of the generous but unbalanced enthusiasm of youth, and so bring sorrow to the hearts of parents and grand parents. And though he might have said it all in five minutes, he spoke very eloquently for half an hour, and Krupasindhu felt that he was getting his money's worth. And in the end the prisoners were found guilty of being members of an unlawful assembly, and the four men were sent to jail, and Guru Charan and the other boy were let off with fines, which their fathers paid.

And Krupasindhu went at once and told his Sahib

the result, and he told him the name of his pleader, and how he had made a long and eloquent speech. But the Sahib told him he had been wasting his money because the result would have been just the same if the pleader had not spoken at all.

Now, while the case was going on Krupasindhu compelled Guru Charan to go on with his studies, and he made him read Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, and he bought him a fishing-rod, so that he might spend his playtime healthfully; but he noticed how the boy's mood was sometimes penitent and sometimes sullen, and he felt disquieted, and watched the boy carefully.

And when the trial was finished the Christmas holidays were near, and Krupasindhu would have preferred to spend them at Cuttack, because it was troublesome and expensive to take his wife and the two girls all the way home and back again only for ten days; and he did not care to leave them behind with only women in the house. But he thought it necessary to go and decided to go alone, leaving his wife and the girls, and his son too, with instructions to be ready to follow if he sent a postcard.

And as soon as he reached home, and had bathed and refreshed and rested himself after his journey, he sent for his other son who was home for the holidays, and asked him questions about the school and why his brother had run away.

'Babu,' said the boy, 'it is not a good school nowadays. The masters give the boys bad advice.'

'What do you mean? Bad advice about what?'

'They talk to the boys out of school. They hang about the playground and talk, and sometimes they take the boys to their houses and talk to them.

'But what do they talk about?'

'About the greediness of the English and the wickedness of the Government.'

'And what have they told you about these things?'

'They told us that the English have cut off the thumbs of all the weavers.'

'Now that was an odd thing to do, wasn't it? But what did they do it for?'

'So that they can't weave dhoties.

'Why shouldn't they weave dhoties?'

'So that the English can sell the dhoties they make in England.'

'Wonderful! And what else did they tell you?'

'They said there were never any famines in Bhārat before the English came.'

'I see. I suppose when there's a famine the English can sell more dhoties. Is that the idea?'

'I don't know, Babu, but that's what they told us.

'Well, I hope you didn't believe all that nonsense.

'Now, Babu, I didn't believe it, because I know that you are loyal and that you like the Sahibs, and you ought to know what sort of men they are because you work with them. But Guru Charan believed.'

'Well, I never heard of such wickedness. I must see these schoolmasters and have a talk with them.'

So Krupasindhu went to the school to see for himself. The other masters were away for the holidays, but the Headmaster was at home, and he received Krupasindhu very politely, because he felt that a district officer's confidential clerk was a more important person than a mere schoolmaster.

'I am very sorry, Babu,' he said, 'that you have had this trouble with your son. Guru Charan is a very promising boy and we all like him. He is a boy of noble character. I hope you will send him back to us after the holidays.'

'I'm not so sure about that. First I should like to ask you why you wear khaddar and a Gandhi cap.'

'I like to feel that I am doing something for the benefit of my country.'

'Is that it? And tell me: is it true that there were no famines in Bharat before the English came?'

'Babu, can you tell me the date of any famine that has happened in our country?'

'Yes. There was a famine in 1908.'

'Quite right. That was under the British Raj, was *it not?*'

'True.'

'Now can you tell me the date of any famine that happened before the British Raj?'

'No, I can't.'

'Well, there you are.'

'Yes, no doubt, here I am. And the English, no doubt, are gods who can command the rain.'

'No, they are not gods.'

'Babu, are you really such a fool that you do not know that a famine is caused by floods or drought or by both coming one after the other?'

'No doubt these are the causes of famines.'

'And do you suppose I am such a fool as to believe that the English make the floods or the drought?'

'Babu, when did I say that the English made the floods or the drought?'

'You said there were no famines before the English came. You told my sons that. They have told me. Why have you been teaching them to hate the English?

'Babu, I am sorry that you should be so displeased. Is it not right to teach boys to be patriotic? Is it not natural that boys who love their country should desire to see her freed from foreign oppressors?'

'And miss their exams and ruin their careers? And

what about the weavers' thumbs?'

'That is an example of tyranny of the English.'

'But do you expect me to believe that that story is true?'

'Perhaps it is not historically true, but it is poetically true.'

'I don't understand.'

'I mean that when we teach boys to be patriotic and to desire emancipation from foreign rule, it is necessary to tell them that foreign rule is oppressive; and when we tell them that, it is necessary to give them examples, otherwise they are not convinced.'

'So, as you can't think of an example, you invent one.'

'It matters little if it is not historically true It is something that might have happened.'

'You old hypocrite! Now let me tell you something that might have happened. You might have received an annual grant-in-aid from the Government.'

'We are receiving an annual grant-in-aid.'

'Are you really? But is it not right to teach boys to be loyal to those whose salt they eat? Is it not natural that boys should be led astray when their Headmaster is a liar and disloyal to his salt? Don't they naturally follow the example that you set them? It is through your fault that my son got into trouble.'

'I am sorry you are angry, Babu, but——'

But Krupasindhu would not listen to any more. He hastened home, and set out next day to Cuttack, taking his younger son with him.

When he got back he went and told his Sahib about his conversation with the Headmaster, and what Sadhu Charan had told him.

'Sir,' he said, 'it is very irregular that those who are entrusted with the care of our children should be the

first to lead them astray, especially when they are getting a grant-in-aid from the Government.'

'It is, as you say, Babu, very irregular indeed. But I'll see about that grant-in-aid. I won't rest till I've had it stopped.'

And after much correspondence the grant-in-aid was stopped, and the school was ruined, and the Headmaster became a professional agitator on nine rupees a month, and the second master committed a theft and was sent to jail, because he said it was better to eat the King-Emperor's kedgeree than to starve to death, and the other masters wandered about the country begging and looking for jobs. And everybody knew that this had been done by Krupasindhu, and they understood that a district officer's confidential clerk is a very important person.

Having made sure that the schoolmasters who had led his son astray would be properly dealt with, Krupasindhu made it his business to enter both his sons at a school in Cuttack. He thought of keeping them with him and sending them as day-boys, but that would have necessitated taking a larger house and for this and other reasons he placed them in the hostel. He saw them on Sundays and holidays, and so was able to keep an eye on them.

Now, one of his reasons for not keeping them in the house was this. Of the two little girls whom his father had bought at his second wife's request to wait on her and to enhance the prestige of the family, one was dead and the other was grown up. And this was the one whom Haribandhu had brought to Balasore with Charubala, and they had brought her with them to Cuttack to wait on them. The girl was faithful and had never had any love affairs, but when Guru Charan came to the house Charubala noticed her often glancing at him,

and she told her husband.

And one Sunday when all the family were having an afternoon nap Krupasindhu heard a noise of splashing of water, and he looked out into the quadrangle and saw the girl washing her face in a pail. And Guru Charan was sitting on a charpoy in a shady corner of the quadrangle watching her. And Krupasindhu saw that she bared her breast on pretence of washing herself, and the boy beckoned to her, and she went and sat beside him on the charpoy. Then Krupasindhu coughed loudly, and the girl ran into the room where the maid-servants lived and Guru Charan lay down on his charpoy and pretended to sleep.

That evening when Guru Charan went out to fish, Krupa called the girl and rebuked her.

'Kanizak,' he said, 'have you no shame that you make eyes at my son and bare your breast in his presence?'

'Babu,' she replied, 'I know that I was bought to be a servant to your wife, and therefore I belong to you and not to your son. And all these years I have kept my virginity for you, but you do not want me. But it is now many years since I became grown-up, and it is not kind of you. Would you have me remain a virgin all my life?'

'Kanizak,' he replied, 'I know that you are a faithful girl. But I do not require a concubine, and you cannot become my son's concubine, because that would be a shameful thing.'

'Babu,' she said, beginning to cry, 'I beg you to send me away, or let me go back to my own people, if I can find them, but anyhow send me away.'

'I will find you a husband, Kanizak. It is not right to expect a girl to remain a virgin all her life.'

So he sent the girl to his village home, and wrote to

Haribandhu to find her a husband, and promised a good dowry.

And Charubala commended her husband for what he had done.

'I am glad she is gone,' she said, 'and now we have no slave-girls We are a humble family, and it is silly to put on airs as if we were great folk Some day, when you are rich, you shall buy some'

'When our two daughters are to be married,' he replied, 'I will buy some girls to keep them company and to go with them when they go to their husbands.'

Charubala was pleased when she heard this, and she and her husband loved each other more and more.

But Guru Charan became restless when the girl was gone. And from time to time fits of restlessness and sulky moods came upon him. And when he was settled in the hostel and came home for week-ends, he often came home very late, and he said his school-fellows liked him to spend Saturday evenings with them. This seemed to his father very natural. But one Saturday night the boy came home drunk And his father noticed that after one of his fits of sulkiness and depression he would go out with some of his comrades and stay out very late, and after that his mood passed and he was normal again, until next time And Krupasindhu remembered his own youth, and knew what was the matter, and determined to get his son married

22

Tale of a Cipher Telegram

In due time Guru Charan was married, and Krupasindhu was delighted when he saw his new daughter, and took her to his heart at once. When Guru Charan brought his bride home there were great rejoicings, and Krupasindhu was very pleased about it all. Only it grieved him that his daughter Nishibala had to stay in her room, and was not allowed to take any part in the rejoicings, because she was a widow. For this was an auspicious occasion, and the presence of a widow would have brought bad luck.

Immediately after he had brought his bride home Guru Charan went back to school till he should pass his Matric. And he passed the same year, and went back to the village to live with his bride until his father should find him a job.

Now Krupasindhu was not troubled by Guru Charan's fits of temperament any more. His other son was an even-tempered boy who gave no trouble. He was happy at school and loved the games. He did not care to take week-ends, but only came on Sundays to spend the day with his father. So Krupasindhu's life became happy and tranquil again.

When his tranquillity was disturbed, which happened in the following March, it was, of course, something to

do with politics.

One evening a man came to him and said that Dip Babu, who was a local leader of the non-co-operators, wanted to speak to him. Krupasindhu hesitated at first but he reflected that his loyalty was above suspicion and he was curious to know what Dip Babu wanted. But he was not willing to go out at that time and walk a mile or more in the dark, so he said he would go if Dip Babu would send a conveyance. The man replied that Dip Babu had sent a car. So Krupasindhu went.

He found Dip Babu sitting on his veranda, and went up and Dip Babu offered him a chair and handed him a telegram.

'Do you know what this means?'

Krupasindhu sat down and read the telegram. It consisted of only one word: 'Cabbage.'

'No. What does it mean?'

'It means that Mahatma Gandhi has been arrested.'

'That is very important news. But why did you send for me?'

'Krupa Babu, did you know that Mahatmaji was going to be arrested?'

'No.'

'Then probably the Sahibs don't know.'

'Perhaps not. Perhaps they have received a cipher telegram.'

'What will they do next?'

'That will depend on what orders they receive.'

'Haven't they received orders already?'

'They receive orders of some sort nearly every day.'

'I mean, have they received any orders as to what they are to do when Mahatmaji is arrested?'

Krupasindhu hesitated a moment. He understood that Dip Babu was trying to extract information. Really he had none to give, but he was thinking that it might

be better not to admit it.

'I think what they do will depend a good deal on what you do.'

'Krupa Babu, I will be frank with you. We hoped that by means of these telegrams we might get the news before the Sahibs.'

'I expect you have, Dip Babu. If Collector Sahib had received the news I think he would have told me.'

'But do you think this is only a beginning? Does it mean that all the leaders will be arrested now?'

'I don't know, Dip Babu, and to tell you the truth, I don't much care. You politicians have made so much useless fuss that I shouldn't be at all sorry to see some of you going to jail.'

'Babu, I am an old man. I am too old to go to jail.'

'Dip Babu, I think the authorities will want to see how the news is received. If your followers make disturbances then no doubt Government will take strong action. But if the people keep quiet then perhaps they will wait and see. That is what I think. It is not the way of the Government to take drastic action unless they can't help it.'

Dip Babu sighed. Krupasindhu was not sure whether it was a sigh of relief or a sigh of disillusionment.

'Babu, it is now a year and eight months since this agitation was started, and do you think we have stirred the people so that they will stand by us in case of trouble? Do you think we could rouse them to action when they hear this news? Never. There is not one man I can trust.'

Dip Babu sighed again. This time Krupasindhu was sure that it was a sigh of disillusionment.

'Now I think I must go and tell Collector Sahib. He will be glad to get the news early. If you have no objection I will take the telegram.'

Take it.

'Thank you. I will try and find out what he means to do, and if it is possible I will let you know.'

Krupasindhu took Dip Babu's car and proceeded at once to the Collector's house. It was the hour when Sahibs have just finished their dinner. At this time Collector Sahib was usually to be found sitting on the upstairs veranda reading a book. But Krupasindhu saw a light in the study and found him at work.

'Wait a minute, Babu,' he said. 'I've got a job of work that you can't help me with. I've just received a cipher telegram, and I'm trying to decipher it.'

'Sir, I have got important news.'

Shut up! Every time you interrupt me I make a mistake.'

Krupasindhu waited a minute. He felt sure that he ought to tell his news immediately.

Sir, my news is very important.'

