

CHAPTER XIV

GAZETTEER

Alwakhowa — This is the second most important cattle fair in the district, and one of the largest of its kind in the province. The fair is held annually in October or November on the occasion of the Rash Purnima festival in honour of Krishna, and lasts from 8 to 15 days. The cattle sold there are mostly cart bullocks of the Hansi type bred in Behar. The price of a pair varies from Rs. 100 to Rs. 200 and a very fine pair suitable for *shampani* use may fetch as much as Rs. 300. Large numbers of elephants are brought for sale from the surrounding districts and from Assam, while from the Punjab come herds of camels and *dumba* or fat-tailed sheep. Both of the latter are for eating, it being considered the correct thing amongst the better class Muhammadans to give a feast on the occasion of the Id festival at which camel forms the *piece de resistance*, while fat-tailed sheep are considered a great delicacy amongst all classes and fetch a very high price. A fair number of ponies are brought for sale from Bhutan and Behar, but it is difficult to pick up a good animal. Besides the sale of livestock a brisk trade is carried on in cloth, metalware, etc., the shopkeepers belonging mostly to the locality and moving from one fair to another during the cold season.

There is no village properly so-called at Alwakhowa, but Baliya village is not far off and the proprietor of the fair, a local zamindar, has his house in the vicinity.

Alwakhowa is situated in the Thakurgaon Sub-division some 18 miles north-west of Thakurgaon close to the main road running through Baliyadangi and Lahirihat.

Balurghat — Head-quarters village of the Sub-division of the same name, situated in $25^{\circ} 13' N.$ and $88^{\circ} 47' E.$, on the banks of the Atrai river, containing a population of 3,220. It lies 32 miles to the south of Dinajpur town and is connected with it by a main road. It contains the Sub-divisional offices, civil and criminal courts, a registration office, and a high school. The latter has some 200 pupils and is a promising institution. There is a large and well found hospital-dispensary maintained principally by private subscriptions, the local zamindar, Babu Rajendra Nath Sanyal, being a liberal subscriber. This gentleman, who lives in the immediate vicinity, was not long since a ward under the Court of Wards and still maintains the former European Manager's bungalow as a guest-house, at which Government officials on tour are made welcome. There is little worth describing in the village of Balurghat itself. It is a very ordinary Bengali village in appearance, though, being situated on the high banks of a fairly large river, it is well drained and healthier than many of the villages in the district. The view from both banks of the river is picturesque enough, especially in the rains.

Balurghat Sub-division — Southern Sub-division of the district, lying between $24^{\circ} 55'$ and $25^{\circ} 32' N.$, and $88^{\circ} 25'$ and $89^{\circ} 0' E.$, with an area of 1,177 square miles. It contains a population of 447,343, the density being 328 per square mile. The number of villages is 2,631. The Sub-division is divided for administrative purposes into five police circles, viz., Balurghat, Gangarampur, Porsha, Patnitola and Phulbari. It also contains the independent police out-post of Kumarganj which was separated from the Kotwali thana of the Sadar Sub-division in 1909. Till 1904 Balurghat formed part of the Sadar Sub-division under the direct control of the Collector. In that year it was formed into a separate Sub-division under a Deputy Collector of the Provincial Service. As elsewhere in the district, the Muhammadans amongst the indigenous population are slightly in excess of the Hindus. The Sub-division is re-

markable for containing the bulk of the Santal and Chota Nagpur settlers who, as has been explained elsewhere, show a decided preference for the Barind tracts, which are a marked feature of the southern portion of Balurghat.

Churaman — A big village on the Mahananda on the south-western border of the district, in the jurisdiction of the Itahar out-post. It is 43 miles by road from Dinajpur and 14 miles from Raiganj railway station. It is a considerable grain mart, the paddy and other produce grown in the surrounding country being exported in boats down the Mahananda. The Churaman zamindars, an old family with considerable estates in the neighbourhood, have their home here, and their family residence, a large *pukka* building on the river bank, looks very picturesque to one approaching the village from the east. The estate is now under the management of the Court of Wards and a few years ago, as the old house seemed in danger of being cut away by the river, it was decided to build the ward a new house at Durgapur, a place 7 miles off on the road to Raiganj. This was recently completed and is a most palatial building with extensive grounds. The ward, who is quite young still, and is being educated to Calcutta, seldom lives there, however. There is an excellent dispensary maintained by the estate at Churaman, as also a boys' Middle English School and a model girls' school. The population at the last census was 810.

Dinajpur — Head-quarters town of the Dinajpur district, situated in 25° 38' N. and 88° 38' E., on the eastern bank of the Punarbhaha just below its junction with the Dhepa. The town comprises an area of about 4 square miles and its average height above mean sea-level is 112 to 120 feet.

