# "NAKED FAKIR"

Robert Bernays

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# "NAKED FAKIR"

by

ROBERT BERNAYS

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To
TOM CLARKE

# PREFACE

I approached India without any previous convictions. I came upon it on my world tour, not as a politician, but as an ordinary globe-trotter puzzled to discover what the East really looked like. I intended to remain only a few weeks and write half a dozen casual articles. I stayed actually five months, and was in intimate contact with the whole drama of the Delhi pact and its aftermath.

I do not present "*Naked Fakir*" as the inevitable book which all travellers feel called upon to write, but merely as a diary of my reactions to the Indian scene and the chief characters upon its stage. I have neither the material nor the capacity to write either a history of modern India or a final appreciation of Mr. Gandhi. Of course I do not pretend to have the width of outlook and the depth of knowledge of those who spent a lifetime in India. I can only record the various scenes as they passed before me and the several acts in the exciting political drama which has not yet reached its conclusion.

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CHAPTER I

# THE GATEWAY OF INDIA

Few travellers can have entered India with more ignorance of the country or less confidence in themselves than I did on Christmas Eve, 1930. The following letter reflects my angle of approach fairly accurately the day before in the Indian Ocean.

"*S.S. Orama*
"*Christmastide.*

"My dear Aimée and Geoffrey,—It is the eve of Christmas Eve, and I have never felt less Christmassy. In a few hours I reach Colombo. All around me is scorching sun and passive blue sea, and young men in flannels and flappers in virginal white—it might, in fact, be the steamship poster come to life. Everywhere there is elegant languor.

"But I think very longingly of you all at Sloane Street— —— playing the gramophone and —— devising some ingenious Christmas charade and you answering interminable telephone calls from your hosts of admirers and —— just sitting watching you in passive adoration.

"This has been a very dreary voyage. There is accommodation for 550, and there are only sixty on board. They are all fledgling females of seventeen or dreary old men of seventy, all of which I abominate.

". . . Thank God all the fun is over to-morrow and I begin the great Indian adventure.

"At present I am rather frightened. India seems so immense and so difficult and dangerous, and I don't think I have brought enough money, and everybody says that I must have a 'bearer,' and I shall not know how to treat him and it will all be terribly hot."

*Colombo, Christmas Eve, 1930.*

Ceylon is called the gateway to India. It certainly seems to be the gateway to India's problems. I had not been in Indian waters more than a few minutes before I was up against the hopeless ignorance of the ordinary Englishman on problems of colour. As I was breakfasting on board ship on the morning of my arrival my steward appeared and apologetically informed me "that there were three coloured gentlemen to see me. I think that they have come about the baggage." I went up, to find two decrepit coolies and a

high-caste Sinhalese gentleman—a charming friend of Oxford days and now occupying a distinguished place in Ceylon politics.

However, Bandaranaike soon had his revenge. For when he took me into the local Harrods to get measured for some thin suits, I was immediately mistaken for a shop assistant by a Sinhalese, who irately enquired of me why the suits that he had ordered were not ready.

In all the big shops in India the shop-assistants are young Englishmen. It pleases the ordinary Indian to be waited on by good-looking young Englishmen in white suits who call them "sir." Only a Freud could unravel the complexes involved.

I come out into the streets, and my first dominant impression is that it is all as I had expected. Those overworked adjectives—teeming, vivid, colourful—can alone describe the scene. There is a rickshaw in actual fact—the one-man carriages drawn by coolies. I have heard their rattle in imagination since boyhood days in a hundred Eastern stories. There is an Englishman in one of them, slim and straight in white clothes and topee—just like an illustration to a short story magazine.

I begin to understand the callousness of the East as regards human life. The man who rides in a rickshaw buys the coolie's health as well as his labour. Few survive into middle age the ravages of the inevitable lung trouble. I see the same fundamental indifference to the sanctity of life in the behaviour of the driver of my car, who charges through streets more crowded than Petticoat Lane at a pace reserved in England for the Kingston by-pass.

Once outside the town, I begin to understand something of the beauty of the East. What a riot of lush vegetation! Mile upon mile of coconut groves; in the narrow valleys, acres of rice, looking like cornfields before they ripen for the harvest; and in an occasional planter's garden a blaze of colour from every form of tropical flower.

When we arrive at the house of my host's father, I begin to realise the enormous influence of Englishmen on manners and modes. For Sir Solomon Bandaranaike has the courtliness and the charm and the way of living of the best type of English country gentleman. He is as much at home in England as in Ceylon, and the signed photographs in his drawing-room show him to be a welcome guest in half the great houses of England. He had emphatically no objection to the British Raj.

I see the gulf between the generations in his son. I knew Bandaranaike at "the House." Indians at Oxford are on the whole a disaster. It is not altogether the fault of the Englishman. The best type of Indian does not

seem to come. Many of them live obscure, chattering lives in unfashionable Oxford suburbs, and only appear in the limelight when they occasionally are discovered contravening in some glaring form the conventions of Western Society.

The popularity of Bandaranaike proved that when an Indian conformed to ordinary standards he was received with open arms. We shortened his name to "Banders," and sat enthralled by his speeches at the Union. He was the finest natural orator I have ever heard, and was elected treasurer by a large majority.

He was an ardent Nationalist, and, when he returned to Ceylon, it was naturally the career of the Bar and politics to which he turned. It is as certain as anything can be that one day he will be Prime Minister of Ceylon in the new reformed constitution. But what a sweeping change! The father served for over thirty years as guide, councillor, and friend to successive governors; he has the rare distinction in Ceylon, or, indeed, India, of the K.C.M.G. The son, though his loyalty to the British connection is unquestioned, will in the end be in control of a Government which in all but name will be independent of the British Raj. It is the gulf between the Jubilee and the Round Table Conference.

We discuss all this wandering in the tropical night—heavy and mysterious and wholly thrilling. I have been in the East less than twelve hours, but the fascination of its problems and the magic of its atmosphere have got me in their clutches.

*Christmas Day.*

It was difficult to recall that at home they were probably shambling to church through slush and sleet. The heat and the dust make it all strangely unreal. I went to church and found myself the only Englishman there. But the service is in English, for Christianity in Ceylon is the religion of the Sinhalese governing class, many of whom can speak no other language. It is only for a few villagers, who, in the manner of an English feudal village, trooped up at the end, that the words of the administration of the communion were spoken in the vernacular. For the rest, it was all strangely like an English church—even to the harmonium that was out of action and the Sinhalese curate who broke out into "Hark! the herald-angels sing" to a tune so unrecognisable that a portion of the congregation evidently thought that he was singing "While shepherds watched their flocks by night," and responded accordingly.

I had hoped that going round the world would afford a certain if somewhat elaborate and expensive escape from the English Christmas.

Indeed, I have a theory that the waste places of the earth have been peopled solely by young men who want to avoid a family Christmas. But it was not to be. We had turkey and lighted Christmas pudding, even though the punkahs rhythmically beat across the table.

We went off in the afternoon to see the Colombo slums. They were worse even than an English mining village a hundred years ago. The houses I explored consisted of one narrow dungeon, without window, fireplace, or even floorboards to cover the bare earth. Any sanitary inspector in England would condemn them out of hand as cow-houses. A ditch runs outside them. It conveys the whole waste water of the street. It is used by the children as an informal lavatory. In such surroundings Ceylon's "spicy breezes" become the greatest lie of the *Ancient and Modern Hymn-book*.

I had not realised how completely we had ignored the social problem in India. It is our greatest condemnation. We have merely been policemen. It is very different, I believe, in the Sudan, where Government has itself stimulated the building of hospitals and schools and modern dwellings. "Banders" is full of plans for slum clearance. It is really tragic that for all these years we have shut out men like him from a vital share in the government of their own country. I wonder that they are not raging revolutionaries.

*In the country.*

I have been seeing something of the way the new reforms in Ceylon will work. The Donoughmore Commission has reported in favour of self-government except in the case of a few reserved powers which will remain in the hands of the Governor. We are in the heart of what will be Bandaranaike's constituency. He has a shooting-box, and, as we sit on the verandah in the steaming heat of a Ceylon night his constituents come to lay their troubles at his feet. Fresh from the militant democracy of Australia, it is strange to come up against, for the first time, the overwhelming reverence for caste. These men make deep obeisance to him; they will not sit down; if he offers them refreshment, they will not insult him by taking it in his presence; they humbly offer him presents, even if it is only—as in one case it most certainly was—a couple of oranges stolen from his garden. Then they unfold all their grievances, ranging from the breaking of a fence to the theft of a wife. I suppose that Bandaranaike is just taking the place of the English civil servant, whose verandah, according to Anglo-Indian propaganda, was at once a court of justice and a place of refuge.

But why has it been supposed for all these decades that in this kind of work an ordinary member of the English middle classes should prove more

sympathetic and efficient than one of their own natural leaders? Bandaranaike is descended from a line of princes. If there must be a governing class in Ceylon, he is surely more capable of playing his part in it than a product of Giggleswick.

In Ceylon there has not even been the excuse for delay obvious in India. For there is no tyranny of caste in the island. Nor is there any danger of invasion. Moreover, the Buddhist religion, which is supreme, makes for intense conservatism. For the foundation of its outlook is a belief in an aristocracy of merit. No one can wish to put down the mighty from their seats if they believe that they may themselves reach them one day, and that they are only not occupying them now because of their past sins.

Certainly there is no lack of interest in politics. Bandaranaike took me to a political meeting in a Buddhist preaching-house. In one sense it was typical of the timeless East The meeting was advertised to begin at 2 p.m. We arrived at 3 p.m. At a quarter to four the chairman broke into his opening remarks, and the last vote of thanks ended at twenty minutes to six. By means of an interpreted sentence here and there I got the gist of what was going on. As a village meeting it seemed to be more in touch with a reality than any similar meeting I had heard in England. Bandaranaike began by telling them what the new constitution meant to them, and what the vote was that they had been given, much in the same way, I imagine, as Liberal candidates in agricultural areas after the extension of the franchise began their speeches in 1885 with the sentence, “There is a man called Gladstone, and he has given you something which is called a vote.” Then a disciple of Gandhi talked of the spinning-wheel, and gave a practical demonstration of how to make home-spun cloth. I realised for the first time that *kuddur* is not necessarily a weapon against the English. Amongst a population where the average earnings are only enough to produce one meal a day it is economically unjustifiable for villagers to clothe themselves in the products of Lancashire. The doctrine of the spinning-wheel is the philosophy of simplicity. It is an attempt to raise the standard of living by simplifying its needs. There followed resolutions calling for more dispensaries, better midwife arrangements, more equitable land-tax, and other practical social reforms. The audience sat obviously enthralled, and, having once heard an ex-member of Parliament lecture an audience of Devonshire yokels for an hour and a quarter on the precise advantages of the gold standard, I could not but think that they already order these things better in Ceylon.

But their capacity for instruction is as inexhaustible as a Liberal summer school. On the speeches go, through the long, hot afternoon. Fortunately, I

had come with the *Manchester Guardian* weekly, and I read it down to the chess problem and the description of the Cesarewitch.

As I look up from time to time I realise that in appearance it is all strangely reminiscent of one of my own meetings in the Rugby division of Warwickshire. There are the same desolate rows of empty chairs in front and the same overcrowded benches behind; the same shy reluctance on the part of the audience to be shepherded forward; the same faces peering through the door and sides of the meeting-house, not willing to associate themselves with the gathering but anxious to hear what they are up to; the same excuses that the day the candidate has chosen for the meeting is the most inconvenient of the month (it always is; I believe on this occasion it was the afternoon of a funeral; the next day it would doubtless have been the anniversary of a wedding). There was the same portentous chairman. I could almost catch, even in Sinhalese, his timeless exhortation that "whatever you have come 'ere for, it is not to 'ear me, but I know there are some of you who would be disappointed if I did not make just a few preliminary remarks"—and, as I anticipated, we did not get free of him for forty-five minutes. It was true of England even to the refreshments at the end, except that instead of the cup of tepid tea in a supporter's cottage it was a warm coconut that I had to gulp down in the sight of all men.

If the reforms in India are going to work like this, what is all the fuss about?

CHAPTER II

# THE BURIED CITIES OF THE JUNGLE

*In the Jungle, New Year. 1931.*

Bandaranaike and I set off on a trek into the jungle. We "stopped off," as the phrase goes in Canada, at Kandy to see the Buddhist temple. I got my first impression of how badly ceremony is ordered in the so-called gorgeous East. The moment I had mounted the steps of the temple I was bidden to take off my shoes. The holy ground into which I stumbled in stockinged feet appeared to be the dumping-ground of old packing-cases. One of the most sacred spots in Ceylon was as full of litter as a builder's yard. I found the same conditions in another Buddhist temple we explored later on. It was a magnificent building cut into the solid rock, but the whole surroundings were untidy and tawdry. The grass in front was like Hampstead Heath after a fair, and the shrine of the Lord Buddha inside was a mass of sprawling candle-grease.

The priests in their yellow robes, and with their hair cropped, are very unprepossessing. They beg for alms in their temples as shamelessly as the beggars outside. One of our party was himself a Buddhist, so the rebuke was swift and smashing. The whole organisation of the priesthood appears to be vicious. It is open to anyone to be a priest. To a lazy unambitious man it is the ideal life. He has few duties, and he is kept by the faithful. In any village the priest can be seen with his begging-bowl waiting to have it filled with the offerings of the devout. Many of them are idle and dissolute, and their addiction to unnatural vice is so general that it has resulted in it being labelled "temple practices."

In the fading light we reached the jungle—mile after mile of impenetrable undergrowth. We arrived for dinner at a lonely rest-house—the kind of dak bungalow that Kipling used to invest with such fascinating eeriness. I learnt more of the humiliations of the colour problem. An English party were noisily in possession, and, while they had their dinner facing the stars on a cool verandah, we were herded into a dark and dirty dining-room. It was interesting for once to find out what it was like to be regarded as a member of the subject race. Not that my companions minded. We had an interesting discussion about the whole question. They did not regard it as deplorable that the English club admitted no Indians to membership and that the Oriental club excluded all Europeans. It was enough for them that both admitted one another as guests. They agreed with the Simon Commission

that there was a limit to the association of the two races, and that was the end of it.

After dinner we went out with guns into the jungle. Everywhere we could see beasts gleaming in the undergrowth—just two eyes like balls of fire suspended in mid-air. Spectral eyes are not an easy target, and the only casualty we caused was to a tame buffalo who had chosen the middle of the road for a night's rest.

The next day we abandoned shooting for sight-seeing.

I have seen in my travels no stranger sights than those which lie hid in the heart of the Ceylon jungle. To enter it is to stumble on a lost civilisation.

Here are the ruins of temples and palaces and fortresses and gigantic cities. At a time when Europe was a dark forest they contained a philosophy, a religion, and a structure of government probably in advance of anything the world had seen. Then the jungle opened its jaws and swallowed them up. Their only inhabitants now are the leopard and the lizard.

I visited first the fortress of Sigiriha, a vast circle of rock towering 600 feet out of the jungle. Two thousand years ago a king who had killed his father took refuge in it and made it impregnable to all attacks. Even to-day only the heaviest howitzers could reach it. Within the rock there are relics not merely of the fortress, but of a palace and a whole department of government—audience chambers, council rooms, guard-houses, bathrooms, gardens, apartments for the queen.

As we scrambled up the rock in the early morning the whole vista of the jungle came into view. As far as the eye could see there was mile upon mile of dense trees choked by bushes and brambles. Here and there through the morning mist could be seen a clearing made by a huge square pool of water.

These were the irrigation works of the old kings. They once provided the water-supply for a thriving people; they are now the drinking-places of wild beasts.

The contrast was even more striking when, later in the day, we reached Polonnaruwa. Here are relics not merely of fortresses and palaces, but eight glorious temples standing side by side built to the greater glory of the Lord Buddha.

Lizards slid across the stones as we entered. In what had once been a council chamber a group of monkeys were holding a round table conference.

The statue of one Buddha here records a grim modern tragedy. A few years ago an impious inspector of roads tested his rifle by firing it at the stone image. Having satisfied himself as to its accuracy, he walked a few

yards into the jungle, and almost in sight of the outrage was trampled to death by an elephant.

There is probably no place in the world where archæology and big-game shooting can be more entrancingly combined. On our way to Anaradhapura, the capital of old Ceylon and now the Luxor of these buried cities, we had several opportunities of potting jackals and red deer, and even an elephant who incautiously came out to have a look at our car.

Anaradhapura was once a metropolis as big as modern New York. It is now a straggling village in the centre of vast sprawling ruins. It once contained six million people; its buildings stretched over twenty square miles; one of its streets had as many as 90,000 houses.

To visit the remains is like seeing the Book of Solomon come to life. There is a rock-hewn temple by the side of a marble pool at whose glories even to-day the Queen of Sheba would have marvelled.

There are the remains of a brazen palace. It consists now only of sixteen hundred columns of granite, but from the intricate beauty of their decoration it is not difficult to reconstruct the glittering nine-storeyed building that they once supported.

There is a grass-grown mound fifty feet high that records a chivalry far in advance of the twentieth century. It was built by King Dutugemunu in memory of the invading Tamil Prince Elara, whom he had defeated in single combat. As far as I know, there is no statue to Hindenburg in Northern France.

A short walk into the jungle and we found almost buried in the grass fresh temples and palaces and swimming-pools.

Then we came on the most interesting experience of all. Imprinted in some marshy ground were the footsteps of an animal. Out of curiosity, we followed them. In a few yards we found they were joined by other footsteps —obviously a leopard stalking its prey. Then in the earth appeared the whole drama of the chase.

We saw the spot where the pursued realised its peril and broke into a sprint for its life. Close behind padded the leopard. The footsteps grew nearer and nearer to one another. Finally they met. There were the marks of a scuffle, and a few yards farther on a neat pile of bones.

It all seemed an eerie symbol of the triumph of Nature. Two thousand years ago a great civilisation flourished here, and now the only arts and laws left are those of the jungle.

With these grim meditations I returned in the gathering dusk to catch the mail train, leaving my companions to continue their shooting expedition in

the ghostly shadows of ruined temples and crumbling palaces.

CHAPTER III

# ROAD TO BOMBAY

My actual approach to India was to the last degree unimpressive. I crossed over in a boat more unspeakably uncomfortable even than a Channel steamer. Ironically, it was being decorated for New Year's day. It is rough, and I am frightfully sick. With heavy head and bleary eyes I reach what I used to learn in my history-book was "the brightest jewel in England's crown," and find a few mud huts and acres and acres of dreary sand.

I begin to realise how deplorably ill-equipped I am for the Indian adventure. I cannot speak the language, I do not understand the customs; I have very little money. I begin with the inevitable altercation with three coolies who dealt with my luggage. They are wildly dissatisfied with my reward for their services, and chatter threateningly round my carriage. I slink away like a political candidate from a hostile meeting and find refuge in the restaurant car. It is only there that I discover that I have given a two-anna piece in mistake for a rupee. Worse was to follow. I had my breakfast leisurely, and at the end of my third cup of coffee casually enquired when the train was going to start. It had left a quarter of an hour ago. The breakfast car was a bad joke. It had nothing to do, apparently, with the Madras express. It was just sitting by itself in the station—merely a refreshment-room on wheels. How often through those dreary hours of waiting do I curse the evil day when I included India in my itinerary.

I finally get started, and slowly the panorama of Southern India opens up before me—its temples and its rice-fields and its monkeys that occasionally have to be forcibly ejected from the carriage, and above all its swarming population that infest every station platform. Soon I begin to realise that I am a member of the dominant race. At one station there is a tremendous clamour and clatter. The stationmaster himself opens the door of my carriage; coolies tumble in, directed by a servant, and, finally, behind it all there appears an Englishman. I imagined at least that he was a commissioner going out on trek. I discover in conversation that he is an obscure Bombay business man "who hates all natives." I find the same bewildering atmosphere of arrogant stupidity in the dining-car. My table companion's solution for the Indian problem is that "if he had his way he would burn all these temples to the ground."

A new peril arises when I innocently ask the way to the sleeping-car. There is not one. There never is. One's carriage in India by day is one's

sleeping-berth by night. One is expected to have with one a mattress, pillow, sheet, and blanket. I have none, and lie shivering through a night "in the cold weather" which, in comparison with the heat of the day, does not belie its name. Hating India more and more, I arrive in Madras in the early morning to find that my letters of introduction have gone astray. There is only one from my next host giving me minute instructions about the route my servant should take. I have not got a servant, and should not know what to do with one if I had.

Like all travellers when they are thoroughly miserable, I went out in search of some English newspapers to read. I found them in the offices of the *Madras Mail*, and incidentally met its delightful editor. He took me in the evening to some kind of religious festival, where I had my first experience of Indian music. To the untutored ear, Indian music sounds entirely tuneless. Its variations and cadences are within very narrow limits. This particular score was concerned, I was told, with a devout Hindu who stole from his master to build a temple. But the sin was regarded as having been wiped out because he converted his master to the true faith. Upon this somewhat immoral theme the performers played for four hours, with brief intervals for mineral waters taken on the platform.

More interesting to me than the music was the audience. The men were as severely segregated from the women as in a High Anglican chapel. I sat next to the editor of the *Hindu* and listened to the iniquities of the Press law. It appears that it is so cleverly drafted that even the most innocent and loyal of Indians is liable to break it. It was all right for the Europeans, for against them the Government never proceeded. On my other side was another Indian journalist on the eve of going to gaol, and patently disliking the idea.

Impressions of this new, strange world I have entered crowd upon me. Over dinner with some English friends I learned some of the obstacles in the way of social relationships between the races, given the best will in the world. The attitude to women is the yawning gulf. Most Indians do not take their wives with them to dinner-parties. Even on the rare occasions when they do bring them, the wives seldom speak in the presence of their husbands. In their own homes they do not dine at all until their husbands have finished. It is possible to know an Indian intimately and yet never be introduced to his wife.

Before the day was out I returned for a few minutes to the old world I knew. I visited the officers' mess in search of a friend. It was odd to be switched so easily back again into the realms of the Oxford accent, whiskies and sodas, and gossip about Amy Johnson and Bradman, within a few yards of the strange, sweltering musical festival.

On the return to my hotel I discovered that I was in the throes of the kind of financial crisis to which I afterwards became inured. It is almost impossible for the traveller in India to carry enough money. The distances are so enormous that, wherever one goes, one never seems to have any change out of a hundred-rupee note. My next source of supply was Bombay, and I calculated that unless I took the next train I should never be able to afford the journey. As it was, I should have severely to ration my meals. On the platform I found an unfortunate Englishwoman in exactly the same predicament, and felt a complete cad at being unable to help. But I had not even enough money to buy papers. On the journey I fell in with an English jockey—the sort of man one meets in a third-class carriage on the Newmarket line. He put his head in at my carriage window and asked if I was a reader. Hungrily I said "Yes," hoping against hope that he had the latest from the Book Society to lend me. He then proudly produced three *News of the World's*. He pointed to some luscious and lurid headlines. "Oh, that is a terrible story—awful—oh, it is really heartrending. The old beast—you can't call him anything less; you take it to bed with you, sir." So I did, and found the papers extraordinarily useful as a blanket on a bitterly cold night.

My first impressions of India in general, and this journey in particular, I recorded in a letter to Frank Milton dated January 4th. This was how India unfolded itself to me as it passed my carriage window.

> "My dear Frank,—All this week I have been travelling through Southern India. All very sombre and quiet. India at present at once fascinates and repels.
>
> "I love the gorgeous panorama of mountain and temple and turbans and snake-charmers, and the whole swarming, chattering humanity that is India.
>
> "But look a little closer and it is hideous. The poverty is agonising. The Middlesbrough slums are Avenue Road compared to the slums I have seen in Madras and Colombo. Square dungeons without fireplace, window, or even floorboards. In England no sanitary inspector would allow cows to be housed in the places where men made in God's image come to life and grow to manhood. That sounds like Clydeside rhetoric, but honestly it is stark naked truth.
>
> "The begging is awful. If one's horse carriage is held up—and you can imagine I always travel in one in preference to a car—at a crossing, it is surrounded by beggars. They are everywhere. They jump on the footboard of the train and whine at one in one's compartment; they even

come to one's hotel bedroom if it is on the ground floor; they expose their revolting sores at one in the street.

"And then so many of them have all the cringing attributes of a subject race. The appearance of a 'G. C.'[1] in shorts and a topee is enough to send them salaaming in all directions. No wonder the more objectionable Englishman behaves like a pre-war Prussian.

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[1] I should explain that G. C. is short for Governing Class, a term in use between us to describe the class that still regards itself as the natural leaders of Society.

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"We have taught them obedience, but we have not given them manhood. Not that the Hindu would do any better. As far as I can see, the Swaraj is purely a movement from above. It is the Hindus struggling for power as against not merely the English, but the Mohammedan. The relations between the rich Hindus and their servants are distant and hostile. Caste here is an infinitely greater barrier than class in England.

"The Hindu does not really care for social reform. It is a useful stick to beat the British, but he never thought of the iniquity of child marriage until Kathleen Mayo stung him into doing something.

"However, I have only been a week in the country and it is absurd to generalise."

CHAPTER IV

# BOMBAY IN TORMENT

*Bombay, January 10th, 1931*

On arrival in Bombay, I determined to study the background of India a little longer before plunging into the intricacies of the political problem. Not to do so seemed like trying to understand the fourth act of a drama without even looking at the programme to see what was the scene and who were the characters.

By the aid of a charming host and hostess I began by putting my own private affairs in order first. I had arrived at my destination with precisely three annas in my pocket and I had to borrow from the Indian butler to pay my taxi. I therefore set off to cash a cheque, and had my first experience of the exasperation that comes from contact with the Indian babu, or native clerk. He is slow, incompetent, and maddeningly pompous. I began to sympathise with the irascible specimens of Anglo-India I had known at home. That is the fascination of Indian travel. One is always learning to sympathise with men for whom one set out without any sympathy. The babu, if I had a life contact with him, would send me home with heat-stroke before I was forty. It took me precisely forty-five minutes to cash one cheque. I learned afterwards, when it was too late, that no Englishman ventures either into a bank or a telegraph office. It is a life work, and is performed by special messengers.

A servant was also procured for me. Apparently no one ever travels here without one. It is like arriving at a country house without a dinner-jacket. I returned to find him in embarrassing charge of my wardrobe. Every day he points out some glaring deficiency in it. He has just, with a pained expression on his face, bought "master" a shoe-horn and a shaving-glass, neither of which "master" has ever possessed in his life. Relieved of domestic responsibilities, I began to look about Bombay. I have never seen a city with so much of "the haunting shadow of the might-have-been" about it. The site is magnificent; the buildings are hideous. Bombay was built in the middle of the last century, and has in consequence the imprint of Butterfield and the Gothic revival all over it. The buildings are shaped like a wedding-cake and decorated like the interior of the National Liberal Club.

Its crowds do something to redeem them. They are mostly in white, and there is a general effect of gaiety and sunshine. Even the Gandhi caps—the white square *kuddur* abominations affected by supporters of Congress—

have not altogether destroyed the rakish individuality of the various shapes of head-gear.

To my intense joy—for I have always regarded the invention of internal combustion as, next to the war, the greatest disaster to the human race—the motor-car is not yet supreme. It is possible to hire for an incredibly small sum a dilapidated one-horse *gharri* and amble from one appointment to another. There are even imposing broughams, owned mostly by the wealthy Parsee community. In fact, to visit the square in front of the Gateway of India at sunset is to be transported straight back to Edwardian days, for there, once more, motor-cars and carriages jostle one another as their occupants take what perhaps, for all I know, they may still describe as "carriage exercise."

Gradually I begin to make personal contacts, and am impressed with the liberal-mindedness of the business community. This is true even of the *burra sahibs* of the Yacht Club, who, after all, can remember the days when English rule was undisputed. They are at tremendous pains to show that they are ready to accept sweeping changes. One of them said to me, "They have got to come; it is absurd for these Calcutta men to say that all they want to do is to hand down their Indian inheritance to their sons in the same condition as they received it. They forget that the world has changed. Even in England our sons cannot hope to have such a good time as their fathers. They too have lost their power. Why, in England, at the last election, in many households the parlourmaid had the casting vote. It is that situation that we have got to accept here." I have met, of course, a few men like the zanies on the *Madras Mail* from Colombo—men who believe in the mailed fist—but they are all men with no prestige, and in dim jobs. Bombay Tories, unlike their counterparts in England, would vote overwhelmingly for Irwin as against Churchill.

But the young men are the most interesting in Bombay. I fell in with a group of them after a Rotary lunch, and have been having in consequence ever since a most generous supply of free meals at the Gymkhana Club. It is a delightful place, where everybody seems to have been at school with everybody else. Here again the vocal element is overwhelmingly Liberal. They believe that the Raj in the Jubilee sense is at an end, and that responsible government is inevitable.

But I discovered one significant fact. Their Liberalism ends with constitutional reform. They are not prepared to admit the Indian socially into their own circles. This is not merely true of the young men, but of the whole of Bombay. There are three great English clubs in Bombay. The doors of every one of them are tight closed against the Indian. Even the Willingdon,

so useful in perorations, where the two races meet in the same club-house, is a failure. They may play on the same golf-course or eat in the same room, but it is in exclusive foursomes and at separate tables.

It is understandable. The Englishmen on the whole are having a hard struggle to keep their businesses afloat in this hurricane, and they can hardly be expected to employ their leisure in political gestures.

Moreover, amongst their own people there is the most ludicrous snobbery in social relationships. I heard more talk in Bombay of men who had "accents," or were not "sahibs," than I have heard since boyhood days in a London suburb. The conditions of admission to some of the clubs are preposterous. At one of them it is necessary to be personally interviewed by members of the committee. Absurd tales are told of wholly eligible young men being turned down because the name of their public school is unknown to the chairman of the committee. There is a fantastic line drawn between commerce and trade. If a man is in commerce he is eligible to be a sahib; if he is in trade he is in outer darkness. A man may sell wine from an office. All is well. That is commerce. He hands it over the counter. That is trade. He is an outcast. Such a system produces extraordinary results. A clerk on the railway may be welcomed with open arms, while a managing director of stores, though he was at Eton, may be shut out.

Side by side with this are, of course, the usual rigid Eurasian prejudices. To say that a man has "a touch of the country" is almost as damning as in England to say that a man is a gaolbird. The ban is carried to monstrous lengths. It extends often even to domiciled residents, to use the grim census term for those Europeans who are permanently living in India. An unfortunate young man with not a scintilla of colour in his veins may find himself socially doomed if he has been seen in Bombay at fifteen, when his contemporaries were away at an English public school.

I once heard an Indian say at a public dinner, "We know that you English have in your society as many 'untouchables' as we Indians do. We often talk about it amongst ourselves." I am not surprised. It is the most interesting phenomenon in Bombay, and explains to a great extent the yawning gulf between Indians and Europeans. It is, after all, the *a fortiori* argument. If Englishmen take such precautions against the society of their own race, it is not surprising that they show some reluctance to meet the representatives of another.

I began to meet some of these Indians, and was struck, as, I suppose, every traveller is, by their extraordinary courtesy. I was the representative of an alien race with whom they were in violent and embittered conflict, and yet they treated me as an honoured guest. But I am sceptical about the

chances of peace. The Round Table Conference has at any rate opened their minds to conviction as to British honesty. But they are full of the police persecutions. According to them, the police are monsters of depravity, who just come up and hit inoffensive women whenever the spirit moves them. They certainly appear to have substantial economic grievances. The Government has very foolishly flouted the opinion of the commercial classes. They have ignored petition after petition on currency and tariff questions. The stabilisation of the rupee at one shilling and sixpence is a burning grievance. It is alleged that it is being manipulated purely in the interests of Great Britain. Probably stabilisation was equally in the interests of India, but it does seem the height of folly to have failed to secure the consent and co-operation of the business community. It is the same with the tariff. It apparently took the Government three years of petitioning to agree to a certain tariff. There seems some excuse for the bitter comment of a business man who said to me: "It takes the Government three years to accede to a tariff, but only three minutes to clamp on a repressive ordinance."

I understood something of how pompous and aloof the Government is when I went to visit some of the civil servants. They certainly deserve the name "heaven-born," particularly the young members. They live in splendid isolation, scorning to conciliate or even explain. Their attitude is one of superb indifference to criticism. "What do they say? Let them say." It was all right in the days when India was governed like a Roman province, but it just won't work in the days of militant democracy.

One writes all this calmly, as if one was making an academic study of conditions in Bombay. But in reality we are practically in a besieged city. More than half the city are in open war with authority. All is tumult and turmoil. I must now really start studying this Congress war.

In a letter home, dated January 10th, I write:

> "I have not had much time to take stock of the situation here yet. It looks pretty bad. Gandhi caps are as common as bowlers in Regent Street. Indians demonstrate at one's car and shout 'Boycott' at one through the window. But, of course, Congress is stronger here than anywhere else in the country."

*Bombay, January 20th, 1931.*

I was now in the storm-centre of India, and face to face with the Congress situation as it really existed. Since the beginning of the Civil Disobedience campaign, Bombay had been the spur-point of the attack.

There were many reasons for this. It was more affected than any other city by trade. Gandhi is a Gujerati, and Gujerat is practically a province of Bombay. Moreover, the Ahmedabad mill-owners who were financing the Congress campaign stood to benefit largely from a boycott of foreign cloth which would fall with terrible severity upon their English competitors in Bombay.

Apart from political reasons, there were grave economic causes of discontent. At the best of times it is a city packed with combustible material. Dives and Lazarus live dangerously close to one another. On Malabar Hill, facing the glorious bay, live in untidy splendour some of the richest men in India, and immediately behind them, in the narrow, squalid, swarming streets of the bazaar, exist housing conditions worse than any in the world. It is fortunate for a cotton operative to have even a roof over his head. Thousands sleep in the streets. The pavements are cluttered up with whole families rolled up in blankets. It is not surprising that in such a city mobs are as easy to hire as stage crowds in Hollywood. There are recognised agents, like the party bosses in Chicago, who for a consideration will supply a riot to order. Money spent in the bazaar judiciously over a period of days will in fact produce all the necessary concomitants of incipient revolution.

In such a city, when Dives and Lazarus combine for an ostensibly patriotic purpose, a serious conflagration was inevitable. Yet this is what had been happening for the last ten months, since Gandhi had inaugurated his campaign of Civil Disobedience. His rich friends had poured money into the bazaar. There was a definite tariff for disorder. So many annas were paid for taking part in a procession, so many more for lying down in front of a tram. University students, who at the best of times find it difficult to get a job after having taken their degrees, had only to enroll in the Congress army to have all their material cares removed and a halo of patriotism in the bargain. Even the families of arrested men were given generous separation allowances. Can it be wondered that there were large classes in the community who hoped, like the Irish farmer in 1918, that “the war would hold.”

Altogether it was a thoroughly ugly situation that I found in Bombay in the early days of the New Year. A city of over a million inhabitants was to all intents and purposes in the throes of civil war. The glowing perorations at the London conference found no echo in Bombay. Hardly a day passed without some kind of disturbance. Sometimes it was only the upsetting of a tram or a minor *lathi* charge on the Maidan, the local Hyde Park. But at increasingly frequent intervals under the name of a *hartal* there was a field-day of disturbance. *Hartal* originally meant a day of mourning, and merely resulted in the closing of shops in the Indian quarter. Increasingly it became

an excuse for violence, and resulted in the filling of the hospitals with the casualties.

The growth in violence was inevitable. Most of the leaders, who for reasons of prudence if for no other had counselled moderation, were now in gaol. Their newspapers had been suppressed, and now only appeared in single sheets, like the English newspapers in the General Strike. They had to be printed in secret in the highways and byways, often under the seat of a moving car. Such leaders as remained were of a very inferior calibre, and were hunted by the police from cellar to garret, so that by circumstance as well perhaps as by inclination they led their forces from behind.

The Europeans were obviously feeling the strain. Night after night the young men who had joined the various auxiliary forces were warned for duty the following day. The older men who were magistrates had two or three times a month to spend a long, hot morning away from their offices in the galleries of police stations in case they were called upon to give the dreadful order to fire. For when the military were called out the general not unnaturally insisted that the threat of opening fire must always be kept in immediate and effective reserve. It was impossible to get away from the atmosphere of conflict. It was not infrequently necessary for Europeans to leave the lawns of the Yacht Club by devious routes to escape hostile demonstrations, and the young men sipping their evening drinks on the verandah of the Gymkhana Club had often to witness the unpleasant sight of a *lathi* charge in front of them on the Maidan.

Communal feeling dangerously increased. About a fifth of the population of Bombay are Moslem, and they began to grow weary of continuous *hartals* ordered by the Hindus, to which they had to submit. When Mehemet Ali died at the Round Table Conference almost at his desk, they proclaimed a *hartal* on their own, and when Hindus refused to co-operate there were more disturbances. It was Cawnpore casting its chill shadow in front.

But the gravest violence of all accompanied the execution of the Sholapur murderers. They had in the most revolting circumstances murdered policemen in Sholapur, and were condemned to death. The moment it became known that the Viceroy had refused a reprieve, Congress proclaimed a kind of general strike. Not a tram was to run, not a mill to work, not a shop to open, not a law court to function.

It was a direct challenge to the civil power, and it was resolutely taken up. I remember calling on the Bombay Chief of Police, Mr. Wilson, a first-class administrator, who in the short time that he has been in Bombay has done a great deal to restore and preserve order. It was on the eve of the

demonstration, and he had just had a final meeting with his police chiefs—rather like a general on the eve of battle. He gave me his card, which entitled me, at "my own risk," to see all that there was to be seen. So I witnessed at first hand one of the last and fiercest battles of the Congress war.