I told you not to interrupt me. Please go and wait in the next room.'

Krupasindhu did as he was bid. Presently he heard the Sahib struggling with the telephone.

'Hullo, Exchange! Wake up. . . . Give me No. 9. . . . Hullo! . . . I want to speak to the Superintendent of Police. . . . *Han! Police Sahib ko salam do.* . . . Hullo! . . . is that you, Winston? . . . I've just got a cipher telegram, and I can't make head or tail of it. . . . Please come round at once. . . . Yes, I expect it's important. . . All right, I expect you in five minutes.'

Five minutes later Police Sahib arrived. For a few minutes there was silence while the Sahibs pored over a wilderness of paper. Then Police Sahib spoke.

'No wonder you can't get it out. You've begun wrong!'

'What have I done wrong?'

'You've spelt the key-word wrong.'

'Have I? Well, that accounts for it.'

'Give me the telegram. I'll decipher it for you in five minutes.'

'Right. In the meantime I'll go and see what my Type Babu wants.'

The Collector went into the room where Krupa was waiting.

'What's this wonderful news of yours, Babu?'

'Sir, Dip Babu sent for me. He has received a tele gram. It is very important.'

'Let me see it.'

Krupasindhu handed him the telegram.

'What's this? . . . "Cabbage". . . . What does it mean?'

'Sir, it means that Mr Gandhi has been arrested.'

'Did Dip Babu tell you that?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Why didn't you tell me at once?'

'Your Honour told me not to interrupt.'

'I've got it out,' shouted Police Sahib from the next room. The Collector went back, followed by Krupasindhu.

'Gandhi has been arrested.'

'Oh, we knew that already.'

'Did you? How did you know?'

'My invaluable steno-typist learnt it from Dip Babu.'

'That's the man we want to get into touch with.'

'Exactly. Babu, what was your impression of Dip Babu's attitude?'

'Sir, he seemed to me to be frightened. He was trying to find out whether the arrest of Mr Gandhi would be followed by the arrest of other leaders. That was why he sent for me.'

'The odd thing is,' said Police Sahib, 'that he seems to have got the news first.'

'When did he get the telegram?' asked the Collector.

'Sir,' Krupasindhu replied, 'it must be half an hour since I came here, and more than an hour since Dip Babu's man came to call me. I think he must have received the telegram fully an hour and a half ago.'

'More than an hour before I got the cipher telegram.'

'So they had arranged to send out warning telegrams as soon as the arrest took place,' said the policeman. 'Was that to enable them to take precautions, or to enable them to take action?'

'What we want to know,' said the Collector, 'is how the news will be received by the public. Do the non-co-operators mean to give trouble?'

'Sir,' said Krupasindhu, 'I think I can safely assure Your Honour that they do not. He told me that he could not rouse the people to action if he tried.'

'And what do you think yourself, Babu, from what you know of public opinion? Do you think there will be any trouble?'

'No, sir, I believe nobody will stir.'

And he was right. For the next three days the Sahibs watched the newspapers carefully for news of any disturbances in any part of India. But there was no disturbance anywhere. Nobody stirred.

In May it was Sadhu Charan's turn to get married Krupasindhu had made the same arrangements for him as for his brother, and he went back to school immediately after the wedding. He also passed his Matric the same year and went to live in the village with his bride.

It was in this year too that Krupasindhu's second grandchild was born. It was born just after the Puja holidays, and Krupasindhu went home for the Christmas holidays to see it, taking Charubala and his two daughters with him. The baby was a boy, and he was

named Jagarnath. Krupasindhu was very proud and pleased, and so, of course, was the child's father. Charubala allotted to herself the task of helping the young mother and teaching her all about babies, and the two daughters-in-law loved their mother-in-law (which is not always the case among Hindus), and all the family loved her, because she was so kind and helpful and put on no airs. And Krupasindhu loved her because she loved her stepsons and their wives as if they had all been her own children.

But all these domestic occurrences made Krupasindhu think of the time when his two daughters would have to be given in marriage. He consulted his wife, and decided to get the elder girl married next year. Then he decided to buy two slave-girls to go with them, as he had promised his wife. And when they went back after the holidays he made enquiries.

By this time he knew everybody in Cuttack, and everybody knew him and respected him. Wherefore he went boldly to the town inspector and asked him if he thought he could buy a couple of girls in the town.

'Babu,' the policeman said, when he understood what Krupasindhu wanted, 'you missed your chance when the famine was going on. Then you might have collected as many little girls as you could want, and got them for nothing.'

'Then I should have had to keep them all this time, and now they would be getting too old for my purpose. No, it is not wise to buy a thing you don't want only because it is cheap. And I suppose they are pretty cheap still.'

'On the contrary, they are getting very expensive.'

'Why? Are there no poor widows with children they want to get rid of?'

'Oh, there are plenty of them. Often a woman comes

to the town with a child to sell, maybe her own child, or maybe a child she has kidnapped. They used to sell them to the brothels, but now they go to the missionaries first.'

'The missionaries!' said Krupasindhu, with surprise. 'What do *they* buy little girls for?'

'To save them from the brothels. It is a very noble and philanthropic work. But, you see, the brothel-keepers have to offer more than the missionaries, and the missionaries have to offer more than the brothel-keepers, and the competition puts up the price.'

'I think that is very shameful,' said Krupasindhu indignantly. 'These missionaries are Americans, and I suppose they write to their country and tell them about these things. The Americans must think we are barbarians.'

'Does it matter to us what the Americans think?'

'Some people think it does, though I don't quite see why. But it really is a shameful business. The Government ought to do something about it.'

'Perhaps they will one day. But tell me exactly what you want and I will see what I can do for you.'

'I want two little girls to be companions and servants to my daughters. They will be old enough to be married soon. I hope to get the elder one married next year. I am not a Raja that I should send a bevy of damsels with each of my daughters, but I should like to send one with each of them. It adds to the prestige of the family, and makes things easier for the bride.'

'Exactly. Then it is important to get girls of the right age.'

'Yes. They should be about the same age as my daughters or a little younger—say, about eight years old.'

'Very good, Babu, I will look out for what you want.

But don't tell the missionaries!'

'Why not?'

'They might write to America about it.'

Krupasindhu failed to see the joke, but that did not matter because the inspector found what he wanted, and, through his influence, Krupasindhu got two slave-girls cheap.

23

Flowerpots-in-front and Flowerpots-behind

A little while before the Christmas holidays, when Krupasindhu went home to see his new grandchild, his Collector was transferred. The Sahib who came in his place was a young officer who had never served in Orissa before.

He was just back from furlough, and brought with him a wife, whom he had recently married in England.

This lady was the most beautiful lady Krupasindhu had ever seen. She was different from the other Memsahibs he had met, because most of the officials in that province marry countrybred girls, there being no others available, but this one was fresh from England. Her skin was as white as snow, her eyes were as blue as the sky, and her hair was pure gold.

Krupasindhu thought she must be a daughter of one of the highest families in England, she was so fair. And it pleased him to think that his Sahib was not just an ordinary Heaven-born, but an English gentleman of noble descent, since he must needs go home to find a suitable wife, instead of marrying an ordinary Missy Baba. Krupasindhu felt that his own prestige was enhanced.

When he returned to duty after the Christmas holidays he found that the Sahib had had an easy-chair

brought into the study, so that his wife might sit with him while he was working. And there she was stitching while her Sahib was staring dolefully at a fat and fearsome file.

'Good morning, sir. Good morning, madam,' said Krupasindhu.

Sahib nodded. Memsahib looked up from her work and smiled and said, 'Good morning, Type Babu,' in a very sweet voice.

'Babu,' said the Sahib, thrusting the file away and leaning back in his chair, 'you'll have to help me, since you know the customs of this country.'

'Sir,' Krupasindhu replied, 'what else am I for except to help Your Honour?'

'Well, here's a file I can't make head or tail of. What on earth is a bada pat mahadei?'

'That, sir, is the title given to the senior wife of a Raja. The junior wife is called sana pat mahadei.'

'And what is the meaning of phulbiyaha?'

'It means "flower-marriage", Your Honour.'

'I know it means "flower-marriage", but what is a "flower-marriage"?'

'Sir, I shall explain the matter to Your Honour very clearly. It is a custom among the Rajas of the Garhjat and Qillajat estates that when a Raja has no son and heir by either of his wives he may marry one of his concubines, even if she is of different caste, and then if she bears him a son he becomes the heir. Otherwise the son of a concubine cannot inherit.'

'I see. What a beastly custom!'

The Collector drew the file towards him again and stared at it with a puzzled expression.

'Sir, if Your Honour wishes, I will take the file and go through it and write a note so as to make the whole case clear to Your Honour.'

'Yes, Babu, please do.'

Krupasindhu took the file to the little room where he worked and looked at it from time to time during the day, whenever he had nothing else to do. And when he went he took it with him to study at his leisure. Arrived at his lodging, he found a letter from Rai Sahib waiting for him.

It was about a year since Rai Sahib had been transferred to Puri, where he was officiating as Superintendent of Police. He had taken a few days' leave to attend to some private business at Cuttack.

Krupasindhu took the file, and went at once to see him. After the usual exchange of greetings Rai Sahib asked what he had brought the file for.

'It's about the Panpara Estate,' Krupasindhu replied. 'Do you know anything about it?'

'Of course I do. I can tell you the whole history of it. Do you think we can turn it to account in any way?'

'I don't know. Tell me about it.'

'The old Raja had two sons and a daughter. His wife, who is a lady of very energetic character, took great care of the interests of the family. When the sons were about eight years old she bought a number of little girls, and when the daughter was married she sent twenty of them with her. That left two for the two young gentlemen. These girls were called Flowerpots-in-front and Flowerpots-behind, because their nominal duty was to change the flowers in the flowerpots in the front drawing-room and the back drawing-room respectively. But one of the sons died, and the one who remained always preferred Flowerpots-behind. When the old Raja died and his son succeeded him, being already middle-aged, the latter had two wives, and a great number of concubines, since each of his wives brought a number of slave-girls with her, but among them all he loved only Flowerpots-behind.

The new Raja had several children, but most of them were girls, and the boys died in infancy, and when his time came to die, he left only one son, whose mother was Flowerpots-behind. Now a distant relation named Narsingh Deo, a descendant of the late Raja's great-grandfather, claims the estate. And Flowerpots-behind claims the estate for her son, alleging a flower-marriage!'

'It is not clear how we can turn this case to account.'

'No, it isn't. There will be a regular suit. It will be tried by the sub-judge. We might try and bribe him.'

'They don't need our help to do that. The only way we can help is by getting the Collector to favour one side or the other, and then I don't quite see what he could do. But the first thing to decide is, which of the two parties do we want to favour?'

'Krupa, haven't you learnt one thing? Never be disloyal to your Sahib. Never let him have cause to think that you are secretly working against him.'

'I know that, of course.'

'Well, then, it is not for us to decide which party we want him to favour. We have to find out which party he does favour, and side with that party.'

'It is not likely that he favours either party.'

'He will not favour either party openly. But he will probably have a feeling that he would rather one of them was victorious than the other.'

'True. And I think I can guess which of them it will be.'

'Which do you think?'

'I have noticed,' said Krupasindhu, after a moment's reflexion, 'that the Sahiblog have strict ideas about marriage. And they don't consider that there is one custom for one people and another for another people, but they believe that their own customs are right and all the rest are wrong. And if I tell the Sahib that such is the custom of Rajas in Orissa, he does not say, "If that is their

custom it is all right"; he says, "What a beastly custom!" And when he hears the story of Flowerpots-behind he will think in his heart that she is a bad woman and her son is a bastard, and his heart will incline him to favour the other claimant.'

'Very well, that settles the first question. We are to side with Narsingh Deo. The next question is, how can we help him?'

'When I write my note on the file, I could write so as to suggest that Narsingh Deo is the rightful heir. I could do that without saying anything definitely false. In that way I could prejudice the Sahib in his favour. But still I don't see what the Sahib can do.'

'Nor do I. But we can ask Narsingh Deo what he wants him to do. I will get into touch with his lawyer. But do nothing till you hear from me.'

'There is one thing more that I want to know. Is the old Rani alive? Which of the claimants does she favour?'

'Yes, she is alive. She naturally favours her own grandson.'

'That is a point of importance. It is a pity we shall have her against us.'

That night Krupasindhu sat up very late perusing the file. In the morning he rose very early and wrote his note, taking care not to favour either side.

When he came to the Collector's house he found his Sahib sitting in his study and Memsahib sitting in the easy-chair sewing.

'Good morning, sir. Good morning, madam.'

'Good morning, Type Babu.'

'Good morning, Babu. Have you written your note on the Panpara case?'

'Yes, sir. I think I have made it all very clear.'

'Well, I'll study it presently. Now tell me all about it briefly.'

Krupasindhu told the story of the disputed succession as Rai Sahib had told it to him. When he had finished the Sahib turned to his wife.

'What do you think of that story, Lucy?'

'Darling, I think it's the most romantic story I ever heard.'

'It's a strange country, isn't it?'

'But, darling! Think of poor little Flowerpots-behind (what a delightful name!) growing up in the house since she was a little girl—playing with the Raja when they were both children! And then he grows up and has two wives and I don't know how many concubines, and all the time he never loved anyone but Flowerpots-behind! And how she must have loved him! And now she's fighting for her son's rights. I think she's so brave.'

'Still, it looks to me as if the other fellow was the heir.'