POPULATION

The population at the last Census was 15,945. There is reason to suppose that in the heyday of the Dinajpur Raj, the town was a very much larger and more important place than it is now. Buchanan Hamilton speaks of this decline in size and importance, yet he estimates the number of homesteads in his day at 5,000 and the population as between 25,000 and 30,000. It seems that in 1807 a terrible fire occurred which destroyed the greater portion of the town proper, and that it has never recovered from this visitation. Nevertheless, the Revenue Surveyor, Major Sherwill, estimates the population in about the year 1860 at 40,000. If

this estimate were to be accepted, no explanation is forthcoming of the enormous decrease in population in recent times. I doubt if the estimates of either of these old authorities are to be relied on, but we may accept the fact that the population of the present day is very much less than it was 100 to 150 years ago.

Buchanan Hamilton in describing Dinajpur said it might be divided into four portions, *viz.*, Dinajpur proper, Raiganj, Kanchanghat and Paharpur. For purposes of description this division may be retained, a new quarter, Pulhat, which has recently been included in the Municipality, being added. Dinajpur proper is the north-eastern quarter of the town where the Maharaja Bahadur of Dinajpur has his residence. This quarter, as being originally the seat of Government, has given its name to the town and district. The name itself is probably derived from some former prince Dinaj or Dinwaj who had his place there, but if such a prince existed his memory has been lost. Raiganj is the central portion of the town containing shops, merchants' godowns, markets, etc.; Kanchanghat is the western portion of the town close to the river. It appears to have been formerly a business quarter, but is nowadays mostly occupied by the houses and gardens of well-to-do persons. Paharpur is the southern portion of the town containing the jail, the hospital, the railway station, the courts, and the residences of the officers of Government. Pulhat is a village on the extreme south and contains all the principal rice *golas*. A small bi-weekly market is held here. The old names I have given for the various quarters of the town have been largely superseded by more recent names applying to smaller areas. Rajganj, for instance, is split up into Munshipara, Nimtoli, Ganeshtola, Kayahpatti, Basaniapatti and Kshatripara. To the west along the river bank we get Sastitola, Baluadanga, Ghasipara and Chawlapatti; to the north are situated Ramnagar, Kalitola, and Barabandar; and on the east is the large quarter of Balubari. The local gentry have their homes in Sastitola, Ghasipara, Kalitola, Barabandar, and Balubari on the outskirts of the town. North of the railway line, the town differs little from any other Eastern Bengal bazar. The houses and shops are built either of brick or mud, some of them with corrugated iron roofs, and have no distinctive features. The houses of the gentry are of the usual Bengal *bari* type, *i.e.*, the dwelling house is a brick structure sur-

rounded by huts of various shapes and sizes and the whole is generally enclosed by a brick or mud wall. Sometimes a small garden with mango and jack trees is included in the homestead. The roads are, on the whole, well kept, being repaired by convict labour, as they were 100 years ago. There are three markets in the town, viz., the Gudri or daily bazar in the centre of the town; the Railbazar Hat in Barabandar (so-called because at one time it was enclosed with wooden rails), the principal market, held twice a week, on Sundays and Thursdays; and Pulhat, a small market, held every Monday and Friday.

South of the railway line the appearance of the station changes greatly, and it can fairly claim to be considered one of the prettiest in Eastern Bengal. The country is high and open and the fine *maidan*, nearly two miles in circumference, dotted here and there with handsome trees, gives it a park-like appearance. On the east and west the *maidan* is bordered by fine avenues of mango and other trees while to the south of it runs the channel of the Ghagra. On the east immediately south of the railway line lie the Judge's and Magistrate's Courts and the other Government offices, and the Judge's bungalow. To the east of these are the Reserve Police lines with a spacious parade ground in front of them to the south. On the opposite side of the *maidan* are the new Circuit house and the Civil Surgeon's and Police Superintendent's bungalows. The Collector's house, a fine old brick structure built in the thirties, lies some distance outside the Municipality to the south-west close to the river bank, and from the flat roof of this building a beautiful view of the river and of the distant Himalayas is to be obtained. At certain times of the year Kinchinjunga and other snow peaks may be seen. The soil of this part of the station is almost pure sand deposited at one time or another by the river, and the rank vegetation with which so many Bengal civil stations are cursed is conspicuous by its absence. Several fine specimens of the Indian fig are to be seen in this part of the town, the finest of all, a magnificent banyan, in the Collector's compound. There were formerly at one time or another several buildings on the *maidan* itself. Of these the only survivors are the European Club, a squat brick building erected early in the last century by a former Judge, Mr. Grant, and the old Fouzdari Record Room, which must be nearly 100 years

old. The former building has recently been repaired by the Maharaja Bahadur, at his own cost, as a compliment to the members of the Club. The northern portion of the *maidan* is the property of Government. Of the remainder, about one half is rented by Government from the Maharaja of Dinajpur at a fixed rent in perpetuity, while the other half, mostly land at a lower level subject to occasional inundation from the Ghagra, as well as the lands lying to the east and west along the north bank of this stream, are unoccupied waste lands belonging to the same landlord and are commonly used for grazing. On the west of the *maidan* behind the Civil Surgeon's and Police Superintendent's bungalows is a large tank, called the Zulum-Sagar from its having been excavated by a former Collector with jail labour. This in course of time, had become overgrown with weeds and partly silted up and was a famous breeding ground for mosquitoes. In 1909-10, a very dry year, the greater portion of the tank having become dry, it was cleaned out and deepened and is now a fine sheet of water. One of the prettiest parts of Dinajpur is the fine mango avenue bordering the last two miles of the Murshidabad road as it approaches Pulhat from the south. This forms a pleasant ride even in the hottest weather while another $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles along a more or less open road brings one to the Ramsagar, the most picturesque tank in the district. In the days when Dinajpur was more important than it is now and many European officers were stationed there, the Maharaja maintained a comfortable rest-house at this spot, and it was a favourite week-end resort.

