

# The scarce, and men and animals gasp



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BUSTER**

The ground is baked and parched, the air is like the blast of a furnace, in many places water is scarce, and men and animals gasp and pant in the heat.

At last a thunderstorm rolls up from the south-west, and, with lightning, thunder and wind, the welcome rain pours down. The change is almost magical. The air becomes delightfully cool and moist; the sun's heat is day by day moderated by clouds; the dry, parched land is quickly covered with green vegetation; and life becomes bearable. Except, however, when it is actually raining, it is still hot in the rainy season; but the heat is not fierce and dry, but steamy and sticky. The farmers now begin to be busy, ploughing and sowing the rain-soaked land for the Kharif, or autumn crops. The rainy season, though a pleasant relief from the fierce heat, has its disadvantages.

Swarms of insects appear, flying ants, flies, mosquitoes, etc., which often make life a burden. And the mosquitoes, bred by the million in the standing pools, bring malarial fever with them. And other more terrible diseases, like cholera, work havoc among the poor. But the peasants much prefer to put up with these inconveniences than a failure of the rains, with means famine.