'No, he isn't. Flowerpots' son is the rightful heir.'

'Is he? I doubt if the law is on his side.'

'My darling, of course he's the rightful heir. I don't care what the law says. The law's an ass.'

'But supposing Flowerpots-behind wasn't really the Raja's wife?'

'But, my love! Can't you see that she is the only real wife he ever had? Oh, I do hope she'll win. Can't you do something to help her?'

'I don't see what I can do. I can only report the facts to Government and leave the decision to the Civil Court. And, of course, I've got to see that they don't come to blows.'

'How old is the boy?'

'Madam, he is a minor. He is about ten years old.

'What about this Court of Wards I hear so much about? Couldn't you get them to take charge of the Estate and protect the minor?'

Krupasindhu had some difficulty in controlling his coun-

tenance The lady had hit on the solution of his problem He wanted to get up and shout "Hariboi!" (which is Oriya for "Hurrah!"), but he remained apparently unconcerned

'That would be asking for trouble,' said the Sahib 'We can't very well acknowledge the minor as the heir, because that is just the question the Courts have got to decide The litigation will go on for years I suppose they will fight it out up to the High Court, and then it will be decided that there never was any flower-marriage, and we shall be told that we've been helping the wrong side, and keeping the rightful heir out of possession Wouldn't that be a silly thing to do? Not that the brass-hats have any objection to doing silly things I've known them do sillier things than that'

'But just think,' said the lady 'the boy was born on his father's estate, he has lived there all his life, and now some distant relation, whom he has probably never heard of comes and grabs it Wouldn't that be absurd as well as unjust?'

'There's a lot of sense in that The boy must be known to the tenantry I dare say they would rather have him for their landlord than a fellow who is really a stranger although he may be the heir-at-law'

'Sir, if I might be permitted to make an observation, the tenantry is most likely to side with the minor They will obey the old lady, the late Raja's mother'

'That is important. The other fellow might have trouble with the tenantry, if they don't want to have him for their landlord and that might lead to a breach of peace'

'Now you're talking sense,' said the lady 'After all, the poor tenants ought to be considered too'

'So ought the old lady Perhaps I ought to consult her Well, I'll go through the file and think it over

Krupasindhu went back to the little room where he

worked and thought hard. Things had taken an unexpected turn. The advice he had given Rai Sahib had proved to be wrong. They had decided to support the wrong claimant—wrong because the Collector was undoubtedly going to support the other. There was no time to be lost. A desperate situation required a desperate remedy. He wrote a short application.

HONOURED SIR,

I have been suddenly attacked with fever, accompanied by severe pains in important parts of my body.

Therefore I humbly request Your Honour to be graciously pleased to grant me leave for this day only.

Your Honour's M. O. S
KRUPASINDHU MAHANTY

He gathered his chaddar about him as if he had ague, and contorted his face into the most woebegone expression he could manage, and went in and presented the application to the Sahib with a moan. The Sahib read the application and passed it on to his wife.

'Let me take his temperature,' she said, jumping up. 'Wait a minute, I'll go and fetch the thermometer.'

'Please do not trouble, madam,' Krupasindhu said hastily. 'I shall go to my lodging, and through the tender care and dutiful ministrations of loving wife, I shall be all right tomorrow.'

'That's right,' said the Sahib. 'Off you go. I hope you'll be better soon.'

Off Krupasindhu went, but he did not go to his lodging, nor did he seek the dutiful ministrations of his wife. He went straight to Rai Sahib.

'You're just in time,' said Rai Sahib, 'if you've got anything to tell me, I'm going back to Puri by car. I must start in ten minutes.'

'You must listen . . . it's important. . . Everything has become otherwise.'

'Don't get so excited. Sit down. Tell me what's happened.'

'We are siding with the wrong side.'

'You mean the Sahib favours the minor?'

'No. The Memsahib favours the minor.'

'Ah! Then, of course, we must. Orderly! Where is that cursed idiot? Orderly!!'

The orderly appeared, looking rather scared.

'Where is that letter?'

'Sir, I was just about to take it. I will take it at once.'

The orderly went off at the double, and Rai Sahib bellowed after him.

'Come back, you son of an owl! Give me the letter.'

Rai Sahib took the letter and tore it up with a sigh of relief.

'Just in time! That was a letter to Narsingh Deo's lawyer.'

'Memsahib is strongly in favour of the minor,' said Krupasindhu, 'and she will compel her Sahib to favour him. How could I have forseen that?'

'The ways of women are always incalculable. If we can't understand the minds of our own women, how can we understand white women?'

'Now I can tell you what we must do. We must offer to get the estate taken under the Court of Wards.'

'All right, but how?'

'The old lady must file an application. Memsahib will do the rest.'

'That will be excellent. But you cannot go to Panpara to interview the old lady, and I must go back to Puri. I will make an arrangement.'

Rai Sahib called his grown-up son and gave him certain instructions, and then said good-bye to Krupasindhu and got into his car and drove away.

24

Promotion and Change of Residence

The year 1923 was marked by two important events. In June Krupasindhu's daughter Dayabala was married, and in October another grandson was born.

Krupasindhu had stipulated that his daughter should return to him immediately after the wedding and not go and live with her husband until she was fourteen, so that the parting which he dreaded so much was postponed. Her husband was the son of a Deputy Magistrate who had a comfortable estate and only served the Government for the sake of the influence and honour that his rank in the service gave him, and therefore the connexion seemed to Krupasindhu very honourable and he was very pleased about it.

The new grandchild was the first child of his son Sadhu Charan. Again Krupasindhu was proud and pleased, and the boy was called Artaballabh.

In the meantime the affair of the Panpara Estate was developing in a satisfactory manner. Krupasindhu secretly met the lawyer who was looking after the interests of the minor and told him to advise the boy's mother to use her influence with the old lady to induce her to apply for the protection of the Court of Wards and at the same time to explain to her that it would be necessary to spend a great deal of money.

And Rai Sahib's son went to Panpara and interviewed the old lady. He also went to the sub-inspector in charge of the Panpara police station and gave him instructions. For all the police in the district were afraid of Rai Sahib, because they knew that he was a great favourite with some of the Higher Officials, and because there was a rumour that he would soon come back to Cuttack as Superintendent, wherefore the sub-inspectors obeyed him as readily as they obeyed their own superior officers.

After interviews and negotiations it was settled that the ladies should pay ten thousand rupees at once and execute a bond for fifty thousand, bearing interest at two per cent a month, in favour of a certain moneylender, who was to receive a commission of ten per cent for his services. The lawyers advised the ladies that this was a good arrangement, because unless the estate was taken under the Court of Wards the bond would be worthless: they could make the creditor whistle for his money. But Krupa was confident that the Court would take charge of the estate.

When all these transactions were complete both ladies put in applications for the protection of the Court of Wards: the old lady on her own account, Flowerpots-behind on behalf of her son. The petitions were presented at the Cutcherry, as Krupasindhu had advised, just before closing time. The office superintendent, understanding that the matter was of urgent importance, took them at once to the Collector's house. When he arrived the Sahib was gone to the Club to play rackets, and Memsahib was alone. The office superintendent therefore explained to the Memsahib what the petitions were about, and left them in charge of Krupasindhu, who was still at work with the typewriter.

Presently Memsahib ordered the car and drove to the Club. When her husband had finished rackets and chang-

ed his clothes he came into the reading-room and found his wife looking at the papers. She began at once to tell him about the two petitions.

'Don't talk shop in the Club, dear, please,' he said.

'But this is important.'

'I know it's important. That's why I don't want to discuss it where we might be overheard.'

When they went home to dinner his wife began to talk about the petitions again. She urged him to do all he could to get the estate taken under the Court of Wards.

'I'll have to think about it very carefully,' he said. 'I won't recommend it unless I'm pretty sure the brass-hats will agree.'

'What does it matter? If they don't agree they can say no, and then at any rate you will have done your best.

'My dear Lucy, if I keep on sending up proposals which get turned down the brass-hats will think I'm a duffer. Therefore, I have to be careful not to send anything up unless I think they will approve.'

'If you are a man and not a cur you will do all you can to save two helpless women and an innocent child, whether the brass-hats like it or not.'

After that, of course, he had to promise to do his best.

In the morning the report of the Panpara sub-inspector, which he had submitted in accordance with Rai Sahib's instructions, arrived. He reported that all the tenants were siding with the minor, which was true; that they were all determined never to recognize Narsingh Deo as their landlord, which was an exaggeration; and that there would be a serious breach of the peace if Narsingh Deo attempted to take possession, which was a gross exaggeration.

When the Collector saw that there was a chance of a breach of the peace he thought he could make out a pretty strong case, and so he sent it up and the brass-

hats agreed with him, and the estate was taken under the Court of Wards.

But the Collector had misgivings about it. He had an uneasy feeling—he couldn't tell why—that somehow Krupasindhu had influenced him to act against his own judgment. Yet he could not remember that Krupasindhu had ever said anything to influence him at all.

When the manager who was appointed to manage the estate on behalf of the Court of Wards had taken charge a notice was published inviting the creditors to submit their claims. And the moneylender put in his claim for fifty thousand rupees, plus interest at two per cent a month. And the Court ordered this and sundry other debts to be paid by borrowing money at a lower rate of interest.

So the moneylender received the money and paid it to Krupasindhu, after deducting his commission at ten per cent. And after the Deputy Collector in charge of the Wards Department, and the office superintendent, and the Wards head clerk, and the Panpara sub-inspector, and a few others had collected their commissions, Rai Sahib and Krupasindhu got twenty thousand rupees each.

Now when Narsingh Deo heard that the estate had been taken under the Court of Wards he was very angry and he went about complaining loudly that the Collector had been bribed, and the Commissioner had been bribed, and the brass-hats had been bribed, but it never occurred to him to say that Krupasindhu had been bribed.

Then Narsingh Deo went himself and bribed the sub-judge. But as the ladies had already taken the same precaution, the sub-judge, who was an honest man, decided the case in favour of neither party. He found that Narsingh Deo was an impostor, and not a member of the family at all, so he was not entitled to the property. And he held that the flower-marriage was invalid, so the minor

was not entitled to the property.

When this judgment was delivered Narsingh Deo, seeing that his imposture was exposed, disappeared and was never heard of again. And the Collector caused an appeal to be filed in the High Court on behalf of the minor, and the High Court decided that the flower-marriage was valid and the minor was entitled to inherit the estate.

When the Collector heard this he was very pleased, because he knew that, after all, what he had done turned out to be right. His misgivings disappeared. Yet he had a feeling—he couldn't tell why—that somehow it was thanks to Krupasindhu that he had done the right thing.

But all this litigation took a long time, and now we must go back to the year 1923.

As soon as Dayabala was married Krupasindhu began to look out for a husband for Krupabala. And at last he arranged for her marriage with the son of the head clerk; and it was settled that the wedding should take place next summer on the earliest auspicious date. This Krupasindhu considered an advantageous alliance, because the other clerks still regarded him as an interloper, and he foresaw that a time would come when he would need friends in the office.

All this time the non-co-operation fuss was going on, but now most people were getting tired of it. Sometimes the movement seemed to be fading away, sometimes the agitators made a great effort to revive it. Like most respectable Oriyas, Krupasindhu regarded it as an unmitigated nuisance, and whenever he heard any rumours about it he tried to shut his ears to them and not allow them to disturb him. It was to him a source of discomfort. It caused an unfriendly feeling in the atmosphere, an atmosphere of hostility and distrust, where before there had been confidence and goodwill. When the year 1924 began he hoped that the New Year would bring the end

of this nuisance, and all his friends agreed with him.

One day in February when Krupasindhu was walking from his lodging to the Collector's house, thinking these thoughts, he met a man in a Gandhi cap who asked him if he had heard the news.

'What news?' he asked.

'Mahatma Gandhi has been released,' the man replied.

Krupasindhu went on his way rejoicing. And when he came to the Collector's house and said, 'Good morning,' to Collector Sahib, the Sahib did not say, 'Good morning,' but, 'Have you heard the news?'

'Yes, sir,' Krupasindhu replied. 'I have heard that Mr. Gandhi has been released from jail. It is the best news I have heard for many days.'

'Why do you say that?'

'Sir, there has been all this useless fuss, but now, thank God, we are all friends again.'

'Is that how it strikes you?'

'Sir, it is not the way of us Oriyas to be against the Government. The English are our friends who delivered us from the oppression of the Mahrattas, and it was painful to us to see that there was enmity between the Government and so many of the people. But now, thank God, that is finished.'

'Then you don't think the release of Mr Gandhi will lead to a renewal of agitation?'

'No, sir. It means the end of it.'

'Well, if that's how it strikes you, I expect it will strike most of your countrymen the same way, but we shall see.'

In the month of March this year Winston Sahib, the Superintendent of Police, went on leave, and Rai Sahib came from Puri to take his place. He now had private copies of the confidential papers of two districts instead of one and his chances of making money were increased accordingly. And from time to time Krupasindhu had a

private talk with him, and they laid plans for doing acts of kindness to worth-while people.

Two months later Krupabala was married, and Krupasindhu began more than ever to dread the day when his two daughters would be old enough to go to their husbands, and his wife and he would be left alone in the house.

In this year also Krupasindhu got his two sons entered as apprentices in the Collector's office at Balasore.