There are few buildings of any great beauty or interest in Dinajpur. The Maharaja Bahadur's residence is a collection of brick buildings of various periods, partly in the European and partly in the Hindu style, surrounded by a high brick wall. It contains various family temples and has a dispensary attached to it, at which the poor people of the vicinity are treated free. Two parallel canals or moats, called Ramdanra, run from the precincts of the palace for some distance in a southerly direction where they join. These were at one time deep and full of water and were used for ceremonial processions and boat races. They may still be seen from the railway line, but are partly silted up and full of weeds and jungle. Opposite the main entrance is a large rose garden. The bungalows of the Judge and Collector are flat-roofed brick buildings of the old Anglo-Indian type.

BUILDINGS

Though comfortable enough, they can hardly be called beautiful. The houses of the other European officers are quite modern and do not merit description. There is a large two-storied new Circuit house, spacious and comfortable, with a pretty view of the *maidan*. The courts of the judge and Magistrate are brick buildings of the usual type, so also is the High English school. The hospital-dispensary has recently been enlarged and improved and is now quite a model of its kind. It has a commodious female hospital attached to it, which unfortunately is not much appreciated, though a lady doctor is employed to treat female patients. Behind the High school is a large new hostel for Muhammadan boys. This is a red brick building built in quadrangular shape containing a reading room, library, quarters and cook-houses for the boys, and family quarters for the master in charge. The railway station is of no great size or importance, and the buildings connected with it are neither elegant nor imposing. There are few buildings of any archaeological interest in the town or its neighbourhood. In Kalitola, close to the present thana building, is a temple of Kali of some antiquity called the Mashan Kali temple. The Court of Justice of the Dinajpur Raj used to be held in a building close by, and condemned criminals were executed before the image. The present keeper of the temple is of the Hari caste, and is the Government executioner. In Ganeshtola is a temple of Ganesh with an idol of great antiquity brought from Bannagar, the city of Ban Raja, the mythical prince round whom so many of the local traditions centre.

INSTITUTIONS

There are few institutions of any sort in Dinajpur. The European Club, which has its club house on the *maidan*, is a small affair with only about half a dozen members. So far as can be ascertained it must be at least 100 years old, but it has no records and it is impossible to say exactly when it was first started. A club and library known as the Dinajpur Institute has recently been started by Indian gentry of the town and has a good many members. The Indian Government officials and the Police officers have small clubs of their own. There is a prosperous football club in the town to which many of the young men belong. It includes Government clerks and police officers besides a considerable non-official element, and matches are arranged from time to time with teams from other districts. A portion of the *maidan* has been levelled at the expense of the club and

is reserved as a football ground. No newspaper is published in Dinajpur at present.

The climate and drainage of Dinajpur town have been treated of, at some length, in the chapter on Public Health, but it may not perhaps be out of place to give a brief resumee of the subject here. The soil in the northern and central portion of the town is a stiff ash-coloured clay, and is used by the inhabitants for making plinths and house walls. The result as regards health has been disastrous. The whole surface of the soil is now a series of holes and excavations dug without method or system and filled with dirty water, weeds, and jungle. In addition to this the two so-called streams, the Kachai and Ghagra, flow into the town from the north and meet on the eastern edge of the bazar. These two streams, which are practically dry for some six months of the year, receive most of the sewage of the town and are filthy to a degree. With such conditions it is not surprising that malaria should be very prevalent. In 1851 an attempt was made to drain the pools and depressions in the western part of the town, and a channel was cut leading by way of the Ghagra stream into the Punarbhaba, which was called Scott's Canal after Mr. Scott, the then Collector. In 1878 a committee consisting of the Sanitary Commissioner of Bengal, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Municipality, the Executive Engineer and the Civil Surgeons of Dinajpur and Rangpur, was constituted to enquire into the reason for the unhealthiness of the town and submit a scheme for sanitary improvement. This committee came to the conclusion that the cause of unhealthiness was defective drainage. In the rains the flood level of the Punarbhaba rose above that of the Ghagra, the stream of the latter was checked, and its water, contaminated with sewage, overflowed its banks and ran into the town. To obviate the nuisance the following works were undertaken :—

(1) An embankment was constructed along the bank of the Punarbhaba.