At five o'clock the next morning, long before it was light, I presented myself at the police station and was offered a lift round the military posts in the commanding officer's car. He and I had left, only three hours before, the same dance. It emphasised the strange mixture of carnival and civil disorder that is Bombay.

Our tour round the police stations irresistibly reminded me of a tour round the committee-rooms at an election. There were the same anxious enquiries, the usual well-worn jokes, and a similar atmosphere of strained expectation.

We made the tour several times during the morning, and I got a sort of telephonic picture of the progress of events. At first all was quiet on every front. Then the darkness began to lift, and as we motored from police station to police station news began to dribble in.

There were three or four vital factors in the situation. Would the tramway-men and railway-men obey their union and cease work? The question was soon answered everywhere in the negative. They had reported for duty at all depots.

Would the trams be allowed out of their depots without grave disorder? We were soon reassured on that point. At only one place had a man attempted to lie in front of a tram—a very effective method of non-violent obstruction—and, as an Indian police sergeant recorded with unholy joy, "he had been limping ever since in consequence." All trams and trains were running. We breathed more freely.

Would the *hartal* be observed elsewhere, and all mills and shops close down? The situation was far less happy in that direction. The sun rose, but the shutters on the shops in the native quarter did not. We saw the men trudging into the mills, and thought that all might yet be well. But there were pickets inside, and the men were very soon all swarming out again. By eight o'clock only 6 out of 24 mills were working. That meant that a vast idle population would be in the streets—highly combustible material.

But still the most important question remained unanswered. Would the Moslems join this Hindu demonstration? We asked the question in the strained tones of voice a candidate uses when he asks on election day which way the men in the great works are voting. Only in this case on the answer depended not how many heads were likely to be counted, but how many

were likely to be broken. We turned into the Moslem quarter, and found the atmosphere of Sunday afternoon reigning there.

But the danger was not over. Friday was a day of prayer, and until the Moslems came out of their mosques at midday the issue was in doubt. Twelve o'clock passed, and all was well. The Moslems had once again held ostentatiously aloof from Hindu demonstrations.

Interest then shifted to the law courts. It having been the courts that had sentenced the murderers to death, it was upon the courts that hostilities were concentrated. An attempt was made to prevent the passage of the judges, and a *lathi* charge became necessary.

Much has been written on the barbarity of a *lathi* charge. It is not a pleasant sight. A *lathi* is a bamboo club, thick enough to inflict serious injuries. The idea that it is used indiscriminately to beat up any peaceful procession is lying nonsense. The only times it was used on that occasion was to clear the way. The trouble is that it is always the innocent who suffer the most. In a mob it is impossible to discriminate who are the ringleaders, and the blows often fall on the backs of harmless spectators. One casualty I saw at a police station was a little Hindu boy about twelve years old who had committed no more intentional political violence than the urchin who jumps on the candidate's motor-car at election time.

As the day went on the violence increased, and by the evening I had heard for the first time the dreadful order to fire.

But what impressed me more even than what did happen that day was the haunting shadow of what might have happened. For everywhere I saw evidence of overwhelming force in the hands of authority. Every police station was packed with troops, and at every vital point a machine-gun grinned down from an upper window. The only result that day was an isolated affray. I had an uneasy fear that the next time might produce an Amritsar.

Serious conflict was inevitable when the military were called out, for the soldier regards a rifle as something to be used. It is his job after all to open fire. The policeman will delay till the last possible moment. It is equally his job to control without opening fire. At every riot I found the military in a dangerously combative mood. They were thirsting for what they called "a good show." Though it is difficult to discover what precisely is the fun in making gaps with a rifle in an unarmed crowd. But there were occasions in Bombay when senior officers would actually send back the magistrate assigned to them if they thought that he would be mealy-mouthed about the

order to fire, and would calmly ask for another, as if they were indenting for a new consignment of jam.

Nor was it only the military who were spoiling for a fight. The patience of the Indianised police forces was reaching exhaustion-point. For months they had suffered in silence the harassing, irritating, distasteful task of combating passive disobedience. It is not easy to deal with a man who flops down in front of a municipal tram and will not suffer himself to be moved. It is more difficult when he is one of your own countrymen, and even more so when women adopt similar tactics. At the same time, while carrying out their duties they were subject to every kind of social boycott at home. Their wives and children were insulted, and they themselves were treated as social untouchables. It was, from the Congress point of view, the worst possible tactics. A gesture of friendliness might have won the day. A few policemen might have been tempted by flattery, a rot might have set in, and the key position of the enemy might have fallen bloodlessly into the hands of the Congress. Persecution, on the other hand, merely stiffened the ranks. In Bombay not a policeman wavered in his allegiance throughout the whole gruelling Congress campaign.

The only fault of the force was that about this time the police force began to hit back. The *lathi* with which every policeman is armed is a murderous weapon, and about this time it began to be wielded with the strength that comes with exasperation. When the women began to take part in the stone-throwing at the police, there was merciless retaliation which resulted at Borsad in some very ugly incidents.

Altogether it seemed as if events in India had reached the edge of the abyss. Congress were becoming more violent, and the police were joining the military in a clamour for smashing methods of retaliation. It is as well to recall this when the wail goes up that Lord Irwin made peace when the enemy were already on the brink of capitulation. There was no sign of it in Bombay in January 1931.

The riots of this week were the last I saw in India. It is perhaps just worth ending this chapter with an extract from a letter to my mother which summarises my doubts and hesitations.

> "There were some ugly riots on Monday. Four murderers were executed, and the news in the bazaar acted like a match on straw. There were *lathi* charges on the Maidan. I sat and watched them from the lawns of the Gymkhana Club, drinking cocktails. One could hardly be an eye-witness in more favourable circumstances—but it was all rather terrible and a little unnecessary. I wonder. The meetings that were

broken up by the police seemed quite orderly. But one hesitates in a fortnight to express an opinion about anything.

"The merchant classes in Bombay who are at the back of it all are anxious to get back to business.

"But there remain the irreconcilables. They are not looking to the Round Table Conference, but the prison at Yeravda, where Gandhi lies silent and incalculable. Will he respond to them or to the returning delegates from London? That seems to me to be the Indian riddle.

"P.S.—The stories about Moslem contempt for Hindu courage are quite true. I saw myself the other day a group of Moslems getting a great deal of amusement out of the spectacle of Hindus lying down in front of a tram and then, on the approach of the police, getting up and running away."

CHAPTER V

# CITY MADE TO ORDER

*In the train from Bombay to Delhi.*

I am now off to explore the country by means of a round of visits. Seeing India is comparatively easy if only the traveller has provided himself with a number of introductions. I have a few, but not nearly enough. I was told before I left England that one powerful introduction would suffice, for everybody would hand one on to their friends. It is not true. Hospitality is very great in India, but it does not extend to those limits. Why should it?

My journey has begun badly, for I have lost my notecase with £15 worth of rupees and letters of introduction. It was all due to my foolishness. I repeated my bank experience, and in the same way went personally to a telegraph office to send a telegram instead of sending a servant. At the end of twenty-five minutes waiting, I became so exasperated that I took out my notecase to write a complaint, and in half a minute it had been snatched from me, never to be recovered. So I am beginning my travels in even more straitened circumstances than I had feared at the beginning.

*New Delhi, January 25th.*

Next week the new city is to be inaugurated, and I have been spending my first few days exploring it.

The inauguration seems to be a great mistake. Everybody regards it as a humiliating farce. There will be no popular demonstration, and it will just be English and Indian officials having fun amongst themselves. At one time it was hoped that the Duke and Duchess of York would come out and inaugurate. I'm told that it was decided that it was too dangerous for them to make the journey. What a commentary on the political situation! We are living in an armed camp.

Altogether the inauguration will take place under the most gloomy circumstances, for most people admit that the whole idea was a colossal blunder. It began with the declaration of King George at the Durbar of 1911 that henceforward the capital of India would be transferred from Calcutta to Delhi. In the political jargon of to-day, not then happily invented, the decision would have been described as a gesture; Calcutta was an English creation; Delhi was the capital of the mighty Moghul Empire. The return to

Delhi meant not merely a change of capital, but a change of heart. It was to be the symbol of the beginning of the end of British autocracy in India.

Disaster overtook the proposal from the first. It was largely the conception of the then Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, and it nearly cost him his life. A bomb was thrown at him as he rode down Chandni Chowk on an elephant, and his thigh was practically blown away. It must have been a terrible moment for the European officials waiting to greet him in the Fort at the end of the Chowk. They heard the ghastly explosion in the distance, and then there descended an awful silence, only broken when the rest of the Viceregal party arrived, white and frightened, to carry on bravely with the rest of the ceremonies.

The foundation-stone was laid in 1911 at a spot nine miles away from where New Delhi stands to-day. In a few months it had to be abandoned. It was water-logged in the rains. Hardly had the present site been chosen, and the preliminary surveys made, before the war came and suspended all activity.

So it was not ready for inauguration until 1931, and, now that it is finished, it is already out of date. For the New Delhi envisages a constitution that has already passed away. The vast Viceregal palace, probably the finest royal house in the world, the imposing mansion of the commander-in-chief, the great houses of the executive councillors, all envisage the India of half a century ago. What will be needed in another generation will be an ordinary country house for the Governor-General, and rows and rows of modest bungalows, built in the Indian style, for Ministers and members of Parliament. They will not be available. We have given India an imperial city. What she will need is a work-a-day laboratory of Government. It is significant that New Delhi does not even boast a hotel.

It is extraordinary that no one realised that Sir Edwin Lutyens was architecting an anachronism. Even the Parliament House known as the Assembly was an afterthought. When the plans were first passed, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 do not appear to have been even on the mental horizon of the Government of India. All that was contemplated was a council chamber in the Viceroy's House, a sort of annexe to the Viceroy's study.

In any case the new capital is in the wrong place. So sweltering is the hot weather in Delhi that the Government of India only remains there five months of the year. For the remaining seven months it retires to the mountain-top of Simla. A few hundred miles away a site could have been chosen at Dehra Dun, where the Government could have remained throughout the year. Nationalists insist that when Swaraj comes Simla will

end. But that is a good political cry more than an axiom of policy. At present the most eager for the trek to Simla are the Indian politicians.

As an outsider who has happily not got to live in either, I can wholeheartedly applaud the project of the New Delhi. For the world has gained thereby a most beautiful city. In the first place, it has a magnificent site. The new city has been built five miles from the old walls, on ground that twenty-five years ago was part of the jungle. Even to-day it is on the edge of it, and jackal make their unearthly howls, like the laughter of ghostly children, round the bungalows, and panthers are occasionally seen on the ridge behind the Viceroy's House. All around in the distance can be seen the ruins of the old Delhi. There have been at least six of them, for it appears to have been the peculiar delight of the old Emperors to celebrate their reigns by building outside their walls a new and greater city than that which they had inherited or won by the sword. The background of the buildings was thus rock and scrub, and the blue sky that seldom fails in India, even in the cold weather.

On this the builders have aimed at rearing a city which will express in colour and contour the association of the English and the Indian. The buildings are Indian, but the general lay-out is English. Everywhere there are domes and colonnades and galleries and pinnacles. The view from the ridge behind the Viceroy's House, flanked on both sides by the north and south wings of the secretariat, might well be a glimpse of Constantinople from the roof of a mosque.

The city is entered through a great arch which has been erected as a war memorial to the 12,000 Indian officers and men who fell in the Great War. It has all the dignity and simplicity of the Whitehall cenotaph, and there is something infinitely pathetic that even less than other buildings in New Delhi has it any real association with Indian thought and aspiration. The fighting races are so strangely separated from the rest of India that beyond the Punjab war memorials have very little meaning.

Once through the memorial archway and the whole panorama of the new city comes into view. An avenue leads up in one glorious straight line to the Viceroy's House, a mile and a half in the distance. It is flanked not merely by trees, but by a succession of pools, so that one gets not merely the vista of the buildings, but their reflection in the water. Still farther to the right and left are the bungalows of the great State officials, and, even more magnificent, the Palaces of the Maharajahs. These dwellings, with their great inner courts, where the ladies can disport themselves screened from the public gaze, seem to express, more than any other buildings, the mystery and fascination of the East. In size and magnificence they rival the largest

country houses at home. Yet in many cases they will not be occupied for more than a fortnight during a whole Viceroyalty.

I met Lutyens last night at dinner, and fell for him completely. It is refreshing to meet somebody unusual in India, where dullness and mediocrity reign triumphant. He had a pencil and pad by his place at dinner, and all through the meal was illustrating his conversation with the most delicious scribbles. We played charades afterwards, and I shall not easily forget Lutyens as Elisha murdering the priests of Baal. Women in Delhi regard his conversation as rather shock-making, but if I wanted a difficult party to go I should move mountains to secure the presence of Lutyens and then sink back exhausted, knowing that I need not do anything else to make the party a success.

Certainly he is an architect of genius. When I think of him in future, I shall recall to mind the dome on the Viceroy's House, in my judgment his supreme achievement in New Delhi. This great sphere of glistening copper supported on a vast white plinth seems to obey no geographical laws. It dominates in its splendid solidity the New Delhi from wherever it is surveyed, as St. Paul's dominates the City of London. It seems to embody in itself the greatness of his conception and the gigantic energy with which he has successfully carried it through.

I wonder what he will make of the Roman Catholic cathedral at Liverpool? It is such a gigantic work that I suppose that he will be lucky if he sees its completion. What a strange inversion of parts that Lutyens, an Anglican, should build the Roman Catholic cathedral, and that Gilbert Scott, a Roman Catholic, should build the Anglican cathedral.

I am told, by the way, that personally Lutyens made not more than two or three thousand pounds out of New Delhi, in spite of nearly twenty years of intermittent work. His vast expenses, which could not be put down on paper, swallowed up his fees. But then, of course, the value of the advertisement is quite incalculable.

CHAPTER VI

# VICEROY'S HOUSE

*New Delhi, January 30th.*

Government in India is still a great show. I lunched with the Viceroy on Wednesday. It was no merit on my part, but merely the result of a lucky introduction. To those inured to the ritual of Courts, I suppose, Viceregal Lodge under Lord Irwin is a very simple affair, but to me it seemed very splendid, and perhaps a little pompous. One is shepherded into a drawing-room by a platoon of aides-de-camp and ranged in solemn line along a wall beside the male guests. The women are opposite, and as their Excellencies sweep down the line they curtsey and the men bow. The bowing is a difficult process. It is done, I believe, from the shoulders and not as I did it, from the hips. What destroyed the ceremony a little was that various dogs scampered in behind Lord and Lady Irwin, so that one got the reassuring impression that the Viceroy, after all, was still essentially a country gentleman. As a matter of fact, I believe that the Irwins have enormously reduced the etiquette of Viceregal Court. The curtseys at a dinner-party used to be as many as seven in an evening under the Reading régime. They have now been reduced to three.

Irwin is obviously delighted with the way the Round Table Conference has progressed in London. Reading's speech had surprised him, together with the general change in the attitude of politicians in England to Indian constitutional advance. He said (I quote the substance, not the words), "The Round Table delegates seem to have swept London off its feet. I never thought to see the day when Geoffrey Dawson [Editor of *The Times*] would openly rebuke the Conservative Party for being timid and hesitant on Indian advance. The news about the princes and federation is the best of all. I had them here in the summer hour after hour and I could not convince them."

Irwin has something more than magnetism. It is a curious spiritual power. His appearance helps him. He has a magnificent head, and his tall figure and Cecilian stoop and sympathetic kindly eyes give more the impression of a prince of the Church than of a politician. He is one of those rare men who make one feel spiritually the better for having come in contact with them. I can understand his power with the wiliest of Indian politicians. He has the kind of personality that makes it impossible to do anything mean or dirty.

I felt slightly ashamed, even, of a story I told him over lunch—the latest from home. It was the story—obviously apocryphal—that, after Sir John Simon's declaration of his determination to defy the Liberal Party Whips and vote against the Government, Mr. Lloyd George went to church, and, by an uncanny coincidence, listened to a sermon on the text: "I have something to say to thee, Simon." It was not a success with the Viceroy. Not that there is any love lost between him and Simon. The way in which Irwin asked me, "What sort of following has Simon got in your party?—would he get a full hall if he was announced to make a pronouncement, for instance, in Birmingham," spoke volumes.

The two men are wholly antipathetic. Irwin is transparently genuine; Simon, with all his gifts, is at times a most irritating *poseur*. Out here I am told that, when he arrived in his car at some important reception, he would be discovered so immersed in papers that he would pretend that he did not realise that he had reached his destination, and would have to be awakened to the fact by the chairman of the reception committee touching him on the arm. I suppose that it is that he is without any spark of humour in his make-up. If only Birkenhead could have had some of his ballast, and Simon some of Birkenhead's humanity they would have dominated the twenties and thirties of this century as Disraeli and Gladstone dominated the seventies and eighties of the last. I remember as an undergraduate escorting F. E. from Magdalen to a debate at the Union, and F. E. impudently suggesting as we passed All Souls that "we should go in and order tankards of beer and have them put down to John Simon." The merry suggestion of F. E. and the chill reception that it would have had from John Simon seemed to epitomise the two natures.

Irwin has a great generosity of nature. At Calcutta a few weeks ago, to the alarm of the police, he decided to pay a secret visit to the slum quarter to inspect at first hand the ghastly social conditions that operate there.

He carried it off so successfully that at the door of a tenement one disgruntled English lodger tackled him with the remark: "You have no business down here. Places like this aren't for the likes of you."

Irwin's difficulty seems to be his executive council. From what I have seen of them they are an indifferent team. But he is lucky in his Commander-in-Chief. I have just met Sir Philip Chetwode. He seems to be the exact opposite of what he is popularly supposed to be in the Radical Press at home. If I remember rightly, he was rapped on the knuckles for a diehard speech he made before he came out here. He seems anything but a fire-eater. He is genuinely and honestly carrying out a sweeping policy of Indianisation. He readily agrees that we could not, if we would, govern

according to Churchill, which in my view is the most damaging condemnation, coming from such a quarter, of Churchill's policy. Temperamentally, I suppose, Chetwode would be on the side of the big battalions. He has no great love for the politicians. He quoted to me a charming story of some Indian soldiers saying to him: "General sahib, why don't you let us come down to Delhi and settle those talky fellows for you." All the same, he patiently told them that in peace, however much they might dislike the thought, it was the "talky fellows" who counted. He is that rare thing amongst generals, a political realist. He was sent up after the famous Curragh rebellion to restore order and discipline among the British officers in Ireland, and very faithfully he did his work. For all that, he is a man with independent views. He knows how far he can go with retrenchment and Indianisation, and beyond that he will not budge. Being a man of considerable private means, he can afford the luxury of resignation.

Altogether he is probably just the right man for his job at the moment, and his friendship with the Viceroy, which transcends the ordinary bounds of official relationships, is an important factor in these very critical months.

For the rest, far and away the best of them is Sir George Schuster. He really is out of the rut of these other dim, self-conscious, high-placed civil servants. Coming out from home for this one job of Finance Member, he brings a fresh mind and a realist outlook on the situation. The trouble about the civil service as a whole is that, though Governments at home may propose, the civil service disposes. The most liberal reforms in the world can be wrecked if they refuse to work them. They don't really believe in constitutional progress, and even the best of them are perpetually fighting a rearguard action against it. What is more, by the time they reach the heights of executive councillorship they are tired men. They have probably done at least twenty-five years service, which probably includes at least fifteen hot weathers in the scorching plains. There is nothing like a blistering sun for drying up energy and idealism. A man like Schuster has been spared this gruelling apprenticeship. Even his clothes are different. He dresses as if he were in a board-room in the City, which is very refreshing to the eye after the eternal grey or fawn that everyone out here wears. It is a pity that of necessity he is a specialist immersed in finance and cannot give much attention to the general problem.

The rest of the Viceroy's councillors are not impressive. I could form a better Government out of under-secretaries on the Labour front bench, probably the lowest in political fauna. It is not altogether the civil servants' fault. They were trained to run a Government department; they now, in addition, have to manage a semi-democratic Parliament. It is as if the

Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs had, at the same time as he was managing his department in Whitehall, to defend it at Westminster.

I visited the Assembly and saw how impossible was the task. I saw in operation the kind of constitution that one used to read about uncomprehendingly in history books. In actual fact an immovable executive is faced by an irresponsible legislature. The Ministers, uninspiring and erect in their morning coats on the Government front bench, have no majority. They can be certain only of the support of the official members behind them and the European block on their right. Opposite them, on the other side of the semi-circular chamber, sit the Hindu party in irreconcilable opposition. Next to them, and usually allied to them in the division lobbies, sit the Independents, a composite body of Hindus and Moslems. Together they outnumber the official block and the Europeans. A Government majority can come only from the Moslems, who sit in the centre holding the balance. Up to now they have given the Government more or less consistent support. They have supported the British Raj, knowing that the only alternative was a Hindu Raj. But now they are wavering. Obviously there is to be a substantial transfer of power to the Indians, which inevitably means to the Hindus, who not merely outnumber the Moslems by three to one, but outdistance them in brains and money. Has not the time come for the Moslems to make terms with their enemy quickly? They are hesitating and divided, and in their hesitations and divisions the Government majority slips away.

The debate is over the granting of a repressive ordinance for which the Bengal Government has asked, in an attempt to grapple with a terrorist movement. The Indian opposition is passionate and voluble; the Englishmen are restrained and equable. Neither understands the point of view of the other. The Home Member, courteous, well-informed, amiable, and in debate wholly ineffective, replies. He has not the ghost of the shade of a shadow of an idea of how to expound a policy or conciliate an opposition. How could he have learned to do so, when, from the moment he landed in Bombay, he has been grounded in the principles and practices of benevolent autocracy? The resolution goes to a division and is lost. Not that it matters very much. The Viceroy will probably use his powers of certification, and the Bill will be passed as if it had never been rejected by a constitutional assembly. It is all a strange commentary on the pulsating perorations at the London conference, and the final speech of Ramsay MacDonald which has just come through on the telegrams. It has created a profound impression. The Indians rejoice, and the civil servants are filled with dismay at the realisation that responsible government is coming at last. The attitude of the civil service is the most entertaining and perhaps a little pathetic too. During the last twenty

years of constitutional advance they have always thought that they could ward off the threat of a real curtailment of their powers. Secretaries of State and Viceroys, and even Governors, might perorate about partnership, but they knew that they remained in power. Now they have digested Ramsay's speech and they realise for the first time that their power is doomed. In theory, most of them have confessed a belief in the inevitability of this transfer, but their motto has been: "Not in our time, O Lord." Now it is most obviously going to be in their time, and visions of commissionerships, membership of executive councils, even, perhaps, the glorious summit of the governorship of their own province, fade and grow dim. It is not easy to give a detached welcome to reforms which mean the closing in of careers just at the moment when they were beginning to hold out radiant possibilities.

But responsibility at the centre is inevitable. The Simon Commission just would not work. It is impossible to have complete self-government in the provinces and semi-autonomy at the centre. A deadlock is inevitable. I have seen enough of the Assembly to see that an irresponsible executive cannot be made to work. As it is, the Government only gets the majorities it does get because Congress has made a secession. If they were to come back they could wreck the whole machinery. The Government has nothing to offer to induce support for it. The opposition have everything to gain by voting against it. In any case, members cannot develop a sense of responsibility until they get responsibility.

The problem now is, What is the next step in constitution-making? Both the Viceroy and the Prime Minister have made appeals to Gandhi and his friends to join the Round Table delegates in constructive work. How can they agree to do so, while they are still in gaol. Equally, how can the Government let them out until they call off the Civil Disobedience movement? That is the dilemma which they are debating behind the closed doors of the executive council. As usual, it is the Viceroy against the civil service mind. The civil servants opposed his opening speech to the Assembly a few days ago, when he made yet another appeal to Gandhi to come out and help. Certainly his eulogy of Gandhi was curiously irrational. The line was: "Gandhi is a saint, and I have put him in prison." That is the trouble about the Government of India. It is never consistently one thing or the other. It is sympathetic and generous to a fault for eleven months of the year, and then in the twelfth suddenly behaves like one of the ruthless heroes of the Mutiny.

Still, now is the obvious chance of bringing the Government of India in line with the opinion at home. Risks must be taken for peace. The Viceroy

should let the leaders out unconditionally. At least it would put us right with foreign opinion.

CHAPTER VII

# THE KIPLING TRAIL

*Government House, Lahore, January 28th.*

So the Viceroy has triumphed. I have just seen the telegram. Gandhi is released. It is unconditional. The Congress leaders are to meet and decide whether they are going to come in with the Round Table delegates now returning to India or stay out and presumably return to prison. Here I am getting another version of Congress methods. Lahore is the headquarters of the terrorist movement in the Punjab, and there, non-co-operation is very *vieux jeu*.

My host, Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, was potted at two days before Christmas. Coming out of the University Hall, a student fired at him with a revolver at six yards' range. A sub-inspector of police by his side was killed, and he himself had two wounds, one in the thigh and the other in the arm. It must have been a dramatic moment at Government House. A large house-party had assembled for Christmas. As H. E. appeared to be delayed, they had begun lunch. The A.D.C. was called away to the telephone, and returned, with a scared face, to inform the lunch-party that an attempt had been made on His Excellency's life. On Boxing Day, Montmorency, though still bandaged up, drove down to the Races in the view of all men, and a few days later actually went back to take part in a function in the very hall where the shots had been fired.

Hard on the heels of this outrage there followed the atrocious murder of Mrs. Curtis. She was on her verandah after lunch when a Sikh stole up the drive, brandishing a sword, and proceeded to hack her to death. With superb bravery she defended her children while she was being slashed to pieces. Of course it was a purely fanatical outrage and has nothing to do with Congress. The murderer wanted to kill an Englishman and mistook Mrs. Curtis's bungalow for that of the general. It is a type of crime not unfamiliar in India, where the urge to slay the infidel occasionally attacks men of unbalanced minds. With the Moslems murder sometimes becomes a kind of religious ceremony performed in clean clothes and after every form of ceremonious purification.

But the two murders together, though they have no relation to one another, have created a very natural alarm. It has taken us straight back to Mutiny days and all the ghastly acts of violence, stories of which Anglo-Indians have read since nursery days. The women of the station are learning

revolver-shooting. Every European bungalow has its guard. Government House is like a fortress. I arrived in time for breakfast. It is the usual time of arrival in India, where everyone travels by night, and in any case there is probably only one train in twenty-four hours. Lord Hardinge was just leaving. It is difficult to recall that he is an old man now, though he walks with a limp, the survival of the Delhi outrage. He is here for the Inauguration ceremonies and is being closely guarded. A car of police with rifles followed his own car when he drove away, though, as so often with armed guards, they made a mistake in the time and followed at least five minutes after him, so that, in the case of any trouble, they could not have done much more than pick up the corpse. It is difficult to get accustomed to being with people who live under the shadow of assassination. I went for a Sunday-afternoon drive with H. E. into the country. There was a guard every few yards until we got outside, in addition to a car of police behind, and the A.D.C. in front had a revolver on his lap. Yet H. E. was gloriously unconcerned with it all. He is very liberal-minded, and attempted assassination has not in the least deflected him from his viewpoint. He seems the very best type of civil servant, efficient, courageous, and with an inexhaustible fund of energy. Whatever may be said against the civil service in India, they are incredibly hard workers. A really solid twelve hours a day they appear to be able to keep up almost indefinitely.

H. E. has one very definite way of judging his fellow-men. They either are or are not "good officers." He applies the test with a splendid sense of democracy, equally to sweepers as to viceroys.

He was private secretary to the Prince of Wales when he was out here, and, like all people who come into immediate contact with the Prince, he has unbounded admiration for his gifts. He told me that the Prince was only angry once, and that was at Peshawar. Some official bungled the place of meeting and inadequately protected the roads that lead to it. The result was a mild street riot and the police had to smuggle the Prince back to Government House by devious routes. The Prince was furious, for he thought that his change of plan would be regarded as cowardice. There was one thing that exasperated the Prince beyond words, and that was any undue precautions for his own safety which would suggest in people's minds that he was afraid. The Prince seems to have the capacity to rise to the big occasions.

There is a queer atmosphere of impending tragedy. It may be the atmosphere of Government House. At every corner one stumbles on a sentry with fixed bayonet, and every one of them reminds me of revolvers and assassinations. The house itself is a little gloomy. The dining-room was, in

fact, built originally as a tomb. It is vast and dim and ornate, and, as I am the only guest, our voices tend to echo eerily in the eaves of the ceiling. It is also bitterly cold and there are glorious fires everywhere, roaring up the chimney and casting ghostly shadows on the walls. In this atmosphere I heard a horrible tale of Congress picketing methods in Amritsar. They proceed against a cloth merchant, rash enough to expose British goods for sale, with the method of the mock funeral. If after a warning he is still obstinate they appear at the head of a funeral procession outside his house, complete with corpse and wailing women. It is a deeply superstitious country, and frequently under the tearful treaties of his wife the merchant gives way and agrees to offend no more.

H. E. is a magnificent raconteur. Here are two stories of viceroys. Curzon was being visited by a potentate from Tibet. It was obvious that it would be a graceful act to mark the visit with a gift. But the problem was the form that it should take. Curzon consulted the Foreign Office. Some bright clerks replied with the suggestion of a couple of St. Bernard dogs for use in the Tibetan snows. Curzon merely minuted the suggestion with the inscription: "There are far too many young puppies already at the Foreign Office."

Lord Minto, when Viceroy, danced one day at Viceregal Lodge with the reigning Society beauty. "Do you play bridge?" she asked him. "No I don't," he replied. "Then what do you do?" was the comment so insolent that poor Lord Minto relapsed into a snubbed silence.

I have been studying the university student here. He is one of the lowest things on earth. When he is not making bombs in the laboratory he seems to be stealing examination papers.

But his difficulties are enormous. There are so very few jobs open for him, and nearly all of them wretchedly paid. Many teachers; for instance, are getting substantially less per month than what I pay to my bearer.

Of course the curriculum of the university is all wrong. There is far too much philosophy and far too little commerce in it. The Indian student possesses the important gifts of concentration and industry. What he lacks is initiative, integrity, personality, drive.

He has a mind that is tricky without being clever. He is a mental gymnast. A conversation with Indian students never seems to take one very far. They are like a line of three-quarters at Rugger passing and re-passing the ball, but making astonishingly little progress.

Far more ought to be done to understand and correct all this in the University curriculum.

Staying at Government Houses is an admirable way of seeing India, for one is encouraged to do exactly what one likes, and given a car to do it with. I took a rest from current politics and went off to explore for Kipling relics. For Lahore, as the Americans would say, was Kipling's home-town.

I got on his track immediately. Opposite the Museum in the Mall was an old, eighteenth-century gun, and astride it an Anglo-Indian child. Somewhere I had seen it all before. But where? Then I remembered my *Kim*, searched for it among my host's books, hunted up the opening passage, and found the identical description. Hot on the trail, I visited the offices of the *Civil and Military Gazette*, where Kipling had his early journalistic training. The buildings have now an imposing modern façade, as uninteresting as any other twentieth-century erections. But behind them still stands the white-washed bungalow where Kipling worked, and, no doubt, in the intervals of correcting his proofs, sketched out the plot of his incomparable stories. The only memorial is a small tablet laconically recording that "Rudyard Kipling worked here, 1885-1889." Quite shamelessly I walked inside, and through the kindness of the members of the staff learned much that was interesting. Kipling appears to have had the title of assistant editor, but as there appears to have been only one other member of the staff, and he the editor, general bottle-washer would probably be a more faithful description. I hunted among the dusty files of the eighties in the hopes of discovering the authentic touch of the master hand. But in those days the paper was not much more than a regimental magazine, and it is difficult to detect the footprints of genius in interminable "notices" of gymkhanas and concerts. The only substantial relic is his desk, and I believe that is a copy. The real one had to be sent to the London office to escape destruction at the hands of mutilating tourists. It is an old-fashioned affair with a wooden balustrade which was gradually being transferred surreptitiously, bit by bit, to the Middle West. By a strange irony, the last man to be impressed by Kipling's work was his own editor. When he resigned to take up work on the *Pioneer* at Allahabad there appears to have been no effort to retain his services, and his editor is understood to have written to him advising him not to continue his career of writing, as "no one thought anything of his stories and he was never likely to make any money wasting his time scribbling stuff like that." Yet it was in these years that he published some of his greatest masterpieces. Indeed, he offered them for publication by the Civil and Military Press, but the suggestion was turned down. Now, when from time to time news reaches the office that a Kipling manuscript has fetched several thousand pounds, there is a feverish search in

old desks and disused pigeon-holes to see if happily some account of a wedding or a whist-drive has survived the forty years since his departure.

I went out into the sunlight again to Lahore in the hope of discovering if any of his local colour remained. The moment I turned off the Mall—now macadamised and lined by European shops—and plunged into the bazaar, I was in the land of his stories once again. No motor-cars penetrate there. *Tongas* and *ekkas* are in undisputed possession. In the jostling, seething life of those narrow lanes are all his types—fakirs encased in dirt, naked and with long hair to the greater glory of their strange gods; hook-nosed Afghans plying their immemorial trade of horse-dealing; slit-eyed China-men with their wares on their back, fresh from traversing the perils of the Tibetan snows; the mild Hindu offering for a pathetically small sum to teach shorthand and typewriting; beggars exposing their loathsome deformities, some of them self-inflicted, their hands perpetually cupped for alms. It was like a word-picture from *Kim* come to life. I took a *tonga* and explored the very cantonments outside which Kipling used to gossip with his friends who "were serving the widow at Windsor" and had entered thereby "the lordliest life on earth." Only there are no Privates Ortheris or Mulvaney nowadays, or very few of them. The hard-drinking, hard-swearing soldier is as extinct as the tight scarlet uniforms that they used to wear. Their place has been taken by bright-eyed young men hardly out of their teens, with a taste for milk-chocolate and an interest in Indian architecture.

But, broadly speaking, the background of Lahore is unchanged from Kipling's time. It is the atmosphere that has been revolutionised. The India of his imagination, with its arrogant sahibs conscious of their divine mission, and its fawning "natives" conscious of nothing but their own abysmal inferiority, has gone for ever. No one finds any music now in the sputter of the machine-gun (or was it the gatling?), and the idea of the white man's burden is distinctly *démodé*. Jingoism that barely survived the Black Week of South Africa perished altogether on the sliding duck-boards of the Passchendaele ridge. It is only in years a generation that separates us from Kipling, but in actual fact it is another century.

My diary of Lahore ends here. But I found that I wrote the following letter to Mr. Geoffrey Shakespeare, M.P., which, perhaps, is worth giving as showing the mild uncertainties of the position before the calling off of the Civil Disobedience movement.

"Government House,
"Lahore,
"*January 25th*.

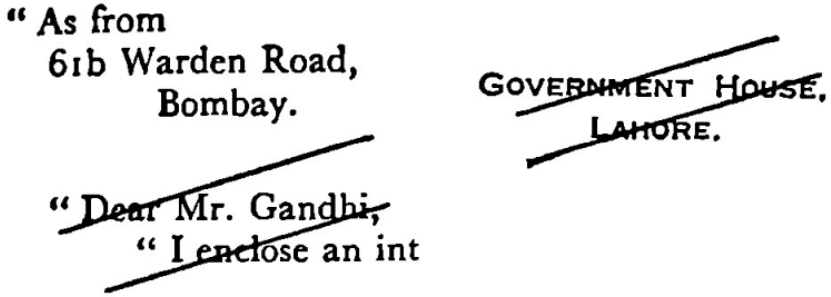
"My dear Geoffrey,—I am staying the week-end with Montmorency, the Governor of Lahore. He was potted at on Christmas Eve, and in consequence the house is guarded like a mediæval castle. One turns a corner and stumbles on a Sikh with a fixed bayonet.

"I went for a drive with H. E. this afternoon. There was a guard every quarter of a mile. I was so frightened lest the assassin should hit me by mistake.

"I am getting farther and farther away from civilisation. This is on the edge of the Frontier province and I disappear into it in a few days.

"If I don't return, I leave you and Aimée my Photomaton shares and a bound copy of the *Liberal Magazine* for 1921."

It began to be increasingly obvious that the Indian situation was becoming more interesting and critical every hour. I thought that it was time that I began to clear the way for getting in touch with Gandhi, as the following letter shows:




"My dear Frank,—I began this letter to Gandhi and then remembered that Government House notepaper was perhaps not the most tactful medium for a request for an interview.

"I am now in the Punjab—the land of fierce loyalties and fierce hatreds. If you are a Punjabi politician you either worship the British Raj, and go into the Indian Army, or you loathe it, and go to Lahore University and pot at the Governor. Fortunately for us the peasant overwhelmingly outnumbers both, and all he wants is to be left in peace in his mud-hutted squalor.

“Faintly down the wind has come the news, first of Gandhi’s release, and now of his unyielding attitude. It is all appallingly difficult. We cannot go back, we cannot stay where we are, and we cannot, apparently, go forward.

“Of course I know you will say: ‘Clear out from the provinces that we have desolated and oppressed.’ But, honestly, it is not as easy as that. I have been this morning inspecting canal systems which by means of British capital and enterprise have watered the desert and made, at any rate, one blade of grass grow where none grew before. Any interruption in the working of those canals and pestilence and famine will come to thousands.”