Now, when it was seen that the agitation had really faded away, Collector Sahib reviewed the events of the past four years with a view to finding out who had been openly or secretly disloyal, and who had been faithful and serviceable, and to rewarding those who deserved it. He found that Krupasindhu had an uncommonly good record. He had steered the boat across the river when the non-co-operators had stopped the ferry; he had shown up the schoolmasters who were abusing their position to poison the minds of the boys; he had been the first to bring the news of the arrest of Mr Gandhi, and on this and other occasions he had given correct information of the reactions of public opinion to events, enabling the local officers to appreciate the situation and decide when to act and when to refrain from action. But his greatest achievement was that through his influence his native village had been entirely free from political trouble. It was one of the few villages where no agitator dared to show his face.

So Krupasindhu got the title of Rai Sahib. At the same time his friend and kinsman Gopal Krishna Mahanty was promoted from Rai Sahib to Rai Bahadur.

A little before the Christmas holidays Collector Sahib sent for him.

'Rai Sahib,' he said, 'I have something very important to say to you. Now that you are a Rai Sahib, you are

too important a person to be a mere steno-typist There are several junior clerks who have learnt shorthand If you stick to this job too long you will find that it is a blind alley that leads nowhere The head clerk will be due to retire after a few years When his time comes you would have a fair chance to succeed him, but for years you have been working here and not in the office I think it would be to your advantage to go back to the office I shall, of course, be sorry to have to put up with another clerk in your place, but it is your career that is at stake, and I leave it to you to decide If you decide to stay here you will probably be the Collector's steno-typist for the rest of your service If not, you will go to the English office as second clerk, and in due time you will probably become the head clerk'

Krupasindhu heard this with amazement, and asked for time to think it over and consult his wife

He hated the idea of working in all the noise and turmoil of the office, instead of the peace and comfort of the Collector's residence On the other hand, he was getting rather elderly and fat, and touring was becoming more and more irksome

He feared that by reverting to a chair in the English office he would lose a good deal of his income, and he was not sure that even if he became head clerk he would have the same opportunities as he had now But he reflected that his first duty was to his family, money is not everything honour and prestige have also to be considered

There was another difficulty The Collector's residence was three miles away from the Cutcherry Krupasindhu had chosen the little house he was occupying because it was near the former, if he went to the English office he would have to live near the latter He would not like to leave the house where he had spent so many happy years.

Charubala's advice decided the question. She discovered an unsuspected ambition to see her husband the head clerk. So Krupasindhu accepted the Collector's advice, and it was decided that he would begin to work as second clerk in the English office after the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Krupasindhu then found a new lodging on the bank of the Katjuri, and left his little home with regret. And when he went to bed on the first day of January 1925 he said to his wife, 'To-morrow I start a new year's work in a new place, with new hopes, and new ambitions.'

25

Krupasindhu Gives Good Advice

Next morning, just as Krupasindhu was getting ready to go to the office, the young clerk who had been appointed to take his place came to him with an order to go to the Collector's residence and show his successor the work.

Krupasindhu had no intention of starting the day's work with a three-mile walk, so he hired one of those curious vehicles which serve in India for hackney-carriages. It was a rectangular vehicle like a box on four wheels, drawn by two diminutive ponies. It had been carefully constructed to combine the greatest possible noise with the least possible speed. The three-mile journey at a snail's pace, accompanied all the way by a head-splitting rattle, would have reduced any white man to a condition of nervous prostration, but the less sophisticated races have stronger nerves, and Krupasindhu and his companion emerged from the box none the worse for this frightful experience.

'There is not much to show you,' said Krupasindhu, as they went into the room where his successor was now to work, 'except where the papers are kept, and how to arrange them in the drawers and pigeon-holes so that you can always find what you want. But I can teach you something about the callers and how to manage them.

Formerly the Collector used to get twenty callers a day, and every one of them paid a fee, but now the number has fallen off sadly—one of the most deplorable results of the non-co-operation movement. But still, they ought to yield you an income of at least a hundred rupees a month. But if I explain this to you I shall expect a commission. You see, I lose this income by going to the English office.'

'Babu,' the young clerk replied, 'for six months I will pay you half of whatever I receive. And from time to time you will come and see if I am conducting the business properly, and getting as much as I should, and give me instructions. After that the whole income from this source will be mine.'

'Quite satisfactory. And, of course, you will have other opportunities of making money. Listen, and I will give you advice.

'Never try to induce the Sahib to do a thing that he does not want to do. He will feel at once that you are trying to influence him, and he will suspect that you have been bribed. In such a case refuse to take money.

'Do not try to induce the Sahib to do the thing that he wants to do. It is unnecessary. In such a case you may take money, and then leave the Sahib to do it of his own accord.

'But it is sometimes advantageous, when you foresee what course the Sahib will choose, to recommend it to him. He will think you are very intelligent, because your opinion is the same as his. But when you do this you must make the recommendation frankly and openly (but with the greatest deference), and not try to insinuate it in a roundabout manner. For it matters little if the Sahib rebukes you for presuming to give him advice; he will give you credit for being straightforward and outspoken. But if he thinks you are trying to influence him

surreptitiously, it matters a great deal: he will never trust you again.

'And now I will teach you a great secret the way to make money is to refuse money Because if it is known that you will not take money unless you can render a service in return, people will think that whatever they give you is well spent, and if you fail to get them what they want, they will understand that it is not your fault'

'Babu, I am very grateful for your advice I dare say I shall often consult you when I see an opportunity'

'I shall always be ready to help you And in such cases we shall share the profit half and half'

When Krupasindhu had explained to the young man how to keep the papers in order and how to manage the calling system, and given him other useful advice, he got into the rattling box again and drove to the Cutcherry, and took his place as second clerk in the English office

He felt that there was hostility towards him among the junior clerks, who regarded him as an interloper, but with a Deputy Magistrate for a father-in-law, and the head clerk his daughter's father-in-law, he thought he had nothing to fear

When he left the office that evening he went to see Rai Bahadur.

I fear, he said, 'that by reverting to the English office, though I do get higher pay, I shall find my income diminished And now that I am not constantly at Collector Sahib's elbow, perhaps you will not find me so useful, nor consult me so often'

'Krupa,' Rai Bahadur replied, 'do you think I am faithless and ungrateful, or do you think I am a fool, that I should desert such a skilful ally? No, I shall often send for you, that we may collaborate to render a discreet service to some worthy person'

So Krupasindhu continued to grow rich And now he

began to buy land. For hitherto he had invested some of his savings in mortgages, and some by lending money to the other clerks, and some he had placed on fixed deposit with various bankers. But now he began to think of building up an estate which would support him in ease and dignity when he retired. And he felt that in the marrow of his bones he was a peasant and not a clerk, and he had a great desire for land.

Sometimes the monotony of a clerk's life was irksome to him, doing the same work every day, and all the year round. And he thought he would prefer the varied life of a peasant, to whom every change of season, almost every change of weather, brings a change of work—a new task, a new hope, a new interest. And when he took his evening walk he would often go to the outskirts of the town where he could see cultivated land and watch the progress of the crops. So he began to look forward to the day when he would be able to retire from the service and go back to the land.

26

Krupa Is Promoted Head Clerk

For three years Krupasindhu worked as second clerk, making money steadily all the time. He kept himself informed, as far as he had opportunities, of what was happening in all the other departments, and particularly he watched the gun-licence department. Here, he found, there was a young and inexperienced clerk who did not know how to make full use of his opportunities, and he gave him instructions and took in return a share of the proceeds. And when Krupasindhu had been working as second clerk for three years the head clerk died, and Krupasindhu was appointed in his place.

This promotion added not only to his prestige and social position, but also to his facilities for making money. He was now pretty expert in the work of all the departments of the office of the District Magistrate and Collector, and he observed and discovered in which departments money was being made, and collected commissions. And he observed and discovered where opportunities of making money were being missed, and he gave the clerks instructions, so that they made more money and he got more commissions.

Soon after Krupasindhu had been promoted, Rai Bahadur retired from service. He had a house in Cuttack, to which he retired, and his estate was in the

district, and his son had started a trading business in the town. But the local officials continued to consult him about what was going on, and he continued to collect and furnish confidential information, almost as if he had been still in service. Krupasindhu and he, therefore, continued occasionally to collaborate.

And all this time Krupasindhu lived happily with his wife and his two daughters in the little house he had taken on the bank of Katjuri, within five minutes' walk of the Cutcherry. And once or twice a year he went home, and every year he was presented with a new grandchild, and sometimes two.

But during the third year something unfortunate happened. Dayanidhi, in his eagerness to get rich quickly, overreached himself again, and was found out, and lost his job. When his master turned him out he went to the village home with his wife and his children and his grandchildren. There he left his family in charge of Haribandhu and went on himself to Cuttack to see Krupasindhu.

'Brother,' he said, 'you must help me. You can't let your elder brother and his family starve.'

'Of course we won't let you starve. There is no need to be so much distressed.'

'But the Babu is threatening to prosecute me for embezzlement.'

'Are you such a fool as to be frightened by his bluff? You must know enough about him to send him to jail twenty times over. Of course he won't prosecute. He dare not.'

'But how am I to live?'

'Haven't you saved anything?'

'A few thousand rupees.'

'I have been thinking,' said Krupasindhu, after a short silence, 'that the old home must be getting rather over-

crowded. Nishibala is living with her child apart in a hut which Haribandhu has built for her at the bottom of the garden, but Haribandhu and all his family are in the house, and the wives and children of my two sons are there too, and now all your family is there. I think it is time to make a partition of the family property.'

'It is only ten acres. If we divide it into three holdings, then one comfortable family will be turned into three poor families.'

'That is not what I propose. We must keep the old holding intact. You, being the eldest brother, should have it. We must buy a new holding for Haribandhu. I have already got some land of my own.'

'Haribandhu has been cultivating the old holding and living in the old house all his life. He will not be willing to leave either the house or the land.'

'I have thought of that. But if he keeps the ancestral holding he will have to compensate you and me for our shares, and I don't think he has got the means to do it. But if you take it you can pay Haribandhu for his share, and I will make you a present of mine. Then Haribandhu with the money you will pay him and what I shall add to it will buy a new holding and build a new house. I have bought the old mango orchard between our house and the river. The trees are too old to bear fruit, but it is good high land, beyond any danger of floods. I shall have most of the trees cut down and build myself a house there.'

'It is a good idea, but Haribandhu will never agree to it. Perhaps it is better to leave things as they are.'

'And have you and your family a useless burden on us for the rest of your lives? No. I will write to Haribandhu, and during the Puja holidays we will meet and settle everything.'

So Dayanidhi went back to the village and told Hari-

bandhu what Krupasindhu had suggested, and Haribandhu said it was nonsense, and he did not believe that Krupa really meant it. Next day Krupasindhu's letter arrived, and when Haribandhu understood that Krupasindhu meant to turn him out of the ancestral home he burst into tears. The thought of leaving the old house where he had lived all his life, and all his children had been born, and the good land to which he had given all the work of his life, was more than he could endure. So he cogitated until he had devised a plan. Then he left the women and children in charge of Dayanidhi and went to Cuttack, unknown to Krupasindhu.

When he came to Cuttack he went and saw Rai Bahadur, and Rai Bahadur, when he understood that he was Krupasindhu's brother, received him cordially. For a few minutes they conversed politely, then Haribandhu opened his business.

'Rai Bahadur,' he began, 'I am in great need of money.'

'I should think it would be easy for you to borrow money,' Rai Bahadur replied. 'I would lend you some myself.'

'I don't want to borrow and be burdened all my life with debt, and interest to pay You must give me money.'

'How much do you want?'

'I want five thousand rupees.'

'If it had been a matter of a hundred rupees I would have given it, for the sake of our kinship and my friendship with your brother, but five thousand is too much.'

'You will give me five thousand rupees for this reason. I know all about the Panpara case. I know how you made two ladies pay sixty thousand rupees by cheating. They thought they were bribing Collector Sahib, but you kept all the money yourselves. Unless you pay me five thousand rupees I will tell the Commissioner Sahib, and you will be ruined.'

'And your brother too.'

'No. I shall say that he had nothing to do with it, and you can't prove that he had.'

'Well, well, five thousand rupees is a large sum. I don't keep so much money in the house. I shall have to make arrangements. Please come again to-morrow.'

As soon as Haribandhu was gone Rai Bahadur sent for Krupasindhu.

'Is this brother of yours mad that he thinks he can get five thousand rupees from me by threats?'

But when Krupasindhu heard what his brother had said to Rai Bahadur he laughed.

'My brother,' he said, 'is a simple yokel. But I think I know what he wants the money for. I'll put that right. Send him to me.'

When Haribandhu came again to Rai Bahadur, hoping to receive the money, Rai Bahadur sent him to his brother saying that Krupasindhu had promised to satisfy him.

At first Haribandhu began to be bold, and said that he would never allow his brothers to turn him out of his own home; and then he began to be pitiful, and begged his brother not to think of doing a thing that would be wicked and cruel. But Krupasindhu cut him short and told him to fear nothing; he should not be turned out against his will.

'Brother Hari,' he said, 'since you don't like my plan, we must change it. You shall keep the old holding and Dayanidhi shall have a new one. But can you compensate us for our shares?'

'That is why I went to that fat thief to get money.'

'Five thousand rupees is too much. The holding is not worth so much.'

'I thought he would have offered me less, and then I would have accepted it.'

'He would not be a fat thief if he was not more cunning than you. But haven't you saved something?'