(2) The mouth of the Ghagra, which formerly flowed into the Punarbhaba a little to the north of the Collector's bungalow, was blocked up, and a canal connecting the Ghagra and Scott's Canals with the Punarbhaba at Ghughudanga, 6 miles below the town, was constructed. These works were found to be only partially successful in improving the drainage of the town, and in 1887 another

CLIMATE
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canal known as the Thomson Canal was cut at the cost of the Maharaja, and the beds of the Kachai and Ghagra were properly levelled and dressed. During the course of the last 20 years the beds of these streams have again become a chain of filthy pools, and various schemes have been put forward for improving them so as to ensure a ready flow of water to carry off the drainage. An elaborate scheme for making a portion of these channels *pakka* has recently been prepared by the Sanitary Engineer, Eastern Bengal and Assam, and is still under the consideration of Government. Meantime an anti-malaria campaign, in charge of special Assistant Surgeon and under the general supervision of the Civil Surgeon, has been started in the town at Government expense. The object of the campaign is to clear jungle, clean compounds, fill up small ditches and hollows, treat pools and tanks with raw kerosene to destroy mosquito larvae, and distribute quinine gratis. A considerable staff of coolies and others is maintained for this purpose, and the work that is being done should in time prove beneficial to the health, not to speak of the comfort, of the inhabitants.

WATER SUPPLY

Drinking water is obtained entirely from wells. Every well-to-do person has a well, generally a *katcha* one, in his own compound, and besides these there are several large masonry wells for the use of the public within the Municipality. There is a large Government masonry well on the *maidan* near the old Record Room and another in the compound of the Magistrate's Kachahri behind the court house. All the existing wells are percolation wells and none of them are of any great depth. The supply of water is in consequence liable to run short during the dry season. A trial boring has been made on the *maidan*, to ascertain if the strata will permit of the sinking of wells on the improved system by which a pipe is sunk below the bottom of the well to such a depth as will secure a constant supply of water. It is expected that the construction of some wells of this kind will shortly be begun.

LIGHTING

The lighting of the town is very imperfect. Kerosene lamps are placed at intervals along the roads within the Municipality, but these are mostly too far apart to be of much use, and on windy nights they are apt to be extinguished.

Dinajpur Sub-division — Head-quarters Sub-division of the district between 25° 14' and 25° 50' N. and be-

tween 88° 5' and 89° 27' E., with an area of 1,598 square miles. The Sub-division, which is irregular in shape, comprises the central portion of the district and extends from Raiganj on the west to Ghoraghat on the southeast. All the principal rivers of the district run through it in a southerly direction. For administrative purposes the Sub-division is divided into six police circles, *viz.*, Raiganj, Bansihari, Kaliyaganj, Kotwali, Parbatipur, and Nawabaganj, and three independent police out-posts, namely, Itahar, Chirirbandar, and Ghoraghat. It contains 3,220 villages and one town, Dinajpur, the head-quarters of the district. The population at the census of 1911 was 694,954, as compared with 637,364 in 1901, and the density 435 persons to the square mile, as compared with 380 and 466 persons to the square mile in the Balurghat and Thakurgaon Sub-divisions respectively.

Gangarampur — Village in the Balurghat Sub-division on the bank of the Punarhaba river. It is situated on a main road 18 miles south-west from Dinajpur town and is the head-quarters of a police circle 262 square miles in extent. A charitable dispensary has recently been opened there. There are several interesting places in the neighbourhood. Within a mile of the village there is a splendid old tank, called Dhaldigghi, dating from Muhammadan times, where the third largest cattle fair in the district is held. This fair is a very old one, but of recent years its importance has declined, owing to the competition of other fairs which have come into existence in the vicinity. In Muhammadan times Gangarampur was called Damdama and was a frontier military post. The commander of the troops, called the Wazir, is said to have lived on the banks of the Dhaldigghi tank, which was probably excavated by the Muhammadans, as its shape seems to indicate. In later times under British rule Damdama was the seat of a Munsif as well as of a Daroga. A little above Gangarampur on the east bank of the Punarhaba are the extensive ruins of Bannagar, the city of Ban Raja, a mythical Hindu monarch, a devotee of Shiva, who fought with Krishna, and is said to have been ultimately overthrown by an infidel race from the west, possibly identical with Alexander's Greeks. The site of this ancient city appears to have originally contained the remains of many stone temples and other buildings of massive architecture, but for centuries now the ruins have served as a quarry for builders

all over the district, and four pillars of coarse granite and a slab or two of sandstone, which form part of a ruined mosque but clearly have a much earlier origin, are all that is left of its ancient grandeur. Other portions of the mosque are of brick and indeed the whole site of the city is so thickly strewn with bricks that it is clear that a great number of brick buildings must have stood there at one time. I think it probable that most of these bricks date merely from Muhammadan times, and are the remains of the lines in which the troops were quartered. Tradition attributes the Tapandighi, a fine tank more nearby resembling a lake which is situated a few miles south of Gangarampur, to Ban Raja, and near it are many remains connected with his name. Another interesting old tank situated in the Gangarampur jurisdiction is the Kaldighi lying a little to the east of Dhaldighi. This tank is attributed to Kala Rani, queen of Ban Raja. Two miles south of Gangarampur is Nayabazar, a large grain mart on the banks of the Punarbhaba, from which a considerable export of paddy is carried on by river.