CHAPTER VIII

# INDIAN DESERT

*Dera Ghazi Khan, February 3rd.*

I have struck out from Lahore into the heart of the country. It is the complaint against all travellers in India that they only see the towns and the big men at the top who collect the decorations and miss altogether the real India of lonely stations and strong men in shorts who do all the work.

I am on the desert fringes of Baluchistan. Railways and motor roads and Gandhi caps have been left far behind. There is nothing but sand and camels and dark-bearded, white turbaned hill-men, and at rare intervals an untidy mud-walled village. Villages in India invariably appear to be on a hill. The explanation is that being made of mud they are always tumbling down and being rebuilt on the old foundations, so that, literally, they are raised on the ashes of their old greatness. What relieves this scene of the monotony of most Indian scenery is that the long weary central plain of India is ending at last, and in the distance can be seen the long low line of barren hills that marks the frontier of the British Raj.

It is a scene in which Abraham would not find himself out of place. It indeed abounds with opportunities for biblical metaphors. I rode out this morning and passed a donkey that was obviously dying and beyond human help. When I returned an hour later I saw on the spot a swaying mass of horrible black birds. The donkey was dead and the vultures were doing their work. When I passed the next day there was only a heap of bones plucked clean.

The social habits are patriarchal. Woman is still regarded as a chattel. Her hand is not given in marriage. It is bought and sold. A marriageable daughter is an asset in bankruptcy. Recently a bankrupt refused to realise his daughter's marriageable value and so a detachment of police was quartered on him until he gave way. This kind of compulsory billeting of police is a favourite form of showing the law-breaker the error of his ways. It is used also very effectively in family quarrels. A refractory suitor frequently is the unwilling host of his future bride's family. They descend on him unasked and since the laws of hospitality in the East are inviolable he has to maintain them until having obtained what they want they choose to depart.

Elopement is a most serious crime. I saw in the local gaol a boy doing a long term of imprisonment for no other crime than that he had married a girl

without her parents' consent. His crime is that he literally stole his wife. The happiness of the couple in their married life has nothing to do with the case. It would be as foolish as to put forward a plea in defence of stealing a motor-car that it had given a great deal of enjoyment. Woman is just a valuable piece of property. In any case, in no part of India is there any real idea of the Western view of marriage as an equal partnership or, as I heard a parson describe it last year in England, as "the loveliest adventure life has to offer." There is no ordinary boy and girl relationship in India. I cannot recall once meeting a mixed party of men and women on the roads in India of the jolly kind that one sees every week-end in England. For the girl is betrothed long before she attains puberty, and thereafter, even though she may be out of *purdah*, she is screened from any association with any other man but her husband.

Similarly, there is no primrose path to divorce. The co-respondent will probably be killed outright. Even if he escapes murder, he will be awarded by the courts a year's imprisonment, a fine of five hundred rupees, and banishment for life. The guilty wife will be cast into no man's land—turned out of her husband's family and denied admission to that of her lover.

The next most serious offences have relation to camels and water. Camels are the carriers' carts of these regions. Any hour of the day one sees a whole line of them, with little bells attached to them, jingling their way across the desert. The owner leads the first by a string fastened to its nose, which in turn connects the others like a thread passed through a succession of needles. In cheapness and safety of transport of merchandise they still leave the lorry standing. To the uninitiate, camels look as like one another as a row of Austin Sevens, but their owners can recognise them as easily as their own children, and a camel thief does not easily escape detection and condign punishment. Theft of water is, on the other hand, not so easy to discover. By means of the five great rivers of the Punjab, which are annually filled by the melting snow of the Himalayas, a beneficent Government has been able to water the desert by means of canals. Tiny tributaries are constructed out of these and, in return for a heavy water-rate, irrigate the surrounding fields. It is a favourite dodge to steal out by night and artificially widen the existing trench, so that a larger supply of water than their due share flows through. Needless to add that this breach of the elementary principles of socialism is visited by the Government with a heavy hand.

It is certainly a part of the country where success goes to the keen of eye and the swift of foot, and where the strong man guardeth his goods. For this is the edge of British India and the beginning of tribal territory and spheres

of influence. Everything is done by presents and patronage to tame the chiefs. But there is no abiding argument other than bullets. They themselves realise this, and to them a rifle is worth far more than its weight in rupees. It has to be guarded like a jeweller's shop. In all police stations and cantonments it is padlocked to its rack. In some places, sentries are chained to their rifles, so that, if they are stabbed in the dark, the thief, to get the rifle, has to take away the corpse too.

They certainly respect the man with the big stick or, rather, the machine-gun. I heard an interesting sidelight on the Amritsar shootings. One of the most troublesome of the hill-men returned from Amritsar with a wounded foot. "The sahibs have lost their tempers; they are firing," was his rueful comment, and he gave no more trouble. Not that it justifies or condones Dyer. The question is, Could not a similar effect have been produced without the enormous loss of life? But I can see that, in the shadow of these grim hills, the incidents of the Jullianwallah Bagh assume a rather different proportion to what they do in an afternoon's debate at Westminster. Here even the humblest policeman is living under almost continuous conditions of active service. Only a few years ago the hill station of Fort Munro was surprised, plundered, and burnt. An unfortunate policeman on that occasion, at the head of an irregular force of Baluchis, was manœuvred into a hopeless position and forced to retire. He was quite unjustly censured and, only a boy, he felt it to be a slur on his honour. He transferred to the North-West Frontier Police and gallantly went to his death in some forlorn hope. Truly, Kipling could still find material, even in 1931, for another series of *Plain Tales from the Hills* to send another band of young men tingling for adventures east of Suez. They would find the conditions quite unchanged.

Below is an extract from a letter dated February 3rd. It is a description of a picnic on a Sunday afternoon.

> "On Sunday we went out into the hills in the heart of the tribal area. It was just too incredibly barren. We took field-glasses, and though we had an enormous range of vision we did not see a living soul. Yet somewhere behind the rocks are nomad tribes who occasionally descend into the plains and loot and kill in the good old way. The whole aspect of the countryside is like the Old Testament come to life. One occasionally sees a long string of camels winding their way across the desert; and there are women with pitchers on their heads, and strange, wild men with long, flowing turbans."

Here I sum up my impressions at the time of a visit to a friend in the I. C. S. who was in control of a tribal area.

"The law may be primitive in these wild regions, but it is rigorously enforced. For this is the old India, where the prestige of the white man is unchallenged.

"Over these half-savage, wholly illiterate tribes there rules in undisputed majesty a young Englishman whom I last saw keeping wicket for Oxford in a recent 'varsity match.

"Watching him doing his job, I begin to realise what the India of Kipling, for which elderly empire-builders so pathetically sigh, must have been like. He is treated as a god. Everywhere his coming is greeted with reverential salaams; he may pass the police lines a dozen times in a morning, but the guard is turned out every time; shoes are taken off in his presence. Even when he was invited to a wedding, the father of the bride arrived with the chief pleader of the courts, presumably to make the entreaties for his gracious presence more forceful.

"I was fortunate enough to be present at this particular wedding feast.

"The wedding breakfast took the form of a dinner, and when we arrived we were ushered in to the strains of the National Anthem. I was less touched at this signal expression of respect when I subsequently discovered that it was the only European tune the local band knew.

"At the dinner table there was neither bride nor bridegroom nor even host. They were all strict Hindus, and as such, not merely cannot eat meat, but cannot even watch others do it. For all that, the courses are as many and as prolonged as a Guildhall banquet.

"These marriage celebrations sometimes go on for four days and, in consequence, drive the hosts into appalling debt.

"I saw more of the old India the next afternoon when I sat by the side of the young Englishman in court. To hear the petitions of the villagers was to see the life of the villagers in pictures. One had lost his wife and was suing for the customary 500 rupees from her seducer: another had had his bullock stolen and wanted to know what the Government was doing about it; a crafty-looking, hook-nosed hill-man was trying to present a petition without the customary two-anna stamp; he had tried the day before the same dodge, but he hoped that the Englishman would forget.

"Next came two kindly old men looking like Indian versions of the Cheeryble brothers. The Englishman whispers to me that up to two days ago

they had sworn to kill one another. They have now made up their quarrel and are asking for the sureties that they had been forced to give to keep the peace.

"So it goes on through the long Indian afternoon. The Englishman resolves the tangles, admonishing some, punishing others, 'indifferently ministering justice' to all, as easily as doubtlessly he solved the problems of the prefects' room at his public school only a few years ago.

"Presumably even this remnant of the old India is doomed to pass away. But while it remains I defy any round table conference in the world to find a better way of governing it."

CHAPTER IX

# NATIVE STATE

*Bahawalpur, February 9th.*

Everyone keeps on saying to me in India: "You have not yet seen the districts. You cannot judge India until you have been out in a district." So I persevere with my country tour. I have now moved on to Bahawalpur, a native state. It is strange that though to use the word "native" in ordinary conversation is to be regarded as having said something positively indecent, one can still talk unrebuked about native states.

On the way here I tried the experiment of travelling second class. Railway fares in India are crushing burdens on slender finances. It is the distances. One tends to think that to journey from Bombay to Delhi is like running up from London to Manchester. It is as a matter of fact rather more than the distance between London and Warsaw. My last hostess was very scornful about my practice of travelling first class. "Travelling second across India is no worse than travelling second across France," she said. Personally, I regard even second class on the Continent as extraordinarily uncomfortable. I am not one who likes discomfort. There are some people who do. Put them on the Golden Arrow and they are acutely miserable, but wedge them into a cattle truck at Uskub and they will prattle about it happily for the rest of their lives. However, I was tempted by the thought that I should be saving fifty per cent. on every fare and decided to be brave. My bearer, who looks like the sort of man who in England will be Lord Mayor in twenty years' time, was obviously pained. He pointed out that I should never get all my luggage into the carriage, and that there might be "Indian sahibs master would not like." I was adamant and tumbled into the first second-class carriage I saw, to find it completely empty. I cursed myself for all the tens of rupees that I had poured out unnecessarily in buying a solitude that I could have had for half the price. But at the junction I had to change and then the fun began. For in my next venture into a second-class carriage, though it was eleven o'clock in the morning an Indian gentleman was still in bed, and though the temperature, even on a cold weather morning, is at least that of a fine day in an English May every window was shut. I opened one in the hope that the prestige of the white race would suffice to get it kept open. But at the moment three more Indians appeared from the lavatory in various stages of *deshabille* and the window is tight closed again. By the rule of the majority I was beaten, and in the interests of the Round Table Conference

spirit I could not defy it. They then all began to eat oranges and to spit the pips to the four corners of the carriage. I could stand it no longer and after the next station I tried to explain through the medium of a supercilious bearer to a suspicious ticket-collector why I was travelling first class with a second-class ticket.

The whole incident, trivial though it is, illustrates the difficulty of contact between English and Indian. To put it bluntly, to the peculiar nostrils of the Englishman the ordinary Indian smells. I do not mean that offensively. Probably our bodies are to them equally malodorous. Nor do I refer to the ordinary Europeanised Indian whom one meets in England. But in general, owing to different conceptions of hygiene and social habits, close casual association between the two races is very often physically unpleasant. It is a difficulty that ought to be faced and overcome. It would be perfectly easy on a railway to have carriages labelled "for Indians" and "for Europeans." Neither race desires the intimate association inevitable to railway travel. Several times I have seen an Indian enter my carriage and on finding me there deliberately go away and seek out an Indian as a fellow-traveller.

I discovered in my newspaper-reading on this journey another strange difference between English and Indian which puts another obstacle in the way of real intimacy. It is the physical and mental condition as regards sex, revealed by the advertisements in the Press. Aldous Huxley comments on them in *Jesting Pilate*, and certainly they are remarkable. "Are you a bed-breaker?" asks one of them. If not the necessary medicine can be supplied at five rupees the bottle to make you one. On the next page the question is asked in a slightly different form. "Does your husband still love you?"—and again a suitable potion against impotency is strongly recommended by a series of Indian doctors, who give names and degrees, and one or two European doctors who, wise in their generation, give neither. These strange advertisements are splashed across every page of the Vernacular Press so that one gets the idea that half the race are suffering from sexual debility. My host tells me that not infrequently as a bribe he is offered a supply of "medicines," that, indeed, aphrodisiacs are a favourite form of gift everywhere. What a commentary on the outburst of indignation that greeted "Mother India!"

I have had an interesting insight here into irrigation. Twenty years ago Bahawalpur was three parts desert—just rolling sandhills. Now a canal has been constructed and the desert is being literally made to bloom like the rose, at any rate in places. For it is a slow business even by means of ditches filled with water to convert a sand-hill into a cornfield. M. has been lent by the Punjab Government as colonisation officer, to speed up the process. The

Nawab has been given a loan of several millions to build and develop the canal by the Government of India, and they are anxious about the safety of their investment.

M. works ten hours a day over it. He is just the type of civil servant who has built up India and the prestige of his service. It is as difficult to get him away from his work as it was when he had the rooms above me in the front quad at Worcester and was wresting a first in History from the Oxford examiners by the naked power of his own industry.

Like all Indian civil servants, even the best of them, he is losing something of the elementary joy of living in the process. When I first knew him he was a rollicking Sinn Feiner, a passionate foe in the Union debates of all oppression, and, like all Irishmen in his love of liberty there was a real streak of poetry. He is now a rigid, and efficient bureaucrat, and if he has any hero left it is Mr. Winston Churchill. His arguments are very plausible. They are the age-long excuse for our existence—that we are the protectors of the peasants and that they represent over ninety per cent. of the population. But how Jack used to mock me when I used to put forth ponderously the same arguments at the Oxford Union not so very many years ago.

I wonder a little sadly too whether all this output of energy and enthusiasm might not be put to more productive use. After all he is working to fill the coffers of the local Nawab. I do not know whether this particular gentleman—in age he is no older than M.—is any better or any worse than his neighbours. But a great many of the princes use far too much of their revenue for their own private enjoyment, and they have powers of execution and arbitrary imprisonment over their subjects in direct violation of all for which England, still fundamentally democratic and liberty-loving, stands. England, robbed of her natural leaders to-day in the successive barrages of the Somme, has not got so many promising young men that she can afford to let them scatter their services, filling the treasuries of despotic native Princes.

It may be argued that it is not only the Princes who are indirectly helped, that the real beneficiaries are the peasants who can now move out from the crowded sweltering bazaar into the open desert. Certainly there is a land hunger. But can it be satisfied by gifts of sandhills with a stream running through them? The world is gravely overstocked with wheat. When there is a glut how can these thin spidery stalks, grown in the sand, compete with the rich rolling wheat plains of Western Canada? Ricardo said that the absorption of the food grown on fertile soil would drive us more and more to land on the extreme margin of cultivation. We are now adopting the remedy

he prescribed when we are in far less danger than ever we were of suffering from the disease he diagnosed.

In any case Jack has been born twenty years too late. Under the old régime a man of his talent would in a few years be absorbed in the secretariat and be treading the well-worn path from secretaryship to Executive Councillorship, to the final summit of the Governorship of the Punjab, with a title, and, if he played his cards well, another important political post when he returned home. The road is blocked now. He will find, even if the Civil Service remains as it is constituted to-day, that whenever a good job is open, all things being equal, it will go to an Indian.

*February 12th.*

I have been trying to understand something of the problem of untouchability. There are sixty millions of untouchables. They are nothing better than pariahs. To their Hindu neighbours they are scarcely human. They are not allowed to use the common well or go to the same school.

In Madras I found that the breath of the depressed classes was regarded as a defilement, and they had to keep at least sixty yards away from caste men.

In Bombay the other day a barber refused to shave a doctor of medicine with a first-class professional reputation because he was a member of the depressed classes—though he would have willingly licked the boots of some dirty vermin-ridden Brahmin.

They are ridiculously under-represented in politics. In the whole of the Assembly there is only one untouchable. In the United Provinces, where they represent twenty-six per cent. of the population, they hold less than one per cent. of the seats on the council.

Gandhi will do one of his greatest works if he can break down these awful caste barriers.

He has championed the cause of the untouchables gamely up to now. He will not speak at a meeting at all unless the untouchables are admitted to it in the ordinary way. He will not have them listening outside through the window as they still have to do in many schools.

He has even adopted a boy from the untouchable class. In most other Hindu families that would mean complete ostracism.

One hears a great deal of the decay of the caste system. It was thought that the advent of the railways would kill it. There is no room for caste prejudice in those enlarged cattle trucks, which are called third-class carriages.

The same has been said about the motor bus. Undoubtedly it is working a change. It penetrates into villages where a railway engine has never been seen.

But I saw the other day on one motor bus that the untouchables had been exiled to the roof.

The change is very, very slow.

Great work is being done by local governments, particularly in Bombay, to build houses and wells and schools for them. Land is also being assigned to them for cultivation.

But the greatest need is for wells. I saw in a village the other day a little boy, looking very flushed and ill, waiting by the side of a well with a pitcher. He was an untouchable hoping that some kindly Hindu would take pity on him and fill his pitcher for him. He could not himself (because he was an untouchable) lower it into the well; he had to wait for it to be done for him.

In some villages the well assigned for the untouchables is green with scum. The Hindus have sparkling fresh water; for the untouchables water is good enough which in England one would hesitate to allow one's dog to drink.

I wish I could linger on in the mud-walled Indian villages. For anyone to boast that they understand India without having studied the Indian village is as foolish as if a foreigner claimed he understood England because he had visited the Surrey hills.

CHAPTER X

# ON THE WAY TO ALLAHABAD

*February 10th.*

In ten minutes this morning I decided to change the whole orientation of my journey. I had intended to make the journey up to Peshawar to catch a glimpse of the Frontier, instead I am racing down to Allahabad to try and interview Gandhi. My office cabled to me some days ago that it would be "immensely valuable" to get an interview with Gandhi. G. was then at Bombay and I was at Lahore. It would be like journeying from London to Moscow to get an interview with Stalin. I cabled back: "Efforts to get suggested interview would cost at least thirty pounds. Does office authorise this?" The answer came back: "Not unless exclusive interview guaranteed." It was rather like asking a steamship to guarantee, if you took a passage to Sicily, you would see Vesuvius erupt. I rather stupidly refused to take the risk and went on my course. I wrote and cabled, however, to Gandhi and this morning I got an answer saying that "it was impossible for Mr. Gandhi to appoint time and place, but if ever you are in hailing distance Mr. Gandhi would be pleased to see you." It is obviously my job to get within "hailing distance," so I am scrapping all my plans, and in the shape of enormous railway-fares I am casting my bread upon the waters in the hope that it will come back to me after many days in the shape of exclusive interviews and first-hand information.

Here is an extract from the letter I wrote on my journey down to Allahabad:

"In the train,
"*February 11th, 1931.*

"My dear Frank,—I am in the train between Lahore and Allahabad. I have just passed the terrible Amritsar—the very name seems to have in it the crackle of Dyer's machine-guns. You see that I have not yet become entirely a camp-follower of the G.C.s.

"As a matter of fact, I am making a dash down to Allahabad to interview Gandhi. I had a post-card from him this morning beginning: 'My dear Friend.'

"The chance of seeing the first great man India has ever turned out is too great to lose, and I have therefore turned off for the moment from the

Frontier to the south. You know my propensity for changing my plans in ten minutes and deciding to go to the Bar or become a lama in Tibet. It is more difficult here, for I have mountains of luggage and a servant. In fact, it is rather like trying to divert an army corps.

"The train gathers speed, and writing becomes with every mile more inconvenient. In addition, my carriage companion, a mild Hindu, has gone to bed, and I feel I ought to do the same. Unfortunately he has not washed. Would it be violating the spirit of the Round Table Conference if I crept into the lavatory? Probably it would.

"*Later.*

"It is nearing noonday, and still the train drifts on through the hot, grey, dusty, dreary, heart of India. I began this journey twenty-four hours ago, and I have another five yet to go. After this a journey from London to Newcastle will seem like a penny tram-ride down the Embankment."

To make the next extracts of my diary intelligible it is necessary briefly to relate what had been happening since I left the Executive Council in Delhi debating whether they should let Gandhi out of gaol, and eventually deciding to take the plunge. For better or for worse, the doors of Yeravda gaol were opened and Gandhi emerged into the sunlight once again.

At once it appeared as if it was for worse. It is true that in the early hours of his release he acted with commendable restraint. At the station where he boarded the Bombay express he gave an interview to the world. Squatting on the platform under the light of four oil-lamps, he said: "I have come out of gaol with an absolutely open mind, unfettered by enmity and unbiased in argument. I am prepared to study the whole situation from every point of view and to discuss the Prime Minister's statement with the other Round Table delegates." On arrival in Bombay, where he was greeted probably by the largest crowd ever assembled to meet one man, he proclaimed a day of silence. He was known to have received an urgent appeal from an important group of Round Table delegates—Sir Tej Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, and Mr. Sastri, the big three at the London Conference, "earnestly begging him to postpone decision until we meet." To this, Gandhi had agreed. It was thought in official India that the day of silence meant that he was happily extending the veto to public discussion.

But it was not to be. Mahatma Gandhi had come out of prison to find himself at the topmost pinnacle of power. Every prediction about him had been falsified. A few weeks ago it had been almost a cliché to say that Gandhi's day was done. When I mildly said that I would move mountains to

get an interview with him, I was told that my news sense was five years out of date. "The man you ought to see," the knowing ones told me, "is Jawaralal Nehru. He is the power behind the throne, the bitter, relentless foe of any compromise with the British." In the event, they proved hopelessly wrong. No one bothered about Nehru. The Press of the whole world was on Gandhi's door-step. It was obvious that it would be so. Consciously or unconsciously, he had captured the imagination of the world. His appearance alone would create a crowd. Everybody wanted to see, merely as a spectacle, that emaciated little man in a loin-cloth who almost by himself had created the most momentous political movement in the world. Then there were his silences and his oracular utterances, his fasts and his disappearances. In the jargon of newspaper-men he was "a front page top" in every paper in the world. That the correct, uninspiring, rather priggish-looking Nehru will ever be more interesting than the mighty Gandhi is as unlikely as that the British public will ever become more interested in the austere and formal Sir Herbert Samuel than in the twinkling eye and flowing mane of Mr. Lloyd George.

His own importance in those few days of early February must have staggered even Mr. Gandhi. Crowds waited for hours outside his bungalow, considering themselves well rewarded if only they could catch a glimpse of the back of his shaven head in a closed motor-car. His writing-table was piled high with pre-paid telegrams from all the enterprising news editors in the world. A battalion of Indian journalists and special correspondents from English and American newspapers crowded round him, ready to transcribe his lightest thought to the ends of the earth.

Not unnaturally he decided that he had too great an audience to miss. He broke into speech. He began giving interviews and even using up some of the pre-paid forms among the waiting telegrams. Every utterance was like a roll of thunder across a sunny sky. He announced defiantly that "the Civil Disobedience movement could not stop yet." He insisted that there could be no compromise on the vital issues of "the illegal manufacture of salt, the boycott of foreign cloth, and the drink trade." He wired to the *News-Chronicle* in still more uncompromising terms: "If the Conference has really offered freedom to India, the reaction should be felt here; on the contrary, I find that black repression continues unabated. . . . The continuance of such repression would make Congress co-operation impossible, even if other difficulties were got over." The situation became more ominous when his great friend and councillor, the aged Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Father of Jawaralal, died at Allahabad. The pandit, extraordinarily handsome, almost beautiful with his long white beard and fearless eyes, had been a great

favourite in the Assembly when, in the days before the Congress secession, he had led the party of the Extreme Left.

He had always been a good friend to peace. In the preceding summer, when the Civil Disobedience movement was at its bitterest height, he had come to Bombay with an olive-branch. He had actually offered to visit Gandhi in gaol and persuade him to call off non-co-operation. The Bombay Government, knowing that his arrest was imminent, wired to Simla urgently asking for a postponement. But the Government, with extraordinary ineptitude, were adamant. They had a charge against him of tampering with the loyalty of the troops. It was, in their judgment, too serious to be withdrawn. The Viceroy gave way to the Civil Service. Motilal was arrested and the chances of a settlement were wrecked for another six embittered months. But the old man bore no malice, and even now it was thought that he would weigh heavily to the side of peace in the vital discussions that were just beginning in the Congress committee. His death was a terrible blow to the chances of a settlement. Grief at the death of his friend seemed to make Gandhi more obstinate and unrelenting than ever. With every interview, his terms of settlement stiffened. He produced a programme of eleven points which included the immediate cutting down of expenditure on the Army by fifty per cent., the withdrawal of the ban against the carrying of arms, and complete prohibition.

But in all his extravagances, Gandhi did not lose his uncanny sense of political realities. He knew that for the first time during the Congress war the English Government in the eyes of the world was in the right. They had summoned a conference to London to state their views freely and frankly, they had conceded the principle of sovereignty at the centre, they had given a real indication that they were willing to divest themselves of power, and they had asked the Congress to come along and help build up the new constitution, and they were ready, the moment that the Civil Disobedience movement was called off, to release the 60,000 political prisoners still in gaol. It might well be asked what more could they do.

Like the supreme tactician that he is, Gandhi realised the weakness of his position. The British Government was patently in the right. He therefore devoted all his energy and ingenuity to manœuvring it into the wrong. The ear of America must be recaptured at a cost.

One of the strange features of this long, lop-sided battle between the British Empire, endowed with overwhelming material power, and the Congress, backed by the unrivalled moral force of passive resistance, was that both sides looked with strained eyes to the tribunal of a third party. It was public opinion in the United States that really counted. The doubts and

hesitations of the English Radical Press counted hardly at all, but a mild criticism of English police methods in an obscure newspaper in the Middle West was enough to send a shiver down the back of the Delhi secretariat and Mr. Wedgwood Benn into convulsions.

For months, Congress had had a magnificent American Press. Boat-loads of special correspondents had been emptied into Bombay. These young men, getting a pompous and chilling reception at Government offices, had gone round the corner to Congress headquarters, where they were received with every courtesy. Eagerly they lapped up the milk of the true word. No story of Government tyranny was too improbable to escape being transcribed on to their cable-forms. Detailed accounts of inoffensive young men walking peacefully down a street being set upon by the brutal police, of women being insulted and spat upon, and beaten up with *lathis*, of innocent processions being broken by rifle-fire were daily written up, and a few hours after summarised in flaming headlines in the Press of a whole continent. Mr. Babbitt would have been justified in thinking that the Devil incarnate had taken up his residence at Viceroy's House. It was jam for the Hearst Press, and it was equally jam for Mr. Gandhi.

But it could not last. When the Indian delegates came to England, and the English situation came under the view of the more responsible American correspondents in London, a trickle of truth began to find its way into the American newspapers. When finally the Conference broke up in a blaze of perorations, American leader-writers became positively lyrical in their estimates of "the new spirit in British Imperial contacts." Gandhi had temporarily lost his most powerful allies.

His attempt to recover them was characteristically astute. He wrote a letter to the Viceroy demanding a police enquiry into the alleged police outrages.

It was a brilliant move. There was just enough truth in the charges to give the impudent request a veneer of justification. Undoubtedly on occasion the police had used unnecessary violence. It was inevitable. Passive resistance is the most difficult form of obstruction in the world to overcome by gentlemanly methods. Even the London police discovered that in the uproarious days of the suffragettes. The Congress campaign had increasingly become a woman's movement. Processions to break the law would be headed by a screen of women. How could the police do their duty without violating the dictates of chivalry? In any case, chivalry is still largely a Western creed. The constables are all Indians, and to them women would have no especial claim to consideration. When they were hit they hit back. When women lay in front of trams they were forcibly removed. An

ugly incident was bound to result. It happened at Borsad in Gujerat. According to Gandhi, a body of harmless women "had been forcibly dispersed, and they were seized by their hair and kicked with boots." According to the police, the women were engaged in throwing bricks, and force had to be employed to prevent serious injuries. As far as I can gather, the police had been unnecessarily brutal and were probably deserving of severe censure. The European sergeants did not always exercise the control over their men that they ought to have done, and they in their turn were not sufficiently supervised by the commissioned officers. At any rate here was heaven-sent material for a first-class political enquiry of the kind in which Indian Nationalists revel. It was an opportunity for columns of chatter. Out-of-work Indian lawyers could have been triumphantly briefed by Congress to bullyrag bewildered policemen. The enquiry would have proceeded for months. The Round Table proposals would have been side-tracked, and the promise of peace would vanish in the debates, increasingly acrimonious as to who hit whom first and why.

Gandhi had successfully impaled the poor Viceroy on a dilemma. If he granted the enquiry, he would irreparably destroy the morale of the police force; if he refused it, he would imperil the support of the English Radicals, who, by a strange twist of fortune, were the chief supporters of a Conservative Viceroy.

There was also the United States to be considered. A refusal of a police enquiry was just the kind of excuse that would rally them again to the side of Gandhi. So observant of motes in their neighbours' eyes, so blind to the beams in their own eyes, they were holding up hands of holy indignation at the methods of the Indian police in quelling a revolution—as a matter of sober fact, infinitely less questionable than those employed by the New York police in breaking up a handful of protesting Communists, as I know from personal experience of both.

It was a difficult decision for the Viceroy to make, but, in all the circumstances, the course he chose was entirely the right one. He refused the police enquiry out of hand. It seemed inevitable that the working committee of Congress then assembling in Allahabad would meet only to record their rejection of the peace terms.

The news from home deepened the prevailing gloom. For in the meantime Mr. Churchill had broken out into a "Save India" campaign. At a speech in Manchester he warned the country that "there would be no more wicked act than to hand over the people of India to an oligarchy of lawyers, politicians, fanatics, and greedy merchants of whom the Indian Congress Party were composed. We ought to make it perfectly clear that we intend to

remain effective rulers of India for a very long and indefinite period, and that, though we welcome co-operation from loyal Indians, we will have no truck with lawlessness and treason." Speeches of this kind struck dismay into every educated Englishman in India. Contrary to popular belief, Englishmen in India are not die-hards. It is a real tragedy for the English association with India at this time that the self-constituted spokesman of Anglo-India should be Sir Michael O'Dwyer. Even the most rabid and rigid on questions of Indian constitutional advance shrank from associating himself with Churchill's policy. As realists, they knew that it was impossible to hold India in defiance of her wishes, however tantalising the suggestion. To encourage, without being able to satisfy, the English public's dreams of a return to the old Empire of the nineteenth century was regarded as in the highest degree mischievous and dangerous.

So it seemed as if the perorations in London had been shattered in ten days' contact with reality. The unfortunate three hundred and twenty millions, ninety per cent. illiterate, were in the position of Alice at the tea-party, between the March Hare and the Mad Hatter. "It does not matter which way you go," said Alice on that occasion. In this case it did not matter which policy—Gandhi's or Churchill's—was followed, for the ultimate result would be the same.

There was only one hope, and that lay in the persuasive powers of the Round Table delegates, now hurrying as fast as P. and O. ship could bring them, to induce Congress to throw in their lot in constitution building.

I will now return to my diary for the chronicle of the next fateful events.

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CHAPTER XI

# I MEET GANDHI

*Friday, February 13th.*

I saw Gandhi yesterday. I set off early in the morning to Anand Bhawan, the imposing country house standing in its own drive, which used to belong to Motilal Nehru. It was extraordinarily difficult making myself understood without even a Hindustani conversation book to help me. But I became the aggressive cub reporter of the American movies, and firmly planted myself down on the verandah to wait for someone to agree to take me in for an audience. I did not have a dull moment. The verandahs of the houses of Indians are like club smoking-rooms. Everybody meets their friends, and as I sat there it was an interesting study to see anæmic but earnest young men wandering past hand in hand, and elderly be-spectacled pandits embracing one another. There was much excited chatter and vivid gesture. Somehow I had the queer idea that I had strayed into the summer school of the Independent Labour Party.

At last a woman appeared, looking strangely competent in that queer assembly. "You want to see the little man," she asked, and in a few seconds I was gratefully following her into the presence. It is impossible not to use the phraseology of courts about Gandhi. The moment you see Gandhi you catch the atmosphere of royalty. It is strange for dignity certainly does not lie in his looks. My first thought when I saw him squatting Indian fashion on the floor on the balcony over the porch was, "I think that you are the ugliest man I have ever seen." He seemed to be all spectacles as the Cheshire cat was all grin. The lenses were very thick and encased in a heavy steel frame. They seemed to dominate the man. I looked closer and discovered the reason. There was such a little body behind them. Very short by nature he accentuates it by his squatting position. He is so emaciated that he reminded me of those grisly pictorial advertisements for the "Save the Children," fund after the war. His bones positively stick out from his body like the ribs of a half-starved horse. The impression of emaciation is increased by the fact that he is literally only half clothed. A large portion of his chest was protruding from his upper garment. His mouth is shaped as if it once had contained prominent teeth. These have now disappeared, leaving a gaping void. He wore nothing on his head, which was closely shaven. Altogether, it was like seeing a half-naked gnome in spectacles.

Even in my repulsion I was conscious of his royalty. He was so upright, so impassive, so utterly unconscious of his surroundings. It was rather like having an interview with a statue of the Lord Buddha. He has extraordinary dignity. A king himself could not have inclined his head more gravely when I stuttered out my formal condolences on the death of Motilal Nehru. He had all the courtly graces too. He apologised for not getting up to greet me, he offered to send for a chair for me, he enquired if the sun was too strong for me. In two minutes I had decided whatever his other failings might be that, he had, to an extraordinary degree, dignity and charm.

Of course he was aided by his background. Squatting on each side of him were groups of his disciples, clothed like himself in *kuddur* (this is the coarse Indian cloth, woven at the spinning-wheel, and worn by all devout Congressmen). These increased as we talked, and by the end of our conversation the gathering had reached the dimensions of a public meeting. Sometimes there was an angry murmur when I was supposed to have put an unfair question.

I heard someone muttering behind me in the clear unmistakable accents of the English governing classes. I looked round and was astounded to find that they came from an English girl clothed in Indian dress. Later on she appeared with the Holy Man's meal, and bending down on one knee held it in front of him like a serving maid before Pharaoh. I have discovered since that she is a Miss Slade. Her history is very curious. She is the daughter of the admiral of the Indian station and was not so very long ago one of the reigning beauties of Bombay society. Then one day, on her return from England, she read some of Gandhi's writings, asked for an interview and was instantly captivated by him and decided to devote her life to his service. She renounced her old manner of living, cut herself off from her family, adopted Indian dress, and even took the Indian name of Mira Bei. Her one regret is that she was not born an Indian. In justice to Gandhi it must be admitted that he did everything he could to persuade her not to follow him. She had a very harsh novitiate at his Ashram (seminary). But she stuck to her intention and is now his faithful servant, following him even to Dandi beach on his famous march to break the salt laws.

She and I did not get on well together. She complained that I was not giving "Gandhiji"—an irritating suffix to Gandhi's name, invariably used by the faithful, which I believe means "dear little Gandhi"—time to answer one question before I put another. It was probably true. It is a time when every sentence of Gandhi is a prospective headline, and a full dress interview worth ten times its expense in cable fees. But all this hostility was very

embarrassing. I could not help feeling that I was like a presumptuous young man daring to cross-examine Socrates in front of his disciples.

For all that the interview was well worth while. It revealed exactly where he stood at the moment, and exposed in all its bleakness the prospects of Indian settlement. Here are his words more or less as he spoke them.

"I see no justification in the Premier's speech for calling off the Civil Disobedience movement. I want the substance of independence, the British can keep the shadow. The Round Table Conference proposals do not give me that substance."

"What would you have wished to happen at the Round Table Conference?" I asked.

Mr. Gandhi laughed. He said: "That is a very good question. I would have liked the grant of complete self-government without any safeguard. Safeguards mean that we are still regarded as not fit to govern ourselves.

"The British Army is entirely unnecessary. It is just an Army of Occupation. I would like to see every British regiment removed to-morrow.

"There is no frontier danger. No foreign Power covets India. Let the Afridis loot a few frontier towns.

"As a matter of fact, I find that I have very considerable influence over the Afridis. I have only just recently discovered that. But if the Afridis did attack us, I should merely oppose them with the weapons of Civil Disobedience, as we are opposing the British invasion.

"There might have to be some kind of Indian Army, though I myself am opposed to any army.

"In order to train that army in modern methods, we should have to call in the advice of experts. We should probably ask the help of English officers in that work, and, if they refused, we should invite the co-operation of the French or the Germans or the Japanese or any other foreign Power.

"Why should there be any financial safeguards? Indians are by nature experts in finance. Absolute control is essential.

"India is a poor country. She cannot afford, for instance, three residences for the Viceroy. The New Delhi has no relation to the Indian villages. It is self-imposed on India. Half our revenue goes to the Army.

"In fact, it has been estimated that after the reservations have been complied with, there will be only twenty per cent. of the nation's revenue left under our own control. I would myself begin by reducing taxes, but any

money that could be found would be used for the building up of the country."

The conversation turned to the alleged police repression.

"I have unimpeachable evidence," said Mr. Gandhi, "of the barbaric methods of the police. I have asked the Viceroy for an impartial inquiry, and he has refused.

"If I complained to you that I had been robbed by your servant, would you merely reply that you had asked your servant if he had robbed me and that he denied it, and that, therefore, you proposed to do nothing more in the matter? No gentleman would act like that. Yet that is what Mr. Benn's answer in the House of Commons means.

"I cannot say that I have found the Viceroy any more responsive than his predecessors. He is very stiff and rigid. I am very disappointed in him.

"I do not say that if the inquiry into the police excesses were granted I would co-operate. It is only one of the essentials. But I would regard it as a ray of hope. At present I see none.