'Brother Krupa, I have fed your children, and I am still feeding your son's wives and your grandchildren, and for many years I fed Dayanidhi's family, and now they are back again. And I have supplied you with rice and maize and spices and anything you have asked for from the produce of the holding, and never grudged you anything, because it belongs to us three brothers jointly. And when I have paid the rent and fed my own family there is never very much left that I can save. I have saved only two hundred rupees.'

'And that belongs to the joint family, because it is the produce of the joint property. But never mind. We will agree on the value of the land and the house, and you shall give Dayanidhi two hundred rupees and I will add enough to make up the value of his share. And with that and his savings he will buy another holding of the same size in another village and make himself a new home and we shall be rid of him.'

'Dayanidhi will like that best. He is tired of service and trying to make money and getting into trouble and living in fear of jail. And how shall I pay you for your share of the joint property?'

'I'll make you a present of it. What is a one-third share in an ordinary peasant's holding of ten acres? I am getting rich, Hari; it is nothing to me.'

'Krupa, you are very good and true. And what will you do when you retire?'

I am going to build myself a house in the old mango orchard, and live on my own land which I have bought.

All three brothers agreed to this arrangement, and when they met for the Puja holidays the details were settled and the necessary documents prepared.

In the meantime Krupasindhu had given out a contract

for building his house. It was to be a two-storeyed house of brick, befitting a gentleman of importance who has been granted the title of Rai Sahib. And the contractor's men began cutting down the old mango-trees and clearing the site. Krupasindhu told him to employ all the dhobies in the neighbourhood, to get the work done quickly, because in Orissa it is the function of the dhobi caste to cut down trees. And first they went to the trees one by one and begged their pardon, and then they cut them down.

And Krupasindhu bought three adjacent fields to make a garden of herbs and a flower-garden and an orchard. And Haribandhu supervised the work and saw to the clearing of the land and the making of the garden and the planting of fruit-trees.

And Krupasindhu bought the land between the building site and the river, and ordered a path and a flight of steps to be constructed, so that the members of his family might go down conveniently to bathe in Old Twister.

And in the middle of the rainy season he caused a hedge to be planted all round the house and the garden, and continued down to the bank of the river on each side of the path. And when he went home for the Christmas holidays he saw that the house was nearly finished, and the hedge was growing well, and the garden was already producing flowers and vegetables, and he began to make plans for the time when his new house would be ready to live in.

27

Krupa Retires on Pension

For three years Krupasindhu worked as head clerk, adding to his savings steadily all the time. He observed what was going on in every department and collected commissions, and, if he saw that any clerk was inexpert, he taught him his business. And he was popular in the office, because he gave the younger clerks useful instruction and never tried to extort too much.

And now he often had to go to the Collector's residence to put up papers personally. And there was a new Collector. This officer seldom spoke to his steno-typist, except to dictate a letter, and had no confidence in him, thinking him to be young and inexperienced and only fit to write shorthand and work at a typewriter. So the young man had not the same opportunities as Krupasindhu had had when he was steno-typist. But the new Collector had confidence in Krupasindhu, so that Krupasindhu became more important than he had ever been before.

And at this time Krupasindhu started a moneylending business in his village, and when he went home for the holidays he used to collect his debts and re-invest the money by granting new loans. In this way he became in a short time the mortgagee of half the land in the village, a position which gave him great influence over his neighbours.

When the building of his new house was completed he

applied for a month's leave, and wrote at the same time to his sons at Balasore and to his brother Haribandhu to get the house furnished and ready for occupation.

This year it was settled that his two daughters should go to their husbands, and Krupasindhu arranged that their husbands should both come to fetch them at the same time.

When all was ready his sons' wives and their children moved into the new house, and Krupasindhu came home on leave with his wife and two daughters, and his sons took leave and came home from Balasore. Only Nishibala and her son were not allowed to come to the new house until the house-warming and other ceremonies were over.

Then there was first a great house-warming, and all the relations and all the neighbours were invited, and a great number of Brahmins were invited, and there was a mighty feast. And the poor were invited too, and they came from all the neighbourhood and were fed.

And after the house-warming the two sons-in-law came and there was more feasting; and when the proper ceremonies had been performed Krupasindhu's daughters went away with their husbands, and the two slave-girls went with them.

Then Nishibala and her son were allowed to come to the house and occupy the rooms which had been prepared for them.

All this cost a great deal of money, and made Krupasindhu famous in the neighbourhood for generosity and hospitality. But he did not grudge the expense, as now all his children were provided for, and he still had plenty of money left.

For years he had dreaded the day when he would have to part with his daughters. He made their husbands promise to send them back for a visit every year, and when

they departed he could scarcely refrain from tears, while the girls wept aloud without restraint. But Krupasindhu recovered sooner than he had expected, and when the time came to go back to Cuttack he felt that it would be a relief to him to live quietly with Charubala, and no one else in the house but the old serving woman and the cow.

Of his two sons, one was now a clerk in the Collector's office at Balasore, and the other was still an apprentice. The latter he withdrew from the office so that he might take charge of the house and the land while his father was serving in Cuttack.

Now, Krupasindhu felt that most of his life's work was done. His sons were settled in life, his daughters were married, he had a house to live in, and land to support him in his old age, and he had won honour, position, and the respect of his neighbours. But chiefly it pleased him to think that he had always been an honest man. He had always been loyal to the King-Emperor, and to his superior officers, and never not even for a bribe, had he done any man any harm.

And yet there remained one duty to be discharged. Nishibala's son was now nearly eighteen years old. For a time he had studied in the village school, but when the other boys began to taunt him with his bastardy he refused to go to school any more, and his great-uncle Haribandhu had taught him to read and write. Now for some time the boy had been helping his great-uncle with the cultivation. But Krupasindhu felt that he ought to find him a wife and make some arrangement, so that he also might be settled in life.

For a time the problem puzzled him, and then he remembered the words that his friends had used to comfort him when the boy was born, 'It is an ordinary thing.' Certainly Nishibala had not been the only virgin widow

in Orissa, and what had happened to her had doubtless happened to most of the others. He decided to consult Rai Bahadur.

While in the service Rai Bahadur had made good use of his opportunities as a policeman to collect information, and when he retired he had brought the information away with him in a mass of papers neatly docketed. And he knew well that the skeletons that lie hid in the cupboards of the most respectable families may sometimes be turned to good account by a clever man who is able to smell them out. Therefore he had specialized in this sort of information, so that he was able to supply Krupasindhu at once with a list of all the Deputy Magistrates and Deputy Collectors in Orissa, and the other gentlemen of similar rank, whose widowed sisters or daughters or daughters-in-law had children not born in wedlock. Out of this list Krupasindhu picked one whose widowed sister had a daughter about fourteen years old. With him he opened negotiations. The gentleman agreed to grant five acres of land in his estate, which was a long way from Krupasindhu's home, and Krupasindhu promised to buy five acres more. So Nishibala's son was married and provided for and had a home of his own in a distant place where his story was not known. But Nishibala preferred to remain in the village where she had lived all her life, with her father who loved her still.

But now when he had made provision for all his dependants and for his old age, and had only two years more to serve before he would retire on pension, Krupasindhu was seized with ambition to become a landlord. And first he bought a small share in a neighbouring village. Then he thought of Somnath Babu, who had inherited the estate of his father, and remembered how Somnath had insulted him, and he ought the time was now come

to have revenge. So he went home for the Easter holidays, and went to see Somnath.

When he came to the great house in which the family lived—for they had a great estate—he found in the outer court two small boys at their lessons, and an old pandit teaching them. And he went up and spoke politely to the pandit, and looked over the boys' shoulders to see what they were writing on their slates. And he saw that they were writing A, B, C.

And when Somnath Babu received him in his study, and he had seated himself (for now he was of such position that he was given a chair) he enquired about the boys.

'Somnath Babu,' he said, 'I saw two pretty boys in the outer court writing A, B, C.'

'They are my grandsons,' Somnath Babu replied.

'Are they? I had supposed they were the children of some of your tenants, since they are learning the monkey language.'

'It is very necessary nowadays,' said Somnath Babu, with a sigh. 'But what are you come for, Rai Sahib? If you are come for money, I'm afraid there is not much in the house.'

'I am not come for money, but for land,' Krupasindhu replied.

'What do you mean?'

'This is what I mean. Many years ago I lent your father ten thousand rupees; and as long as he lived he paid the interest regularly. But you have not been paying at all. Now the debt with compound interest amounts to rupees 75,118. Will you pay?'

'You know I cannot pay so much.'

'I know you cannot. That is why I say that I am not come for money but for land.'

'Rai Sahib, surely you will reduce your claim a little?'

'*I will reduce it to 60,000 rupees if you will pay at* once.'

'You know I cannot pay so much in cash.'

'Then you can sell some of your villages and pay.'

'You will give me time.'

'No, I will not give you time'.

'Then what can I do? Will you renew it at a higher rate of interest?'

'The rate of interest matters little, since you never pay t. No. You must yield me a part of your estate.'

'*What you claim is as much as my whole year's income.* Will you accept a one-anna share in my estate?'

'No, I will not accept a share. I must have a village or a group of villages equivalent to a two-anna share.'

'That is too much. It will kill me to part with ancestral property.'

'The sooner you settle the debt the less you will have to part with.'

'There is no help for it, since you have no mercy.'

'I have offered to reduce my claim from seventy-five thousand to sixty thousand. That is all the mercy you will get from me.'

'I will do it on one condition,' said Somnath Babu. 'Since I am a little short of cash, I will give you villages to the value of 60,000 rupees if you will lend me another ten thousand.'

'That I will do,' Krupasindhu replied, 'but the interest will be at 36 per cent per annum, to be compounded twice a year.'

To this Somnath Babu agreed. And as Krupasindhu had to go back to Cuttack, and could not stay to settle the details, he appointed Dayanidhi to negotiate on his behalf, and Somnath Babu appointed a lawyer to negotiate on his behalf. And eventually the matter was settled.

Krupasindhu became the proprietor of six villages, which he accepted in satisfaction of his debt, and he lent Somnath Babu another ten thousand rupees on his own terms. For he knew that the interest would never be paid, and in this way he would gradually become the owner of the whole estate.

And he remembered what Somnath had said about the monkey language when he had been a boy, and he rejoiced in his revenge.

Now in this same year, in October, Krupasindhu received three letters on the same day.

The first was from the husband of Dayabala to say that she had given birth to a son, and mother and child were both doing as well as could be expected.

The second was from the husband of Krupabala to say that she had given birth to a daughter, and mother and child were both doing as well as could be expected.

The third was from Haribandhu, who said that he had heard that the Benign Government had made a new law that no girl might be married till she was fourteen years old.

Now, when Krupasindhu read the first letter he was very excited and very anxious for the health of his beloved daughter, and wanted to sit down at once and write a long letter of advice about the care of babies and nursing mothers. But he stopped to read the second letter.

And when he read the second letter he was yet more excited, and wanted to sit down and write two letters of advice. But he stopped to read the third letter.

And when he read the third letter he did not know whether to laugh or cry. He had always done his best to leave politics alone, so that it became known in the office and among his friends and relations that one must not talk politics to Krupasindhu; and when anyone wanted to talk politics he refused to listen. Consequently, the

news was quite new to him: he was not aware that any such legislation was contemplated. But it seemed to him good news, because he had seen many instances of what happens to girls who begin married life too young. And for that reason he had kept back his own daughters and not allowed them to go and live with their husbands until they were old enough. And yet it seemed to him sad news, because it was shameful that the Government had had to interfere to put something right that the people should have put right for themselves, and he feared that many of his countrymen who had old-fashioned ideas would resent the new law and make an agitation about it.

Therefore when he went to Cutcherry he enquired from the other clerks and learnt that the new law would not come into force till the first of April in the following year. So there was plenty of time for those who had unmarried daughters to get them married before the new law came into force.

And Krupasindhu discovered that there was great perturbation in the town among the castes which were accustomed to marry their children very young. And those who had girls to marry were running about looking for bridegrooms, and those who had boys to marry were demanding large dowries and the brokers were raising their fees.

Now Haribandhu had three sons and two daughters, and the two girls were both under fourteen; and Dayanidhi had a grandson eight years old and a granddaughter five years old; and Haribandhu had written that they were anxious to get the girls married before the first of April. But he feared it would necessitate spending a great deal of money.

Then Krupasindhu wrote to his brothers and asked them to leave the arrangements to him, and he would manage it so that the girls' dowries would cost nothing.

As soon as he had received their consent he gave it out in the office that he had four nephews to marry. And he had noticed that a number of clerks and other Government Servants had applied for leave in order to arrange matches for their daughters, and some had even resigned the service when the leave applied for was refused, because they thought it better to lose their jobs than not to get their daughters married before the first of April, 1930. Therefore, when he received proposals he demanded good dowries. And he demanded that the money should be paid in advance.

When he had arranged marriages for the four boys and received the money, he gave it out that he had three nieces to marry. And he added together the four dowries which he had collected and divided the total sum by three. In this way he provided handsome dowries, and soon found bridegrooms for his nieces. So he made the marriages of the four boys pay for the marriages of the three girls.

28

Politics

The beginning of the year 1930 brought a great renewal of agitation, and Krupasindhu, according to his rule, shut his ears to it and refused to be interested. But in the month of March the talk was of contraband salt. He began to be interested after all, because this was a thing he knew something about.

So, one day when he was taking his evening walk on the embankment, seeing a Babu in a Gandhi cap, whom he knew to be one of the local politicians, he went up to him and asked him to explain the matter.