Gareya — This, though a small village with only 591 inhabitants, is a big market and jute centre. It is situated 8 miles east of Thakurgaon, on the road from that place to Nilphamari. Three zamindars have their *kachhahris* there, and there are several jute godowns and Marwari shops in the village. During the jute season 1,500 to 2,000 cart-loads of jute are sold every *hat* day. The place is absolutely devoid of attraction, the country round about being flat and ugly and without anything in the way of antiquities to relieve the monotony. A good deal of jute is grown in the vicinity.

Ghoraghat — A village in the Sadar Sub-division, in the south-eastern corner of the district, 18 miles east of the railway station of Hilli in Bogra. It is the head-quarters of a police outpost 70 square miles in extent, and is situated on the bank of the Karatoya river. A considerable trade in grain is carried on there. Ghoraghat was an important place in ancient times. Buchanan Hamilton says of it, "Ghoraghat is the place where Virat Raja kept his horses, from which circumstance its name is derived. In the time of Nazrat Khan, king of Gaur, it belonged to a certain Nilambar Raja, who resided at Kantedwar in the Rangpur district, and had at it a fort surrounded by a forest. In the conquest of this infidel, Nazrat employed Ismail Ghazi, a very holy man, as

well as a good officer. He reduced all the neighbouring country, and took up his residence in the fort of Ghoraghat, which had formerly been constructed by the Hindus, and changed the name of the place into Nazratabad, after his master's title. He then cleared the adjacent woods, and a city arose, which was much increased by the addition of Arangabad to the north and Narangabad to the south. The principal increase seems to have been owing to the military station (Fauzdari) of the north-east frontier having been withdrawn from Rangamati, after the unsuccessful attempt on Assam, and to the army having been stationed at Ghoraghat, for the Governor of the place in all late records is said to have been called Fauzdar of Rangamati. The person who brought the troops from Rangamati to Ghoraghat is said to have been called Mahammad and he was succeeded in his government by his son Zaynulabdin. Now from an inscription over a mosque, near the ruins of Governor's house, it appears that Zaynulabdin, the son of Mahammad Hoseyn, son of Mahammad Saleh Izdanah, was Governor A.H. 1153. This mosque is now deserted, no worship having been performed in it for 40 years, and it never has been large. The Governor's house near this mosque is quite ruinous, although the gateway is pretty entire, and many walls are standing. These show that the size has been considerable; but no traces remain either of elegance or splendour. The city in the time of its greatness extended 8 or 10 miles in length, and about two in width, and bricks and ruins may be traced in different parts through that extent; but there is no reason to suppose that it was a close built town of these dimensions. On the contrary, there is every appearance of by far the greater part having been cultivated fields with houses and gardens scattered among them. Besides the mosque already mentioned there were several others but all of very small dimensions, nor are there any traces of any great public buildings. The place suffered no particular misfortune, and has gone to decay merely owing to the removal of the courts of justice and of the army. The fort seems to have always been a sorry place, and the only remains are a ditch, surrounding a space on the bank of the river, about a mile in length, and half a mile in width. Part has been carried away by the river. The most celebrated place in the town is the tomb of Ismael Ghazi, placed on the south-east corner of the fort. He is much

respected and feared both by the Hindus and Muhammadans, and a small canopy is still hung over his tomb which is very ruinous." Several Zamindars, of whom the most important are the Maharaja of Cooch Bihar and the Kumar of Bardhan Kuthi, who belongs to a branch of the Dinajpur Raj family, own land in the vicinity and have *kachhahris* in the village.

Haripur — A village in the Thakurgaon Sub-division, on the Purnea border, 37 miles north-west of Dinajpur and close to the main road to Purnea. It has a population of 724 inhabitants, and is important as being the home of several zamindars, all more or less related to each other, who own all the land in the neighbourhood. One of the smaller annual cattle fairs is held here, and there is also a large weekly market, a charitable dispensary and a Middle English school. The estate of one of the leading zamindars was for several years under the management of the Court of Wards and has only recently been released.

Joyganj — A big village of 2,355 inhabitants in the Thakurgaon Sub-division. It is situated on the Thakurgaon-Nilphamari road, 19 miles east of Thakurgaon, on the east bank of the Atrai. It used to be an important centre of jute and other trade, but its importance in this respect has declined in recent years. The zamindars of Teota, who have large estates in Dacca, own land in the vicinity and have a *kachhahri* in the village. Some years ago these zamindars started a co-operative grain bank called a *dharma gola* in the village. This institution has become very popular amongst the cultivators. The principle on which it is worked is that every member, besides paying an annual subscription of 8 annas for the privilege of membership, deposits in the bank as much paddy as he can spare from his year's crop. This is utilised for distribution amongst the members either for seed, or in years of scarcity for food, every borrower repaying the bank $1\frac{1}{2}$ maunds for every maund borrowed, after harvesting his crop. The zamindar's contribution to the scheme was a present of a fine corrugated iron godown for storing the grain. The scheme has worked so well that several smaller *golas* have been started in neighbouring villages on the estates of these zamindars. A small cattle fair is held at Joyganj every year in the month of March.

