

Palli residents. The women wish to organise a meeting. Everyone is eager to hear something from Kinkarda. Now, just the date needs to be decided upon. And they want him to say a few words about the Women's Association.

Kinkarda listens to everything intently. Becomes rather serious. He turns to me and murmurs, 'Such trouble it is to have landed in your neighbourhood. What do I say to the ladies? What's there to say anyway?'

He looks rather worried. After remaining quiet for a while, he says with pauses, 'These days there's a problem with my throat—find it hard to talk.'

Kinkarda's face shows a sick man's distress. Shaking his head a little he says, 'No, no, it won't be a good idea to talk too much now.' His voice carries the gravity of a doctor's prohibition.

This innocent deceit is delightful indeed. I say, 'That's right, you should desist from talking for a few days. I am sure these ladies can inform the Association members that you are ill; they can organise the meeting once you get better.'

Kinkarda snaps up the suggestion. It is much to his liking. He says, 'Right, right, I will let you know when I am a little better. Then I will be able to deliver the lecture as well.'

The women depart. Kinkarda heaves a sigh of relief. A concealed smile lines his lips.

'Have you read Michael's *Meghnad Badh*? Pramila had almost tried to attack Ramachandra. I see poor Ramkinkar has no respite either.'

He happily lights a *bidi*.

'The other day you were talking about working with concrete. In the context of cheap material.'

'You know what? Something has to be done. It is dangerous to rely too much on someone else. I want to work. But where do I find the material? Who will give it to me? Where's the money? Rabindranath could barely manage Visva-Bharati's necessary finances; how could he pay me?'



Relief works on Kalobari (Black house),
Santiniketan