'I cannot understand,' he said, 'what connexion there is between contraband salt and Swaraj.'

Then they sat down on the top of the Katjuri revetment, where they could enjoy the refreshing breeze that comes from the sea, and the politician began to explain.

'Mahatma Gandhi,' he said, 'has ordered that we are all to make and eat, as far as possible, nothing but contraband salt. Thus the Government monopoly will be broken, and the finances of the Government will be ruined, and the English will be driven from India, and we shall win Swaraj.'

'Babu,' Krupasindhu replied, laughing, 'I have toured all over the districts of Balasore and Cuttack with the Collectors, and I have often seen the sea. And I can tell you that in every seaside village and in every village on the banks of the tidal rivers, where the water is salt the

fishermen are making salt. They always have made it and they always will. Sometimes the Sahibs wink at it because they know that the fishermen are poor, and sometimes some poor devil is prosecuted and fined a rupee or two. And if Swaraj could be won by making contraband salt the fishermen would have won it for us long ago.'

'Babu, the fishermen only make salt for their own use or for profit. Therefore, they acquire no spiritual merit. Moreover, they do it stealthily. But Mahatmaji is marching to the seaside with hundreds of followers to make salt openly. It is not only a question of the material effect of reducing the revenue; there is the mystical efficacy of self-sacrifice and martyrdom.'

'A fine martyrdom, I'm sure,' said Krupasindhu, laughing again, 'to commit a petty offence and to be fined a couple of rupees!'

And Krupasindhu decided that this agitation was even sillier than the last. But whether it was silly or not, it was certainly a nuisance. And it went on. In May Mr Gandhi was arrested; and still it went on. August came and it was still going on, and it was becoming more and more of a nuisance to everybody, except those who made their living by politics and agitation.

But one day in August Krupasindhu went to Collector Sahib to put up some confidential papers, and the Sahib showed him the morning paper and said, 'Read that, Babu, and tell me what you think about it.'

Krupasindhu read it. There had been a mass meeting of Europeans at Peliti's restaurant in Calcutta. Thousands of them went, so that the whole restaurant was crammed, and those who could not get into the restaurant filled all the street from Peliti's to the railings of Government House.

They had passed a series of resolutions. The first re-

solution was a demand that seditious propaganda and unconstitutional agitation should be dealt with firmly.

'That,' said Krupasindhu, 'is no doubt what ought to be done.'

The second resolution ran as follows: 'That the Government of India Act of 1919 should be repealed at once and the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909 be brought into operation with such modifications as may be necessary.'

'Sir,' said Krupasindhu, 'that is what we would all like best. Does Your Honour think the Government will actually do it?'

'I believe that is really what everybody would like best,' the Sahib replied, 'though I don't suppose Government will do it—at least not yet. It will come to that some day.'

'Sir,' said Krupasindhu, 'If I may be permitted to say so, the Government has been very much to blame. Why cannot we Oriyas be allowed to enjoy our own country without the interference of damned foreigners? I can assure Your Honour that none of my countrymen would have taken part in any of this nonsense if their minds had not been infected by these poisonous Bengali b——.'

'Babu!' said the Sahib, interrupting in a tone of rebuke. 'I am surprised. I did not know you had such an extensive command of the English language.'

Your Honour will kindly pardon the exuberance of my terminology. I cannot speak patiently when I consider how my countrymen are being ruined by foreign immigrants, only through the negligence of the Government.

'Are you sure it's all the fault of the Government? However, it will be interesting to see if this mass meeting produces any effect.'

'If Your Honour will kindly keep me informed. . .'

'You may see the paper every day.'

Krupasindhu saw it. The effect was immediate. A

few days after the meeting the Congress Working Committees were proclaimed illegal associations. Strenuous action was taken. In a few months the agitation had almost ceased. By the end of the year the Congress was dead. How Lord Irwin brought it to life again, and raised it to a pitch of power and prestige it had never attained before; and how Sir Samuel Hoare tried to crush it and failed: these things I omit, because they do not belong to this story.

But, in spite of all this bother, Krupasindhu went on working diligently and adding to his savings. And he kept up his friendship and alliance with Rai Bahadur, who was still in condition to render occasionally some discreet service. But now Krupasindhu's fifty-fifth birthday was approaching, and under the rules he had to make up his mind whether he would retire or apply for an extension of service. On this point he thought it proper to consult his wife.

'When we were first married, Charubala said, we were very happy in the little house at Balasore, and I would have liked to stay there. Then we came to Cuttack, and for years we were very happy in the little house near the Sahib's residence, and our children were born there. You used to go fishing in the Mahanadi. And you were always in the Sahib's house, and the Sahibs were very kind to us and used to give the children toys. Then we had to move here, and we have been very happy here. But all the time I am in this house I know that we have got to leave it. And why should we live in a little mud and thatch bungalow when we have got a fine brick house of our own? You are getting old. You ought to go to your own home to enjoy comfort, peace, security.'

'There is some wisdom in that,' said Krupasindhu. 'As long as a man is in the service he is not secure. There is always danger that some officer may find out something

that he ought not, and then the situation may become otherwise.'

'And there is another reason I am the daughter of a poor man who lived by cultivation I was born and brought up in a village I love the fields and the crops, and the words of husbandry, and all the things of the land'

Krupasindhu agreed with his wife and decided to retire, and applied for his pension

When he had submitted his application he took stock of his position and thought out plans He had zemindari property that would bring a net income of about five thousand rupees a year in rents alone Beside the land in possession of tenants he had land in his own possession amounting to nearly a hundred acres Then there was the sum of ten thousand rupees which he had lent to Somnath Babu on a mortgage on the remainder of his estate, and besides this there were other sums which he had lent on mortgages amounting to nearly ten thousand rupees And the rest of his savings he had invested in gilt-edged securities He would be very happy, he thought, managing his estate with the help of his son Sadhu Charan, and looking after his cultivation (and for this, by the way, he would need a number of labourers and ploughmen) and supervising the development of the new garden and the new orchard.

The day came when Krupasindhu took his seat in the English office at the head of the long table where the clerks worked for the last time Next day he hired one of the little boxes-on-wheels which serve for hackney-carriages in Cuttack, and went round the town saying good-bye

First, of course, he went to Collector Sahib, and the Sahib came out on to the veranda to receive him and shook hands

'Well, Babu,' he said, 'so now, after so many years of faithful service, you are going to enjoy ease and dignity in your humble village home.'

Krupasindhu felt inclined to say that his village home was not so very humble, but thought it more prudent not to.

'Sir,' he said, 'by Your Honour's kindness my modest pension has been sanctioned. I shall never again serve His Most Gracious Majesty in the English office, but that does not mean that I do not intend to serve. If ever I can be of any use to Your Honour, I shall always be Your Honour's most obedient servant.'

'That's right, Babu. Well, I hope you'll come and see me if ever you come to Cuttack. And I hope you will live long, and be very happy in your retirement.'

Krupasindhu got into the rattling carriage again, and told the driver to drive him to the Commissioner's residence. They drove down the Cantonment road, stopping on the way to say good-bye to the other Sahibs who lived there. And when they came near the turning Krupasindhu changed his mind and told the driver to drive straight on over the bridge across the moat through the half-ruined gatehouse to the Club. There he got out of the carriage and went and said good-bye to the Club clerk, who, from his opportunities of frequently meeting the officials, was considered a very respectable gentleman. When he had said good-bye to him Krupasindhu walked about a little and had a last look at the beautiful park-like grounds, which the moat enclosed, and the magnificent trees.

Then he got into the carriage again and drove to the Commissioner's residence. And while he was waiting he had a farewell look at the park and the herd of deer. But after a few minutes an orderly called him, and he went on to the veranda and the Commissioner bade him

good-bye with many kind words, and promised to go and see him in his village if ever he went on tour that way.

After that Krupasindhu drove home to dinner. And late in the afternoon he set out again and drove round the town saying good-bye to his Oriya friends.

Next day he hired the carriage once more. Having said good-bye to the people, he now set out to say good-bye to places, and this time he took Charubala with him.

They went and saw the little bungalow near the Collector's residence where they had spent many happy years. And they walked along the embankment of the Mahanadi and gazed at the great river and the islands and the hills in the distance, and revisited the places where he had been accustomed to fish. And they walked to Jobra and looked at the workshops and the boats.

That evening was his last evening in Cuttack, and the junior clerks and others to whom he had not said good-bye (because he was a gentleman of superior importance, and it was not for him to go to them, but for them to come to him) came and wished him long life and prosperity.

That night Krupasindhu paid off the old serving woman and made her a present of the cow. Then he hired once more the rattling box-on-wheels, put his luggage on top, packed his wife and himself inside, and drove to the station and caught the Puri Express. They arrived at Balasore in the small hours and found Krupasindhu's two sons waiting for them with a bullock cart. They travelled the rest of the night on the cart, and arrived at the ferry in the morning.

The ferryman—it was no longer the same ferryman, but his son—came out of his hut and greeted Krupasindhu very respectfully.

On the other side of the river his brothers were waiting for him together with Janardhan Jethi's son—for he also

was gone long since to the burning ghat—and some of the other villagers. And they all welcomed him back to his village home.

'Welcome home, brother,' said Haribandhu, 'and live long in the village in which our ancestors all lived.'

And all the others welcomed him with kind words and flattery.

And when they came to the fine new house Charubala went into the women's apartments. And when he had bathed and refreshed himself and rested after the journey Krupasindhu went in too, to receive the greetings of the women and children. There was Haribandhu's wife, and his two sons' wives, and Nishibala, all eager to make namaskar; only Haribandhu's wife veiled her face in Krupa's presence, because he was her husband's elder brother. There too were his daughters, whom their husbands had sent home for the promised visit, and they had brought the two slave-girls with them. And these girls were pleased to see Krupasindhu and Charubala again, because they had been treated kindly, and even if they committed some fault Charubala had never chastised them excessively, nor branded them with hot irons as some ladies do.

All the women welcomed him with affection and respect, and the children some with awe, and some with boisterous delight, according to their ages, and the little ones felt in his pockets to see if he had brought anything for them. But his sons' wives had thought of this, and sweeties were duly forthcoming.

That evening and all the next day the villagers were coming one by one to pay their respects—for Krupasindhu was now the most important man in the village.

Charubala promptly took charge of the housekeeping and proved as competent to manage a large house as she had been to manage a small one, and she taught her hus-

band's daughters-in-law how to cook new dishes.

So Krupasindhu settled down to live the remainder of his life in his new house, with his wife, and his sons' wives and children, and his widowed daughter. But often he would walk across the fields to visit his brother, because he still loved the old mud and thatch house in which he had been born.

And every month he journeyed to Balasore to draw his pension, although the amount was so small that it was not really worth the trouble. But he liked to revisit the familiar scenes, and to be seen himself and to call on the officials. And every time he went to Balasore he called on the Collector and asked him to come to his village when he went on tour in that direction. And he remembered the time when he had been a young apprentice and had determined to make money and to be a genteel person and to be respected by everybody, and now he felt that he had accomplished all these things.

29

Krupa's New Home—A Pilgrimage to Jagarnath

It did not take Krupasindhu very long to settle down in what was now to be his permanent home. For a high-caste Hindu who strictly observes the rules of his caste the apparatus of life is very simple. Table knives, forks, and spoons were quite unnecessary. A few brass pots and dishes, brass tumblers to drink from, and lotas of various sizes, a large iron ladle for use in the kitchen, and a flat stone and a pestle for preparing spices were all that was necessary for the business of eating. The food was taken on small plates of half-baked earthenware which were used once and then thrown away. This practice has two advantages: it saves washing up, and it eliminates all danger of losing your caste by eating from a plate that may in some way have been defiled.

Krupasindhu's wardrobe consisted almost entirely of dhoties and shirts. But since he had been head clerk he had taken to wearing coats too—silk in the hot weather, tweed or serge in the winter. But these were now reserved for special occasions. For ordinary visitors it was sufficient to put on a shirt. In the privacy of the family circle he discarded the shirt as well as the coat. This simplicity of costume made wardrobes and chests of drawers unnecessary. A tin trunk served to contain the lot.

With four women in the house, one of them an expert

cook and the others very apt pupils, Krupasindhu considered it unnecessary to keep a great number of servants. He had a *mali* to work in the garden, a behera to look after the cows, and one old woman to do the rough and dirty work about the house.

But if his domestic establishment could be run with little expenditure on wages, the same was not the case with the management of his property. Besides the outdoor staff necessary for the cultivation and the collection of rent he found it necessary to employ three young *Karans to deal with the clerical work and book-keeping*, and to make one of the ground-floor rooms an office.

This room contained a number of almirahs for papers and stationery, a small writing-table, and a couple of chairs with flat wooden seats. These were for the use of Krupasindhu himself and distinguished visitors. For the three young Karans chairs were considered unnecessary. They worked squatting on a low wooden platform covered with a durry, folded double to make it softer.

Next to this room was Krupasindhu's own particular sanctum. This was furnished with a carpet, a good writing-table, a few cane-bottomed chairs, and a rack for books and papers.