"You tell me that there is a new spirit in England in the last few weeks, following on the visit of the Moderates. Why is there no echo of it out here? The tale of repression is as long as ever it was."

I interrupted to asked him about the difficulties of Moslem conflicts.

Mr. Gandhi said: "They are no obstacle. They have been fomented by the British. There is no communal question in the villages. It exists only in the towns, where the British influence can effectively encourage it.

"It is because men and women have not been given enough to do that there are these communal disturbances. If the Moslems would come along with us and share the Government, these communal quarrels would disappear.

"It is suggested that I am doing a serious thing in encouraging people to break the law. My answer is that it is better to break laws than to break heads. There is only one alternative to Civil Disobedience, and that is open revolt. I prefer to oppose force with self-suffering. It is not lawlessness, for that implies wanton violence. We break the law, knowing and accepting the consequences. There may be stray and isolated instances of actual violence on the part of Congress supporters. But, then, there are deserters in every army."

"Would you say," I asked, "that the British have contributed nothing to India during all the years that they have been here?"

Mr. Gandhi smiled. “You are a very persistent interviewer. I really cannot say that the British have contributed anything. They have given us a sense of self-discipline, but we should have had that in any case. Undoubtedly they have given us sanitation, but apart from that, the British Raj has been nurtured in rapine and maintained by repression.

“Look at men like Clive and Hastings. I am not quoting what Indian historians say, but what your own British historians say. Yet these are the men you honour and admire.

“I want the substance of self-government and I will be content with nothing less.

“The Civil Disobedience movement must go on.

“I am looking for every opportunity of peace. If I saw my chance, I should rush to seize it. But at present I see none.”

He is absolutely irreconcilable. At the moment there is not a glimmer of hope of his ultimate acceptance of the Round Table Conference proposals. Some of the delegates arrive in Allahabad to-night and will see Gandhi to-morrow. Will they work the miracle?

CHAPTER XII

# THE FIRST GREAT STRUGGLE

*February 14th.*

The Round Table delegates have arrived. Night and day they wrestle with the working committee of Congress. It is an unequal battle. It is not unlike a contest between an English Liberal and a Socialist. The Round Table delegates are the Liberals. They are the personification of the common-sense point of view. They are amiable, reasonable, and statesmanlike, and wholly unrepresentative of any body of opinion but the Indian professional classes. Congress are the Socialists. They are rabid, obstinate, bitter, intemperate, and they faithfully represent political India. The parallel can be taken further for Congress are openly contemptuous of the Round Table delegates. They have suffered for the faith. Have they not been languishing in gaol while these amiable gentlemen have been having a free trip to London? It cannot be an easy position for these returning delegates. They have had London at their feet and now they return to stand on the door-step of the working committee of Congress.

Fortunately they have one very able politician amongst them. I have just met Sir Tej Sapru. He strikes me as being of all the Indian politicians that I have met the one most like a House of Commons man. In appearance he is not unlike the late Mr. Pringle. He has his massive head and his combative manner and his sense of humour. But he has what Pringle never had, a constructive mind and a first-class grasp of political realities. He realises that the co-operation of Congress is vital and on the balcony of Anand Bhawan he is fighting for it inch by inch. It is really a struggle between him and Jawaralal Nehru for the mind of Gandhi which is the key to the capture of the Congress machine. Jawaralal has come out of prison more bitter and obstinate than ever, now that he is no longer under the influence of his Father. I am told that the ferocity of his nationalism is very much the result of the social system that we have created in India. Nehru was educated at Harrow and Cambridge. He had a good time at both and returned with no particular animus against the British. Immediately he found that he was ineligible for election to the chief clubs in his own town and in a dozen other ways was made to feel that he was a member of the subject race. He threw in his lot with the revolutionaries, and very soon with his eloquence, his trained intelligence, his tall, good-looking, ascetic appearance he became the prophet of youth. Not much over forty now he remains the idol of the young

men and second only to Gandhi—though a long way behind him—in power and influence.

So far he seems to be winning. I saw Sapru to-night and found him very depressed.

* * *

I have been studying again this afternoon the background of the India for whose soul presumably the struggle is contended. I saw this afternoon the sacred junction of the Jumna and the Ganges. Round it there are the traces of a gigantic Wembley—empty stalls, drooping banners, derelict triumphal arches, tired grass, scattered paper, and tumbling tents. They are the remains of a religious festival. There is such a festival every year, a larger one every five years, and a monster ceremony every ten years. During that one week every tenth year ten million bathe in the waters of the Ganges, which, though they may be sacred, resemble in appearance the Manchester Ship Canal. There is a special railway constructed solely for that festival and Hindus will devote the savings of a lifetime to be in these teeming camps, decimated sometimes, despite all precautions, by a ghastly outbreak of cholera.

From there I went on to see a leper hospital. Hitherto the only two things that I knew about lepers were that they were as white as snow and that their disease was appallingly infectious. As is usual in scraps of isolated information they were both quite false. Lepers are not white and only continuous contact with them over a period of at least a year produces infection. But for all that I have never seen more pathetic human wreckage than those lepers. The flesh just crumbles away bit by bit, and of some there was nothing left of the wonderful human body but the head and the trunk. This was an asylum for them, run by an American mission. Unfortunately there is no law in India making leprosy a certifiable disease. Lepers can wander at will, marrying and begetting children all over the country. What makes their journeyings easy is that no leper need ever pay a fare on an Indian railway. They only have to expose their sores and ticket collectors shrink away from fear of contagion.

The object of this hospital is to make some kind of home for them. They have their own little hovels and cook their own meals and grow their own vegetables. It is hoped that they will prefer a settled life to their old wanderings, and the majority of them do. An attempt is also made to get the children away from them. It is vital, if possible, to get a child of leprous parents isolated from them before it is two years of age. There is then some

hope that it will have escaped the taint. Here again there is no law to compel separation; it all has to be done with the parents' consent. Very cleverly the organisers of the hospital have built the children's home in the centre of the leper colony, so that the parents, even when they allow their children to be taken from them, can still see them happily playing in the distance. Very often, after two or three years, they lose all interest in them and the children are rescued altogether from their peril.

A clinic is attached to the asylum and heroic work is being done by the doctor in charge. Experiments are being made in the curative properties of oil from a local plant. But, so far, only six per cent. of the lepers have been cured and most of those cures have only been effected in the early stages of the disease.

*February 15th.*

The fight still goes on. The Nawab of Bhopal arrived to-day to add his persuasion to those of Sapru and little Jayakar, another success at the London conference, also has arrived. It is now known that they are urging Gandhi to go and see the Viceroy and discuss the whole implications of the Conference with him. Bhopal has been in communication with Irwin, and the Viceroy is prepared to see Gandhi, but insists, not unnaturally, that the request for an interview must come from Gandhi in the first place. Bhopal is a young man of very progressive views. In accent and dress he looks and talks like an ordinary member of the English upper middle classes. He is known to have sympathies with much for which Congress stands, and gets on personally very well with Gandhi. Altogether it is a powerful deputation, and it seems to be having some effect on Gandhi.

Sapru is much happier about the situation to-night. Gandhi seems willing to write the letter, but is still obsessed with this demand for a police enquiry. The delegates are urging him to write a plain letter, freed from any condition of any kind, just asking for an interview.

*February 16th.*

They have triumphed. Gandhi has actually written the letter and it is now on its way to Viceroy's House. It is straightforward and courteous, and contains no reference to the demand for a police enquiry. There are two characteristic touches. Gandhi asks for what he calls "a heart to heart talk," and he adds that he wants to meet "Lord Irwin the man." Gandhi is fundamentally a sentimentalist. At times he talks like a woolly-minded lay preacher rather than a practical politician. That has been the trouble during all these talks this week. They could not get him to face realities. Sapru said

to me on one occasion: “Our difficulty is that we cannot get him to discuss real political problems. He is all the time putting to us moral and social conundrums.” Evidently he wants to transfer the conversazione to the Viceroy’s study. He likes the Viceroy personally and he knows that he will treat him more as a friend than as an impersonal problem in statesmanship.

His letter to the Viceroy is undoubtedly an important advance towards peace. Gandhi has abandoned his *non possumus* attitude and is prepared to discuss a scheme of government other than complete independence. That is a tremendous advance on the Lahore Congress of December 1929, when the whole assembly went bald-headed for complete independence. It is, of course, a foregone conclusion that the request for an interview will be granted. As I have indicated that path has already been most carefully prepared.

Irwin will, of course, be castigated by the diehard Press for negotiating with rebels. Certainly it is an unpleasant position into which we have manœuvred ourselves, when we are thankful of the opportunity of treating on equal terms with the leader of the rebellion without even the advantage of an armistice. The Civil Disobedience movement is apparently still to go on and its leader to be received with honour in Viceroy’s House.

But what could Irwin do? He might refuse to see Gandhi until the movement was called off. Gandhi would almost certainly refuse those terms. All hope of co-operation would break down and the leaders would go back to gaol, and the best hopes of peace for a decade would be irretrievably wrecked. For what purpose? Merely in order to maintain the prestige of the Raj.

It is the general strike conundrum over again. For nine days, during which the commerce of the country bled into a decline from which it has never since recovered, there were no negotiations, though both sides wanted to negotiate. The purely mechanical question of calling off the general strike first stood in the way. I remember meeting old John Burns in the middle of that strike, on the steps of the National Liberal Club. “The strike would be ended to-morrow,” he said, “if it were not for the pride and punctilio of the Government.”

Lord Irwin is playing the part urged upon Baldwin by the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lloyd George on that occasion. He is scrapping “pride and punctilio,” and opening negotiations. It is a supremely courageous action. There are no signs of a change of heart in essentials among the Congress Committee. Jawaralal Nehru said to me this afternoon, “it is useless for us to enter into a conference with the Round Table delegates as long as the

safeguards remain in existence, and upon those we are not prepared to negotiate or to compromise."

Taken at its face value that statement is in itself an unanswerable argument against any parleying with Congress. But Irwin is great enough to realise that his is not the only side that suffers from its extremists, and he is prepared to take the risk.

I am beginning to realise that the general liberalism of Delhi is not reflected outside it so far as the administration is concerned. I had an eye-opener to-day at the house of one of the most prominent of the English civil servants. During tea a cutting from a Congress newspaper was handed round containing an attack on the civil servant for having ordered the school-children in a local school to turn out to watch a regiment of British troops march by. There was general laughter when we all read it, and I thought that the joke was the ridiculous nature of the Congress charge which carried with its own absurdity its own refutation. Not a bit of it. The charge was true. It was only directed against the wrong person. It was some educational authority, and not our host, that had given the order. That was the joke. No one thought it remarkable, much less reprehensible, that in the year of grace, 1931, when India is on the threshold of responsible government, Englishmen should make themselves a party to this silly form of Prussianism.

Fortunately many Indians, for all their solemnity, have a sense of humour, I came across this afternoon one with the quality very highly developed. She was Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the Indian poetess. I discovered that it was she who had been so kind to me at Anand Bhawan, and had taken me up immediately to see Gandhi. We met at a local flower show, where Indians and Englishmen were self-consciously mingling together in brotherly love round the begonias. Mrs. Naidu had just come out of gaol. I asked her about her experiences. "I had a splendid time," she said. "I did not want to come out. I had planted some beautiful antirrhinums, and just as they were coming into flower we were all let out again. I begged the civil surgeon to allow me to stay just an extra day to see my flowers, but he refused absolutely, and I had to turn out. Now will you take me to look at the roses if you don't mind being seen with an old gaolbird. What do you think of Gandhi—isn't he an ugly little man?" So she chattered on, and I came under her spell like many young men before and since. It was clear that she had a great following, although she had come to the show incognito. Young men buzzed round her with cameras and she swept chattering on rather like Mrs. Patrick Campbell at the theatrical garden-party.

But all Congress prisoners have not come off as well as Mrs. Naidu and the other leaders. They were treated as Class A prisoners, on the same lines

as First Division offenders at home. They had their own private rooms, they could write and read and even receive visitors. Their only punishment was that they were under restraint. One of the curiously foolish acts of the Government was to delay the arrest of the leaders until special legislation had been passed, to ensure that prison for them was robbed of its discomforts. It is these forcible weak acts of the Government which have such a disastrous effect on our Indian policy. There was a case for imprisonment of the leaders for sedition, and a case against it, but absolutely none for making them martyrs without any of the deterrents of martyrdom.

Very different has been the lot of their humble followers. They have been thrown into the common gaol like any ordinary malefactors. I have been round the Allahabad gaol and seen the political prisoners in the mills and the workshops associating on equal terms with the off-scourings of the bazaars. It was easy to detect them by their self-conscious uncomfortable look when people from outside came to see their humiliation. The ordinary criminal took not the slightest interest in us, but the politicals would busy themselves in their work trying to hide their shame as educated convicts do when the visitor makes his rounds of an English gaol. I disliked the experience even more when we passed by the young political prisoners. Many of them were not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age. Yet some of them were in handcuffs, some in leg-irons, some in both, and one or two showed the signs of having been recently beaten. I do not mean to suggest for a moment that the administration of the gaol is harsh. "____" is both humane and efficient. He hates repression as much as anybody. The prison, indeed, had less trouble than any in the province. Order had to be preserved, and when young prisoners become violent and mutinous I suppose that there is no other remedy but the leg-iron and the whip.

Still, I feel even less comfortable about our position in India, now that I am seeing some of the price that we have to pay for it—a charming educated woman like Mrs. Naidu, kept for months under restraint, and boys, still in their teens, looking out on to the blank towering mud walls of a prison.

I am amazed that there is not more personal bitterness against Englishmen. I have been right down amongst the Congress men in the gaols and the bazaars, and have received no insulting word or even gesture. Where there is so much kindliness and goodwill and even humour there must be a way to peace with honour to both sides.

Here is an extract from a letter written at this time:

> "It is terribly difficult to know how to deal with this non-violence. Tolstoy was the original inventor of it—wasn't he?

“It is a brilliant way of making the physically weak morally strong. The Governor of —— seems to have been the most successful in dealing with it. He had a few of the ringleaders well beaten. Congress tried to make the most of it and took the unfortunate men round the bazaar to expose their stripes. This exhibition of what happened to law-breakers was so effective that the Congress movement practically collapsed.

“But Parliament might have something to say if the method was freely adopted! But it is all beastly. I hate it.”

CHAPTER XIII

# THE EXTRAORDINARY CITY

*Benares, February 17th.*

So the curtain has rung down on the opening scene of this strange drama. There is a week-end interval while the characters change their clothes and get into position for the second act in the Viceroy's study in New Delhi.

I have used the breathing space to make a day's dash to Benares. I am not likely to be as far south in India again and Benares is particularly exciting at the moment by reason of an outbreak of communal rioting.

So I travelled from Allahabad through the night and after two ghostly changes I arrived here in bleak darkness at half-past four in the morning. The station was almost deserted, for though this is the time of festivals the local government, owing to the riots, has just ordered the cancellation of all third-class booking on the railways. Such high-handed orders are borne extraordinarily patiently by the Indians. Probably they are quite unconstitutional and could be resisted if the intending passenger felt inclined. But a word from the ticket-collector is enough and they all tumble back to their villages and bazaars. As a matter of fact only a nation with the slave virtues would tolerate the conditions of third-class travel. The carriages are like vast cattle trucks with a few wooden-seats in the middle. In these are wedged together with their baggage a sprawling, sweltering mass of humanity. The old troop trains in Northern France, with their trucks constructed for eight horses and forty men, were "Golden Arrows" compared to these Indian "Black Holes." The excuse is that they are cheap, which is certainly true. The third-class fare is rather less than a sixth of the first-class fare which in itself is little more than the equivalent third-class fare in England. It works out at rather less than a farthing a mile. It is also added that they are popular. If they are, it is a popularity akin to Edwin Montagu's phrase about pathetic contentment, which by the way does not really describe the Indian masses in their dirt and poverty, disease and general degradation. They are not content, only resigned.

But all this is a long way from Benares. I stretched myself out on a seat on the station platform and to the music of shunting trucks snatched an hour and a half's sleep. Then in the half-light of early dawn I set off in a tonga for the river. The driver either through genuine fear of the rioters, or more likely with a desire to increase my financial obligations to him, took me an enormous circuit and the sun was already up when I reached the river. My

first impression was so depressing that I nearly turned back to my hotel for breakfast. For I was confronted with grimy water, desolate mud flats and an iron railway bridge. However, I was already in the clutches of the guides and I was soon being hounded out on to the roof of a barge of the type on which in happier days I had eaten ices in Oxford eights weeks. Down below sat four rowers like the slaves in a trireme. They lumbered at their oars and slowly the barge lurched out into mid-stream. We turned the corner of the river and suddenly there heaved into view the whole glorious sweep of Benares—its domes and its minarets, its tumbling terraces, its great palaces in all their untidy splendour, its swarming, dripping, repulsive, fascinating, puzzling crowds.

The rowers turned the barge towards the shore and from a bird's-eye view I was able to get a "close up" of every detail of the scene. I saw men and women fully clothed enter the water as solemnly as if they were entering church and wade out up to their shoulders. It was still very cold and some of them as they prayed shivered so much in the water that they created ripples all around them. The boat lurched on and I saw women stumbling into the water with little children at their breasts. The children were crying with cold and fright but they were ducked in the water as remorselessly as in the bad old days of the bathing women at home. A little further on grave men were filling flagons with water like little children with their buckets at the English seaside. They were hoarding as much as they could of the sacred water to take back with them in triumph to some dusty, sun-swept village in Southern India. A little further on there was a flutter on the crazy uneven steps. A Ranee was being borne down on a palanquin to take the waters. Their caste forbids them to bathe with the common herd and this unfortunate lady was rowed out in a heavily curtained barge to bathe with her attendants screened from their fellow creatures, in the bilge water at the bottom. My rowers stopped and with the happy expression on their faces of guides who have at last reached the show spot, pointed out to me a few yards away on the shore the first of the burning ghats. Stretched over a pile of wood were two corpses, shrouded like mummies. I could have viewed them impersonally if only they had been properly shrouded but a hand peeped out of the corner of one of the sheets and I began to lose all interest in my forthcoming breakfast then long overdue. However I had to wait and hear the whole ceremonial explained to me. The man having his head shaved a few paces away from the corpses was the chief mourner. The haircut was the first preliminary to the burial. That finished he would give instructions to "the fire man." The ghat would be set alight, the family would stand around and they would scatter at the appropriate moment the ashes into the sacred

Ganges. It is the ambition of every devout Hindu to die at Benares. By so doing he will go direct to Paradise without having to traverse any of the intermediate circles. Most of the Rajahs have one of their palaces in Benares —great shuttered crumbling mansions on the river front—in the hope presumably they will be inhabiting it when the end comes.

At this moment a barge-load of American tourists ground against my boat. I turned round to find that the whole river was covered with them. They were all wedged four deep on to the top of their barges and I in my solitary grandeur must have looked the embodiment of the reserved Englishman taking his pleasures alone and sadly. I decided I wanted breakfast very badly and ordered my rowers, who were very reluctant to let me go without tasting the full ghoulish horror of the ghats, to turn round and row me back with all speed. As I returned along the bank the scene had lost much of its savour. It had become from a rather moving expression of religious fervour a steamship advertisement to catch the idle tourist. As I passed the other barges cameras clicked like a volley of dummy cartridges and innumerable specimens of Hindus at Prayer were fastened on to negatives there to be triumphantly displayed in a few months' time to the ladies' clubs of Zenith. I wonder how they would like snaps of themselves at Holy Communion to be transported back to the Oriental clubs in Calcutta and Bombay? But I must admit that the worst instance of this kind of sacrilege I witnessed not amongst Americans but in Australia at Sydney. In one of the night-clubs there in front of the orchestra is a statue of the Lord Buddha brushed every evening as the dancers' swirl past by the dresses of the women and the tail-coats of the men. I suppose that we in Protestant England are no better with our jokes about Masses. One man's religion is another man's mockery.

I jogged back to the hotel in my *tonga* to find that the Americans in their motor-cars had overtaken me and were now on the verandah—many of them in their sun-helmets, though they were protected by a roof and there was no sun—explaining to one another ponderously that they had nothing like the caste system in the towns of the Middle West.

After breakfast I announced that I was going down to explore the town. I might have said that I was going into a lions' den for the alarm that it caused the proprietor. I was first told that no *tonga* driver would take me and secondly that I should be murdered. The latter statement I demonstrated immediately to be false and therefore decided to risk the accuracy of the former—obviously if there was a communal riot on I ought to be there to see it. It became increasingly evident as we rattled down that the situation was still inflamed. One procession of youths, obviously Hindus, passed down

one side of my *tonga* and another procession of youths, obviously Moslems, passed down the other. Both carried heavy bamboo canes and though self-consciously out to crush a riot were just in the very mood and temper to create one at any moment. I went down to the police station which I knew even from my limited experience of Indian towns would be in the centre where the town hall is in England. In England we hide our police stations down side streets and alleys. Few Londoners could say off-hand where Bow Street is and the Thames Police Court baffles the most expert taxi-driver, as I know when I was once late for a summons there. In our hypocrisy we try and give the impression that police stations are really hardly necessary. In India there is no such reluctance to display them. They are usually in the centre of the central square where they cannot be cut off from a sudden rush from behind and where there is a good field of fire in front.

I found the square surging with excitement and on the steps of the police station one English collector and one English police officer. It was an impressive sight. They were the umpires of all that tumult and turmoil, and by their very detachment from racial strife they were regarded as the natural leaders and controllers of the situation. Even Congress enthusiasts were supporting them, and as I talked to them Moslems and Hindus, irrespective of creed and caste, came up and consulted them.

The fact was that the horror of the riot transcended all prejudices and convictions. A Moslem cloth-dealer had been murdered. Two or three times he had been warned not to sell English cloth. He had defied the edict and three nights before he had been caught in a quiet street and brutally done to death. Retaliatory murders immediately followed and then the whole bazaar blazed up into a communal riot. The Congress supporters are thoroughly frightened and desperately anxious for political reasons to stamp these embers out. For this is the kind of riot that has been long prophesied would result from their propaganda. The attempt to coerce Moslems into the grand boycott of English goods was bound to lead to trouble. Their nightmare has always been that it would lead to a general uprising of the Moslems against them and that in the conflict hopes of self-government would vanish for another generation.

I saw the absurdity of the old charge repeated to me by Gandhi two days before that it is the British who foment these riots and fan them into flame. The English collector, the only English civil servant in the town, was the one stabilising influence I met that morning. He just stood there smoking a pipe, calming a frightened old man one moment, giving the lie to a preposterous rumour the next. The bazaar was still in a highly inflammable condition. There was all around that uncanny buzz of angry voices unpleasantly

reminiscent of a stage crowd in a play about the French Revolution. I had no idea before how like the real thing is their acting. An angry crowd is like the beating of the tom-tom—once heard never forgotten. But the collector's very appearance seemed to steady the atmosphere. As I talked to him I could positively feel it improving as during a serious flood I have seen the sudden turn of the tide and the waters beginning to recede. So it went on all through the morning until with the remark that he thought that he had got the town quiet at last he quietly slipped away for his Sunday lunch.

I hurried off to explore the temples. It amazes me that there is not a communal riot every week in Benares. It is the Jerusalem of the Hindus, the sacred place of pilgrimage for two-thirds of India's millions. But unfortunately on this foundation of immemorial Hinduism there has been planted a superstructure of Mohammedanism. Aurang Zeeb, a Moslem, once conquered the town in the seventeenth century and converted a Hindu temple into a Moslem mosque. It is possible to see in it to-day the traces of the original Hindu foundations. Next to it is a Hindu temple. Moslems and Hindus as it were have to use the same church path. The services begin long before they enter the temple and thus day after day there are two streams of rival religionists jostling one another and chanting to different gods. On festivals it often happens that the times of services are different. Thus the Moslems may be at prayer while the Hindus are marching past with song and dance. On this occasion the riots coincided with a Hindu festival on the first day and a Moslem festival on the second.

It is an extraordinary city. Its back streets are really as fascinating as its river front. To see the city after the river in fact is to see behind the scenes. Here it is possible to see in crude colours the religious emotionalism that finds its highest expression in the sacred waters. In the dreary bedraggled figures pouring up the streets that lead from the river, in their faces grotesquely painted with their caste marks like actors in a green-room, in their anxiety to make way for a sacred cow mooning its way down the narrow alleys, in the beggars sightless and crippled tapping their bowls and mumbling whining entreaties, in the ascetics bearded and naked going through every form of loathsome torture to the greater glory of their god, I saw the sinister background of their religious ecstasies—ignorance, arrogance, disease, destitution, masochism, sadism. How often does the glib agnostic say that one religion is as good as another and that the object of missionaries is merely to turn a good Hindu into a bad Christian. It is the greatest lie of the age. It is their religions that keep Indians in thraldom—slaves to custom and therefore to any foreign Power that cares to exercise dominion over them. The Nationalist talks of India's chains. They exist, but

the greater part of them are chains of their own making. If I were a rich Indian nationalist I would found either Christian missions or schools for Atheism. Both would work for freedom of the spirit, without which freedom to mark a cross on a ballot paper is as futile as showing a great picture to a blind man.

It seemed so easy before I came out here to solve the Indian problem in a sweeping statement about the rights of nations. Now I am beginning to realise that in admitting a right to one class you may be creating a wrong for another. Perhaps that is true of all liberty. A man can only be free by standing on the back of another. It is not possible to pursue the happiness of all but only the happiness of the greatest number.

In a letter dated February 17th I wrote:

"Benares,
"*February 17th*.

"You hear a great deal of anti-missionary propaganda in England. It is freely stated that one religion is as good as another. Don't believe it. There is something actively unclean about some aspects of Hinduism. The very Hindu architecture is disgusting. Imagine a style of building of which the most prominent feature is the Phallus. Benares, for all its fascination, is positively unclean."

I might add here that I was enormously impressed by the work of the Christian missionaries in India. The silliest gibe against them is that they are only successful among the untouchables. Why should that be a reproach to them? Christianity itself made its first contacts among the slaves at Rome.

They set up a standard to which no religion in Asia, even at its purest—Buddhism, Mohammedanism, or Hinduism—approaches.

As for Hinduism, I was frequently told that it is decaying. From my experiences at Benares and elsewhere I only wish that it were decaying faster.

CHAPTER XIV

# THE MUTINY COMPLEX

*Lucknow, February 19th.*

I returned to Allahabad to find that the reply had come back from the Viceroy to Gandhi. The ground had been well prepared, and the reply to the request for an interview was, as everyone knew that it would be, in the affirmative. Gandhi set off for Delhi last night, travelling third-class. I was interested whether he would do the thing properly and, together with his secretaries and companions, push his way into a third-class carriage choked, as it always is, from floor to roof, not merely with men and women and babies, but with every form of luggage and litter. But a secretary arrived in advance and, at the first whisper that Mr. Gandhi was coming, the carriage reverently emptied itself for him and he had to himself and his friends a compartment the size of a Pullman saloon. No doubt an extra carriage had to be provided for those who had voluntarily removed themselves to the platform. Great men who scorn the usual accommodation provided for great men must be extraordinarily trying for the railway companies. Ramsay MacDonald, in the days before he became Prime Minister, used to travel third class during his election campaigns. No doubt it was good electioneering, but it was extraordinarily irritating to the railway officials, who had to reserve a badly needed third-class carriage for the Leader of the Opposition, while there was, perhaps, a whole coachful of first-class compartments eating their heads off further up the train.

Gandhi is really sincere. In his austerities there is no artificiality. Fundamentally he is a humble little man, so passionately concerned with uplifting the poor that he genuinely desires to shoulder their sorrows and share their discomforts. So opposed is he to the privileges of caste that he empties his own slops. It is necessary to have been in India to realise the deep significance of that action. In India no caste servant will so much as empty a basin of dirty water. It is necessary to employ a sweeper for that, an untouchable, whose only work throughout the day is to clean the latrines.

Having seen Gandhi safely off to Delhi, I decided to delay my pursuit of him a day, in order to catch a glimpse of Lucknow. It was well worth it, if only for the sight it gave me of the Residency, the *mise en scène* of the famous Mutiny siege. It is a ruin now—strangely, in its gaping battlements and crumbling walls, like some mediæval castle in the Welsh Marches. Yet

there is an old man still living in Lucknow who was alive during the horrors of that blazing summer of 1857.

It is strange how near in point of time, and, indeed, in point of temperament, India is to the Mutiny. I remember hearing in Delhi that a few years ago at a *purdah*-party an Englishwoman noticed among the Indians an old woman who, though she couldn't speak a word of English, was too white even to be a half-caste. Enquiries disclosed that she too was a survivor of the Mutiny. Her English parents had been murdered on their verandah, and this old lady, then a baby of a few months old, had been smuggled away by an *ayah*. The *ayah* also died, and the child was brought up by Indians in an Indian cottage, in Indian fashion, and, nobody knowing who were her parents or anything about her, she remained divorced from her own people during the whole of her life. I saw the old man in Lucknow to-day who was actually in the Residency during the siege. He was three years old at the time.

More interesting is the way the Mutiny has coloured political thought amongst Europeans. There is a very real Mutiny complex in the big stations in India. In most of them the fort or citadel is far more than a picturesque survival. It is the place where the women and children are to be housed in the event of a rising and in the cellars will be found stored three months' provisions in the case of siege. Few husbands will let their wives shop in the bazaars, and most houses still have their *chaukidars*, or night-watchmen. Even in church, British troops clatter in on Sundays with bayonets and rifles and with twenty rounds of ammunition, because once during the Mutiny a regiment was surprised at a garrison church and cut to pieces as they tried to scramble out.

The fear of rape has become an obsession with the official classes in India. If I ever questioned Dyer's action in the Amritsar massacre, it was always hurled at my head that he was avenging the rape of a white woman. Yet I can see very little evidence to justify the elaborate precautions. Throughout these troubled times there has not been a single instance of rape nor, with the exception of a few isolated murders of officials, any organised attack on the European community.

But the fear of another Mutiny is very general, especially among the Army. It colours, indeed, the whole political outlook. The safeguards upon which there will be no compromise will be those that have relation to the protection of the Europeans. For this Mutiny complex is fiercely reflected at home. The electors will tolerate sweeping reforms as long as they are not accompanied by violence, but three first-class assassinations and one good rape will give Churchill a majority of the nation. I wonder, if the bullet that

grazed Montmorency's side had pierced his heart, whether the Round Table Conference then sitting in London would not have come to an abrupt and disastrous conclusion.

I must admit that any study of the Mutiny experiences makes the Mutiny complex very understandable. Most of the Mutiny ruins that I have seen seem to be stamped with the marks of the agony and bloody sweat of those that suffered there. Certainly this is true of the Residency, where every stone has its history of daring and endurance. Into this country house were packed, in the height of the flaming Indian summer, two thousand men and women from May to September. When it was finally relieved, after at least one false dawn, hardly more than nine hundred were found alive.

The conditions must have been as bad as any siege in history. In the first place, the Residency was quite unsuited for defence. It was no more suited to stand attack than any other house of an ordinary civil commissioner. It had not even the commanding ground. It was overlooked by the native bazaar, which in those days straggled right up to the garden wall, a few score of yards from the house itself. From its roofs a murderous fire was poured on to the Residency, until clever sapping finally destroyed the vantage-point. Every protection had to be laboriously improvised. It was performed in a temperature that occasionally reached 120 degrees in the shade and was seldom below 115 degrees in the shade, by men in tight-fitting scarlet serge tunics, with no sun-helmets and on famine rations.

But the plight of the men was as nothing to that of the women. The men at least had gruelling work to distract their minds. The women, to the number of 250, remained for those ghastly summer months cooped up in an underground cellar. It would have been hard enough to be above ground, but in that dark cellar, with the noise of crashing masonry above them as one more shell got home, and the groans of a wounded man as yet another of the defenders stumbled down the steps, they must have had all the worst sensations of death and life.

There is enough left of the Residency and the compound to reconstruct, without the need of very much imagination, those terrible days. There is the stark house itself in quite as good a repair as the Cloth Hall at Ypres, and conveying just as vivid memories, though seven times as many years have elapsed since that tragedy. There are the cellars apparently quite untouched from seventy years ago; the outpost in the compound defended by the boys of Martinière College, many of them hardly in their teens; the British flag flying still triumphantly from the top of the tower, the only flag, perhaps, in the British Empire which is never lowered at any time—it has now to be guarded by a policeman lest Congress might make a surprise raid. Outside is

the church, which acted in the siege as the granary. There is little left of it now, for it was so battered by shell-fire, even in those days long before the appearance of siege-guns, that it looks like a French church in the devastated regions. But it is still possible to see the hole behind the altar through which the defenders had to scramble to get their supplies when the ordinary church door was hopelessly enfiladed by enemy rifle-fire.

A wonderful peace broods over the scene now, but I have seldom visited an historic spot more obviously haunted with living memories. It is like the gardens of Versailles, where psychic visitors are always claiming that they are meeting Marie Antoinette in the spring-tide of her beauty. I shut my eyes in the Residency garden, and faintly down the wind came those hot anguished nights when the European community and a handful of soldiers and half a hundred schoolboys stood at bay to fight literally to the last man and the last bullet. I was told that it was a favourite spot with British soldiers, and that every Sunday the gardens were full of them. I can well understand the magnet that draws them there.

Lucknow, however, is a place of memories. I was more conscious there of the tragedy of endings than anywhere in India. It seems to epitomise the rapidly fading glories of the British Raj. I paid a visit to the club, a large mansion once known as the Umbrella Palace. It was once the thriving centre of Anglo-Indian life. It was the gay rendezvous of all that society that Kipling knew and loved, and portrayed so vividly that nowadays, when one meets in India a managing, mischief-making hostess, or an innocent blue-eyed subaltern, or a capable, fearless, ordinary sort of he-girl, one wonders whether they are genuine or are not merely subconsciously playing up to their conceptions of Mrs. Hawksbee, Pluffles, or "William the Conqueror." Compared to its old gaieties, the Lucknow club is dead. Hardly a score of men visit it in the evening. It only comes to life on gala occasions. I was told that once upon a time it shut its doors stoutly in the face of all but Government servants. In the end, it had to open them even to commerce, but the civil servants have still kept their exclusiveness, for now that the club is open to practically everyone they have ceased to use it. How like they are to the high-caste Hindus. The moment the untouchables establish their right to the use of a well, the Hindus promptly leave it!

Lucknow is, indeed, only typical of the general decay in the social customs of India so bravely maintained in a changing world. The old club-life of the station has been halved since the war. It is partly due to a deliberate cutting down of luxury expenditure. In the old days the average civil servant spent up to the full limit of his income. He was lucky if at the end of thirty-five years service he had saved five hundred pounds. What

purpose was there in saving? He had a substantial income and an assured pension. Service in India was as gilt-edged a security as railway shares in the seventies. It is all changed now. No one knows when he may be prematurely retired, and there is a very natural anxiety about the pensions, though frequent and categorical statements have been made that in any future constitution they, at any rate, are inviolable. In addition, taxation, which at one time was almost negligible, is rising now to the heights of Great Britain. Altogether, the Indian service man is thoroughly alarmed, and the first item that he is trying to cut down is his drink bill at the club. Side by side with this is a general and rapidly increasing shrinkage in membership. As Englishmen retire, their place is being more and more taken by Indians. Again and again one hears a man in a high position say, "I shall be the last Englishman to be in this job; it will go to an Indian next time." Though there is still a recruitment of fifty per cent. from England to the Civil Service, it is bound to be further reduced after the next Round Table Conference, and in less than a generation will probably cease altogether. So the cistern is emptying faster than it fills, and the clubs up and down the country, except in Bombay and Calcutta, where there is a large business community independent of Government service, are feeling the drought. I suppose that in a generation these great club-houses in the various headquarters of Government will remain deserted or be turned to other uses like the country houses at home, mournful survivals of an age and a manner of life that have vanished for ever. It is inevitable, but rather sad all the same.

I was even more depressed when I went on to the Martinière School. It is a vast Indian palace, founded by a Frenchman named Martin. He seems to have been typical of the nabobs of Warren Hastings' time. A representative adventurer of John Company days, he arrived in the country without a penny, and in a few years had made several hundred thousand pounds. With the proceeds he built himself this gigantic country house, where he lived—so it is alleged—according to the prevailing Moslem practice, with several wives. He then died and left his fortune to found the school for Anglo-Indian boys. It is a glorious place; but, as in the case of any institution connected with Anglo-Indians, I found it infinitely sad. For these boys are doomed to a struggle for a livelihood harder, perhaps, than any educated class in the world. For there will be as much discrimination against them in the matter of appointments as against Englishmen. For Englishmen it does not matter so very much, for India is not their home and they can find other sources of livelihood. But for Anglo-Indians it is their home and there are no other opportunities of employment. The tragedy is that they are spiritually and

mentally more “Anglo” than Indian. Their whole outlook and manner of living is European. In devotion to the Raj they have been more loyalist than the King. Now they are to be left to make what terms they can with the Indian. Whole blocks of jobs in the subordinate services of the railways and the canal department, and the telegraph office and the like, which were once their perquisite will now be closed to them. Nor will they be received socially. The prejudice against Anglo-Indians is quite as strong from the Indian side as from the English side.

I hurried off to lunch at Government House. Hailey was away and my host was Sir George Lambert—a charming man, typical of the Civil Service at its best, efficient, overworked, slightly cynical, and with a fund of dry humour.