Kantanagar — A small village on the Dinajpur-Thakurgaon road, 12 miles north of Dinajpur, on the banks

of the Dhepa. The chief point of interest about the place is a large Hindu temple which Buchanan Hamilton described as by far the finest he had seen in Bengal. It is situated in the ruins of a fort, which is said to have belonged to Virat Raja. The building was begun in 1704 by Raja Prannath, the greatest of the Dinajpur Rajas, who brought an image of Kantaji (Vishnu) from Delhi and set it up there. The temple, originally on a small scale, was extended as the building went on and took a long time in completion. For want of attention it soon fell into disrepair and Mr. Hatch, one of the early Collectors of the district, had it thoroughly restored less than 100 years after it was first begun. It again became almost a ruin by earthquake in 1897, and the present Maharaja, partly at the instance of Government, which thought it a pity that such a fine specimen of Hindu architecture should be lost, is spending considerable sums in restoring it. The building, a square two-storied brick structure, rests upon a massive plinth of sandstone blocks, brought from the ruins of the ancient city of Bannagar near Gangarampur. Some people say, indeed, that the idols of Krishna and Radha worshipped in the temple, come from the same place. The whole outside of the temple is covered with beautiful brick reliefs, the work of Krishnagar artists, representing every phase of Indian life. The roof was formerly adorned with turrets or cupolas, which, however, were all destroyed in the 1897 earthquake. The temple is well worth a visit from anyone interested in antiquities. An annual religious fair is held at Kantanagar on the occasion of the Rash-Jatra, to which many pilgrims resort. The Kantanagar temple, though beautiful and interesting is, of course, quite a modern affair, but the old fort in which the temple stands is of great antiquity and would be of surpassing interest to the antiquarian if only there were something besides mere tradition to go by in determining the date and history of the ruins. It is said to be one of the places where Virat Raja, a very ancient and apparently powerful monarch, kept his herds of cattle. The space covered by the fort is about a mile square and is surrounded and intersected by high ramparts now overgrown with jungle. Within the fortifications are several large mounds possibly the remains of ancient buildings, but all the ruins seem to be of earth and no bricks or stones are to be found from which any information might be gained.

Khansama — A village of 1,798 inhabitants in the Thakurgaon Sub-division. It lies nine miles west of Darwani railway station in the Rangpur district, and 23 miles north-east of Dinajpur on the east bank of the Atrai. It is the head-quarters of an independent police out-post, 80 square miles in area, is a big centre of the jute trade, and has a large weekly market.

Lahirihat — A considerable village in the Thakurgaon Sub-division, 14 miles west of Thakurgaon, and 48 miles north-west of Dinajpur. It contains a registration office and one of the three Guru Training schools in the district. It is a large centre for jute, and exports not only raw jute but hand-made gunny cloth. There is a large weekly market here.

Mahipal-dighi — This a large tank by the side of the Malda road about 18 miles south-west of Dinajpur in the Ban̄sahari thana. It is thus described by Buchanan Hamilton :- "In the north-east part of this division is a very large tank, supposed to have been dug by Mohipal Raja, and called after his name. The sheet of water extends 3,800 feet from north to south, and 1,100 feet from east to west. Its depth must be very considerable, as the banks are very large. On the banks are several small places of worship, both Hindu and Moslem, but none of any consequence; nothing remains to show that Mohipal ever resided either at the tank, or at Mohipur, near it; but there is a vast number of bricks, and some stones, that probably belonged to religious buildings, that have been erected by the person who constructed the tank. One of the stones is evidently the lintel of a door, and of the same style as those at Bannagar, and may have been brought from the ruins of that city. The people in the neighbourhood have an idea that there has been a building in the centre of the tank; but this is probably devoid of truth, as there is no end to the idle stories which they relate concerning the tank and Mohipal. Both are considered as venerable or rather awful, and the Raja is frequently invoked in times of danger. In 1793 a branch factory of a larger indigo concern in Malda was erected at Mahipal-dighi by a Mr. Thomas, who combined the functions of indigo planter and Baptist Missionary. The remains of the old indigo vats are still to be seen on the north bank of the tank. It does not appear that the factory was ever very large or prosperous, or that Mr. Thomas had any great success

with his mission work in that neighbourhood. It is said that Mr. Thomas utilised some of the old bricks and stones, spoken of by Buchanan Hamilton, in erecting his factory buildings. The tank with its lofty embankments covered with well grown trees, and its great expanse of water fringed with tall feathery-topped reeds, is one of the most beautiful spots in the district, and something of grandeur and mystery still clings to it. A remarkable thing about this tank is that fish of the carp family caught in it are so tough and oily as to be quite uneatable. The flesh indeed is said to resemble rubber in consistency. I can offer no explanation of this phenomenon.