Next to this was the parlour, which was, of course, the best-furnished room in the house. There was a good Mirzapur carpet on the floor, and the walls were adorned with a large looking-glass in a gilt frame, a portrait of *King George, and a deplorable coloured print (printed in* Germany) of the Goddess Saraswati. In the middle of the room stood a table, consisting of a round slab of marble resting on an elaborately carved mahogany pedestal. Precisely north, south, east, and west of the centre table were four gilt chairs upholstered in blue velvet. On one side of the room was a bookshelf secured to the wall on iron brackets. Among the books theology was repre-

sented by The Bible (Revised Version)—the gift of an English friend; another Bible (in Oriya)—the gift of an American missionary; *Kok-Shastra* in Oriya, and *Ramayana* in Sanskroot—Krupasindhu would have died rather than pronounce it 'Sanskrit,' like a damned foreigner. History was represented by Hunter's *Orissa* and a battered copy of Macaulay's *History of England*. Besides these there were a few law books and English novels, and a copy of the B. and O. *Quarterly Civil List*, purloined from the Collector's office. The place of honour in the middle of the shelf was allotted to Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, proudly supported on either side by *The Orissa Tenancy Act* and *The Sorrows of Satan*.

Facing the bookshelf on the other side of the room there was a small glass-fronted almirah, which contained a china tea-set and some English knives, forks, and teaspoons: all the apparatus of the English tea-table. This was reserved for the day when Krupasindhu's dearest ambition would be fulfilled, and a Sahib would come to his house and sit on one of the blue velvet chairs and drink tea. For himself, Krupasindhu was content to drink his tea from an aluminium tumbler.

For the same occasion was intended a brass flowerpot which stood on a little wooden stool in one corner; always empty, but ready for duty when required. It was also on the principle that 'they also serve who only stand and wait,' that the centre table carried a brass tray, for handing round pan and cigarettes, and Janardhan Jethi's masterpiece, the ittardan in silver filigree work.

This parlour was, of course, reserved for visitors of more than usual importance. For ordinary callers there was an airy and spacious veranda.

These three rooms were the only rooms in the house that could boast of tables and chairs. For a bedroom a charpoy, a small looking-glass hanging on a nail, a bit of

carpet, and a tin trunk or a wooden box on little wooden legs, to keep clothes in, were sufficient.

When Krupasindhu had satisfied himself that his domestic affairs had been well organized, he turned his attention to his business. And for this purpose he summoned his brother Haribandhu for consultation and his son Sadhu Charan for instruction. He also sent for Mohan Das, the son of Madhu Das, who had succeeded his father as village accountant.

'My plan is,' Krupasindhu began, 'that my son here will take over the management of the zemindari, and I will look after the cultivation.'

'Babu,' said Sadhu Charan, 'I don't think I know enough about it yet."

'The boy is inexperienced,' said Haribandhu.

'Well, well, my son, I'll have to train you. In two or three years you ought to learn enough to take it over entirely. Now about the cultivation: hired labour is very expensive, and it is not always easy to get it, because all the cultivators want it at the same time. I would like to buy one or two men.'

'Babu, surely slavery is not permitted under the British Raj?' asked the young man.

'Of course it isn't. I shall buy two men. There is much land to cultivate. The question is, where can I get them?'

'I hear,' said Haribandhu, 'that Jaga Babu, whose estate is on the other side of the river, is selling some of his land to pay his debts. Probably he won't want so many labourers.'

'He has got a number of insolvent debtors,' said Mohan Das, 'I dare say he would sell you a couple of them.'

'I wish you would enquire,' said Krupasindhu.

Mohan Das promised to do so.

Next day he returned and reported the results of his

enquiry. This was what he had found out.

There was one Brajamoni Bhuyan who had a decent holding. When his father had died he borrowed fifty rupees from Jaga Babu's father. As his credit was good the interest was fixed at 24 per cent. per annum. As he never paid any interest the debt mounted up in four years to 106 rupees 12 annas 9 pices.

Then he borrowed forty rupees for his wife's funeral. On this occasion he had to execute a fresh bond for 140 rupees bearing interest at 36 per cent. In four years the debt amounted to 478 rupees 8 annas 8 pices.

Then he wanted money to marry his daughter. First he had to sell the greater part of his holding to pay off the previous debt, and then he was able to borrow one hundred rupees at 48 per cent. In three years the debt amounted to 284 rupees 1 anna 9 pices. And now, as he had only one acre left, he became a day labourer.

Then it was time for his second daughter's wedding. Jaga Babu lent him a hundred and sixteen rupees, and made him execute a fresh bond for 400 rupees with interest at 60 per cent. In eight years, Brajamoni having made some small payments, the debt amounted to 17,148 rupees.

When his second wife died he had to surrender the remainder of his holding to his creditor, execute a contract of service, and fresh bond for 17,000 rupees bearing interest at 72 per cent.

When Bradja himself died about a year later, the debt amounted to 18,470 rupees.

He left two sons, Bonumali and Chintamoni, who, of course, inherited the debt, and wanted money for their father's funeral. So Jaga Babu paid for the funeral, and took a fresh bond for 18,500 rupees on the same terms, and a new contract of service. That was not long ago. Now Jaga Babu was willing to sell Bonumali for two

hundred rupees. As Chintamoni was hardly fully-grown he would throw him in for another hundred if Krupasindhu cared to have him

Krupasindhu accepted these terms, and Mohan Das set to work to prepare the necessary documents In time the documents were engrossed and executed and registered, and the transaction completed.

Now, this is what the documents showed. Krupasindhu lent the two brothers ten thousand rupees, bearing interest at 72 per cent per annum, which they paid to Jaga Babu, who accepted this amount in full satisfaction of their debt to him At the same time they executed a contract of service undertaking to work for Krupasindhu as whole-time agricultural labourers until the debt was paid; and Krupasindhu agreed to give them half an acre of land to cultivate on their own account rent free; food for themselves and their families all the year round an outfit of clothing for themselves and their wives once a year; two rupees a year each for pocket money; wages at four annas a day for the days they actually worked; the wages to be set off against the interest on the debt.

That is what the documents showed What actually happened was that Jaga Babu sold two young men to Krupasindhu for three hundred rupees

Now Krupasindhu had solved his labour problem and settled his scheme of life He divided his working hours between the cultivation of his land and the instruction of his son in the business of zemindari management. His leisure he spent pottering about the garden or sitting on the bank of Old Twister He used to have a chair brought down to the end of the path which he had had made down to the bank of the river, and there he would sit gazing at the trees and the thatched cottages on the opposite bank, and thinking of the experiences of his life.

Sometimes he would think of the many strange places

he had seen when he used to go on tour with Collector Sahib, and of his life as a clerk; but more often he thought of his boyhood, and how he had loved his Nirmalabala. Of her he thought a little sadly, but without bitterness.

And then he would think of the girl with the wistful look who had brightened his life when he had been a young clerk. A pretty plaything she had been, and a very sweet-natured girl, and a master of her art (it is an art and not a profession), but she meant nothing to him now—she never had meant much—and he easily put the thought of her out of his head.

So he would sit and dream, gazing at the river and the trees and the thatched cottages on the opposite bank, and the blue mountain in the distance. And often as he sat there dreaming the village children would come to him, for he loved children, and they all called him Grand-dad, and he would tell them stories of giants.

And one day while he sat dreaming, or playing with the children, a stranger came to the house. He was a lean, keen-faced, clean-shaven man who wore nothing but a dhoti and a sacred thread. He carried all his belongings in a little bundle slung over his left shoulder, and in his right hand he held a palm-leaf umbrella. His long hair was done up on the back of his head in a large bun, so that if you had only seen his head you would have taken him for a woman. In short he was quite unmistakably a Panda from Puri; one of those who go out touting for pilgrims, for that is Shri Jagarnath's method of publicity.

When he came to the house he enquired about the inmates, and when he heard that there was a widow, he asked to be allowed to see her. And when Krupasindhu came in Nishibala wanted to see him.

'Babu,' she said, 'I think I ought to make a pilgrimage to the Lord Jagarnath.'

'Do you indeed?' her father replied. 'And may I ask why?'

'I have lived in this village all my life, since I never went to my husband, and I should like to see another place before I die.'

'And that is not the only reason,' said the Panda.

'No,' said Nishibala. 'The other reason is that I am a great sinner.'

'Nonsense,' said Krupasindhu. 'If you have committed any fault you have suffered more than enough.'

'Babu,' said the Panda, 'in this life no doubt the lady has lived virtuously. But why is she a widow? Because of sins committed in a previous life.'

'And because of my sins,' Nishibala put in, 'my husband died young; and could a woman commit a greater sin than to be the cause of the death of her husband?'

'You have instructed her very well,' said Krupasindhu to the Panda.

'And that is not all,' Nishibala continued. 'By my folly I have caused my dear father trouble and shame.'

'The gods are not inexorable,' said the Panda, 'and the Lord Jagarnath is mighty to deliver.'

'If only I can go and make darshan to the Lord Jagarnath, and go to the Gate of Heaven and bathe in the sea, my salvation and the salvation of my husband will be secure.'

'After all,' Sadhu Charan put in, for he pitied his sister, 'it is the usual thing for a Hindu widow to make pilgrimages.'

'Unless,' added the Panda, craftily, 'she is so poor that she can't.'

That decided Krupasindhu. The respect of his neighbours was still very dear to him, so it seemed proper to him that Nishibala should do as high-caste widows usually do if they can afford to. But he did not yield at once.

'Do you suppose it will cost nothing?' he said.

'I can arrange it for you as cheaply as possible,' said the Panda. 'My uncle keeps a licensed lodging-house.'

'You can't go alone. Who will go with you?'

'I don't want to go,' said Sadhu Charan's wife. 'My father's home was at Puri, and I have often seen the Lord Jagarnath.'

'I would like to go,' said Guru Charan's wife. 'I have never seen the sea.'

'I have been there,' said Charubala, 'and it is necessary that I should stay at home to look after the house.'

'Well,' said Krupasindhu, 'Guru Charan can't go because he can't leave his work in the Collector's office. You can go, Sadhu.'

'As my wife doesn't want to go, I think I would rather stay at home too.'

'Nishibala,' said Krupasindhu, suddenly turning to his daughter, 'do you know that Puri is a very wicked place?'

'Babu,' she replied, 'I am nearly forty years old. You need not be afraid that I shall make a fool of myself again.'

'But, if Sadhu Charan does not want to go, who will take you?'

'You are getting old, Babu,' said Sadhu Charan. 'You ought to go and make your own salvation secure.'

'I am not inclined to go and stay in a miserable licensed lodging-house.'

'I could arrange,' said the Panda, 'to rent a house on the beach for you, but it would be very expensive. This is the season at Puri, when there is a fresh cool sea breeze and there are no mosquitos. When it is hottest inland, then is the best time at Puri.'

'A house on the beach is not for us. The rents are much too high in the season.'

'Then come to my uncle's house.'

'And who will manage my affairs in my absence?'

'Babu,' Sadhu Charan replied, 'this is the season when there is no work to do in the fields, and the season for collecting rents is nearly over. I can manage quite well while you are away.'

'You could arrange it very comfortably this way,' said the Panda. 'Make up a party with some of your neighbours, and take the whole lodging-house all to yourselves. Then you will be quite comfortable.'

So after all Krupasindhu had to go. He arranged, as the Panda had suggested, to make up a party with one of his caste-fellows, who brought three of the women of his family, while Krupasindhu brought Nishibala and Guru Charan's wife.

Very unwillingly Krupasindhu went, since he had hoped never to displace himself again. And he grumbled at Nishibala for wanting to go, and cursed the Panda for putting the idea into her head. But after all he enjoyed it very much. He found that many people at Puri remembered him, and he called on the local officials and was well received, and the police were respectful and obliging for the sake of his kinsman the Rai Bahadur. And Krupasindhu enjoyed revisiting all the wonderful sights, and delighted in the delight of the women, who had never seen the sights before. And Nishibala especially, having never before been out of the village, enjoyed it all immensely, and suddenly grew fatter and younger, and seemed to have won a new stock of life. And Krupasindhu was happy when he saw her happy, because he loved her very dearly.

30
The Durbar

Two years after his retirement Krupasindhu handed over the management of the zemindari to his son. And the next year he handed over most of the cultivation too, because he found it difficult to visit the fields that were at a great distance from the house. And now his eyesight also began to fail, and he had to wear spectacles constantly.

In the second year of his retirement his ambition was fulfilled, and the Collector, who was camping in the neighbourhood, came to his house. The Sahib came in and sat on one of the blue velvet chairs, and Krupasindhu offered him tea, and biscuits, and bread and butter, and Indian sweetmeats. Now also the brass flowerpot was filled with flowers, and the beautiful silver filigree ittardan was brought into use, and the Sahib put some of the scent on his handkerchief.

The Sahib ate very little, but drank a cup of tea, and when he had finished he accepted a cigarette. Then Krupasindhu's grandchildren came in with garlands of flowers, and one by one they made namaskar very bashfully, and then put the garlands round the Sahib's neck.

And when the Sahib had finished the cigarette he said he would like to see the garden, and Krupasindhu showed him round. He showed him the flower-beds—marigolds, periwinkle, petunia, phlox; and the vegetables—cabbage, carrots, ladies' fingers, and baigana; and the fruit—pine-

apples, bananas, custard-apples, papita. There were some mango-trees, but the fruit was of the sort that is only fit for making chutney.

When they had been round the garden they came back to the parlour, and the Sahib sat in the blue velvet chair again, and Krupasindhu offered him whisky and soda. Then the Sahib produced a little surprise.

'Babu,' he said, 'if you will send for my orderly I have got something for you.'