I heard a good story about him to-night. He was discussing with his Ministers the plan of chastising boys who break the law for political reasons, instead of putting them into prison. “Won’t that treatment,” asked a solemn Indian member, “leave considerable soreness behind.” “That is exactly what we want to do—isn’t it?” was Lambert’s comment.

I follow Gandhi to Delhi to-night.

CHAPTER XV

# THE TWO MAHATMAS

It is perhaps as well to pause here in the narrative of my diary to give a brief sketch of the two strange personalities that were now to come together, and between them shape for better or worse the future of India for a century.

Lord Irwin's appointment as Viceroy of India in 1926 had come as a big surprise. He was unknown to public life until the downfall of Mr. Lloyd George in 1922, and the unexpected loyalty of the chief leaders of the Conservative Party to the Coalition had elevated him into that "cabinet of under-secretaries" in Bonar Law's most unimpressive administration. As Edward Wood he had acquitted himself well as Minister of Agriculture. Though he was a Fellow of All Souls, indeed perhaps because of it, he had no obvious flair for politics but he was essentially a country-man and he had a real practical sympathy with the farmer's point of view. When he was appointed Viceroy of India even his best friends knew little about him, except that he was a fervent Anglo-Catholic, looking like his father, Lord Halifax, to the reunion of Canterbury and Rome, that he was devoted to his Yorkshire home, and that he had the Tory virtues of being a good rider to hounds, not too clever, not too ambitious, and absolutely honest. The general public knew nothing about him at all. His equipment then for holding the greatest position of autocracy in the world at the moment when it was most seriously threatened was not very obvious. In actual fact he had just the qualities that were most likely to capture the imagination of the new India.

"I want to meet Lord Irwin the man," Mr. Gandhi had written from Allahabad. It was in itself a tribute. It showed that Gandhi knew in his heart that behind all the pomp and power of a Viceroy he had not merely a sympathy but an understanding of India's aspirations.

It represented a tremendous triumph of personality over circumstances. For as a Viceroy, Lord Irwin had had to make himself responsible for ordinances more far-reaching and more repressive than at any time since the Mutiny. He had been face to face with revolution and he had been forced to take the necessary unpleasant steps to grapple with it.

Yet somehow everybody in India knew that Lord Irwin from the depths of his soul hated this position. Indian Nationalists might in their speeches use every weapon of insult and invective against Lord Irwin, but they knew in their hearts that their words had the ring of falsity. In the first place his whole appearance and manner gave the lie to it. It was impossible to regard

this Yorkshire squire, with his kind eyes and his shy charm, as the incarnation of oppression. The very idea was ludicrous. He had not even the usual Viceregal qualities of austerity and remoteness. He is indeed a man of extraordinary simplicity. Other Viceroys never seemed to have emerged out of their ceremonial knee-breeches and their Garter robes. Lord Irwin is always spiritually in plus fours with his gun and his dogs in his Yorkshire home.

I do not mean that Lord Irwin ever failed to maintain the dignity of his position. There were people who thought that when he relaxed some of the absurdities of Viceregal etiquette all ceremonial was at an end. They were quickly disillusioned. At an investiture in the throne-room of Viceroy's House there was one day a great deal of chatter during the ceremony. Swift came the reprimand. Lord Irwin wished it to be understood at once that when he was acting directly as the King's representative the etiquette must be as rigorous as in Buckingham Palace. Lord Irwin's charm was that he clearly distinguished the occasions when he was the King's representative and when he was Lord Irwin. It was possible to meet him over a pipe in his study and forget altogether that he was "His Excellency."

That was one of the secrets of his success with Indian politicians. There is a legend that Indians love a show and that the British Raj can only maintain itself with a great panoply of power. It may have been true a generation ago. It may be true now so far as princes and peasants are concerned, but it is not true and never has been true as far as the educated Indians are concerned, and it is after all they who will govern the country. It is impossible to satisfy the yearnings of young India by occasionally riding in state on an elephant. Lord Irwin was quick to realise this. Other Viceroys had clattered down to open the Assembly in the gorgeous robes of their office with a cavalry squadron as an escort. Lord Irwin motored down in a top-hat and morning dress. During Lord Irwin's time the howdahs on which Viceroys used to ride proudly to Durbars remained almost unused—little more than picturesque survivals, like the sedan chair in old English country houses.

No Indian who had ever come in contact with Lord Irwin looked upon him as the stern unbending representative of the British Raj. They visited him in their troubles as a counsellor and a friend.

But there was a quality in Lord Irwin that impressed itself not merely on those who knew him but on the imagination of all educated India. That was his obvious and deep religious sincerity. The story is well known of how, when he landed in Bombay, in April 1926, it was a Good Friday and that his first action was to make a brief escape from the ceremonies of welcome in

order to attend the three hours' service at the Anglican cathedral. The simple action created a profound impression on the Eastern mind.

It is a sad fact that in India our religion does not create respect. I imagine that the greatest difficulty of the Christian missionaries must be the Christians. To the average Indian, deeply mystical as he is, Christianity appears to have no real meaning, even to Christians. It appears to him nothing more than the religion of the Raj. He sees the Europeans attending church as mechanically as they sign the visitors' book at Government House. Viceroys drive down to church on Sunday mornings with their military secretary in full uniform and their aides-de-camp arrayed like the morning star. The Indian has come to regard it as all part of the game, like inspecting a prince's troops or opening the wing of a hospital.

Lord Irwin, after all this, was rather a shock. Here was an Englishman who looked upon the observances of his Church as something more than an excuse for the clatter and glitter of an occasional church-parade.

In the remotest corners of India the Viceroy's train used to be stopped on Sunday mornings so that Lord Irwin might walk across to attend some wayside church to make his communion. Even surrounded by the pomp and majesty of New Delhi he would walk across from the Viceroy's House to attend services like any ordinary churchgoer. He could not bear to feel that in church he was still the Viceroy, and would go out of his way to show that he wanted to be regarded just as a member of the congregation.

Yet there was nothing studied or self-conscious about it. So unaffected, indeed, is Lord Irwin in his religious observances that one hesitates to mention them at all. Yet they are essential to an understanding of the man. Of no man that I have ever met can I write with greater sincerity than of Lord Irwin that his religion was his life. It was so much a part of him that he seemed to radiate goodness. He has that rare power, possessed I suppose by men like Gladstone, of making men who meet him spiritually the better for their contact with him.

His triumph was that he had the same effect on Englishmen as he had on Indians. At times it is true he exasperated the officials. He was often high-handed. He would take an important line of action either without consulting them or in direct opposition to their expert advice. He made two bad mistakes. On one occasion he was conciliatory when he ought to have been adamant, and on another occasion he was adamant when he ought to have been conciliatory. He ought, for instance, to have yielded to the clamour of the Indian politicians that they should have direct representation on the Simon Commission. The Government at home would hardly have resisted on that question the advice of the man on the spot. Instead, he backed up

Lord Birkenhead in his refusal to admit Indians and thereby doomed the Simon Commission to failure before it had landed in Bombay. I am told that Lord Irwin admits this mistake to-day. It is the one act in his Viceroyalty that he would most like to undo.

He was weak when he ought to have been strong after the Lahore Congress of December 1929. Congress had declared for complete independence. They had rejected the olive branch. It was war. Yet he delayed until May 1930 to arrest the ringleaders. He gave them time to prepare their campaign and chose the moment when it was most formidable to set out to crush it.

But all this made no difference to his relations with his permanent officials. Whatever his mistakes it was impossible not to like him and even in a sense to love him. It is really extraordinary that he was able to go to the lengths he did in concession and yet retain their affection.

I do not suppose that Viceregal hospitality has ever been more popular than under the Irwins. They had collected round them a first-class body of aides-de-camp. They were not, as occasionally happens, in the government houses of the Empire, just poodle-fakers with a title. They had all done something worth doing first. An A.D.C. has an enormous negative power of harm. I have visited a certain state in Australia where the matrimonial eccentricities of a former A.D.C. has made Englishmen unpopular to this day. There was never any danger of that kind of thing happening under Lord Irwin.

There was always the pleasant easy atmosphere of an English country house about Viceroy's Palace. Lord and Lady Irwin had a delightful power of radiating friendliness. Even the great forgot to be pompous when they found themselves playing paper games after dinner. It was whispered that even the game of "murder," which in India ousted bridge in popularity for a short time, was not unknown in Viceregal drawing-rooms.

What was the position then of Lord Irwin in India on the eve of these momentous conversations? It can be summed up in a sentence. His policy had failed but his personality had triumphed. Conciliation had only bred violence and there was bitterness and anger throughout the land. But in spite of it all he had won the respect of educated India and retained the affection of the English community. Might he yet by a stroke of superb statesmanship win Gandhi over to peace and revolutionise the outlook in a night?

No thoughtful person on either side was hopeful, but those who knew Gandhi admitted that if Lord Irwin failed with him no other Englishman would succeed.

Lord Irwin was the one man who could understand Gandhi, for he was the one man nearest to him in spiritual outlook. Both are mystics; both are passionately concerned with "the life everlasting"; both are deeply sympathetic to poverty and suffering; both have the Gladstonian belief that they are living "as ever under the great Task-master's eye." Mr. Gandhi once told me, in a parenthesis to some political point that he was making, that his work in life was "to live great truths." Lord Irwin would never say that, for he was educated at Eton, but he lives them all the same.

No one has ever understood Gandhi like Lord Irwin. To the ordinary man he is often unintelligible. It is difficult in conversation sometimes to keep him on to domestic politics at all. He is always straying off into doubts and speculations on the universe. He talks familiarly of "the inner voice" and scouts the claims of reason.

He has indeed all the attributes associated with mediæval sainthood. I have heard men scoff at his asceticism and imply that the loin-cloth is only a theatrical property. I have heard it suggested as if it were an axiom that he is in the direct personal pay of the Bombay and Ahmedabad millionaires. But I have never heard any such sneers from anyone who has even casually met him.

His asceticism is entirely genuine. When he makes a public fast he may do it openly, but he does it with an almost terrible sincerity. There is something Christ-like about him. He is "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." I never looked upon a man who seemed more to reflect in his eyes the agonies of the world.

His whole life is one long resistance to the lusts of the flesh. He occasionally threatens public fasts to expiate some gross act of violence on the part of his supporters, but in reality his life is one long fast. His main food is nuts soaked in coconut oil, taken with a few pieces of wheaten bread. This meal he takes at sunset and if by some misfortune the light has disappeared before the meal is ready then he starves until the following day. For he was brought up among Jains, and is faithful to their creed that food must be taken in daylight lest an insect may creep on to it and be swallowed and the vow of not taking life be in consequence inadvertently violated.

He has the saint's love of solitude. Monday is his day of silence. For twenty-four hours, usually from 4 o'clock on Sunday afternoon to 4 o'clock on Monday afternoon, he does not utter a word. Visitors may see him and even talk to him, but if there is an answer to be made to them it has to be written on paper. It is on this day that he does his spinning and writes his article for *Young India*. This day of silence has a practical value as well. He is so inordinately busy during the rest of the week that if he did not insist on

one day free from interruption he would never get his essential work finished. But fundamentally it expresses his innate need for meditation.

He has also this important attribute of sainthood that "the common people hear him gladly." It is absurd to suggest that the whole country is behind the Congress campaign. Ninety per cent. are illiterate. It is a town movement. The cries of the market-place do not penetrate the low untidy mud walls of the villages. The only concern of the villagers is the coming of the monsoon to satisfy their thirsty fields, and no politician lumbering in his *tonga* from village to village can persuade them that any *swaraj* can hasten its approach. The seventy million Moslems, too, are suspicious and hostile. Gandhi represents to them the establishment of the Hindu Raj, and to their fearful minds it is what the bondage of Egypt was to the Israelites. But for all that Gandhi is the first Indian who has ever impressed his name on the whole of India. The fact remains that the whole country from the remotest hamlet in the shadow of the hills of Baluchistan to within sight of the Tibetan snows has heard of Gandhi and would crowd into the streets to shout "Gandhi ki jai!" which roughly means "Up Gandhi!"—if he passed by.

Yet in appearance he is almost ridiculous. I have recorded elsewhere my impression of what he looks like when he is sitting down: that he is like an image of Buddha with the sense it gives of wisdom and peace. Even though he is ugly to the point of repulsion he has the dignity that comes with quietness. But when he walks he looks almost like a dwarf on the music-hall stage. His bare legs protruding from his loin-cloth look too short and emaciated even to carry his little body. The saint has shrunk into the "funny little man."

I am not surprised that Mr. Churchill, who only knew him by his photographs, spluttered into flaming rhetoric "at the nauseating and humiliating spectacle of this one-time Inner Temple lawyer, now seditious fakir, striding half-naked up the steps of Viceroy's Palace, there to negotiate and to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor."

I wonder if he would have said the same if he had ever met him personally. My own experience is that all thought of Gandhi's repulsive appearance vanishes the moment he begins to talk. In a flash one realises that one is in the presence of one of the great men of the world. Though he speaks very quietly and without a trace of passion or bitterness his power is almost hypnotic. His words so grip and absorb the mind that half an hour's conversation with him produces real physical exhaustion. For he speaks not as other men do, but with the power of a prophet.

But a prophet who is at the same time an astute politician. That is the baffling enigma. There is so much of the man of the world about Gandhi.

His handling of the Press is superb. He knows just how infrequent his interviews ought to be to maintain them at their present dizzy heights of public interest. He can stand up to a journalistic cross-examination as well as an English statesman. He speaks to such effect that it is impossible to let a word of it go unrecorded. Every line of an interview with him is a potential headline. His friends hotly insist that there is nothing calculated in this, that everything he says is wholly natural and unstudied. I think that they underrate his abilities. Mr. Lloyd George himself could learn lessons from the Saint in the arts of political propaganda.

Prophet and politician, saint and super-propagandist, the object of adoration to three-quarters of India, of admiration to half the world, the inventor of a form of passive resistance which has enabled the Indian with all his deeply-rooted sense of inferiority, to meet the proud Englishman on equal terms and beat him; in some things generations in front of his time, in others centuries behind it; something of a mystic, something of a fakir, altogether a rebel to the British Raj; obstinate, suspicious, and though he does his best to crush it down, bitter of soul against what he calls "a satanic government"—this is the man that Lord Irwin has set himself to win over to reason at the Round Table Conference.

Lord Irwin has taken great risks. He has decided to negotiate with rebels. Already there are murmurs of indignation behind him in London. The British Government is cautious and unhelpful. The last thing it wants is an election on India. If things go wrong there is no help there. His own Executive Council are loyal but dubious. He himself must know that if the negotiations break down now the position will be infinitely worse than it would have been if they had never been taken in hand. It is the crisis of Lord Irwin's career, though I do not believe that he gave that aspect of it a moment's thought. All his life he has had all he wanted. A career tends to mean very little for men who are born to great position and never have to struggle in the market-place. That is the justification of a governing class. Lord Irwin believed that personal negotiation with Gandhi was the best hope of Indian salvation and he crashes his way to it regardless of the consequences.

CHAPTER XVI

# "HEART TO HEART"

*February 17th.*

I reached Delhi from Lucknow early this morning to find the hotel lobby crowded with journalists—English, American, and foreign, all ravening for colourful stories about Gandhi. The meetings of Gandhi and the Viceroy are to be secret, which means that they will be an open book to any competent journalist. It also means that they will have enormous news value in London. News tends to be valued not in proportion to its intrinsic interest but according to the difficulty in getting it. It is a bad *milieu* for me. I am neither sufficiently persistent nor sufficiently pachydermatous to be a reporter. I did it once for three months in Fleet Street. It was the most humiliating experience of my life. For days I never got a line in the paper at all. My diary used to read something like this: Sent out to interview the Prime Minister; saw his third secretary who said he had no statement to make—sent out to see McKenna; his footman rather rude. I used to return slowly to confess abject failure to the news editor, often to discover that he, wise in his generation, had already guessed it, and had sent a real reporter to do the job. I ended my career ringing up butlers to find out the condition of distinguished invalids. The job was regarded as fool-proof.

Here I am six thousand miles from home in sole charge of a story, the outcome of which may re-make or irretrievably shatter the Indian Empire. I have just had a telegram from my editor, saying, "Hope you will stay out till situation clears." So here I am for better, for worse—and almost certainly for worse.

To-day I have drawn an almost complete blank. Gandhi was back from Viceroy's House about six o'clock, so that I had the whole evening to find out what happened. There is one advantage in journalism in India, and that is the time factor. We are approximately five and a half hours in front of English time, and a cable takes approximately five and a half hours in transit, so that a message reaches London about the same time that it leaves here. I can cable up to midnight and can be certain that the news will be on the breakfast tables of Great Britain the same morning. Petersen, *The Times* special correspondent, tells me that when two years ago the Viceroy's train was bombed about eight a.m., by paying triple rates he got the news into the early editions in London the same morning.

Clearly Viceroy's House is going to be no use to me. My conversation with —— this evening to whom I had had a personal letter of introduction from a powerful mutual friend in London ran like this:

I: Awfully sorry to trouble you, but can you tell me if any *communiqué* is being issued about the conversations this afternoon?

He: No. I am sorry, I can't.

I: Is Gandhi going to see H.E.?

He: I cannot tell you.

I: You cannot help me at all?

He: No, I am afraid I cannot.

Noise of receiver being replaced.

No wonder we have such a dangerously bad Press in India when that kind of reception is given to newspaper correspondents.

But though I have not yet found the key to inside information, even the photograph of the story is interesting. It was an extraordinary sight to see Gandhi this afternoon huddled up in a shawl, driving up the long, broad, stately avenue to Viceroy's House. Only a week ago the same avenue had seen all the glitter and clatter of a State procession to inaugurate Imperial Delhi. The scarlet uniforms and white breeches of the Viceregal bodyguard have now given way to the loin-cloth and shawl of Mr. Gandhi.

Not a week but an age seems to separate the two functions.

Again, I was reminded of royalty. Even at the secretarial gate to the right of the main entrance to the Palace there was a great crowd to greet Gandhi. Members of the Civil Service returning to their offices after lunch found them emptied of Indian clerks. They had all gone off to catch a glimpse of Gandhi. What a speech Winston Churchill could make if only he could see all this. However one may disguise the fact it is a meeting of two equal and independent potentates.

I went down to see if I could meet Gandhi on his return from the Viceroy at Dr. Ansari's[2] house. It is a large old-fashioned bungalow, just inside the walls of old Delhi. I hear it dates from Mutiny times, and belonged to one of the prominent civil servants of the day.

[2] Dr. Ansari, a Nationalist Moslem, was Gandhi's host all through the negotiations at Delhi.

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Outside to-day, there was the same inquisitive, silent, expectant crowd that waits outside 10 Downing Street during a Parliamentary crisis. When Gandhi arrived, too, there was the same feeble cheer that greets the arrival of a Cabinet Minister on such occasions at home. I thought that they would be much more demonstrative; but probably I don't understand yet the Indian mentality.

We newspaper correspondents awaited the little man on the door-step, but looking tired and worried, he waved us all away, and we came sadly back to our hotel empty.

All that I have learned is that the talk was cordial, and that it will be resumed again to-morrow.

This will not do. I must tap fresh sources of information. It is useless, I think, to hunt with the pack. One must strike out a line for oneself, and keep to it.

*February 18th.*

A much better "bag" from the point of view of "news."

Gandhi had another talk with the Viceroy from 2 to 5 p.m. this afternoon.

A complete non-committal statement has been issued from Viceroy's House. It runs as follows:

"His Excellency granted a further interview to Mr. Gandhi to-day. It is understood that various matters emerging from the discussions are now under examination and it is possible that some days may elapse before a further stage in the discussions is reached."

Happily, I have heard something that explains this cryptic statement.

The discussions have nothing to do with the future constitution of India. On that Irwin refuses to parley. One of his first questions to Gandhi was, "Do you accept the principle of the safeguards? If not, it is useless for us to continue our talks." Gandhi's reply was that he did recognise the necessity for safeguards. That seems to me a very important point. It finally disposes of the dangerous suggestion that Irwin is bargaining away the Empire.

The conversations are exclusively centred on the conditions preliminary to an armistice. Irwin has said to Gandhi that it is impossible to get a successful settlement in the atmosphere of suspicion and hatred created by the Civil Disobedience movement. Will Gandhi call it off?

Gandhi has tabled three demands. He wants an enquiry into the alleged police outrages; the abolition of the salt tax; and the legalisation of the peaceful picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth merchants.

The most important of these terms is obviously the police enquiry. This is a burning question among the rank and file of Congress men. The most ghastly stories are told about police barbarism, and all eagerly and unquestioningly believed. Gandhi is himself in a difficult position here. He, after all, has been treated with great consideration by the Government. In spite of extreme provocation he was not even tried and sentenced in the courts, but was just detained during His Majesty's pleasure with the full honours of war. While he was in gaol, he could read and write and spin and even see his friends. His humbler followers were treated very differently, and he obviously owes a great responsibility to them. In duty bound he must demand a police enquiry.

The appeal for the abolition of the salt tax is a clever, tactical manœuvre. The salt tax, like its counterpart in the French Revolution, is far less an actual burden than a first-class political cry. It works out at not more than two or three annas a year on each family, but since it is paid by all it is something that all can understand and all resent.

Gandhi's campaign began with his famous march to Dandi to make salt illegally on the sea-shore. It would obviously be of great spectacular advantage if a campaign that began with the breaking of the salt law on Dandi beach should end with its repeal almost exactly a year later in the Viceroy's study.

The question of peaceful picketing is at once an ethical and a political move. It emphasises what a strange mixture of saint and politician go to the make-up of this extraordinary little man.

Gandhi loathes alcohol from his soul. Certainly in India its consumption takes a very terrible form. What the ordinary Indian drinks is toddy—the juice of the coconut after fermentation—easy to buy and very intoxicating. Its evils are magnified by the blazing heat. At the same time it is a source of revenue to the hated Government, so that Gandhi can, at a stroke, satisfy his conscience and strike a blow at the British.

It is the same with foreign cloth. Gandhi has elevated the spinning-wheel into a philosophy. He believes in *kuddur*, the coarse, home-spun cloth, as the

antidote to the poison of industrialism. He is in revolt against the machine age. In a sense he is the Chesterton of Asia. He looks to the time when men will return from the factory to the cottage door and spin their own clothes instead of watching a loom which will spin somebody else's. He looks with eyes of infinite pity at the terrible poverty of India and believes that only in a return to patriarchal simplicity can contentment come.

That is the mystery of Gandhi. He is centuries in front of his time and centuries behind it too.

At the same time, apart from all these philosophical motives, he knows that through foreign cloth he can strike at Lancashire, and through Lancashire at the vitals of the British Raj.

To him picketing, even in peace-time, is essential. It is like the blockade of Germany after the war. Like the Allied statesmen he believes that once lift that blockade and the enemy is in a very different mood about peace terms. We struck at Germany through her stomach; Gandhi is striking at us through our pockets.

These are the terms, and the Viceroy is taking a day or two off to consider them and to communicate them to the home Government.

In the meantime a new and slightly sinister figure has appeared on the stage. He is Mr. Birla, the great Indian banker and mill-owner. He is a most generous subscriber to the Congress funds. Indeed, he and his fellow mill-owners are in the relation to Congress that the brewers are to the Conservative Party or the shipping magnates to Liberalism in its triumphant days. They have provided the sinews of war. Are they going to exact their price now, and, if so, what is it going to be?

Gandhi drove this afternoon straight from the Viceroy's study to Mr. Birla's house, incidentally one of the most magnificent mansions in Delhi, rivalling even the palaces of the princes in size and splendour. I hear that Birla and his friends are desperately anxious for peace. They have suffered heavy losses recently in the general world depression, a portion of the effect of which they are inclined to ascribe to the Civil Disobedience movement.

At any rate it looks as if Mr. Birla might play a big part in the next few critical days. Saint and millionaire colloguing behind closed doors—it all makes one think, and my present feeling is that Gandhi's terms will never be accepted. We shall see.

CHAPTER XVII

# IN THE VICEROY'S STUDY

*February 19th.*

Optimism is dimmed. The general impression is that Gandhi does not want peace. I gather from conversations amongst his more intimate friends at Ansari's house that, even if his terms are accepted on the police enquiry and the salt tax, it will not end there. Accept his terms to-day and they will become higher to-morrow—that is the sort of impression I have got of the situation.

G. is manœuvring for position. For the moment the Government of India in the eyes of neutrals is potently in the right. For the first time in the history of India, almost, the British Raj has a good Press in the United States. That does not suit Gandhi's book. He is devoting all his great talents to put us in the wrong. That is why he is staking everything on the police enquiry.

But he is not the only party playing for position. According to the Civil Service, we are engaged in a game just as deep and tortuous. —— put it to me like this to-day: "We know Gandhi won't co-operate. I do not like these conversations, but one step leads to another. If we appealed to Gandhi to come along and help, we had to let him out of prison; and if we let him out of prison, we had to let him consult with the Viceroy. It may all work out for the best. He will be manœuvred into such a position where, if he breaks away, he will alienate all moderate sympathy and be left with nothing but a rump of irreconcilables."

That is a very typical Civil Service point of view. They are seldom sincere in any gesture of goodwill they make. They are determined to hold on to power to the last, and so far they have been remarkably successful. Challenged, they "will speak liberal things," but their attitude is that of the arriviste Labour members, who say, "Socialism by all means—but not in our time." The Civil Service says, "Self-government is splendid—but not in our time if we can help it." It is all very natural. Still the P.M.'s speech last January has shaken them up a good deal, and the shrewdest of them are beginning to realise in their hearts that the game is up.

Though Irwin would hotly repudiate the suggestion that he also is manœuvring for position, it is true all the same. That is why he is such a good Viceroy. Though a man of the most lofty ideals, he yet has the necessary instinct of tactics. He is, in fact, very like Gandhi. I cannot help

coming again and again to the conclusion that they are both extraordinarily alike. “The two mahatmas”—that was the description that Mrs. Naidu gave of them to me to-day. They are both “holy-men,” endowed at the same time with a very healthy knowledge of the necessary cut and thrust in critical negotiations. That is one reason why there is still a hope that they will come to terms.

Another is the cordiality of the relations between the Round Tablers and Gandhi. Sapru and Sastri are in hourly communication, not merely with the Viceroy, but with Gandhi. They go and discuss the day’s doings with him over his dry bread and coconut oil every evening, and even mildly rag him about his diet.

I have been able to reveal one fact which will be of absorbing interest to the general public of two continents. Gandhi does not squat on the floor in the Viceroy’s study. There are in the Viceroy’s study particularly low armchairs which might have been specially constructed for these conversations. “I am very comfortable on them,” he told Sapru this afternoon, “but I should certainly squat on the floor if I were not.” I cannot help liking the little creature. He is strangely human.

*February 20th.*

Heard Gandhi speak in the public park to-day. As an orator he is gamma minus.

He is long-winded, dull, unemphatic, prosy, and yet extraordinarily effective. He is impressive by the very fact that he is so obviously not out to impress.

He speaks like a very great man talking to himself.

His speech illustrated his two dominant qualities—his sentimentalism and his frankness.

He spoke of his talks with the Viceroy as being conducted “in the friendliest possible manner and with much sweetness.”

What an opening for Winston!

He warned them against the evils of violence. It was an implied admission that there had been gross cases of violence on the part of his followers—and therefore very courageous.

I gather that in these talks the Viceroy has replied to the police enquiry with a vigorous counter-attack on Congress violence.

I am told that he said, “I agree that the policemen may have hit the wrong people on the head, but if I had been one of them I should certainly

have hit more of them." Irwin is not the weak man they seem to think him at home.

I tried a long-distance shot this afternoon and seem to have scored a bull.

I asked for an interview with Gandhi, and his secretary has rung up to say that he will see me at 9 o'clock to-morrow morning. "Could I make it convenient to be there."

I replied, as Winston did on a similar occasion, "Could a duck swim," or words to that effect.

*February 21st.*

G. was an hour late for his appointment, so he is getting even the vices of great men.

When I arrived I was told that he had gone out for a walk. His morning walk is as much a habit as that of L. G.'s at Churt. L. G. gets up at 7.30 every morning, and by breakfast has walked two or three miles. Even when the House is sitting, he strides three miles every morning round his London garden.

With G. it is more difficult, for the crowds are so great that he takes a car out on to the Ridge and walks either in solitude or with an odd millionaire or two, or, if they find out his route, with a couple of American correspondents walking respectfully behind like detectives in attendance on the Prime Minister.

Finally he arrived back and I was led round to the verandah. There was a magnificent view from it of the turretted walls of Old Delhi, still in a splendid state of preservation, and the sprawling River Jumna and the endless dusty plains beyond that is India.

Only a few yards away was the old palace where the Moghul emperors used to give *darshan* (a showing of themselves) to the people. They used to appear from time to time on a balcony facing the banks of the river to prove to the people that they were still alive and flourishing.

I turned a corner, and there was Gandhi squatting in front of the same scene—the new ruler of India in council almost on the site of the old emperors—regal still, but in outward appearance more repulsive even than in Allahabad.

* * *

My diary stops there, so that I must go to letters and newspaper cuttings and my own memory for an account of the interview.

In a letter written at the time I described Gandhi thus:

"G. himself is a teaser. I saw him again on Saturday. In appearance he was even more repulsive than when I saw him last, for, in addition to his ordinary physical peculiarities, he was unshaven, half-naked, and covered with flies. But he is an amazing man to have dealings with. One gets the impression of prophet, priest, and politician of genius all rolled into one. He is very vain as well . . . ."

I remember his vanity on that occasion well. I could not get him to talk. His conversations with the Viceroy had been secret, and all through his public career he has been scrupulous in never divulging anything that has taken place behind closed doors. Any statesman over here can be certain of one thing when Gandhi arrives—that they can say anything to him in confidence with the certainty that they will not be betrayed. In his ordinary personal relations, Gandhi is straightness itself. He is the last man to arrange a judicious leakage in the Press to outwit an enemy. In that he is far in advance of most politicians here.

On that occasion I could not get him to say anything; then I tried the personal note. Gandhi had said that, though there had been violence amongst Congress men, he could not perform a penitentiary fast as he had done in 1922. That at the present moment was "out of the question." I had happened to read this curious statement in the morning paper while I was waiting for the interview. It suddenly came into my mind then, and I asked him why, since there had been many acts of violence done by Congress men recently, fasting was now "out of the question." "People are wondering why you will not fast now. Why won't you Mr. Gandhi?"

It was an impudent question, but it had an immediate effect.

Gandhi's face lit up. Here was an attack on him personally. He would give me a statement at once. Up to then I had taken no notes, for I believe that there is nothing that frightens men who are being interviewed more than the appearance of a pencil and pad. There is an atmosphere of the policeman about it—"everything you say will be taken down and used in evidence against you."

But Gandhi was so insistent that I should report him word for word, that pencil and paper were provided, and, crouching down on my haunches on the verandah, I took down his statement.

The whole interview is, perhaps, worth giving, for it reflects more than any conversation I had with Gandhi, his extraordinary mind. It also shows in the light of after events that the sky was clearing.

*New Delhi, Sunday.*

Mr. Gandhi's first words, when he received me yesterday on the verandah of the house of Dr. Ansari, were:

"The situation is not hopeless. At any rate it is not as hopeless as when I saw you in Allahabad.

"I have found the Viceroy," he said, "friendly, courteous, and frank.

"Perhaps I ought to say that in reparation," he added, with a charming smile, "for having described him to you last time as stiff and frigid.

"But the police repressions still go on. There has been shooting at Partabgarh. It was quite unprovoked. The police thought that a sub-inspector was missing and fired on the crowd.

[The official version of this affair is quite different.]

"A few days ago there was only one patient suffering from injuries at the Allahabad Congress Hospital. Now there are twenty-five.

"It is impossible for me to say which of the points I am making to the Viceroy is the most essential. They are all equally important. I would not put forward any point to him unless I regarded it as essential.

"I cannot bargain. Never in my life have I done so. I will never be content with the second best. It is contrary to the whole law of Satyagraha."

Satyagraha is one of the terms in the vocabulary of passive resistance and is defined in the biography of Gandhi by C. F. Andrews as "soul force."

I then asked him why, in view of the acts of violence which he had admitted in his speech the day before had been committed by his Congress followers, he did not do a penitentiary fast as in 1922. Why did he describe such an action as "now out of the question"?

Much controversy centres round this point and an Amritsar *zemindar* has written to Mr. Gandhi a public letter in which he asks a similar question.

Mr. Gandhi's face lit up as I asked my question. He said: "I am very glad to have an opportunity of answering that. Please take down very carefully what I am going to say."

He then unfolded the following intricate argument:

"Last time when I did expiation this non-violent idea was new in politics, and people were unused to what I call absolute downright plain speaking on the part of their leaders. Therefore I saw with regard to myself that people very often thought that I spoke with mental reservations and said what I did not mean.

"That not only hurt me, but I realised at once that it would injure the cause itself, and so I felt it necessary to drive home the truth to the masses

that they must take me literally in all I spoke, and that there was no conscious mental reservation. This I could only do by some definite drastic action, which even millions could understand in a moment, and hence I deliberately adopted the method of public expiation through open fasting. I saw that the very first experiment along these lines had produced effective and startling results, and I continued that until the culminating tragedy in 1922."

Mr. Gandhi paused here to explain to me that he was referring to the Chauri Chaura incident, when the crowd, without any provocation, set fire to a police station and burned some policemen inside to death.

He continued: "I now know that people understand that I mean what I say. Having declared at the beginning of this non-violent campaign that I was responsible for its initiation, but not for its further conduct or its stopping, it would be improper on my part now to interfere through the method of fasting. The Congress Working Committee is responsible and can interfere and shape the conduct of the campaign.

"This, however, ought not to be taken to mean that I disown moral responsibility for violence done by a single Congress man, and if some violence done by Congress men produces such a shock in my system that I cannot bear it, I cannot say what I should then do, for in all such things I am not guided by reason, but by instinct—in other words, by the inner voice, and one never knows where that voice will lead you."

I read over these strange words to Mr. Gandhi and he made no alteration in them. I said, "Am I to understand that you might decide, if the outbreaks of violence on the part of Congress men continue, to leave the movement altogether and go into retirement?"

Mr. Gandhi said: "I might do a thousand things. I might fast again."

In a letter to Major H. L. Nathan, M.P., written over that week-end, I find I commented, after this interview, on Gandhi thus: "To understand Gandhi you need to be a psycho-analyst with a First in Greats, and even then you won't."

But I could not help admiring his frankness, and his readiness to face up to the weak points in his case. When I asked him about the fasting, and violence of his supporters, he promptly admitted that there had been cases where his followers had not been equal to the vow of non-violence; one of his disciples interrupted to inform me that these cases were exceptional and only under great provocation from the police. The Mahatma snapped out,

“That is not accurate and, in any case, quite irrelevant.” There were no more interruptions.

I took a few hours off in the afternoon to attend the Delhi horse show. But I could not escape the problem there. Among the officials there was a general atmosphere of gloom. No one thought that the Viceroy could accept Gandhi’s terms, and no one believed that Gandhi would withdraw then or, indeed, could do so.

In a letter written that Saturday night I said:

“I fear he does not mean peace, and that the moment he sees a chance he will break off negotiations, and we shall have all the trouble again—*lathi* charges and rifle-fire and boys of seventeen beaten in gaol.

“It is terribly sad, for the Viceroy is so fundamentally decent and has dedicated himself like a Galahad to the Holy Grail of responsible government.

“But what can you do with a man who, when questioned about the establishment of a reserve bank, says: ‘God will provide.’

“Hopes of immediate return grow thin again. My office wires: ‘Hope you will stay till situation clears.’ I think I had better take a house here!”

So ended the first week of the fateful negotiations.

CHAPTER XVIII

# INTERLUDE

*February 22nd.*

I had an interesting talk with —— a young English I.C.S. boy who is here for the week-end. He has just passed through his probationary period which he has been spending with a group of fellow Indian I.C.S. men.

He explained to me the difficulties of the New India. In his station five Englishmen and five Indians, all in the Civil Service, had been temporarily the guests of a police mess. When the time came for them to go the Englishmen thought that they ought to make some graceful recognition of the hospitality they had received by giving the mess a piece of plate. The Indians whom they invited to help in the subscriptions pointed out that they were under no obligation to the police mess as they had paid for everything they received and flatly refused to co-operate in the presentation.

—— says that nearly all Indians are innately disloyal and in a crisis could not be relied on.

It is a pretty grim prospect if that is true.

I spent the morning transcribing my Gandhi interview on to cable forms.

*February 23rd.*

News is very difficult to get. As far as I can make out the end is in sight. H.E. will definitely state in his next interview how far he is prepared to meet Gandhi.

The impression at present is that he will stand firm and if G. stands equally firm it is all up.

Sapru, whom I like more every time I see him, is still the confirmed optimist. He said to me to-day:

"I have been in close touch both with the Viceroy and the Congress and I regard the situation as hopeful." He flits—a persistent dove—between Viceroy's House and Dr. Ansari's. He denies that he is an intermediary, but all the same he is doing most valuable work in explaining each side to the other.

In the dearth of news we are all making the most ridiculous efforts to manufacture it. One American journalist has taken to attending Gandhi's evening prayer-meetings. Presumably he thinks that is the way to G.'s heart,

and exclusive interviews. We call him "Holy Joe." Well, well—"more things are wrought by prayer than . . ."