Nawabganj — A village in the Sadar Sub-division, situated seven miles east of the Charkai railway station on the old channel of the Karatoya which is now little more than a string of *bils* or marshes. It is the centre of a police circle of 168 square miles and used in former days to be the head-quarters of a Munsif also. There are some places of antiquarian interest in the vicinity, notably Sitakot or Sitakunda, a square mound of bricks surrounding a cavity which may have been a small tank. The goddess Sita is said to have lived here during her banishment from Ram. A short distance away on the banks of the Karatoya is a place called Tarpanghat, where the poet and saint Valmiki used to bathe and which, owing to its sacred character, is still resorted to twice a year by the Hindus of the locality for the same purpose. Five or six miles from Nawabganj thana, in a patch of tree jungle, is the ruin of a dwelling of some sort. It is of no very great extent, and is surrounded by a high mud wall and contains several mounds which may be the remains of small buildings. It is called Ban Raja's house but if Ban Raja was the great prince he is said to have been, it is more likely that some servants of his, possibly cowherds, lived there, than that he lived there himself. The history of the spot is lost in the mists of tradition and it is impossible to estimate the real age of the ruins.

Nekmarad — A small village of 474 inhabitants in the Thakurgaon Sub-division, 16 miles south-west of Thakurgaon, and 37 miles north-west of Dinajpur. The village is of no importance in itself, but is nevertheless worthy of mention as the place where the biggest cattle fair in East Bengal is held every April. The description already given of the Alwakhoa fair applies to this also, except that rather

fewer elephant, camels, and fat-tailed sheep, and a larger number of cattle are sold. There are several proprietors of the fair, of whom the principal are the Maldwar and Haripur zamindars, and these divide the profits of the fair between them. The usual commission charged is 8 annas to Re. 1 per every head of cattle sold according to the value. In recent times the fair was closed by order of the Magistrate as it was feared that, attracting as it did large numbers of up-country men, it might bring plague into the district. It remained closed till 1907, when the permission of Government was obtained to its reopening. Since then it has been regularly held and is beginning to regain some of its former importance.

The place derives its name from the Muhammadan *pir*, or saint, Nekmardan, whose remains are preserved in a thatched hut near the site of the fair, which is held in his honour. He appears to have been a very holy man, but little is known about him, and it is impossible to say the exact period at which he lived.

Nithpur — A village of 2,925 inhabitants in the Balurghat Sub-division, situated on the east bank of the Punarbhaba in the extreme south-western corner of the district. It is distant 49 miles almost due south from Dinajpur, and is 16 miles from Muchia railway station on the Katihar-Godagari line. It is identical with Porsha, the centre of the thana of that name, which has an area of 202 square miles. A charitable dispensary has recently been opened here close to the thana. Nithpur is the most important grain mart in the district and large quantities of paddy and rice are exported by river to Godagari and other marts outside the district. Imports of pulses and other food-stuffs, not commonly produced in the district, are also considerable. The population of the village itself mostly consists of up-country merchants and up-country coolies employed by them. The Porsha zamindars, the largest Muhammadan land-owners in the district, have a *kachhahri* in the village. Nithpur is surrounded on the north, west, and south by low-lying country covered with grass jungle, through which the Punarbhaba river winds its tortuous way. Besides the actual channel through which the river now flows the country is interested by old river-beds and sprinkled with many *bils*. A few years ago this tract of low marshy country was full of game of all sorts, but now beyond a stray leopard and a few duck and

partridge there is little to attract the sportsman. Considerable herds of cattle and buffaloes are grazed here in the dry season, and Santal and other settlers have already done much towards bringing the higher land under cultivation. This is one of the few parts of the district where *boro* rice is grown to any extent.

Parbatipur — A large village in the Sadar Sub-division, 19 miles east of Dinajpur, with a population, mostly foreign, of 1,914 souls. It is an important junction on the Eastern Bengal State Railway, and an appreciable part of its population consists of railway servants, railway coolies, and others more or less connected with the railway. The Station Master and the Assistant Station Master are Europeans, and it boasts a railway hospital and a railway police thana. Parbatipur is a police circle of 166 square miles and the thana head-quarters is about a mile from the railway station. A large weekly market is held here. Parbatipur is on the old main road to Rangpur and is said to have been a frontier post of the ancient kingdom of Virat Raja. There are many remains in the neighbourhood which are ascribed to this monarch. The most important of these are the ruins of a fort and city where Kichak, brother-in-law of Virat, is believed to have lived. The fort is about half a mile square and surrounded by a rampart and a ditch now overgrown with trees and scrub jungle. At a place not very far from the present thana, in a hole under a big tree, are to be seen a plough and other instruments of agriculture in stone which are ascribed to Bhim Raja, the mighty hero of the Solar race, who was a contemporary and friend of Virat's and was hospitably received by that prince when he and his brothers were expelled from their ancestral kingdom.