The orderly was sent for, and handed his master a bundle of papers. The Sahib produced a large gilt-edged card and gave it to Krupasindhu.

'Babu, I have got an invitation for you,' he said. 'His Excellency the Governor is coming to Cuttack to hold a durbar. This is your invitation card.'

Krupasindhu was taken by surprise, and began to express his gratitude volubly, in an eloquent extempore speech. But the Sahib cut him short.

'You need not thank me, Babu. As a title-holder you are entitled to an invitation, and now I must go.'

Krupasindhu wrote to Rai Bahadur to ask him to put him up and then turned his attention to the preparation of clothing suitable to the occasion. He provided himself with a pair of white cotton trousers (a garment he had never worn before), a black cloth chapkan, and a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles.

He went to Cuttack a couple of days before the durbar so as to have time to rest after the journey and to look up some of his friends. He noticed an unusual bustle in the sleepy old town, and an atmosphere of festivity and pleasant anticipation. He also noticed an unusual number and variety of vehicles about the place. Once he saw an odd procession. It was one of the Feudatory Chiefs arriving for the durbar. First a magnificent carriage and pair—a coachman in a gaudy livery with a man-

at-arms beside him, complete with sabre, dagger, and battle-axe—behind the carriage a pair of no less gaudy grooms, each carrying a horse's tail on a silver staff to brush away flies; inside the carriage, more gaudy still, the Raja himself. There followed a couple of the noisiest, dirtiest, and most ramshackle of the boxes-on-wheels, containing the Raja's servants and luggage.

The great shamiana in which the durbar was to be held had been pitched in a wide, smooth, grassy place just outside the fort ditch, near the old gatehouse. Krupasindhu and his host arrived in good time in an elegant car. When he had found his place Krupasindhu sat down and watched the other durbaris coming in.

First he noticed one of the Chiefs, magnificent in brocade and cloth of gold, with a great deal of jewelry. The ivory hilt of his sword and the crimson velvet scabbard was mounted in gold—and studded with rubies.

A striking contrast was the elegant simplicity of the next one. He wore a small flat turban made of pale pink silk, mixed in about equal proportion with gold thread, a plain cream-coloured chapkan of the finest homespun silk woven on a handloom, white cotton trousers, long enough to conceal the fact that he had no socks on, and black elastic-sided shoes. He had no ornaments but a plain gold signet ring and a fat gold watch-chain. He was a wealthy landlord, merchant, and banker, and his boast was that many people were obliged to him, but he was obliged to nobody.

Who was it remarked that all our passions make us do silly things, but love makes us do the silliest? I think, if the witty Frenchman had lived in India, he would have written vanity instead of love. For example see this man. He is Mr B. N. Chattopadhayaya, B.A., B.L., one of the most vociferous, the most long-winded, and the least competent of the gentry of the local Bar. For this occasion

he has taken pains to make himself look as European as possible. He has put on a blue serge suit that may have fitted him when his waist measurement was two or three inches less. But now the two lowest buttons refuse to enter or even to approach the button-holes to which they belong. As the two top buttons of his trousers are equally recalcitrant there remains a gap, so that all the world may see that he is wearing a boiled shirt. His tie is a dreamlike creation in mauve and buff, and he has a silk handkerchief and socks to match. A pair of bright yellow shoes completes the outfit. He walks with a drawling swagger, turning his knees out as well as his toes, as if he was pushing his stomach before him.

Unfortunately he has spoilt the European effect by adding a diamond tiepin and a large ruby ring. Not content with this touch of Oriental splendour, he has scented himself so lavishly with ittar of roses that the whole shamiana stinks of him. Yet in his national costume of shirt and dhoti he looks a simple good-natured Bengali, and really he is quite a good fellow.

A contrast to him is the youthful Assistant Magistrate. He also is dressed in a blue serge suit. He has a tie to match, black shoes and socks, and no trinket or ornament of any sort. As he walks quietly to his place his most conspicuous characteristic appears to be modesty—or *pride, whichever you like to call it—the kind of modesty* that is a negative rather than a positive quality, merely an absence of swank. Krupasindhu noted him as an example of what he considered the best type of English gentleman, for he knew the Sahiblog well enough to understand that this absence of swank is their English method of proclaiming to the world how entirely they are convinced of their own immeasurable, indestructible, and innate superiority to any other breed of men.

When all were in their places, a few minutes waiting,

and then the police bugles blew a salute, and His Excellency and his staff drove up. When the guard of honour had been inspected the procession was formed, and marched through the shamiana to the dais. First came the chobdars, marching two and two in their gorgeous liveries with their silver maces at the slope, then the District Magistrate with the Chief Secretary, and after them other high officials walking two and two, then His Excellency the Governor walking alone, then some police officers in their blue full-dress uniforms, then the junior members of His Excellency's staff.

Krupasindhu recognized His Excellency, whom he had met years ago as Collector. Afterwards he spoke of this to Rai Bahadur.

'It is the same thing,' he said. 'They call him His Excellency the Governor, instead of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, but he is still a Heavenborn. It is only the name that is changed.'

'You are right,' Rai Bahadur replied. 'The Sahibs have a saying: the more it changes the more it is the same thing. Depend upon it, in spite of all the prattling of the politicians, it will always be the same thing as long as you and I are likely to live.'

When all were seated the District Magistrate rose and asked His Excellency's permission to declare the durbar open. The proceedings were brief and formal, and when they were concluded the procession was formed again and marched out. His Excellency then drove away accompanied by the District Magistrate, while his staff went to the Club in search of refreshment.

Now the durbaris began to pour out of the shamiana and to walk about on the grass, greeting one another, the local officials mingling with them. Krupasindhu noticed the stiff and rather haughty manner in which the Sahibs greeted their esteemed friends the Chiefs, and their frigid

politeness to some of the local gentry, and their frank cordiality to others. Krupasindhu himself was one of those who were greeted with frank cordiality. He felt that this was a fitting crown to an honourable career.

31

Happily Ever After

After the durbar Krupasindhu remained another day in Cuttack for a final visit to some of the officials, and then went back to his village home, never to leave it again.

As he grew older he grew fatter and his legs grew weaker, so that they were scarcely able to carry the weight of his body.

First he ceased to go to Balasore to draw his pension, and made arrangements for Guru Charan to draw it for him.

Then he was forced to hand over all the cultivation to his son, though he still loved to walk along the ridges between the fields and see the crops growing and keep an eye on the work.

Then he found that the stairs were too much for him and had a bedroom prepared downstairs, and never went upstairs again.

Later he had a carrying chair made so that four men could carry him to his favourite place on the bank of Old Twister.

Among his neighbours he was greatly respected and had influence. And he always used his influence in the best way he knew. He taught the villagers to settle their disputes by arbitration, instead of going to law not to marry their daughters till they were fully fourteen years old, to have nothing to do with politics, and if any agitator came to the village, to beat him soundly and throw

him into the river. The older men always took his advice, but some of the youngsters were inclined to argue.

'But, Babu,' said one young fellow one day, who had been to school at Balasore, 'surely the politicians are not altogether bad. They have got a promise from the Government that all the Oriya-speaking country will be reunited and there will be a separate province of Orissa.'

'Don't thank the politicians for that,' Krupasindhu replied. 'Thank the English officials.'

'It is true that the officials have supported our national demand, but it's the politicians who make the fuss, and Government never does anything unless somebody makes a fuss. But don't you think it's a good idea?'

'It is a good idea. But do you think it will make much difference? When Bihar and Orissa were separated from Bengal we thought we should get rid of the Bengalis, but they are still here. Do you think they will go away when Orissa is separated from Bihar?'

'But that isn't all. When Orissa has been made a separate province we shall ask for a king of our own. Then, indeed, we shall have our own holy country all to ourselves.'

'That is a good idea—a beautiful idea. Orissa reunited! The ancient Kingdom of Utkal revived! We shall be a nation again. If only I might live to see it!'

Krupasindhu continued always to keep himself informed of the welfare of his relations, though he no longer visited anybody. Dayanidhi was also getting feeble, and could not go and see his brothers. He had made over the care of his cultivation to one of his sons, who managed to get a pretty good living out of their ten acres. His other son was in the police, making a little money, but very cautiously being warned by his father's example. Haribandhu, having lived all his life on the land, was far more vigorous than his brothers, and often went to see them both. He had not had his sons taught English, but taught them

to love the land and to be content with agriculture, which is the honourablest of all professions. But his two sons-in-law were at college, one meaning to become a lawyer and the other a school-master.

Guru Charan was getting on well in the Collector's office at Balasore. Krupasindhu's two sons-in-law had also entered the service of Government. Krupasindhu had good reason to be satisfied with the welfare of his relations, but he always took care to save money, and built up a good reserve, because he said, you never know when one of the lads will get into trouble and need help.

Sitting in his chair on the bank of the river, he loved to muse on his successful career. It was pleasant to remember how, when he had been granted the title of Rai Sahib, the Commissioner had congratulated him, taking him by the hand and saying many kind things; how the Collector had called at his house and drunk tea in his parlour—an honour that was seldom accorded to anyone except noblemen with large estates and long pedigrees; and how he had been to the durbar and been presented to His Excellency the Governor of the Province. It was pleasant to reflect that he had achieved all this by hard work and devotion to duty.

As he grew older Krupasindhu grew more and more fond of children, and all the children in the village used to gather round his knee and call him Grand-dad, and make him tell them stories about giants. And the older children and the schoolboys used to come too, and the villagers encouraged their boys to go, because the old man used to give them good advice.

He used to teach them always to be truthful and honest, and to be law-abiding and loyal to Shri Bharateshwar, and to hate foreigners (especially Bengalis), but to love their own countrymen, and to love above all things the holy land of Utkal.

GLOSSARY

ALIF, BE, SE	The first three letters of the Persian alphabet
BEHERA	A man of the cowherd caste
BHADRALOK	A respectable person
BHADUA	A pimp
BHARATESHWAR	The Emperor (or Empress) of India
CHADDAR	A shawl
CHAPKAN	A long coat, very like an achkan, except that the opening over the chest is in the shape of a semicircle, and is closed by a piece of cloth of the same shape, which is fastened with a number of small buttons
CHOBDAR	Mace-bearer
CUTCHERRY	Courthouse
DARU	Spirit distilled from rice and flavoured with the flowers of the Mahua-tree
ELAKA	Jurisdiction; the area over which an officer's authority extends
GARHJAT	'Land of Castles'. The mountainous tract which separates Orissa from Chota Nagpur
GOWNA	When a girl is married in infancy this ceremony is per-

	formed when she becomes mature enough to go and live with her husband
HATHIANA	Elephant-money: an illegal cess levied by a landlord on his tenants for the purchase of an elephant
ITTARDAN	A highly ornate container for ittar of roses, a scent made from rose petals
JAGARNATH	Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe: one of the incarnations of Shri Krishna
JAGIR	A service tenure
JAGIRDAR	The tenant of a jagir; one who renders service for his land instead of paying rent.
KARAN	The writer caste of Orissa: pronounced 'korron'
KHALASSI	A man whose duty is to pitch and strike tents
KILLAJAT	Certain estates which, though not situated on the border like Garhjat, used to be held on similar terms. These estates are to be found on the great rivers, their original purpose having been to suppress piracy
KOK SHASTRA	Ancient Sanskrit 'Art of Love'
KROS	A measure of length, about two miles
MARKANDE	The name of one of the holy tanks at Puri
MARSE	Marseilles

MISSY BABA	'Little Miss'; it implies an English girl bred in India, as distinct from a young lady straight out from England
MOHURRIR	A vernacular clerk; one who deals only with vernacular papers and is not required to know English
MUKHTARKHANA	Law library. The place where mukhtars (lawyers) meet their clients
PALKI	See 'plankin'
PANDA	Pilgrim guide
PAPITA	Papaya
PICE	Old coin: one-sixtyfourth of a rupee
PLANKIN	A palanquin
QADAM-I-RASUL	Footprint of the Prophet. In this mosque is preserved a large stone on which is what looks like a human footprint, which is said to be the footprint of the Prophet Mohammed
SANSKROOT	The Oriya way of pronouncing 'Sanskrit'
SERISHTADAR	Office Superintendent. The head of the clerical staff of the Collector's office
SHAMIANA	A large tent made of coloured canvas with silken ropes and silver poles
TESTWORK	A testwork was a public work usually road-mending, which was intended to test the con-

	dition of the people. If they flocked to the testworks in great numbers and many of them were emaciated, it was known that there was a famine. If not, it would only be 'distress', or perhaps, a false alarm
TONJON	A conveyance peculiar to Orissa. It consists of an ordinary office chair, a rest for the feet, and a small desk—like a school desk, with a place to keep papers in—the whole affair being fitted with a pole at each end, so that it can be carried like a sedan chair
TOOK HIS BELT OFF	This was in accordance with a custom called *kamal khulai*, or loosening of the belt
TUMBLE-HOME	A ship is said to be built with a 'tumble-home' when it is narrower at the top than at the waterline

Set in pre-Independence India, this unusual tale wittily depicts some of the harsh realities of that time. It is the story of how Krupasindhu grew from a shy young apprentice clerk into a most important man, along a path strewn with rewarding 'services' to the English Sahibs and highly profitable 'acts of kindness' to worthwhile—that is, rich—fellow Indians. Krupasindhu's successful career encompasses a world existing apart from the world wars, famines, droughts, riots and the Freedom Movement which form an unobtrusive background to this tongue-in-cheek tale.

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