G.'s prayer-meetings are worth attending for their own sake. I am told that all creeds and sects and races—Moslems, Hindus, Europeans, Sikhs, all assemble on the lawn in front of Ansari's verandah every evening when it gets dark and that Gandhi impressively appears and with a spot-light behind him reads a non-sectarian service. I do not mean to mock. G. is absolutely sincere and really does point the way to religious unity—the greatest boon that could be given to India.

I must go myself one night.

*February 24th.*

Viceroy still awaiting cable from home Government containing the answer the Cabinet instructs him to give to Gandhi.

Benn has been troublesome. I am told that he wants the Viceroy to give way on the police enquiry and earlier on cabled to the Viceroy the suggestion that he should agree to it. The Radical Press in England are backing it too.

Irwin cannot possibly grant it. It would be the end of authority in India. I imagine the police in the dock at the mercy of a cohort of clever Indian lawyers. Police discipline and loyalty, already very severely strained, might crack altogether.

Irwin in the meantime is doing his best to rally moderate opinion to his side. To-day he had a long interview with eight prominent Round Tablers. They all declare that with or without Gandhi they are determined to push on with constitution building.

They are brave words, but I wonder if they can implement them. All the same the Round Table conference has been of inestimable value. All these men who went so suspicious and so hostile have returned with a wholly new view of England and her aims.

Can they put it across to India? They came back with the determination to hold meetings all over the country, but I have heard of no such campaign yet.

That is the trouble about Indian politicians. They have so little courage. You cannot get them boldly to come out into the open for what they believe to be right. Family relations being so close and so involved the power of the social boycott is immense. I have yet to meet an Indian politician with the courage to be unpopular.

The result is that we have really no friends out here. Not even an executive councillor corresponding to our Cabinet Minister will go out into the country and hold a meeting in support of the Government. The only propaganda on our behalf is a rare speech from the Viceroy. Parties only differ in the extent of their hostility to the British Raj. If only that was understood in England, there would not be so much nonsense talked.

Honestly I cannot envisage a peace that will be anything but a truce that does not receive the approval of Gandhi.

There is no entry in my diary until February 27th, but I wrote the following letter to my Editor, on February 26th, which sums up the position.

"New Delhi,
"*February 26th*.

". . . It has not been an easy job here. Viceroy's House is bolted and barred against all assaults of journalists, and the Congress people, though voluble in speech, are wholly unreliable as to facts.

"My own impression is still that there is no peace, and will be no peace, but I hope that I am wrong. . . .

"I do not know which side I dislike the most—the Government creatures, all Eton and Oxford and maddeningly correct and official in all they do and say—or Gandhi, emaciated, bald, skew-eyed, half-naked . . .

"The output of news is a scandal. Congress pour it out daily like a waterspout from a sewer. Government House issues nothing. Hence the American correspondents cable a bucketful of muck to the States every day not so much because they want to as because they cannot get anything from anywhere else.

". . . I am trying to keep expenses down but New Delhi, where the Viceroy lives, is five miles from Old Delhi, where Ansari and Gandhi live, so you can imagine what the daily taxi bill is like. . . ."

*February 27th.*

I hear that Irwin will definitely refuse a police enquiry. How far he himself is against it or how far he is influenced by his advisers is uncertain, but whichever it is Irwin is adamant.

A big influence in his decision has been Sykes. (Sir Frederick Sykes, the Governor of Bombay.) He has been staying on a private visit at Viceroy's House and has come flat down against any suggestion of a police enquiry. He has had in Bombay to bear the full attack of Congress. He is much

criticised in official quarters here for his weakness, but in this case he seems to have come out four-square for authority.

I liked him when I met him in Bombay—a little doleful perhaps—but who would not be who had to face the situation there?

* * *

I explored some of the Mutiny ground to-day. One really ought to visit battlefields in appropriate weather—Ypres in the November rains. Waterloo in a cold misty summer morning, Bunker's Hill in the hard American sunlight. To get the atmosphere of the Delhi ridge one ought to visit it in the oven heat of early May. It was dull and cold to-day. All the same I got the authentic thrill.

It seemed hardly touched. There was the watch-tower, on the height above old Viceregal Lodge where for one blazing day the European women had sheltered before they escaped across the dusty plain. From the top of it one could see the city below and imagine what sort of sight those women must have seen—their bungalows ablaze, the bazaar, that they had only known as the quarters of respectful salaaming "natives," a nest of howling dervishes. A little further on was the residence of Hindu Rao, the commanding point on the ridge, the scene of the fiercest fighting through that terrible June, still standing battered and bruised, still very much as it appears in those dim shadowy pictures taken of it in the very early days of photography in the late fifties. A hospital has now been built by the side of it. Still intact along the ridge are the Pathan mosque and the observatory and all the other famous scenes of daring and endurance.

I have never visited a battlefield that was so vivid to me. I could almost see the black hordes flowing up from Delhi with the light of fanaticism in their eyes and the hard-faced red-coated Englishmen fighting to the end expecting no quarter and determined to give none either.

I suppose it is that the Mutiny, even though nearly eighty years separates us from it, is so near to us here. I am always hearing the poser put, "Suppose there were another mutiny?" The wives of the military officers are the worst. At any moment they feel that the bazaar will rise and they will be murdered on their verandahs. The fort in Delhi is provisioned for a three months' siege and machine-guns grin down from every turret.

It is forgotten that the Mutiny took place under totally different conditions. Wires still came along "the electric telegraph," which could be cut with the greatest ease. What was happening in Lucknow would be quite unknown in Delhi and the news of it would not reach London until weeks

later. Aeroplanes and cables and machine-guns have revolutionised the position. Artillery too. The walls built by Shah Jehan in the seventeenth century were sufficient to stand a siege against the guns of the nineteenth century. It is possible to see the breaches made in them to this day. They are little more than would have been made by the old battering ram. In the year of grace 1931 a few rounds of an ordinary howitzer and the walk would fall as flat as those of Jericho before the blasts of the trumpet.

That is the irony of the situation. At a time when mechanically we are ten times as formidable as we were in the Mutiny, morally our position is thirty times as weak. We are being forced to surrender our power at a time when it has never been better protected.

I like the story of the Resident who received the telegram announcing the outbreak of the Mutiny at Meerut in the middle of a dinner-party and therefore left it unopened until the next morning. It is so typically British.

*February 28th.*

The fateful day arrives.

Gandhi is to see Irwin to-morrow and a final answer is to be given.

Is it peace or war? . . . My impression that Irwin is going to stand firm is strengthened. At least seven governors have followed Sykes's example in threatening resignation if police enquiry is granted.

I had a long talk with Mrs. Naidu at Dr. Ansari's house. I like her enormously. She is kind, gentle, amusing and very intelligent. Incidentally she is the one woman I have met who looks nice in *kuddur*. She has realised that even home-spun cotton can be made to look smart if it is tailored well and made in attractive colours.

She was not hopeful. She said: "I have got my toothbrush already packed for my journey back to prison."

I strolled across to the Assembly to hear Schuster (Sir George Schuster, the Finance member) deliver his budget speech. I have never seen a more dismal audience. They did not even cheer when he increased the duty on foreign cotton! It does seem rather absurd that his proposals had to be submitted not merely to the Viceroy's Executive Council but to Downing Street.

What can little "Wedgie" Benn know about the advisability of taxing betel-nuts?

Not that we any longer administer Indian finances for the benefit of ourselves. The new scale of income-tax will fall heavily on the European,

and whisky, an almost exclusively European drink, is now nearly as heavily taxed as in England.

I am thankful I am not out here permanently. The boredom must be indescribable—the same hard polo faces, the same interminable round of chota pegs (small whiskies) at the club, the same silly chatter about the doings of Government House, the same ignorant intolerance of anyone with a different outlook to themselves, the same fearful atmosphere of strained heartiness.

No wonder all these people congregate at Cheltenham and Bedford. They are a community apart.

But perhaps I am a little bitter. So many of them patronise me as a journalist. I think that they really expect a journalist to be a young man with a pencil behind his ear who will produce a notebook on the slightest provocation and who, in their own language, is "not quite a sahib." That is not true of the intelligent ones, who are quite charming. But I get so tired of silly females who arch their eyebrows and say, "You are a journalist; I must be careful what I say."

Worse are the noisy subalterns—the type who play leap-frog after dinner, who tell me that I am one of these "writing wallahs."

CHAPTER XIX

# GANDHI CHANGES HIS MIND

*New Delhi—Sunday.*

I am writing just before lunch to get it all down before I forget.

It is all UP with the Conference.

The Viceroy has refused Gandhi's terms and Gandhi has refused to withdraw from them. There is a complete deadlock. The working committee of the Congress, who are an all-powerful Soviet, met last night and decided to go on with the war. Gandhi is communicating their decision at half-past two this afternoon.

The whole trouble continues to centre round the police enquiry and, in a lesser degree, the legislation of peaceful picketing and the abolition of the salt tax.

On the police enquiry the Viceroy has made one minor concession. He has offered to have any case of alleged repression investigated on the spot by the local authorities. On the main question of a general enquiry he will not budge.

He has told Gandhi quite firmly, "I will not have the whole police force of India put in the dock."

On the picketing question he is equally firm. He told Gandhi, "Peaceful picketing is perfectly legal now, but you know in actual fact that such picketing as goes on is anything but peaceful."

The question of safeguards is entirely sound. He told the Viceroy, "I prefer to call them adjustments." The Viceroy bluntly replied, "I don't mind what you call them as long as you accept them." "Adjustments," as a matter of fact, was Motilal Nehru's word and G.'s use of it now emphasises how important was the old man's influence on him and how disastrous was his death.

Of course this insistence on these minor points by Congress is all an astute move. If the Viceroy agreed, the stock of Congress would leap up. The Round Tablers would pass out of the picture and Gandhi would be omnipotent. The Round Tablers realised this and, on the whole, have backed up the Viceroy in his stand.

But for the moment they have got cold feet. They are all bitterly disappointed and are ready to throw in their hands. That is the difficulty with

Indian politicians. They have no courage. They cannot afford to be unpopular. It is not their fault, it is their training and environment. The average G.C. Englishman learns to be unpopular very young. It is part of his education. One begins to see how much there is to be said for the public school when one sees their products at work in responsible positions. They do have "guts," and I suppose it is "guts" that has made the Empire, both its virtues and its vices.

Well, the Moderates have got to make a big choice this afternoon. They have got to choose between building-up the new constitution or going over to the Congress and wrecking any constitution. I cannot understand how they can hesitate. Congress has done nothing to help them. It has jeered and sneered at them. They braved suspicion and ridicule in going to London; they were enormously impressed by the honesty and generosity of Great Britain, and they came back determined to fight for the Round Table programme from platform to platform.

Are they really going to desert their posts now?

The position is very grim. It is really as you were to the position before the Round Table Conference. The violent movement will go on; there will be a frightful hoo-ha in the *Herald* to-morrow when the news is known in London.

I asked —— this morning what will happen now. He said, "The war of attrition will go on." Very significant. It shows the hopelessness of the position. We may stand firm successfully now. But Congress goes on with the war. It wears down our fortifications ceaselessly, relentlessly, and then in a few months, possibly a few years—time means nothing in India—we have to surrender to them and agree to still more unpalatable terms of peace. That was the history of Ireland. If we are not careful it will be the history of India too.

*11.30 at night.*

The whole position has changed in a startling fashion. After lunch I sat down and wrote out on to the cable forms something of what I had written in this diary in the morning. I have the message in front of me. It begins, "The prospects of peace, never really hopeful, have collapsed altogether this afternoon," and so on for five hundred words.

It then occurred to me that to relieve the gloom the news would produce in England, I ought to get an encouraging message from Sapru announcing his intention to carry on with the work of the Round Table Conference whatever G. and his friends might do. Sapru made a big impression in

London and the news that he was standing fast would have a heartening effect. Incidentally his answer would tell me where he stood.

Gandhi was expected only to be at V.H.[3] half an hour. I had discovered on the telephone that he had gone there at half-past two. At four o'clock I sent a letter to Sapru, "Will you, in view of the breakdown in the negotiations between the Viceroy and Gandhi that I understand is certain to happen this afternoon, give me some message to the *News-Chronicle*, indicating that whatever Mr. Gandhi does you will carry on with the Round Table. Such a message would have a big effect on public opinion in England."

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[3] Viceroy's House.

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At 4.30 I got his reply. Mr. Gandhi had not yet returned from V.H. He had, therefore, not seen him and certainly could not give such a message until he had heard what Mr. Gandhi had to say.

My spirits rose. I felt that it could not have taken two hours for both of them to say that they had nothing further to say. Every minute G. remained in the Viceroy's study was a minute gained for peace. I started ringing up to find out if G. had left the Palace. At 4.40 he was still there; at 5 p.m. he had not left; at 5.30 the consultations were still going on.

At 5.50 I had to leave myself for I was due at a cocktail party the other side of Delhi. I decided to hold up my cables at any rate for a few hours.

When I had reached my third cocktail —— arrived from an Executive Council meeting that had been hurriedly summoned to the Viceroy's study. He was very discreet, but he suggested enough to inform me: 1. That the conversations are to continue; 2. That peace is once more on the map. Apparently Gandhi is in an unexpectedly accommodating mood. "Easier to deal with than the others" was the phrase used.

I rushed back and have altered the whole tone of my message. I hope that it is right but I am very much shooting in the dark.

. . . So there is to be a fourth act to this strange drama. Will it provide the conventional happy finale following on the equally conventional threat of tragedy at the end of the third act?

* * *

My diary ends here, but I see that my cable that day reflects the bewildering change in the situation but with the soft-pedal down. My message begins thus: "To-day has been a day of startling changes in the political situation. It began in an atmosphere of deep despondency . . ." and ends, "To-day Gandhi for the first time has shown himself as willing to negotiate on these questions. (The police enquiry, peaceful picketing, and the salt tax.) A prominent official, hitherto a confirmed pessimist, said to me to-night, 'The situation is more favourable to peace than at any time during the conversations.' "

I remember that it was with considerable fear that I opened the newspapers next morning to see if I was on the right track. I return to my diary again for the answer.

*March 2nd.*

It is true. There has been an extraordinary change in the situation. It is a most dramatic story. Gandhi went off yesterday from Dr. Ansari's house with, in fact, the intention of breaking off relations. His committee were in session and expected him back inside three-quarters of an hour. He was only going off to carry out their instructions and refuse the armistice. It could not take long. Half-past three came and still he did not come back. The hours crept on and still there was no sound of the subdued cheer on the drive outside which always signalled his return. By four o'clock they began to think that something had happened to make the little man throw over the whole of his plans. By five o'clock they were uneasily certain, and when finally he returned, shortly after six o'clock, they knew that for better or worse the situation had been revolutionised.

I have learnt what in the meantime was happening in the Viceroy's study. Irwin played his last card. It was a personal appeal to Gandhi. He appears to have talked to him more or less like this. "Forget all about your theoretic rights to demand a police enquiry; I admit that you have got the right to demand an enquiry. Of course you have. I appeal to you to forgo them. You must realise that nothing could result from a police enquiry but mutual recrimination. Cannot we let bygones be bygones? I appeal to you to come in on the side of peace."

The effect was instantaneous. Gandhi immediately responded, "If you make an appeal to me on those grounds, your Excellency, I have no other course but to respond to it."

In five minutes the whole situation was revolutionised. Gandhi suddenly swung over to peace. He is now throwing all his weight into an effort to induce his committee to abandon their immediate demands and forthwith

declare an armistice on the basis of the proposals of the Round Table Conference.

My information to-night is that G. is having a big struggle with his committee, a section of whom, led by Jawaralal Nehru, are still wholly implacable. But G.'s prestige is immense, and if he sticks to his guns he will win through.

* * *

That is all I say in my diary, but as I write now I can record two impressions not mentioned there.

The whole day was a revelation to me of the immense reserve of strength in Gandhi's frail body. This was how Gandhi had spent those last fateful twenty-four hours:

SUNDAY MORNING: Meetings with his committee.

2.30-5.50: Closeted with the Viceroy.

6.30-8.15: Explaining to his committee what had happened.

9.30: Return to the Viceroy. He walked by himself the whole five miles.

9.30-12.15: More conversations with the Viceroy.

12.15 a.m.: With shawl over his shoulders and staff in his hand, the little man trudged back the five miles to Dr. Ansari's house.

MONDAY, 1.30 a.m.: He roused his committee from sleep.

1.40-5 a.m.: He fought with his committee for peace.

A man who can do that is not, as some people seem to think over here, on the brink of the grave. The strain of the London Conference will be a rest cure compared to those gruelling Delhi conversations.

The sudden change in Gandhi's attitude presents also an interesting problem in psychology.

What made him suddenly commit that extraordinary *volte-face*?

I think that the explanation is that he is in one sense the old-fashioned philosophic Radical. He was interested in the police enquiry largely as a question of abstract rights. He wanted the right to a police enquiry admitted, and when it was once admitted he was no longer interested in it. It is the same with the problem of Indian membership to European clubs. Indians make a great commotion about not being admitted to membership on equal

terms with Europeans, and in the few clubs where they are eligible for membership only a few of them ever exercise the right. They are quite content that it has been conceded.

But the most important factor of all in Lord Irwin's sudden success was Gandhi's sentimentalism.

He is instantly responsive to a personal appeal.

Sir Tej Sapru once said to me, "You English can get far more out of Gandhi than you can out of me if you go about it the right way. Gandhi is a sentimentalist." For days he had been urging the Viceroy to make some kind of emotional appeal.

The whole incident was a lesson for statesmen here. If they treat him in London as Lord Lloyd would have them treat him, distantly and firmly, he will become stubborn and wayward and altogether impossible in council. If they treat him with complete frankness and friendliness they will find him more reasonable than they could have dreamed possible. The fear, even among the moderates in India, is not that he will be unyielding in London but that he will give away too much.

CHAPTER XX

# FROM DEADLOCK TO TRIUMPH

But it was not over yet. There were still many swift and startling changes in the next few hours before the curtain finally fell on the Delhi conversations.

My diary records the shifting scene.

*March 3rd.*

It is horribly wet—like the worst day in an English summer, only worse. India was made for sunshine. The brown earth and the white buildings if not lit up by the sun are drab and depressing in the extreme. When it rains in England the dominant colour impression is green, when it rains in India it is grey.

The news too is a bit drab after the exultations and agonies of the week-end. Gandhi is haggling now over the punitive police. Apparently when there is a disturbance in a town extra police are drafted in as a punitive measure and the expense has to be borne by the inhabitants. It seems a small point on which to hang up a settlement.

Gandhi saw Schuster this morning on the salt tax and some compromise has been reached, but I do not know what it is. I have not the courage to ring up S. and ask. My hide is not nearly thick enough for a journalist.

Sapru is doing a great work flitting between Dr. Ansari's and V.H. and explaining everybody to everybody else.

Again and again I come back to the same theme! What an extraordinary fellow Gandhi is! Apparently, when Sapru saw him last night his day of silence was not yet over. The conversation therefore had to be conducted wholly in writing. Gandhi would write a question; then Sapru would answer it by word of mouth. Then Gandhi would scribble his comment and ask another and pass the paper across. So vital conversations on which depended the ultimate happiness of three hundred and twenty millions went on hour after hour.

Soon the floor was littered with little bits of paper. And what paper!

There was a new departure to-night in the conversations. Usually they end punctually at 6 p.m. in order that G. may have his evening meal before the sun goes down. But to-day a knotty point was still being discussed when six o'clock came and the need for speeding up the settlement is so urgent that instead of Gandhi going to his meal, the meal came to Gandhi.

Miss Slade, or to give her the full Indian title by which she prefers to be known, Mira Bei, was the bearer of it. She arrived at Viceroy's House with 40 dates and a pint of goat's milk, which Gandhi ate in the Viceroy's study. Shades of Curzon!

H.E. and Miss Slade met and of course he was as charming and courteous to her as he is to everybody. She is usually very much on the defensive when talking to Englishmen nowadays, but was quite captivated by H.E. —— told me this evening at Dr. Ansari's—that "she came back from Viceroy's House walking on air. She had actually spoken to the Viceroy and he had been so charming to her. If you are not careful she will transfer her attentions from Gandhi to the Viceroy."

What a queer gallery of portraits they would all make!

Sapru continues to think that we shall round these rocks safely.

Some of G.'s Congress Committee are still fighting him on the general peace terms, but G.'s prestige is enormous. No one will dare oppose him if he stands firm. But will he?

A new character has come on to the stage, H. W. Emerson, the Secretary to the Home Department, Anglice Home Secretary, bureaucracy incarnate but bureaucracy at its best.

He is anathema to the Congress Party, to them a typical member of what G. has called "this satanic government." Irwin called him into the consultations on Sunday night. G. was not anxious to see him, but Irwin pressed it. To the amazement of everyone they made effective contact immediately. It illustrates again G.'s love of frankness. Emerson is frank, perhaps brutally frank and absolutely straight—just the qualities G. most understands and appreciates.

G. is delighted and is busy taking back all he ever said about Emerson.

There is something awfully generous about "the old gentleman," as they now call Gandhi in the secretariat.

He is 62.

*March 5th.*

Peace seems certain now. Schuster had a further interview with Gandhi on the salt tax and as a result the people living on the sea-coast are to be allowed to manufacture salt. Technically it is not really a concession at all as salt made on the sea-shore is really quite uneatable. It will in practice make no difference to the Government salt monopoly. Actually however it is a big concession of principle. Gandhi began his great march to Dandi beach to defy the law by manufacturing salt and the march has ended in his

negotiating successfully the removal of the ban as man to man in the Viceroy's study. It is the end of perhaps the blackest chapter in our relationships with India since the Mutiny.

* * *

But it nearly was not. My diary does not record the hitch at the last minute of the eleventh hour which all but smashed the negotiations. I shall have to go to my cables, my letters, and my own memory for the details of the sudden and wholly unexpected turn of events which nearly sucked India from calm seas into the whirlpool once again.

I only heard of it quite by accident. I was changing for dinner the next night when I got a telegram from my Editor asking for five hundred words of jubilation on the Gandhi-Irwin triumph. I wrote it out and to make certain that there was no fresh news I went round to see Sir Tej Sapru before sending it off. I found him out and something like consternation among his friends.

The whole settlement was in peril.

When the Viceroy had got Gandhi to the point of signature he had suddenly broken away.

It appeared that Gandhi had woken up uneasy in his mind. He could not explain what was wrong. He merely told the Viceroy that he felt unhappy in his mind about it. In this atmosphere they set about drafting the final terms. Line after line Gandhi began to dispute and finally in the early evening there was a deadlock.

Lord Irwin was due to attend a farewell garden-party given to him by the Executive councillors. I had been there myself and seen the Viceroy arrive late, looking, when there appeared so much cause for jubilation, strangely tired and worried. He had a few words with Sapru in a corner of the garden. Sapru with an anxious face thereupon left the garden-party. I wondered at the time what it was all about.

I was now to hear the reason. Gandhi would not move an inch from the position he had taken up. The Viceroy was saying to Sapru, "Gandhi is in my study still; I can do nothing with him; go along and see what you can do."

To me the point at issue seemed ludicrously trivial. It concerned the return of lands confiscated for non-payment of land revenue. Under the terms of the proposed agreement the broad principle was enunciated that confiscated lands should be returned but that where these lands had already passed to a third party the forfeiture of the original owner must be regarded

as permanent. It was on this latter proviso that the hopes of peace seemed likely to be shipwrecked.

Behind the dry words of the clause lay a fierce personal struggle. Gandhi's most formidable opponent at the Congress table was Vallabhai Patel, the President of the Congress and incidentally a Gujerati.

He wanted war, for he knew if there were peace that he could not deliver his promises. He had been the chief organiser of the "no rent" campaign in Gujerat, which had proved more formidable to the Government than anywhere in India. He had induced his followers to force the confiscation of their land on the ground that when the peace came they would be restored *in toto* whoever had bought them. It had happened after the 1921 campaign and it was bound to happen this time.

It was just this that the officials in Bombay were determined to prevent. Sir Frederick Sykes, the Governor of Bombay, had again played the strong man, contrary to popular belief, and had brought all his influence to bear upon the Viceroy to induce him to stand firm.

He had succeeded and Vallabhai Patel was faced with the prospect of having to make a good meal of his own words. He determined not to give in without a struggle and after prolonged effort won Gandhi over to his side.

Gandhi, who had been unhappy all day over the situation, suddenly said that it was this clause which was the cause. It must be deleted. The Viceroy refused. Gandhi was adamant.

They adjourned to consult their respective councils. Gandhi returned to Dr. Ansari's house in the last stages of depression. His first words were—"It is tragic. Hopes of peace may all be at an end." He summoned his Congress Committee and they backed him up to a man. Irwin in the meantime had called together his Executive Council, and they were equally determined not to give way.

That was the situation I learnt when I arrived on Sir Tej Sapru's verandah. Obviously it altered the whole basis of my cable. My paper was expecting peace celebrations when, as a matter of fact, a renewal of the war was gravely threatened.

Sir Tej Sapru was out and there was nothing to do but wait until he came back. He was expected, they said, any minute. I was due at a dinner-party in a quarter of an hour—I was in fact in evening dress all ready to go. I scribbled a line of apology to my hostess and sat down to wait.

My sensations are described in a letter I wrote during the vigil.

Here it is:

"New Delhi.

"*March 6th.*

"My dear Dingle,—I am sitting on Sapru's verandah while the rain beats down outside, waiting for him to return from the Viceroy's House. Apparently there is a hitch at the last moment in the signing of the pact. All is gloom. The telegrams from London say that you are all throwing your hats into the air at the signing of the agreement. I have just had a wire from Tom Clarke asking for 500 words of jubilation. Here we sit glumly contemplating a complete breakdown.

"Apparently Gandhi's 'inner voice' has been troubling him. He told the Viceroy this morning that he was unhappy about the agreement. Now he has discovered why. It is over some obscure clause about land that has been confiscated for non-payment of land revenue and has been sold twice over. Should it be restored now? G. says it must; Lord I. says it can't, and they have been debating it all day. Only Sapru can get them out.

"Damn them all! I wanted a night off, and ought to have been at a dinner-party an hour ago. I shall be very unpopular, for dinner-parties here are elaborate affairs, where the numbers are always equal and the guests elaborately arranged in order of precedence.

"Probably T. C. is chaffering because I have sent him nothing. But I think that it would be madness to jump this for it may be war again within twenty-four hours.

"I have two telegrams prepared for either eventuality, but in the meantime I must sit on this draughty verandah hour after hour.

"Even if this point of difference is patched up it is going to be a bad look-out for the next Conference if G. is suddenly going to hear 'the inner voice' at awkward moments, in St. James's Palace.

"He is an odd creature.

"His loin-cloth has humbled the greatest Empire the world has ever seen—and here he is holding up my dinner while he disputes a sub-clause of a minor point.

"I do not know which is the greater achievement.

"Splendid—wheels and lights in the drive. My deliverance has come. Good-night."

Sapru arrived, but only for two minutes. There was still complete deadlock. Gandhi, after another visit to the Viceroy's House had gone home

to bed, and Sapru, having come straight from Gandhi, went off immediately to the Viceroy.

I joined my dinner-party. They had reached the sweets stage and I was not unnaturally very unpopular.

It was strange all the same how comparatively uninterested the Anglo-Indian community was in all these alarms and excursions in Delhi. Here was an issue that would intimately concern their future careers. The Gandhi-Irwin conversations might outwardly centre on police enquiries and routine matters of that kind, but in reality they struck at the vitals of the British Raj.

They were the death knell of India as they knew it.

But it was the height of the Delhi cold weather season, and all decent conversation was about the Viceroy's ball that had just happened and the Bachelors' ball that was just going to happen.

I had hardly gobbled a few mouthfuls before I had another telegram from my office. Obviously, I could not leave the situation where it was, so when the men got up to join the ladies I made fresh apologies and slipped away by a back door to search for news again.

It was raining now—the heavy hopeless rain that only India can produce—and I was filled with the gloomiest forebodings as my car splashed down the endless avenues that separate Delhi from New Delhi. I tried Sir Tej Sapru's house first. He had not returned from Viceroy's House. I tried old Viceregal Lodge miles away the other side of the Delhi ridge. There was nothing doing there. Once more I turned down the Darya Gunj, flanked by the old city wall, where Gandhi was staying. I had already visited the house four times that day. As I arrived the Congress Committee were just breaking up. Dr. Ansari and Mrs. Naidu were on the door-step. They could tell me nothing except that peace had not been signed, and that they were going to bed. There would be no more news that night.

So I dismally went back and wrote a warning cable.

> "There has been a last minute hitch in the negotiations. . . . It is a trivial point. . . . The Viceroy has referred the question to his Executive Council and by a unanimous vote they have agreed to support him in his 'no surrender' policy. . . . The working committee of Congress have sent their final answer to the Viceroy to-night. . . ."

As I wrote it out I pictured the trouble it would cause in the newspaper office. Head lines would have to be altered; introductions changed; possibly a whole first leader given a new orientation or knocked out altogether. For I could see from the telegrams that I had received that the signing of the

armistice was, in the jargon of the newspaper world, “a front page splash,” and in a few hours my cable would arrive to inform a distracted night editor that it had not yet been signed at all—might, in fact, never be signed.

I woke the next morning to find the Indian papers by my bedside. There was no mention of any hitch. The sun was shining, and all the excitements of the previous night seemed like an unpleasant dream.

I went out and heard the whole story. All was well. The armistice terms had been signed at half-past eight that morning.

It had been touch and go to the last. Sapru had been with the Viceroy until two o’clock in the morning. They had worked out a formula of agreement. The Viceroy refused absolutely to agree to Gandhi’s demands about the restoration of land when it had passed to a third party, but he was willing to agree to the insertion of a statement of Gandhi’s objections to this clause.

Would Gandhi accept that?

Back Sapru went at 2 o’clock in the morning to Dr. Ansari’s house. It was in darkness. Everybody had gone to bed. But in Indian houses there are no bolts on the doors. They are as open at 2 o’clock in the morning as they are at 2 o’clock in the afternoon. He went in, stumbling over Miss Slade’s bed which was apparently in the open air in the compound at the back. He found Gandhi, roused him from sleep and told him in plain words that that was the best he could get and that he could take it or leave it.

At last Gandhi haggled no longer and the Viceroy and Sir Tej Sapru went thankfully to sleep. The terms were actually signed in the Viceroy’s House after breakfast the next morning.

CHAPTER XXI

# CUI BONO?

Was Lord Irwin right in the course he took? It is a question that will provide happy debates to historians for years to come. For my own part I am convinced that it was a supreme act of statesmanship, first in arranging the interviews and then in bringing them to a triumphant conclusion.

It is argued that he destroyed at a stroke the prestige of his office.

Certainly it is easy to make a good debating case against shaking hands with sedition.

But what was the alternative?

There was no other course than to let the Civil Disobedience movement take its dreary course. Nothing could have sapped our prestige more certainly than that. In that battle we were at a hopeless disadvantage. Englishmen can stand up to open rebels. They can meet them and beat them at any time. Civil Disobedience was something far more subtle and more deadly. It was the militant suffragette movement on a gigantic scale, stripped of its hysteria. It had, in fact, this tremendous difference. The militant suffragettes ended by making themselves ridiculous. The disciples of non-co-operation, as long as they kept to non-co-operation, made the Government ridiculous.

There was something ludicrous, for instance, in the spectacle of the police trying to clear a tramline of recumbent women and as fast as they had cleared one stretch of line the women were back again, lying across the lines further up the street. The authorities even had to take to watering the streets several times a day in the hope that fear of rheumatism would discourage this particular form of "Satyagration."

Lord Irwin did not destroy the prestige of the Government. That had gone already. He did something to recreate it.

It is argued that he elevated Gandhi to a position higher than he had ever held before. That is probably true but it was only for a few days. Gandhi's position has been declining ever since Karachi. For he has surrendered the martyr's crown and with it his greatest instrument of power over the Indian masses. Gandhi free and at peace with the Government is in an infinitely weaker position than Gandhi in prison and at war. His status is wholly altered. It was Lord Irwin who produced the change.

Lord Irwin is accused of surrendering the girders of his position. He did nothing of the kind. From those long conversations, in which he was supposed by his enemies to have bartered away our birth-right, every essential principle remained intact. He had secured Gandhi's surrender of the police enquiry and a frank acceptance of the safeguards. Every one, in fact, of those eleven points, which Gandhi had originally insisted were essential to an armistice, had disappeared from his programme.

He had done this in face of the greatest discouragement from home. The news cabled out by Reuter that Mr. Wedgwood Benn had been cheered by the whole House of Commons when he announced the terms of the truce tickled us all immensely in Delhi. For it was widely known that he had contributed absolutely nothing to the settlement. Not a constructive idea nor a suggestion of one had come from the India Office. In fact, at the darkest hour, when the whole settlement was in peril, at about 9 p.m. on the Wednesday night, when Lord Irwin was exhausted with a whole day of wrestling with the extraordinary conscience of Mr. Gandhi, a telegram was brought to him from the Secretary of State containing the request that he should persuade Gandhi to include in the terms of peace his admission that a police enquiry was unnecessary.

By that time the police enquiry had passed out of the discussion altogether. It was settled. After hours of argument and appeal Gandhi had been persuaded to abandon it. At the time when the Viceroy was faced with a deadlock on the land question he was asked to re-open this wretched question of the police enquiry—and this by the man who had originally opposed his refusal to grant one, and had now apparently wobbled right over to the other side.

But perhaps the most favourite line of attack is that Lord Irwin made terms with an enemy already on the verge of capitulation. Of the fact that there was a big peace party in Congress there is no doubt. The millionaires undoubtedly wanted peace. I have recorded already the secret talks between Mr. Birla and Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Gandhi was surrounded with rich men. I remember Mrs. Naidu telling me one day, on Dr. Ansari's verandah, somewhat defiantly that Gandhi had just gone off to the Viceroy's House "accompanied by two millionaires." When I smiled questioningly, she said, "Why should he not have the millionaires around him? Everybody is concerned with a reduction of the rupee—the poor much more than the rich."

It was more than the rupee that they were discussing. The rich men were threatening the withdrawal of supplies. The cost of the movement was enormous.

In Bombay alone it was estimated that when the peace was signed fifty thousand young men went off the payroll.

There was a big peace-movement in Gujerat, the stronghold of disaffection. The cultivators there were so certain of peace that during the weeks of the peace negotiations they left their crops uncut. They knew that if they were harvested they would be seized for non-payment of land revenue. If they waited long enough then peace would come, all would be forgiven, and they could reap their harvest unmolested. The news from all the centres was unfavourable to a continuance of the war, except in Bombay, and even there the merchants at any rate were weary of it.

But even if peace had come it would have been nothing but a temporary truce. For the desire would have come not from the heart but from mere weariness of the flesh. No terms of settlement based on exhaustion could ever have been permanent.

Lord Lloyd is always boasting that the moment he shut Gandhi up in 1921 all was tranquillity. So it may have been.

But for how long?

The second Civil Disobedience movement came a few years later and the struggle was more fierce and more bitter than ever before. The policy of the strong hand is certain to be successful for a time. Lord Balfour's twenty years of resolute government staved off Home Rule for Ireland for nearly forty years but when it came it was not Home Rule but virtual Independence.

So it would have been with India. We might have secured—though even of that I am doubtful—a dictated peace in the early spring of this year. But at what price? Congress, the only popular organisation in India, would have been sullen and hopelessly hostile. Even more important, the Round Tablers would have lost faith and vision.

There are two schools of thought among Englishmen who have not been to India recently as to what we ought to do. Both are dangerously wrong.

There are those who take their stand on the Simon report. Most of them have not read it, but they have a vague idea that of all the suggestions made for India's future it is the least Radical and therefore ought to be supported by Conservatives. In my view there are two unanswerable arguments against it. The first is that no one in India supports it, and the second is that even if they did it would not work.

The Simon report was dead the day it was published. It satisfied no one. Much play is made of stories of villagers taught by Congress propagandists to say, "Go back Simon" in the same way as a parrot is taught to say "Pretty

Poll." But it does not mean that because there were millions who did not know who Simon was that they were therefore his enthusiastic supporters. Among the educated Indians, and after all it is they who would have to work them, there was no support of any kind for the Simon recommendations.

In any case his constitution was quite unworkable. Broadly speaking, it gave complete autonomy to the provinces and left despotic power in the hands of the Governor-General in council. Supporters of the Simon report appear to imagine that provincial assemblies are little more than county councils. They represent the population of European states. Bengal has as many inhabitants as Germany, and the United Provinces ranks in numbers with France. The Simon constitution would have established a series of autonomous legislatures facing an irresponsible executive. In a word, an irresistible force would have been swept up headlong against an immovable object.

A frightful crash would have been inevitable.

Indeed it is extraordinary that a superb lawyer like Sir John Simon, endowed probably with the clearest brain of any man in the country, ever put his name to such an illogical document. I am told that the explanation is that he accepted at the eleventh hour, against his better judgment, the principle of no responsibility at the centre, to placate Lord Burnham and secure a unanimous report.

The irony of the situation is that those who regard the Simon report as the ark of the covenant have no conception how far its recommendations go. They base all their speeches on the unfortunate village cultivator who, they insist, looks to the Englishman as his only refuge from his persecutors. At the instigation they say of Lord Irwin, and with the connivance of Mr. Wedgwood Benn, he is now to be delivered over to the vengeance of his fellow countrymen. But as a matter of fact that already happens under the Simon report. The condition of the villager is almost exclusively a provincial question, and therefore one upon which the Indians will have autonomous power.