Phulbari — A village in the Balurghat Sub-division 26 miles south-east of Dinajpur with a population of 555. It is the centre of a thana of 160 square miles and is also a railway station on the main line between Sara and Siliguri. It contains a Sub-registry office and a charitable dispensary and was, till recently, the seat of a Munsif. A large weekly market is held in the town, and a good deal of paddy is exported. Most of the exports are carried by rail, but in the rainy season a certain amount of trade is carried by Jamuna river which flows through the village.

Raiganj — A village in the Sadar Sub-division 32 miles west of Dinajpur. It is the centre of a police circle of

243 square miles and is also a railway station. It boasts a Munsif's *kachhahri*, a registration office and a charitable dispensary. Raiganj is, next to Dinajpur, the largest and most important centre in the district. The population at the last census was returned as 4,431. The greater part of the village and the surrounding country is owned by the Maharaja of Dinajpur, who has a large *kachhahri* there, and who maintains the charitable dispensary. He derives a considerable profit from the market, in which fish is an important commodity. The churaman zamindars also have valuable property in the village. A considerable trade is carried on in jute and oil-seeds, and, besides many jute godowns belonging to native merchants, the large Greek firm of Ralli Brothers have a jute press near the railway station in which about 100 coolies are employed daily during the jute season. The river Kulik runs through the town, and there is a brisk trade by boat during the rains. The only Co-operative Credit Society in the district has its head-quarters here, though it has hitherto failed to prosper as well as might have been expected.

Ramganj — A place close to Ranisankail village in the thana of that name, on the opposite bank of the Kulik river. It is of interest as being the place of residence of the Maldwar zamindars, an old Brahmin zamindari family from Darbhanga. They are the only Maithili Brahmin zamindars in the district and have considerable estates both in Dinajpur and Purnea. They live in a large brick house of quite recent date, close to which is a charitable dispensary maintained by them, which is better attended than any other dispensary in the district.

Sapahar — A village in the Balurghat Sub-division 14 miles south-west of Balurghat. There is a big weekly market, and one of the smaller annual cattle fairs is held here. The population consists principally of Behari settlers and other foreigners, and the village has more the appearance of an up-country village than of a Bengal one, the houses being built mostly of mud after the Behar style. The surrounding country is undulating *Barind*, and good qualities of winter paddy are grown in the *hulas*. Much of this paddy is exported by cart to Balurghat, Nithpur, and elsewhere. About two miles from the village is an old tank, said to have been dug by certain Dhibar Raja about 1,000 years ago. In its centre is an eight-sided stone pillar some 34 feet

in height and 10 feet in diameter. There are some traces of iron ornaments on its top but it has no carving or inscription, so it is impossible to ascertain the object with which it was crected.

Samjhia — Village in the Sadar Sub-division of 730 inhabitants, situated on the Atrai 14 miles south-east of Dinajpur. It is the site of a large market and is an important centre of the rice trade. There is considerable export of paddy by river from the place.

Thakurgaon — Head-quarters village of the Sub-division of the same name, situated in 26° 5' N. and 88° 26' E., on the east bank of the Tangan. It is 35 miles by road from the district head-quarters and 26 miles from Nilphamari railway station. The town is an ordinary Bengali village of 1,422 inhabitants, and is not important except as being the head-quarters of the Sub-division. It contains the Sub-divisional offices, civil and criminal courts, a registration office, and a police station. By far the finest building in the town is the new High school, a handsome brick building, built by private subscriptions, with hostels for Hindu and Muhammadan boys attached to it. The necessary subscriptions were raised and the building erected largely through the instrumentality of an energetic Sub-divisional Officer who was stationed there for some years. The town possesses a good hospital maintained by the District Board. There is an old temple of Govinda (Vishnu) at Govindnagar on the other bank of the Tangan opposite the town, close to which a small annual fair is held. Govindnagar was formerly the favourite country seat of the famous Raja Ramnath, and the ruins of his house are still to be seen there overgrown with jungle. On the west bank of the Tangan opposite Thakurgaon is a patch of tree jungle some two miles long by half a mile wide. This, in places, is so thick as to be almost impenetrable, and is said to afford a refuge for several leopards and panthers.

Thakurgaon Sub-division — Northern Sub-division of the district, lying between 25° 40' and 26° 23' N., and 88° 2' and 88° 39' E., with an area of 1,171 square miles. The population in 1911 was 545,566, or 466 persons to the square mile. The density of population is considerably greater than in most other parts of the district, the population to the square mile in Thakurgaon thana being nearly equal to that in the Kotwali thana itself. The number of

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villages in the Sub-division is 1,990. It is divided for administrative purposes into four police circles, *viz.*, Thakurgaon, Ranisankail, Pirganj, and Birganj, and three independent out-posts, Atwari, Baliyadangi and Khansama. The chief town or village is Thakurgaon on the Tangan. Being further to the north the climate of the Sub-division is cooler than that of the other Sub-divisions of the district and the country generally is more thickly wooded. In the thanas of Thakurgaon and Ranisankail Muhammadans are in excess of Hindus; in the other thanas Hindus preponderate. There are few Santals or other foreigners in this Sub-division.