The second school of thought is both more Liberal and more reasonable. Its believers take their stand on the recommendations of the Round Table Conference. They say that the Government went as far as it could at the Conference in London and that our only job is to stand by the moderates and let Gandhi come in or not as he likes.

What they fail to realise is that the Round Tablers, amiable, eloquent, and learned as they were, represent nobody but themselves. Men like Sir Tej

Sapru and Mr. Sastri would be the first to admit it. I saw the contrast between their position and Gandhi's position very vividly in Delhi.

The following extract from my diary describes it.

*March 3rd.*

Impossible to blink the fact that co-operation of Gandhi would enormously improve the hopes of the new constitution. He is the only leader with a popular following. Its size has been grotesquely exaggerated, but it exists and the measure of its importance is that Sapru has none. There are no surging crowds outside his house shouting "Sapru ki jai." There is no need for him to have a daily *darshan* (showing). He would merely show himself to a weary journalist and a couple of crows.

There is something significant in the fact that Gandhi is living in Old Delhi, within sight and smell of the bazaar, and that Sapru is staying in one of the trim formal avenues of the new city. Sapru is staying at 7 Clive Road; Gandhi's address is 1 Darya Gunj.

The crowd of pilgrims to Gandhi's house is so great that little wayside stalls have been set up all along the route.

I am certain that they would not recognise Sapru if he passed.

The opinion of Congress on the Round Tablers and their proposals was reflected in a conversation I had yesterday with Mrs. Naidu. She said, "They have just been passing the time in London; they represent no one out here. Their proposals are vague and nebulous. There may be something good in them but they were divorced from reality. Even Sapru has never been in touch with the people. He does not know how they live. Not one of them has any following. They are just a handful of amiable, educated gentlemen."

No doubt there is a certain amount of engaging feminine pique in Mrs. Naidu's remarks, for it must be a bit galling to come out of prison and find that the Round Tablers even temporarily have stolen the limelight, but from what I have seen myself, I should say that her view is substantially accurate.

* * *

It was almost as silly to stand uncompromisingly for the Round Table proposals as it was to stand firm on the Simon Report.

Something had to be done to bring Gandhi in, and by a supreme act of statesmanship Lord Irwin did it, and, what is more, did it without sacrificing any essential principle.

Sapru's nightmare was that when the Round Table Conference was resumed it would be on the background of riots and shootings. That was the reason why he devoted all his energies to getting Gandhi into their deliberations.

His first remark to me when it was all over was "the English delegates, if they come to India, will get a splendid reception. India is a changed country to-night. All anger and bitterness has vanished."

That was the supreme achievement of Irwin. He secured that the next conference should be entered upon soberly and quietly.

He did more than that. He bridged the gulf between the Jubilee India and the Congress India, and he won the heart of Gandhi in the process.

He rescued India from bitterness and bloodshed and though her path in the next few years is beset with doubts and difficulties I do not believe that she will ever go back to it.

It will always be a matter of dispute as to whether Mr. Gandhi got the better of Irwin or Lord Irwin the better of Mr. Gandhi, but whoever lost from those daring negotiations in the long run it will be found that India and the Empire won.

CHAPTER XXII

# ACTION AND REACTION

There was a tremendous relief all through India at the truce.

In the city of Delhi it was as if a long siege had been at last lifted. The very next day Englishwomen were shopping freely in the Chandni Chowk, the great Indian shopping quarter, which they had not ventured to do for many weary months.

European opinion to a man, and almost to a woman, applauded the Viceroy's actions.

From my own personal point of view, after the excitements of the last three weeks, reaction set in. My mood is reflected in a letter to Dingle Foot which I give below.

"New Delhi.

"I have a strange feeling of anti-climax after the excitements of the last few weeks. Every day of those negotiations might have ended in disaster, and now an agreement has been reached one has the kind of feeling of flatness that must have followed even November 11th, 1918.

"I have come out of it all with a great admiration both for Gandhi and Irwin. Gandhi's sainthood is genuine. Make no mistake about that. He has definitely renounced the world. He lives on nothing but nuts and olive-oil and wheat-cakes—and these only twice a day. He owns nothing but his loin-cloth, and even that and his food are given him by devoted supporters. Of course, you may say that he has got everything in the world, for he has got power. But his power is quite disinterested. Was it Walpole or Melbourne who complained of a fellow-politician that 'there was nothing this fellow wanted'? It is true of G. so far as personal ambitions are concerned.

"Irwin's triumph has been that he is the first Englishman who tried to understand Gandhi. I wrote in one of my cables that Gandhi had expressed a wish to see 'Lord Irwin the man.' Irwin has responded by studying 'Mr. Gandhi the man.' That is the reason of his success. Men in the old tradition, like Reading and Lloyd, have handled Gandhi as they would handle Smillie or Cook or George Hicks or any other obstreperous rebel to society. They treated him as an agitator. Irwin has been the first to grasp that G. was not merely a politician, but a prophet.

"G. cannot be judged by Western standards. He does not submit himself to them. As he said to me the other day, 'I am not guided by reason, but by the inner voice, and I never know where that will lead me.' Irwin has been wrestling with this inner voice—and he is the only Englishman who could have done it.

"The result is that Irwin has not merely gained a temporary success with Gandhi. He has won him over for all time. I wish that he would lease out a wing of Garrowby Hall (Lord Irwin's country house in Yorkshire) to Gandhi when Gandhi visits England. The only hope of a solution lies in Irwin never letting G. out of his sight.

"Spiritually, of course, though they worship different gods they have the same outlook. There is far more common ground, for instance, between Irwin and Gandhi than, for instance, between Irwin and Winston. I must work out when I have got more time the psychology of it all in greater detail. In the meantime I will let you off.

"PS.—Kipling never wrote greater nonsense than when he said, 'East is East. . . .' Of course they can meet. The mistake we have made is assuming they can't. When I talk to a man like Sapru I feel that I am up against the same kind of mind as one finds on the front benches of the House of Commons. Our environment may be different, but our instincts, ambitions, virtues, vices, are very much the same."

I return to my diary for a description of the new situation in Delhi.

*March 6th.*

So it is all over but the shouting, and most of that was premature. Wednesday was a terrible night, which I shall not easily forget. All seemed lost. I was really too much behind the scenes. It is almost as nerve-wrecking to be a spectator of great events as to be a partner in them. What a dramatic setting that garden-party was—everybody congratulating everybody else and six thousand miles away the whole House of Commons cheering the Indian settlement and presumably the London evening papers coming out with splash headlines—and in a Delhi garden the Viceroy whispering to Sapru in a corner, "Gandhi is still with me. The whole thing may be called off." And all over a sub-section of a sub-clause. I wonder if my paper ever printed my message. I see the rest of the Press appears to be ignorant of any hitch at all.

The verandah of Ansari's house is less congested now. But "Holy Joe" remains hovering round.

I had an interesting talk with Johnnie Steel this morning. (Air Vice-Marshal Sir John Steel, Commander-in-Chief of the R.A.F. in India.) He has just arrived from home. He was quite charming. The more I see of these great war lords in India, the more I think how libelled they are. It is only in the lower ranks that they are caricatures of themselves.

It is strange to think that Steel was in the defence of Ladysmith several years before I was born.

This Air Force versus ground troops controversy presents an interesting problem even to the amateur. The soldiers are in high glee because the R.A.F. were unable to prevent the Afridis creeping down from their mountain fastnesses to the very outskirts of Peshawar last year. They think it proves that the Air Force have taken too much upon themselves and that they never can be more than a very subsidiary arm of the frontier defences. They point out that all this bombing of villages has little permanent effect. The tribesmen know when it is coming, and retire peacefully to the rocks. When they see the tail of the aeroplane disappearing over the mountain they come out and cheerfully build up the village again.

The Air Force answer appears to be that they were not sufficiently used. They claim that the Afridis were allowed to get too far. The Air Force spotted them massing in the mountains, but for political reasons were not allowed to break them up with bombs. The moment the Afridis were allowed to get down into the plain they were wholly protected by trees and river-beds from aerial observation. They would never have reached cover at all had the Air Force had their way at the beginning. As for the bombs on the villages they do little actual harm, but they make it damned uncomfortable for the villagers.

In any case, what was the use of all those regiments penned up in Peshawar behind the barbed wire? They did not prevent raids into the cantonments night after night.

So speak the Air Force.

It is an important problem, and I must study it when I have more time. For the idea of the R.A.F. chiefs is that more and more of the defence of the frontier can be undertaken by air squadrons. The saving in military expenditure would be enormous, of course.

*March 8th.*

Stories are leaking out about the Gandhi-Irwin conversations. They throw a very interesting light on the characters of both of them.

From start to finish there was never an angry word between them. Gandhi is abnormally sensitive, and, if ever—as was inevitable occasionally—the Viceroy said something which hurt him, G. never did anything more than look on the floor and say:

"That presents a great difficulty."

Gandhi never forgot the respect due to the representative of the King Emperor. He always addressed him as "Your Excellency."

Lord Irwin treated him as a friend and an equal. He dropped the ceremonial prefix and called him "Gandhi."

They even joked about Yeravda gaol. "Well, Gandhi," the Viceroy would begin a conversation, "have you got your bag packed ready to go back to gaol? You know, you are so popular with the governor of the gaol that he misses you badly."

They even laughed, I am told, about Churchill's infamous description of the conversations. On one occasion Gandhi got up to go and left his shawl behind. Irwin, holding it by the tips of his fingers, followed him to the door, calling after him:

"Gandhi, you are leaving your shawl behind. You have not got so many clothes on, you know, that you can afford to leave any behind."

This story is enough to make Cheltenham go up in smoke, but it is unaffected friendliness of that kind that has saved India for the Empire in the last few days.

But can there ever have been a stranger spectacle in history than those heart-to-heart talks, going on hour after hour in the Viceroy's study?—Gandhi clothed in coarse white home-spun cotton and the Viceroy in ordinary morning clothes. Gandhi is almost a dwarf, and the Viceroy must be over six feet in height. The difference between them was exaggerated by the fact that Gandhi sat in a very low chair.

The whole background of the conversations was so ludicrously different to anything we know in England. When the great moment came on Sunday, and G. had responded to the Viceroy's appeal, the Viceroy suggested that they should drink one another's health over a cup of tea. Gandhi agreed, but asked instead for a glass of water, some salt, and a lemon.

On one occasion when he arrived at Viceroy's House, Lord Irwin was engaged, and Mr. G. was shown into the A.D.C.s' room opposite H.E.'s study to wait. It was full of young men terribly embarrassed but, of course, terribly polite. They put Gandhi into a chair, and, hot all over, tried to make him at home. The dogs who tumble all over the Viceroy's House bounded in. They stopped when they saw G. and sniffed all round him, as if they had

never seen anything like him before in the whole of their lives. Poor Mr. G. sat in an arm-chair with his eyes fixed on the ground.

The old India of noisy subalterns and the new India of half-naked visionaries meeting together in Viceroy's House.

What a photograph it would have made, and what a chance for a Proust!

Emerson and Gandhi, when they first met at the suggestion of the Viceroy, were shown into a room empty of all furniture except one arm-chair placed opposite to a pile of cushions!

*March 8th (another entry).*

G. saw all the journalists yesterday. He is an amazing fellow. There he is, apparently an impracticable mystic one moment and the next a front-rank politician standing up to a ruthless journalistic cross-examination.

Again I was impressed by the extraordinary subtlety of his mind. He has now introduced into the controversy a new term—"*purna swaraj*." He told the Indian Press that an indifferent translation was "complete independence." Obviously it is impossible to have complete independence and safeguards at the same time, and it was vital that we should, therefore, have a translation of *purna swaraj* that is not "indifferent." So we tried to pin him down to a precise definition.

My head is still in a whirl trying to follow the intricacies of his argument. "*Purna swaraj* literally means disciplined self-government from within. It does not exclude association with any nation, far less with England. But this association must be one of free will and mutual benefit."

Petersen of *The Times*, who has himself a very clear brain, then interrupted with this poser:

"How is it possible to reconcile acceptance of the paragraph in the Delhi agreement limiting the constitutional scope of the discussions with the Congress demand for complete independence explicitly set out in the Congress resolutions at Madras, Calcutta, and Lahore? Would it be logical for the congress at the coming session at Karachi to reaffirm this policy when it joins the Round Table Conference?"

Gandhi replied, "Most certainly. It is perfectly possible to carry a resolution at Karachi in favour of complete independence."

But how can you stand by the safeguards and by complete independence at the same time? That is just the kind of dilemma into which Gandhi's extraordinary mind lands him. To him such a union of opposites seems simple and straightforward. To the Westerner it seems tortuous and rather dishonest.

What enormous ears Gandhi has got. They stick up from his head like those of a rabbit.

* * *

Gandhi left that night for the south. I decided that after six weeks of the hardest labour since my Rugby by-election that I needed a change of scene too, and determined to snatch a few brief hours in Agra.

As I drove to the station that night I saw great processions down the Chandni Chowk, the main thoroughfare of Delhi, accompanied by the weird monotonous Indian music. They were marching with released prisoners at their head, garlanded with flowers. A large crowd was already gathering at the station to see Gandhi off. It was his greatest hour of triumph. He could have done anything in that moment.

CHAPTER XXIII

# HOT WEATHER AHEAD

It was now, in my judgment, that the Government made its biggest mistake.

The Gandhi-Irwin pact had cleared the air. The sun had come out at last on Indian affairs. They ought to have taken immediate advantage of it. In the next few days they should have announced their plans for the next Round Table Conference, and while enthusiasm was still red hot they should have swept the delegates off to London.

Instead, Mr. Wedgwood Benn placidly waited on events. Nothing was done, precious moments slipped by, enthusiasm died down, and the opportunity of a century was lost.

Lord Irwin himself cannot escape some blame. After the conclusion of the pact he appeared to think that his work was done. It was very natural. He was leaving India for ever in six weeks time and he was very tired. Never at the best of times an initiator of a new policy, in these few weeks he seemed more passive than ever, at a time when resolute action was vital to garner the fruits of his statesmanship.

My diary records the delays and the growing exasperation and dismay that they created.

*March 9th.*

I arrived in Delhi, hot and hungry from Agra, at 10 o'clock this morning, and went straight to Maiden's for a bath and breakfast. The temperature is beginning to creep up now. It is in the region of the nineties. The glare is very trying and I have had to take to dark glasses.

All the talk is now of plans for the next Round Table Conference. Two suggestions have emerged. Benn is of opinion that the original idea of a British delegation coming out to Simla forthwith should be abandoned. He suggests a fuller Round Table Conference in London in the autumn to consider the new constitution, the groundwork of which should be prepared by the Indians in conference in Simla this summer.

Sankey, apparently, is the difficulty. The Government want him to lead the British delegation, and certainly among the Round Tablers he is regarded as the best man England could send. But his doctors are against his coming. He suffers badly from rheumatism. Sapru tells me that all through the conference he sat with a rug over his knees. In any case, there are technical

difficulties in the way of a Lord Chancellor being so long out of the country as an Indian conference over here would necessitate.

As further arguments against a conference in India, Benn points out the difficulties of Englishmen working in the hot weather, and also the general exigencies of the British Parliamentary situation.

Officialdom here, on the other hand, is in favour of the despatch of an immediate British delegation over here. The civil servants scout the idea that anything can be done at a preliminary conference in Simla. They point out that the moment the conference begins, the delegates will be up against essentials.

As representatives of the Government of India, some of them will have to be present to guide the councils. "How," they plaintively ask, "are we to represent the views of the Government of India and the collective will of the Conservative, Liberal, and Labour Parties at home?" So the exchange of views goes on between the Viceroy and the India Office in Whitehall. Nothing is yet certain.

But one thing of which everybody here is convinced is that delays are dangerous. They have been the curse throughout the negotiations with Indian nationalism.

*March 10th.*

There is a growing feeling of irritation here at the British Government's delay in announcing its proposal to carry on the Round Table Conference. I met Mrs. Naidu at lunch with the Schusters. She said, "What is needed is a spectacular announcement that a powerful English delegation is coming out at once. We are losing daily that momentum of goodwill which came with the Gandhi-Irwin agreement."

Undoubtedly there is, if the delay increases, a real danger of reaction.

I gather that efforts are being made to send out a delegation at once, but that the Cabinet is quite unable to make up its mind. The fact is that Benn is like Irwin in this, that he is not an initiator.

The moment Ramsay MacDonald retired, after the end of the Round Table Conference, from Indian affairs, the sag was felt immediately in Delhi. There is no directive force from Whitehall. It is tragic.

I am staying the next couple of days with the Schusters till I go down to Bombay on Friday. Lady S. should be on the Viceroy's Executive Council. She is infinitely abler than are ninety per cent. of the people I meet here—and, incidentally, extraordinarily charming too.

*March 11th.*

A new danger is threatened—this time from the North-West Frontier.

The Moslems, who overwhelmingly predominate up there, are inclined to think that with the Gandhi-Irwin agreement following on the Round Table proposals, the British Raj is coming to an end. There is a danger that, in consequence, both among the Moslems in the North-West Frontier province and the Afghans across the border, there may be a sudden call for a *jehad* (war against the infidel).

The position of the present king, Nadir Shah, is precarious, and it may well be that, in the interests of his throne, he would find himself unable to resist such a demand.

What adds to the danger is that the Afghan snows are now beginning to melt, and that this time of year is popular, in any event, with the tribesmen for making themselves obnoxious.

I went to a garden-party yesterday afternoon at the Assembly. Baker's (Sir Herbert Baker, the architect of the Secretariat) lovely forecourt was festooned with terrible paper chains. Over the table reserved for the Viceroy at the end there was a banner imprinted WELCOME in red and white. It all looked rather like Palace Yard decorated for a school-treat.

I met Sastri, Sapru's companion in all these negotiations. He is an inscrutable fellow, always rather melancholy and very reserved, but on the platform possessed of the flaming eloquence of John Bright. He too is depressed by the situation, and thinks that a golden opportunity is passing.

An interesting debate on the Army in the Assembly. The opposition are concentrating all their fire upon the Army estimates. Here they have a very legitimate grievance. Not merely does the Army absorb fifty per cent. of their revenue, but they are unable to challenge it. It is out of their control altogether. Imagine the situation in England if half the expenditure of the nation was in the sole control of an irresponsible executive.

There is not even a military member of the Viceroy's Executive Council to explain the Army estimates. The only military member is the Commander-in-Chief, and he is a member of the Council of State and, in any case, could not possibly be put in the position of having to defend the estimates in open debate.

All the same, he might well have been present in the Viceroy's box. The military caste have little idea of the volume of the opposition among the politicians against this enormous expenditure.

With no other aid but a military secretary, Schuster has to fight the battle of the defence forces. His position is made no more easy by the fact that the

members of the Assembly cannot back up their opposition in the division lobbies.

Probably for each item of expenditure there is absolute justification in the eyes of the experts. But imagine if the experts were the judges of our own military expenditure. We should never get any reduction at all. Nearly the whole world has reduced their expenditure on armaments. They have taken risks for peace. Why should not India do the same?

The dangers cannot be as great as they were. Before the war there was the Russian bogey. No general I have met seriously believes that the Russians are mobilising at Tashkent. . . .

. . . There is the second dinner-bell, and I am only half dressed.

My diary ends here, but I see from my cuttings that I had that afternoon another interesting talk with Mrs. Naidu.

She was in favour of a small plenipotentiary committee in London to thresh out the constitution at the next conference. "What we need," she said, "is a business committee of not more than a dozen Indian delegates. You cannot get a public meeting to make decisions." She was referring to the previous conference, where there had been some seventy-three delegates from India, many of whom contributed virtually nothing to the councils.

She then made what was the then startling suggestion that Gandhi should come to London as the sole representative of Congress. "It is the only way," she said, "to get to business. Imagine if, in the recent conversations at Viceroy's House, Gandhi had had a score of advisers and the Viceroy had had an equal number, all putting up suggestions and all getting in the way, no decisions would ever have been made at all. Let Gandhi represent us, and let there be two or three to represent the Moslem, and two more to represent the princes, and so on. I believe it would have an enormous effect on opinion in England. It would show that India, so far as it was reflected in Congress, could speak with one voice."

It seemed to me an admirable suggestion, and though it has been adopted by Congress, it has not been adopted by the other parties. I understand that we are to have an even more unwieldy body this time, consisting of over a hundred delegates.

At the time, Mrs. Naidu's suggestion had the support of the Government of India as well, and if only the Government had acted promptly, such a conference might have been summoned immediately and its deliberations might have been concluded before this one assembles.

Throughout this week, almost as fateful as the weeks that had preceded it, there was, both in Delhi and still more so in London, a complete lack of direction and driving force.

*March 11th.*

The Baldwin bombshell exploded in Delhi this morning. Baldwin has announced that the Conservative Party will not take part in the next Indian conference.[4]

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[4] It did not become known until the next day that the statement only meant that the Conservative Party was against a conference in India.

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No one is more astounded than the Viceroy. This is the second time that he has been let down by his great personal friend. The first was when, in agreement with Baldwin, he made his famous declaration on Dominion Status, by which Baldwin, under the pressure of his party, subsequently refused to stand. And now this.

The Viceroy jibbers with rage, as do all who have had anything to do with these recent negotiations.

The general feeling is that India has been let down by the Conservative Party.

Opinion has now swung in favour of London, and not Simla, as the venue for the next conference.

Mrs. Naidu tells me that Gandhi will definitely come to London. If that is true, then London is clearly the right place for the conference. English opinion is now obviously roused on the subject of India, and the final drafting of the constitution ought therefore to be in close contact with it.

I am inclined to think, too, that there will never be any communal settlement except out of India. It is too much like negotiating terms of peace on the actual battlefield. A casual bazaar riot might lead to blows in the conference chamber at Simla, but it cannot have much effect on St. James's Palace.

Wherever the conference is, Irwin must be on it. To blaspheme against him now has almost become the sin against the Holy Ghost. To the Indian Nationalists he represents the pledge that England will keep her word to stand by self-government.

But, then, if Irwin is on the conference, why not Simon? There will be trouble there. The Indians really dislike Simon.

His cold, clear brain leads him to despise their subtleties and equivocations. He tried to hide it, but the more uncomfortable Simon is, the more saponaceous he becomes. Am I plagiarising anyone when I describe him as "a melting iceberg?"

But I am surprised to hear the Europeans accuse him of lack of courtesy. They say that Simon never thanked for hospitality. Men like Hartshorn and Atlee were most punctilious in their letters of thanks to hosts and in their offers to entertain them on the Terrace when they visited England—but Simon never.

Wherever the conference is going to be held it must be held quickly. It is now being suggested that it should be postponed until the autumn. It would be a great mistake. All the enthusiasm now at burning heat would melt away and rival parties now in process of coming together would fly apart. Now is the time to call the conference—*now, now, now*.

An invaluable week has already gone by.

I leave for Bombay to-morrow morning. It is getting terribly hot.

CHAPTER XXIV

# THE TAJ BY MOONLIGHT

I snatched a day off from the tumults and turmoils of Indian politics and journeyed down to see the Taj Mahal at Agra, the glorious tomb that Shah Jehan built for his favourite wife, which ranks as one of the seven wonders of the world.

Everybody disputes as to the best time of day or night to see it. Some say that its fullest enchantments are only revealed to those who come to it in the mists of early morning; others insist that it is at its finest in the glare of the noon-day sun, and there is a further school of thought who hold that it is hardly worth visiting except at the time of a full moon.

I saw it at four o'clock in the morning by the soft light of a waning moon. What made it more wonderful was that I was absolutely alone with its beauties.

It happened like this.

I had intended to see it in company with the other tourists in the hotel at the more orthodox hour of midnight. But when I saw the whole giggling crowd of them getting into the hotel motor-cars and going off complete with cameras and horn-rimmed spectacles, just like myself, I conceived such a loathing for my fellow creatures that I went sadly off to bed.

It was a stifling night and I could not sleep. At half-past three I gave it up and humbly on foot I went off to look for the Taj. When I arrived, the gates to the garden, as I might have guessed, were bolted and barred. I pushed open the door, which was on a narrow chain, sufficiently far to catch a glimpse of the glories that lay beyond. I realised for the first time what it must be like to be shut out at the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

I banged and shouted like a man in torment.

At length a creature with a candle tottered down in a nightcap. I asked to be admitted; he refused: I implored, he was adamant; I produced a rupee, he hesitated; I produced two rupees, and I heard the key clicking into the lock.

The doors swung open and I was face to face with perhaps the most beautiful single building in the world.

Remember I was seeing it under the worst possible conditions. I was unwashed and cross and hot and heavy-eyed with lack of sleep. I was just in the appropriate mood to be angrily disappointed.

In a second I had forgotten everything in the mystery and the majesty of the building.

The dim light of the waning moon gave just the right emphasis to every aspect of its beauty—the splendour of the lines and contours, the long tapering minarets, the unearthly white of the marble, the ghostly foreground of dark cypresses, and the ethereal reflection of it all in the pools that lead up to it.

Alone in the moonlight it seemed to embody in itself everything in the world that was lovely and of good repute.

I have never before realised that sorrow could be expressed in stone.

The Taj Mahal seemed to reflect the tears and anguish of the man who built it in memory of the woman he loved, and was doomed only to see it in the distance from the fort across the river, a prisoner in his son's house.

Next day I explored his apartments in the fort, and there in the bricks are still the little mirrors which he had put up so that wherever he looked he could still catch a glimpse of his wondrous creation. After this I ought to have caught the next train in the morning back to Delhi with my impressions unblurred by further visits.

But I made the mistake of returning to the Taj after breakfast and being conducted round in the blazing heat by a professional guide. It was rather like seeing the back-cloth of a scene in a play from the stage instead of from the stalls.

In the hard sunlight, perhaps it was all just a little tawdry.

I had to listen to how much each portion of it had cost to build: I was made to touch the precious stones to satisfy myself that they were real; I was forced to descend into the bowels and see the actual tombs of Shah Jehan and his wife: I had to test the echo in the dome and solemnly time the full 15 seconds before the last reverberation of my guide's voice rumbled away.

At various points in our pilgrimage I was informed that the blessings of Allah would descend on my head if I added to the pile of rupees on the floor.

I modestly added one, and was told in pained tones "that the last sahib had put five." In comparison with my visit in the early morning it was a descent from Olympus.

But, happily, the memory of the Taj by the waning moon can never be blotted out. I can only describe it in lines written with far less justification of a palace in Old Delhi:

*If there be any paradise here upon earth,*
*It is this, it is this, it is this.*

CHAPTER XXV

# GOVERNMENT HOUSE

*March 12th.*

Off to Bombay to stay with the Sykes (Sir Frederick Sykes, Governor of Bombay). Travelling is really most extraordinarily comfortable in India. I have a carriage to myself which is twice the size of the first-class carriages in England and includes a lavatory complete with shower-bath.

The only discomfort is the absence of a corridor. For meals one has to get out of the carriage and walk along the platform to the dining-car and remain there until the train stops at a convenient station; perhaps more than two hours away. But that is infinitely more comfortable than in Australia where on most trains time is given for an uncomfortable meal at the station refreshment-room.

It is a dreary view from the windows. It is just mile after mile of scrub and sand. The only vegetation for miles is just myriads of weary-looking eucalyptus-trees.

*March 13th.*

I arrived in time for breakfast hot and tired and very shy, but fortunately their Excellencies breakfast in their own rooms, so all was well.

Government House is a delightful place—really a series of bungalows on a promontory overlooking the glorious bay. There is a central block where the Sykes have their private rooms, and another where the state-rooms are, a drawing-room and dining-room obviously constructed for entertaining on a great scale. Scattered round these are the guest-houses.

It is going to be great fun, for one can do exactly what one likes. Hospitality in India is like that. One just sees one's hosts as much or as little as they or you want. At breakfast one signs on or off for meals, and the rest of the day is at one's own disposal.

An A.D.C. took me to the Willingdon this afternoon. It was founded by Lord Willingdon as a club where European and Indian could meet over golf and tennis and bridge. The idea was to heal the resentments created by the refusal on the part of the big Bombay clubs to admit Indians.

It would not have happened if the French had conquered India; the conquered would very soon have conquered the conquerors. The two races would have been gradually absorbed and all would have been harmony.

Frenchmen and Indian would have mingled together happily as conscripts in the French army. There is no racial hatred in Algiers for instance. French and African gossip by the hour at the same table.

Perhaps that is the real tragedy of India. Was she conquered by the wrong nation?

*March 15th.*

It is Sunday, and instead of an afternoon siesta I am writing up my diary.

Bombay is very revealing of the effects of the Delhi pact. I have not been here for six weeks, in fact, since before Gandhi was let out of gaol. The change in the city is remarkable. At that time there was about its streets the horrible atmosphere of an English industrial city in the middle of the General Strike. We never knew what the next day might bring forth. Young men would excuse themselves from dinner-parties on the ground that they were being called out on special constabular duty the next morning. Everywhere there were over-turned trams and red cross lorries and violent arrests and all the other sinister accompaniments of what are mildly termed in legal text-books "civil disturbances."

They have all gone now. The streets are quiet, the *lathis* are in their racks, the women pickets, with their yellow saris, are no longer. The war is over.

Contrary to the *Daily Mail* the business community is delighted. I hear nothing but praise of Irwin. The general feeling among the business men is that the clouds have lifted.

It is not surprising. Bombay, in a sense, throughout has been defeatist. All that they have wanted is the necessary tranquillity in which to make money. The civil power, in fact, has not really received the support from them in some cases that it ought to have done.

In this Bombay is in striking contrast with Calcutta. There Winston would get a great reception, whereas in Bombay he would be hooted off the platform.

I must go and change for tennis with H.E. I am very frightened, and when I am that, there are no depths to which my tennis will not sink. And tennis in India is very difficult owing to the bright light which varies in every place. It is additionally unpleasant with glasses for the sweat pours down them like rain on window panes.

*March 17th.*

The chief trouble in Bombay seems to be the Congress workers now out of work. There are fifty thousand of them. Most of them are university students. They have never had a job in their lives and are entirely unfitted for one.

What a mess we have made of education in India!

India is an overwhelmingly agricultural country and we have turned out a nation of clerks.

We have taught them philosophy and history. Very right and proper. But what they really needed was botany and agriculture. It is a case of "this ought ye to have done and not left the other undone."

Thousands are being poured out every year from the universities and there are only four careers open to them, the law, teaching, clerkships, and professional agitation.

The educated unemployed are one of the most formidable obstacles to a permanent settlement in all India.

Gandhi has arrived in Bombay and had a stormy reception last night. It was chiefly, I think, from the Communists. In their own peculiar jargon, "he has betrayed the working-men." In consequence his platform was rushed. It is now given out that he is very tired and must have a complete rest.

I hope that he does not get many more of such meetings. Like the Labour Party at home, he is not used to hostility, and equally like them, he is weak in defence.

I have just bathed at Juhu. It is the beach of one's dreams—with an endless stretch of golden sands and a coconut grove coming down to the edge of it. Almost for the only bathe in my life I did not know when I had had enough of it.

There was a garden-party here yesterday to which half Bombay was invited. The other half had come a fortnight before. I saw the difficulties of Indian entertaining. There had, for instance, to be a special tent of refreshments labelled "for Brahmins."

One guest with an entertaining lack of humour came in a Gandhi cap. To wear the symbol of independence at the same time as accepting the hospitality of the Emperor's representative indicates an engaging desire to get the best of both worlds.

I came in the wrong clothes. With great effort of will-power, for the temperature was in the early nineties, I forced myself, on the advice of an A.D.C., into a wedding garment, only to find that everybody who was

nobody was comfortably in a lounge-suit—and full of confusion I crept back to my bedroom to change.

I must go and change. Dinner here is great fun—a band playing outside and the toast which never fails to thrill of "the King-Emperor."

I must leave India soon or I shall become an imperialist!

*March 18th.*

I am on my way in the train back to Delhi.

I have just had the queerest interview with Gandhi. As he was in Bombay I thought that it would be silly not to go and see him. I found him installed in a suburban villa in a road that was most appropriately called Laburnum. It had proved rather difficult to reach, for in telling my taxi-driver where to go I had put the accent in the word Laburnum on the second syllable instead of on the first and thereby rendered myself quite unintelligible. We had to enlist the aid of a passing European to help us out.

Eventually I arrived and presented my card. I was shown into a bare front room empty of any furniture. It was decorated with bedroom wall-paper. It was all rather like an election committee-room at home.

A few minutes later I was led down a passage into the presence. Gandhi was squatting in front of his spinning-wheel. We bowed and I opened with my favourite leading question which I am using indiscriminately with governors, newspaper editors, Congress leaders, and generals: "How do you think the situation is shaping?" The question has this advantage. It cannot be answered either by "yes" or "no." It is bound to lead to some kind of discussion. In that it is like the question I reserve at home for non-utterers at dances. "What have you been doing to-day?" I ask my partners, and in over ninety per cent. of the cases she mentions something that starts a conversation. The remaining ten per cent. say "nothing much" and I am floored.

But my question failed dismally to-day. For Gandhi made no answer at all. I thought that he had not heard it and repeated it in louder tones. Still no answer. Then a young under-secretary of some kind, much disturbed, interposed to tell me that the Mahatma was not speaking that day. He had only let me in "to have a peep at him."

Apparently I had blundered in on a day of silence. I gravely thanked the young man for the peep and asked to be excused from staying any longer as I was rather a busy man.

Outside I found a queue of earnest women. I suppose that they were going to have peeps too.

A day of silence in public! What a publicity stunt! Yet Gandhi may well be serenely unconscious that there is anything publicity-making in the procedure.

That is the kind of thing they do in India. The saintly Rabindrinath Tagore, for instance, has a public meditation from time to time. He has his chair brought out on to the verandah and in the sight of all men publicly meditates.

There is something of "the fakir of a type well known in the East" to quote Winston once again about Gandhi. I have seen them at Indian fairs quite naked sitting before a fire in a kind of hypnotic trance. The difference is that Gandhi is a fakir of genius.

But it will all take a lot of explaining when he comes to England.

Well, my journey to Bombay has taught me one thing. The Delhi pact has produced a real truce. Gandhi has falsified the prophets. He was supposed to be unable to control his followers. "Even if Gandhi called off the Civil Disobedience movement"—the wiseacres used to say—"he would only be partially obeyed. It has gone too far now." He has now shown in spite of everything that his writ runs from one end of Hindu political India to the other.

None but Gandhi could have got Congress to accept those terms which, after all, were humiliating in comparison with what they had expected to get. Gandhi handled right may yet be the biggest peace force in India.

But what are Benn and the Viceroy doing? Over a fortnight has gone past now and still no announcement of the next step.

One can almost see the first enthusiasms cooling down.

CHAPTER XXVI

# JOURNALISM DE LUXE

*Commander-in-Chief's House, March 18th.*

This is the India of one's dreams.

I began my day about seven o'clock this morning with a long ride into the country behind the C.-in-C.'s house. It is an endless stretch of sun-baked plain dotted with the ruins of the old Delhis.

This morning we rode out four or five miles into the open to see a ruined temple. It was in a glorious state of preservation. In England it would have been surrounded with charabanc parks. One would have entered it through a turnstile, and outside there would have been weighing-machines and picture post-card kiosks. Here we were alone with it in the morning sunlight. The wooden door was breaking down, the approach choked with brambles, and the whole saturated with the peculiar reek of the East. We finally found a decrepit creature who produced a key of the door and a herd of children to hold our horses. This is the way to sight-see. I feel now that I shall turn away from Notre-Dame if there is a charabanc outside it.

Back to breakfast in a temperature already in advance of the midday heat in a London August, a bath, an enormous breakfast, a round of interviews, attendance at the Assembly, the composition of my daily cable, a bathe in the Viceroy's swimming-pool—a sort of Roman affair with a blazing flower-garden behind the diving-board—ending up with a dinner-party and that thoughtful, stimulating conversation that one gets here with men who know their jobs and do them supremely well.

It is certainly journalism *de luxe*.

—— writes that, reading about "all these bombs and riots," she is worried for my safety. I replied to-day: "Don't worry about bombs and riots. I am far safer here than when driven by my father in his car at home."

The Princes are in session. They meet for one week a year in Delhi, and this is it.

I was first made aware that they were here by their amazing cars—with long, sweeping bodies, painted in every kind of ostentatious colour, and in some cases actually decked out with jewels. I now know how the purveyors of luxury motor-cars live. It is on the Indian Princes.

Their clothes are in keeping with their motor-cars—in exquisite colours and materials. They look as if they were at the Court of Haroun al Raschid.

I attended the Chamber of Princes this morning. It is in dark oak, an admirable setting for the resplendent dresses.

But its impressiveness ends with its appearance.

I thought the debates agonisingly dull. The whole atmosphere is so formal and sickly. Everybody congratulates everybody else. Their examples are all "inspiring," their motives "disinterested," their abilities "conspicuous," and their records "noble."

Oh, it was so wearisome.

Of course the only interesting subject is "Federation," and this is discussed only behind closed doors. I hear, by the way, that there is a movement away from it, particularly among the smaller Princes, who fear that in any scheme of Federation they will be absorbed in the larger States.

Federation is being supported or opposed largely according as each individual Prince thinks that it will or will not adversely affect his own autonomy.

The position of most of the Princes is ludicrously mediæval. They have greater powers than the feudal barons. They can confiscate the money of their enemies at will, and even execute them if they so desire.

I remember in the State of H.H. of —— seeing a gloomy, tumble-down fort in the desert. I was told, quite as an ordinary event, that inconvenient gentlemen were incarcerated there without any sort of trial, to remain until H. H. thought that they had ceased to be dangerous.

There is no rule of law in the sense that Dycey used it, and of course there are neither of its corollaries—an efficient police force and a judiciary freed from personal control.

In many States the finances are administered in a way so irresponsible as to be almost incredible if I had not seen it myself.

—— (a friend of mine now serving in an Indian State) told me that not infrequently when he came to pay the monthly salaries he found no money in the till at all. The Prince had just raided it as he would his own private banking account.

It is personal rule with a vengeance.

There are no Gandhi caps in the States of Princes. The wearer would not merely lose his cap, but his head with it.

—— told me that when he dined with H.H. of —— one night a servant upset some soup over him. H. H. dismissed him from the room, but with such a gesture of concentrated fury that —— said, "I should not be at all surprised if the wretched fellow was actually put to death."

That is the sort of thing that is going on behind the mud walls of a few of these remote capitals of the States, separated from civilisation by acres and acres of dreary sand. It is only on rare occasions that the voice of the oppressed reaches Imperial Delhi and the Government of India interferes.

It is a frightful system, and we are engaged in bolstering it up.

It is important that we should see that the end really is coming to it. There are Princes who welcome Federation as removing the last elements of control by the Viceroy—that is, the power, in a case of outrageous misuse of power, to interfere.

Congress are certainly determined to insist, with Federation, on the internal condition of the States being brought up to the level of the rest of British India.

It is amusing to see the jewelled cars standing for hours outside Gandhi's house.

They are making terms with their enemy quickly while he is in the way with them.

I wonder if London Society would be so keen to entertain —— when he comes to London if they knew what his reputation is here. There is no crime known to the readers of the English Sunday papers which he has not committed. Yet he is entertained from one end of the country to another. I seem to have got very angry about them in a letter which I give below.

"Karachi,
*March 23rd*.

"I have missed the mail and must send this by air. As I am at Karachi, it should come in record time.

"I have been seeing something of the Princes in Delhi.

"—— is the best of them and —— the worst. —— looks and talks like the best type of English landowner. He is intelligent and hospitable, and kindly and arrogant—all the qualities of the land-owning class, in fact.

"With varying proportions of vice and virtue the Princes range between these two extremes.

"People of England who accept their lavish hospitality ought to know more about them. —— gave a dinner in London that cost £1,500. It was paid for by the blood and tears of the peasants in his State. What a chance for 'Limehousing!' These Princes, with their jewelled cars and their viceregal shooting-parties and their magnificent entertaining in the

capitals of Europe, are being supported by the annas of men who cannot afford to give their families more than one meal a day.

"Some of them are just mediæval despots."

* * *

My diary ends here, but it would be a grossly unfair picture of the Princes if I ended here too. I was writing of a small minority.

The majority of the Princes are far different from these. Men like Bikanir, Bhopal, Dholpur, Kapurthala, Bairoda, Mysore, Hyderabad, and a dozen more are at least as good as English landlords. They are prudent in finance, have an excellent judiciary, and are in every way striving to lift up the standard of the peasant, which for the most part is pitiably low.

I am only publishing my remarks about the others because I think that it is well that the British public, in considering the safeguards, should bear in mind that it is not merely the constitutional rights of the Princes that must be safeguarded, but the rights of their subjects, who lack in some cases that most elementary of human rights: the right to live.

*March 20th.*

"SUDDEN INDIA CRISIS"
"THE SAFEGUARDS"
"GANDHI'S THREAT OF BREAK-AWAY"

I suppose those will be the headlines which will describe to-morrow morning in my paper the alarming situation that has suddenly arisen.

At the moment Gandhi is declining to attend the Round Table Conference. Everybody is having consultations and striking attitudes and issuing ultimatums all over the place. It is as if we were suddenly back in the Delhi negotiations again.

It is all over Sankey's speech in the House of Lords. Sankey has implied that safeguards are inviolable. Gandhi insists that in his talks with the Viceroy prior to the truce safeguards were always regarded at least as a question open to debate. He is now asking what is the use of his going to London if the most vital questions are irrevocably settled.

The secretariat, on the whole, secretly back him up. They think that he has got a definite grievance.

It is strange to find out here the Government of India again and again more Liberal than the Labour Government at home.

I suppose it is that there is no question time out here and no Churchills to badger the Executive Council even if there were.

But the position of these safeguards is very difficult. For if the British Government say that they are open to debate, the Conservatives at home won't play, and if they are declared closed, Congress won't play—both results about equally disastrous to peace.

However, the question has been brought to a head by a letter written by Gandhi, on behalf of the Congress committee, asking definitely if the safeguards are, in fact, still open to discussion and amendment at the next conference. So a definite answer will have to be given in the course of the next twenty-four hours.

* * *

There is no further entry in my diary for that day, so I must explain a further important element of discord in the situation.

By an extraordinary stroke of ill-luck at this critical moment, the Government announced that it had refused to grant a reprieve to Bhagat Singh. In this it was entirely right. Bhagat Singh, amongst other offences, had thrown a bomb in the Assembly at Delhi, and had murdered Mr. Saunders, a young assistant superintendent of police at Lahore. If ever capital punishment was justified, it was in this case.

But, for India, Bhagat Singh had a wide sentimental appeal. He was only twenty-one years of age, supremely able, and very courageous. It was represented that his crimes had only followed from an excess of patriotic zeal. Even a sensible woman like Mrs. Naidu was caught up in this slushy sentimentalism.

I remember her saying to me, "I admit that he ought to be punished for his crimes, but not by death. After all, he was only a rebel. You admire rebels in your own history, why cannot you admire them in ours?"

But however specious the arguments in his defence, the fact remained that Bhagat Singh was a national hero. He was the idol of the young revolutionaries who were already in revolt against the truce and were eating their hearts out in unwilling idleness. His whole case had an irresistible appeal to the sentimentalism inherent in Gandhi. He knew that in logic there were no grounds for a reprieve, but with him the heart almost invariably rules the head, and to his letter to the Viceroy about the safeguards he tacked on a fervent appeal for the rescue of the young man from the gallows.

It was an extraordinarily difficult situation for the Viceroy. The mention of Bhagat Singh might well drive India back into disorder. The

consequences of that at this moment were incalculable, for it was the eve of the fateful Karachi Congress. Yet how could he let him off? He might well have been faced with the resignation of every head of the police force of the Punjab if he had.

So at one stroke the Viceroy had to solve a problem of the heart and a problem of the head. One false step, and he would see his whole labours smashed to pieces before his eyes. How longingly he must have thought of April 17th, less than a month ahead now, the day when the *Viceroy of India* would speed him away from it all.

I will leave my diary to tell how the corner was rounded.

* * *

*March 21st.*

I have only just realised the full seriousness of the situation.

G. broke away altogether yesterday.

He had what he called "a soul movement."

He awoke in the morning to discover that his conscience would not allow him to carry on any further with the Peace policy. It seemed as if the whole work was undone.

But once more the extraordinary power and perseverance of the Viceroy have triumphed, and Gandhi is again in a more reasonable frame of mind.

Sympathy and frankness have won. On the constitutional question the Viceroy admitted that there was some point in G.'s complaint, and, in communication with Benn, is trying to get the whole matter cleared up.

On the subject of the murderer Bhagat Singh he is adamant. He will not give way. B. S. must hang.

I admire Irwin's courage. There is a belief at home that he is a weak man. In his handling of the constitutional situation he can be represented as such on occasion, but on the maintenance of law and order he has never wavered. Yet the temptation to yield on this occasion must be considerable. Not that B. S. is an attractive figure. The murder of Saunders was an atrocious affair. He was shot in the dusk as he was getting on to his motor-bicycle outside a police station. He had only been out from England a year. A pretence is put up that B. S. is innocent. His own personal petition to the Viceroy contains no denial of guilt. It is merely a request that, instead of being hanged as a murderer, he should be shot as "the leader of the revolutionary army."

Irwin's firmness seems likely to win through. Gandhi is sensible enough to know that he has a weak case and, to do him justice, he does genuinely loathe, from his soul, the crime of murder.

I think that he will accept the situation. But it is still critical. Gandhi is delaying his departure here another day for further conversation with the Viceroy.

* * *

I dined last night with a group of police chiefs. We all got extraordinarily heated over Dyer's action at Amritsar. I alone stood up for the Government that broke him. Their point is that his dismissal weakened our authority. That may be so, but it would have been weakened still more if he had remained. It was an impossible case for the British Government to stand upon. I have seen the Jullianwallah Bagh where it happened. Dyer had his machine-guns at the entrance. He was firing on a crowd that could not get away. Then his own evidence was so disastrous. His admission that he only stopped firing because he had no more ammunition left was damning.

They brought up the question of rape. One white woman had been raped. Would not I see red if it was my own sister?

Rape is very terrible, of course, but I cannot see that it justifies the massacre of some three hundred defenceless creatures, none of whom, probably, took part in it.

This rape complex is very serious in India. It is a branch of the Mutiny complex I have mentioned elsewhere. Men and women, particularly in the military cantonments, betray in conversation continuously what a part the fear of assault plays in their opinions. Yet throughout the whole Civil Disobedience movement there has not been a single case.

But heaven help India if it was not so. A couple of rapes, and there would follow twenty years of resolute government from Whitehall that would make Balfour's régime in Ireland a picnic in comparison. For the English are a queer people. They are pacifists only up to a point. That point is reached when crimes of violence are committed against their women. Then they rise in all their might, and it is woe unto those by whom the offence comes.

I suppose that the plea of "women in peril" has produced more bloodshed among civilised men than any other single war-cry.

Was it not, in our own time, the thought of "the girls in the gold-reef city" that sent "twenty thousand horse and foot to Table Bay"? In the same

way the picture of the women in dusty cantonments and sun-baked forts, all in peril, might easily bring the whole Territorial Army to Ballard's Pier.

*March 23rd.*

In a letter written on this day I said:

> "The Viceroy dined here last night. If he founded a new party I should certainly join it. But though he is re-entering English politics, I don't think that he will do more than be the elder statesman. He is one of these exasperating people who really do debate whether it is a greater honour to be the Prime Minister of England or master of their local fox-hounds. He is to be master of the Bramham next year, and he is as delighted as if he had never been Viceroy of India."

My diary contains the following entry:

The Viceroy dined here last night informally. It really was informal. I arrived in the drawing-room in "tails" to find everyone else in dinner-coats, and had to race up to change again. As I tied a black tie, I could see the Viceregal car entering the drive, and only arrived back as the Viceroy was climbing the stairs, thus narrowly escaping the awful crime of coming in after him. I should think that Irwin must be the only Viceroy of India who really does dislike pomp. There will be a change when the Willingdons arrive.

It is symptomatic that nobody asks what Lord Willingdon will do. Conversation centres on the changes that Lady Willingdon will make. It is feared that she may order a complete re-decoration of Viceroy's House in mauve—her favourite colour.

We played charades last night. I had protested all day that I could not and would not act, but within five minutes after the men had joined the ladies I was presiding as secretary to a matrimonial agency, with the Vicereine as one of my clients.

I abominate charades as a rule, but these were directed with such extraordinary efficiency by Penelope that I enjoyed them for the only time in my life.

The way from Viceroy's House to the C.-in-C.'s was lined with police and there was a cordon round the house all the time that he was there.

* * *

They are expecting trouble all over India the day that Bhagat Singh is hanged. The date is being kept secret. All European women have been warned to keep within the European quarter for the next ten days. Expeditions are being postponed, and there is a general atmosphere of restraint and anxiety. It must get very wearing after a time, and I can well understand how everybody wants to get out of India.

Mrs. Naidu asked Penelope and myself to come and sing "Lead, kindly Light" one night at Gandhi's prayer-meeting. But the threatened disturbances have knocked it all on the head.

* * *

The invitation shows the remarkable friendliness that existed between the Congress leaders and the other side. I could not have believed if I had not seen it that war could have been waged with such an extraordinary absence of personal bitterness. I received nothing but kindness from the Congress leaders wherever I met them.

Extract from letter dated March 23rd:

"Commander-in-Chief's House,
"New Delhi.

"My dear Frank.—In spite of your anti-militarism and anti-G.C.-dom. you would like the C.-in-C. tremendously. Happily for the peace of the country, he is a devoted admirer of Irwin, and is really doing rather a great job in Indianising the Army.

"The Army really is the greatest Nationalist grievance of all. Fifty per cent. of the revenue goes on it, and there are vastly more English troops out here than there were before the Mutiny. The Indian pays more than one hundred per cent. more for it than he did in 1914. The Air Force, who it was hoped would reduce our defence forces to a few frontier squadrons, have merely added to the general cost without displacing a single infantry regiment. But I am becoming tedious, and, in any case, this is hardly the notepaper to write all this on.

"I envy you your frost and snow. The temperature is beginning to soar to flaming heights. As I write, I feel nasty messy trickles running down my face. I do look so disgusting when hot.

"Irwin dined here last night—so simple and charming. All my latent hero-worship goes out to him. But the trouble is that he won't play up to it. He is going into retirement, at any rate for some months, after he returns."

*March 23rd (continued).*

The crisis is over. The soul-storm has passed and Gandhi is now back where he was before.

This morning, Gandhi relapsed into his weekly silence, which he will not break until he starts for Karachi this evening. We all breathe again. It is rather like the passing of the crisis of an illness when the patient, after delirium, sinks at last exhausted into a deep sleep.

It is going to be a bit awkward if Mr. G. gets one of these "soul-movements" in St. James's Palace.

All interest has now shifted to Karachi, where the Congress opens on Friday. An attempt is being made, I see, to dramatise the meeting into a struggle by Gandhi for the soul of the Congress Party. I do not think myself that Gandhi will have to do much fighting. Congress is even more of a one-man show than the Labour Government at home.

There is no rival to Gandhi. The nearest to it is Jawaralal Nehru, young, handsome, eloquent, brimming over with a bitter enthusiasm to turn out the British, bag and baggage, but endowed with a social outlook as well as political ambitions, which is more than can be said for most of them. He would be a powerful rallying-point for the irreconcilables. He alone could seriously challenge Gandhi at Karachi.

Will he do it? My own impression is that he realises that his time is not yet. He will just confine his opposition to the closed doors of the working committee's deliberations.

Much more will depend on the reactions to the Bhagat Singh execution which, I hear, is fixed for to-morrow. The police are expecting an outbreak of disorder all over the country. But there is one thing I have learnt from a brief study of contemporary Indian history, that when riots are expected they never happen.

*March 24th.*

Bhagat Singh was executed last night. There were immediate repercussions in the Assembly.

The Nationalist Party walked dramatically out of the Legislative Assembly as a protest.

It is amusing to see the slavish way in which Indians imitate Western democratic institutions, even to the handling of scenes. It was all very like the silly gestures of defiance that the Labour Party used to make in the House of Commons in their salad days as an Opposition.

The Nationalists are the party of the Hindus, and sit on the extreme left of the chamber. It was interesting to see that the Moslem Party sat tight and repudiated the whole demonstration. There is no sympathy among them for Bhagat Singh, a Hindu. They point out, too, that whereas he was executed nearly two years after his crime, the Moslem who tried unsuccessfully to assassinate Captain Barnes, a magistrate in the North-West Frontier province, was executed within a few hours. I believe he committed the crime in the morning and was executed in the afternoon.

I was much impressed by the reluctance of the Government to press home the tactical advantage presented to them by the secession of the chief Opposition. Important budget resolutions were tabled for discussion and it would have been perfectly within the right of the Government to rush them through in an attenuated House. This they refused to do, and actually arranged with the seceding Opposition to postpone them that day, and to take them instead, at an hour and on a date when the Opposition would have returned from their sulks.

One of the Government members to whom I expressed surprise at this startling altruism said in reply, "Well, we have got to make the constitution work, and if we took all the presents the Opposition wantonly give us we should break the Parliamentary system."

Gandhi's position at Karachi is undoubtedly more difficult as a result of the execution than it was before. It is the first time since he came out of prison that he has really failed with the Viceroy. It had come to be thought in Congress circles that he had only to ask to receive. It was a legend that had little basis in fact, for he had failed after all to get what Congress most wanted—a police enquiry.

His failure now to get a reprieve for B. S. is the first shock to his prestige, and it will not help him at Karachi.

CHAPTER XXVII

# GANDHI WINS THROUGH

The meeting of Congress at Karachi was the most fateful in its history.

It had to ratify the Delhi pact. That in itself involved the question of peace or war, and the consequent triumph or extinction of probably the most formidable man that Asia has thrown up since Mohammed.

At the same time there was another less spectacular but no less important issue to be decided. Would the resolutions of Congress reflect the constructive outlook necessary for the success of self-government?

Congress was in the position of the Labour Party at their 1920 conference. Its history had indeed been very much the same. It had begun in the eighties as a collection of amiable visionaries, anxious to work for a larger share in the government of their country. At first it was little more than a useful channel for bringing isolated grievances of the governed to the notice of the governors. It gave the British Government no more concern than would a Home Rule movement for Scotland to the Government at home.

Then gradually its resolutions became more and more advanced. Just as in the Labour Party the way to high office once tended to lie through extremism so it was in Congress. At one time it was thought very daring to talk about even local self-government, then the fashionable cry became responsible government; then every ambitious young man salted his perorations with the magic word "dominion status." Finally the competition reached its inevitable conclusion in a demand for full independence at the Lahore Congress in 1929.

Obviously the days of this irresponsible propaganda were over. Like the Labour Party in the early twenties of this century they were now within sight of office and power. They had been agitators and they were now called upon to be statesmen. Would they respond?

I will leave my diary to tell the story as it unfolded itself to me in the sand and sunshine of Karachi in the closing days of March.

* * *

*March 25th.*

I am writing this over breakfast at Lahore—a very different Lahore from the Lahore I visited in late January. Then there were roaring fires in the bedrooms. Now the temperature is in the late nineties. I am sitting in shorts and an open-necked shirt, and the fan is whirring above my head. The expected flare-up over Bhagat Singh's execution has not happened. All is quiet. His execution should be a big blow to the terrorist movement. It has no great hold on the country. There is too much of the Chicago gangster atmosphere about it. Its members may be aflame with selfless political enthusiasms, but their supplies come from nothing more than vulgar "hold ups."

I begin my journey across the blazing Sind desert in a few minutes. Twenty-five hours of it. It is 750 miles away. It will be hell.

* * *

*March 26th.*

Hot and tired and hungry I arrived early this morning at Karachi station. I chartered a cab and had all my mountainous luggage piled into it, and was then solemnly driven twenty yards to the hotel. Nobody had thought it worth telling me that the hotel for which I had ordered a carriage was just across the road. I would not have minded if they had all thought it was funny. But it was just stupidity.

I am getting to understand the rasping note that creeps into many Anglo-Indians when talking to their servants. They understand the meaning neither of initiative nor of efficiency, and it can get very exasperating in a mounting temperature.

I spent the morning at the Congress camp. It is four miles away on the edge of the desert. In appearance it is a ramshackle Wembley in the sand. There are the usual triumphal arches of lath and plaster that lead nowhere. They are painted in a bilious yellow. One is labelled Martyrs' Gate, another I saw was dedicated to the late Pandit Motilal Nehru. There is a vast amphitheatre like the Stadium where Congress will meet in full session. There are dismal exhibitions of nothing in particular all around and dreary stretches of sand labelled "Car Park."

I behaved very badly. I had been travelling all night and was in no mood to suffer fools gladly. I was stopped at the gates by a young man dressed in a uniform that was a cross between a boy scout and an officer in the British army. He told me that I must take off my hat. It was a day of universal mourning for Bhagat Singh. I pointed out firmly:

1. That I was not in the habit of taking off my hat to murderers alive or dead;

2. But if I did, I should almost certainly get sunstroke.

He said that he was sorry but those were his orders. He was terribly polite about it. I was not, and in the middle of his explanations I walked rudely past him. No one seemed to mind.

Next I was refused a Press pass on the ground that I had no written authority from my editor to show that I was what I said I was. I expostulated. I was incredulous, indignant, and ironical all in turns. It made no difference. It only created a crowd, for all the other Indian clerks in the tent left their work to come and join in the discussion. I was to write to my editor in London and then when I got the answer they would give me a pass. I pointed out that by that time there would be no need for a pass as the Congress would be over. They agreed that perhaps it might. Finally, I thought of my Press pass authorising me to send cables without prepayment. When each of them had read it three times over, including footnotes, it was decided that I was not bogus and I received a card.

But I felt as if I had already done a day's work.

I then set off to look for Mrs. Naidu. I felt that I should explode altogether if I did not soon find somebody with a sense of humour.

It was a weary search. A meeting of Congress is at once a political demonstration and a holiday camp. The delegates live on the premises. Side by side with the *pandals* or meeting tents are row upon row of canvas huts, of the kind constructed for an Indian religious fair. Thus when Congress meets it brings with it a whole new town. There are some thirty thousand delegates, and with their friends and relatives the whole Congress population cannot be far short of a hundred thousand.

Congress is really democratic. The leaders do actually live with the rank and file. At party conferences in England the leaders, if they stay the night at all at a party conference, live remote and invisible in either the most expensive hotel or in the country house of a local supporter. In India they definitely live amongst the people, sharing their discomforts. It is true that there is a president's camp railed off from the rest, where Gandhi and his entourage are staying, but it is just as much a camp as the rest.

At last I found Mrs. Naidu, and over a hospitable soda-water I felt distinctly better.

The sole topic of conversation is the attack on Gandhi at the railway station yesterday. An Indian boy, carrying a black flag, rushed at him and

struck at his head with a flag-pole. Physically he was unhurt and psychologically it has helped him enormously.

There seems no doubt that the Delhi pact will be ratified. The main body of Congress is clearly in a mood to do anything that Gandhi asks.

The only danger is from the extremists—the Red Shirts and the Hindu Mahasahba, and a group of disgruntled volunteers from Bombay.

The Red Shirts are from the frontier. They are Mohammedans and are under the leadership of a man of enormous stature and patriarchal appearance, called Abdul Guffar Khan, who is known as the Frontier Gandhi. On the wild North-West Frontier non-violence is a difficult creed to stomach and they are expected to give some trouble.

The Hindu Mahasahba is a revolutionary youth movement from Madras.

The volunteers from Bombay are merely out-of-work professional agitators. They are chiefly interested in their arrears of pay.

It is impossible to believe that this heterogeneous group of malcontents will overthrow the mighty Gandhi. They have about as much chance as Maxton's group has of bringing down MacDonald at the next conference.

The only chance of any fun at all is from Jawaralal Nehru. He addresses the young men to-night.

*March 27th.*

Jawaralal is not coming out into the open against Gandhi. That is definite. He admits that he does not like the truce but adds, "I am a disciplined soldier and must therefore remain loyal to our leader Gandhi."

This means that G. is bound to win. The only interest is to see if anyone will have the courage to stand out against him. He would be bound to be beaten, but it might be in such a way as to indicate that in the end he would win.

The issue will be decided to-morrow. The procedure of debate is reminiscent of a party convention at a presidential election in America.

The main battle is not at the full Conference but at the meeting of a large inner committee. This is called the Subjects Committee. It consists of 350 delegates chosen by the country as a whole—one for every 50,000 Congress supporters.

Nominally, they have the power only to select the resolutions to be laid before the full Congress, but in actual fact they propose and dispose at the same time, for the Congress is little more than an enormous machine to ratify the committee's conclusions.

All day long the Working Committee of fifteen have been in session drafting the official resolutions to be submitted to this all-important Subjects Committee.

There are just two resolutions of vital importance. The first concerns the Delhi pact. The second has relation to the execution of Bhagat Singh. The wording is very ticklish. For it has to express vehement condemnation of his crime at the same time as passionate resentment against the punishment. All day the committee have been drafting and re-drafting it.

What a pity it is that Gandhi mixes himself up with such sordid chicanery. He is not sincere in the vehemence of his condemnation of the Government on this question, and yet he has not the sense or the courage to stand up against his followers. It is a thousand pities, for his position amongst them is unassailable at the moment, and though he might temporarily weaken Congress solidarity he would enormously add to his stature in the eyes of the world.

Once again the saint is seemingly lost in the subtle politician.

The position with regard to the safeguards has been cleared up. Irwin, on the authority of Benn, has given assurances that the safeguards are open to discussion. Gandhi admits the necessity of safeguards and, in return, has been informed that the actual method of their operation can be debated at the London conference. So Gandhi is happy and the truce is safe.

I have just heard that Pandit Jawaralal Nehru is suffering from throat trouble, which will make it difficult if not impossible for him to address the Congress. That is singularly opportune. It reminds me of Balfour's influenza attacks which always used to come, by a happy coincidence, at the most awkward moments of the Tariff controversy.

There will clearly be no light relief in this show. A portentous seriousness broods over it all. Imagine if the English Trades Union Congress met in Karachi! There would be exhibitions to inspect the docks, journeys out to the landing ground of the air-mail, pilgrimages to see the vast desolate hangar that was built to house R 101, pleasure trips across the harbour, perhaps even a voyage of exploration into the desert. Here there is nothing. The delegates just chatter and argue from morn till midnight. Their only diversion is to line up round the president's tent to watch Gandhi setting out for a walk.

There are many women delegates here, and the Congress leaders are very proud of their presence. They are always telling me what a revolution Congress activities have produced in the life of the Indian women. Certainly they have been in the forefront of the battle in any street riot. They could learn nothing from the militant suffragettes in organised violence.

But they have not yet learnt to understand and enjoy the social relationships of the West. I never meet in this camp young men and girls together in jolly companionship as in England.

It is a camp without laughter and without love-making. To me the atmosphere is wholly alien—almost uncanny.

The only fun is provided by an American journalist. He has come dressed for the part, complete with *dhoty* and Gandhi cap.

Here is another estimate I seem to have given of Mr. Gandhi in a letter written to my mother from Karachi on this day.

> "After contemplating the Princes it is a relief to turn again to Gandhi. For all the dirtiness of his appearance he is on the whole a pretty clean politician. He speaks the truth, and that is a tremendous thing in India. If he gets a square deal, he will always give one back. He is genuinely trying to carry out this Delhi agreement. The trouble is that he is so credulous. When someone tells him that they cannot pay their land revenue he genuinely believes it. He makes no enquiries. It is enough for him that the statement has been made. He cannot believe that his fellow Indians have not got the same standards as himself.
>
> "That will be the difficulty in England. G. will have so often to rely on his experts. For instance, he knows nothing about finance. On that question he will have to rely on his Bombay mill-owning friends. They have a very unsavoury reputation, yet on vital questions like the stabilisation of the rupee he will have to rely on their advice—which, in the nature of things, will be far from being disinterested.
>
> "It is a great pity that G. is so ill-read. Beyond a few second-hand text-books he reads nothing. He is contemptuous of books.
>
> "I go and see my 'girl' friend, Mrs. Naidu, daily. We drink sweet lemonade on the verandah. The other day she was late and said that she had been delayed by Gandhi. 'I told him,' she said, 'that I was keeping you waiting, and he said, "That boy Bernays is becoming a pet of yours." ' 'What had you to say, Mrs. Naidu?' I asked. 'What if he is,'

she said, ‘that is what I told the little man—what if he is.’ She is great fun—the one flash of humour among all those solemn gentlemen.

“The solemnity of the proceedings is awful. There is no light relief of any kind in Congress in session.”

CHAPTER XXVIII

# CAWNPORE AND AFTER

*March 28th.*

The opponents of Gandhi appear to have found a leader. He is Subhas Chandra Bose, the Mayor of Calcutta, who has been in deadly rivalry with Sen Gupta for the leadership of Nationalist opinion in Bengal. I wedged myself into a sweltering tent this morning to hear him address the Extremists. It was all very like a Communist meeting in England—the same tight-lipped young men making bitter speeches, the same references to the bourgeoisie greeted with laughter, self-consciously hollow, the same preaching of the brotherhood of man in the language of Armageddon, and the same complete divorce from any sort of reality.

Over the platform was a banner inscribed "Down with Gandhi, the ally of the British exploiters in India." It would have done Winston's heart good to see it.

After the meeting I am less inclined than ever to regard Communism as a rival to Nationalism for the soul of India. In the first place India is far too soaked in religious faiths and superstitions ever to cleave in large numbers to a creed that begins with the denial of the Deity.

I came out as Mrs. Naidu's car was bumping along the sand and together we went and explored a Swadeshi exhibition, which roughly means an exhibition of home-grown goods.

The most gruesome exhibit was a series of scenes in Gandhi's life, in wax. We saw him spinning and setting out to break the salt laws and then, to my horror, undergoing an operation. There he was on the operating table with his chest bared for the knife, and close by a doctor with the implements of his profession and an English nurse coming in at the door with a bowl of water and towels.

It was quite nauseating but obviously from the almost sadistic glee with which it was shown to me it is the most popular show of the exhibition.

The proceedings of the Conference opened this afternoon and already I am tired of them. At other conferences one can walk out when they are dull,

chat with one's friends, even get some light refreshments. In the whole camp I do not know even of a chair where I can sit down. Moreover, Indian food is so wholly unpalatable in its sweetness and its greasiness that it is necessary to drive back the ten miles to and from the hotel to get so much as a cup of tea and a bun.

The conditions of work are frightful. The Subjects Committee sits in a vast marquee packed so close with squatting, sweating humanity that it would require a shoe-horn to get in any more. I would like to see the faces of London journalists when they were shown the conditions under which they were expected to report.

Feeling very much like a stray sheep in a market I was herded into a wire pen. Into it had scrambled about twenty times as many journalists as there are papers in India. Any delegate who had come without a ticket had called himself a journalist and had been admitted into the pen. The result was that there was not a square inch of ground unoccupied by squatting Indians. It was impossible to stand and equally impossible to sit on the ground. Finally I lowered myself onto the human mass who found the process so uncomfortable that they made way sufficiently for me to get to the ground. I could then move one hand fairly freely but as it was the left one, it was not much use for reporting purposes.

I then discovered that the situation was worse than I had realised. For the pen was not even in front of the platform. It was directly to the side of it. It was thus like trying to give an intelligent criticism of a play, squatting twenty yards away in the wings.

However it did not much matter for most of the speeches were in a foreign language and those that were not were totally inaudible.

Most of the speeches are in Hindi and all one catches in the jabber is occasional words like "safeguards," "British Government," "Round Table Conference" to which one clings as to a floating spar in mid-ocean. Occasionally a neighbouring Indian journalist thinks it worth interrupting the flow of one's thoughts with the translation of a sentence here and there, usually only when something particularly offensive is being said about the British connection.

It is agonisingly dull. One's face is in a constant stream of sweat and one's mind becomes dead to everything except a longing to get out. It began this afternoon at 2 p.m. and I had to sit in that sweltering tent until half-past six. In the Black Hole of Calcutta one was at least among white people!

When friends at home envy my trip here I must try and recall some of the horror of the Congress tent.

But if only I had been less uncomfortable the proceedings would have been really rather funny.

They began with a sort of two minutes' silence in memory of Bhagat Singh. The delegates rose to their feet and I hoped for a cheap martyrdom for not doing so. But unfortunately we were so tightly packed that no one took any notice.

Bhagat Singh's father, by the way, has appeared on the scene and is the lion of the Assembly.

We then embarked on a long wrangle on the almost inevitable motion which begins by trumpeting the praises of B. S. and ends by expressing the strongest disapproval of his crime.

Here was the first chance of the out and out revolutionaries to show their strength. They did it by a series of amendments calculated to strengthen the language of the resolution. In a word they wished to leave in all the praise of B. S. and cut out all the condemnation of his crime. They were certainly logical.

As one of them said of the official resolution: "We approve the criminal and we condemn the crime. I do not understand." I sympathised with him.

As usual there was a middle party that wanted to reconcile the two views in some attractive formula which would mean nothing. His proposal was that the Executive should take back the resolution and produce another. This seemed to produce general agreement, as something always does that settles nothing.

However, the Executive would have none of it. The President rang his bell and stopped the proceedings. He said that Congress must accept the resolution without any change or alternatively reject it altogether. No one thought it worth while asking on what this strange ruling was based, and why, if there could be no amendments, we had been debating them for the last two hours.

The resolution was put to the vote and the malcontents numbered about a fifth of the audience. That, I should think, would be about the proportion by which the Delhi pact resolution will be eventually carried.

Almost as weary and as worthless were the debates on the Congress report. Very foolishly the author had put into it references to the cowardice of the Indian newspaper editors and the faintheartedness of Southern India in the recent campaign.

Probably both charges were true. The Congress Press on the whole had kept peace with the Government. If it issued gagging ordinances they obeyed them or if they did not they only went to prison once, and when they

came out did not risk going in again. It was very understandable. It is hard enough to run a newspaper at all in India where the number of people who can read is severely limited, without having to pop in and out of gaol all the time.

The Madras Presidency could not boast anything like the riots of its neighbours in Bombay. Why should it? Madras has already got by being quiet, thanks largely to Willingdon, what the rest of India has not got by being violent. There has been for several years Cabinet government in Madras, and something very like dominion status.

However both the Press and Madras were very angry over these slighting references to their zeal in the cause and in the end the pundits on the platform agreed to have them cut out. The President said that the Report had been hastily drafted, and everybody seemed satisfied.

Then we started off on a long technical discussion about the violent political prisoners who did not come under the terms of the agreement, but who ought forthwith to be released. A formidable list of rebels and murderers had been tabled, and I thought that every murderer and thug in the country must be included in the resolution. But apparently it was not so. For delegates kept on jumping up and saying, "What about the Sholapur martial law prisoners," or "What about the Meerut conspiracy prisoners." The answer invariably was that they would be put on the list too. Finally there were so many good and deserving murderers that had been left out that the President agreed that the resolution should be taken back and re-shaped to include them all.

So it went on all through that scorching afternoon. I had no watch, and gazed longingly at the sun through the flaps of the tent, for I knew that when it started to disappear, Gandhi would too or he would miss his evening meal. My release would come. At last the sun went down, and the resolution on the Delhi pact was promptly postponed until the following day.

My diary ends here, but I must record something that happened before the subjects committee adjourned that evening. I heard, for the first time, at Karachi perhaps, the most sinister name in modern Indian history. Gandhi squatting in front in the centre of the platform was saying something in Hindi, the only word of which I could distinguish was Cawnpore.

The news of the second Cawnpore massacre had come through to Karachi. The full horror of that communal riot, probably the worst in Indian

history, was not yet known, but enough news had filtered through to tell us that a terrible disaster had taken place.

It was a stunning blow to the Congress leaders. What was the use of their proclaiming the demand of a united India for full self-government at Karachi when, fifteen hundred miles away, the two great communities of India, Hindu and Moslem, were turning the word community into a mockery. The story reads like a chapter in the Book of Judges. It was not merely the loss of life that was so frightful. That can never be computed for scores of bodies were just thrown down the city drains and never recovered. It was the character of the massacre—whole families murdered in the houses in which they had taken shelter, women bludgeoned to death and children ripped up like yards of calico.

The reason of it all seems to have been the execution of Bhagat Singh. The Hindus proclaimed a *hartal* (day of mourning) and called upon the Moslems to close their shops. They refused, and hell was let loose. But the causes go much deeper than that.

It is difficult to interpret to the Englishman the ferocity of the hatred of Hindus and Moslems. The Catholic and the Protestant in Ireland form no parallel. For on the whole Ireland is divided on a religious basis. In India there is no Moslem Ulster. In the Punjab and in Bengal, they live in almost equal proportions side by side. In round numbers they number 25 million out of 47 million in Bengal and 11 million out of 30 million in the Punjab. There are the two races face to face, unable to get out of one another's way in the great rabbit warrens of the Indian cities.

On one side are the Moslems, believing in one God, hating and despising the idols and temples of the Hindus, intensely proud of their own splendid Moghul monuments, representatives of a race that once conquered half India, rejoicing in the conviction now that though they could only put into the field 70 millions to the 220 millions of the Hindus, they could drive them headlong in front of them.

On the other side are the Hindus, obsessed with the fact that they are in a majority, and as, a majority, ought to rule—superior in education and in culture, the class that provides the lawyer and the money-lender, possessed of wealth far in excess of their neighbours, yet with it all cursed with a sense of inferiority that makes their struggle for freedom all the more ruthless and intense.

The Hindus feel that they are now on the threshold of supremacy. The Moslems agree, and fear of the consequence is driving them desperate. They believe that once there is a Hindu Raj, they will be shut out of every office,

driven from every position of privilege and finally reduced to be hewers of wood and drawers of water to a race of which they once were the insolent conquerors.

So it is that with the approach of self-government the relations between the communities become more and more inflamed. It is pointed out again and again that Cawnpore is no new thing. That is tragically true, as the communal riots in Calcutta and Bombay in recent years attest. But it is a new thing in the sense that, broadly speaking, it did not happen before the War.

The British Raj in its might brought peace; in its decline it has brought a sword. That issue, unpleasant though it is, has got to be faced. The communal question is the over-riding question in Indian politics to-day.

I have introduced this rather lengthy explanation, for in my view Cawnpore was second only to the Delhi pact in importance in the momentous events of this year.

It was the shadow over Congress though the rank and file did not yet realise to the full how grim and chill it was.

But Gandhi did. Astute tactician that he is, he had realised from the start of the Civil Disobedience movement that his greatest danger was the threat of communal strife. He had impregnated all his immediate supporters with a sense of the vital necessity for preserving peace. Wherever there seemed a danger of an outbreak members of his working committee rushed to the spot. I had myself seen in the Benares riots a few weeks before members of Congress wearing their Gandhi caps giving every assistance to the police in the preservation of order.

Now when the Civil Disobedience movement was over and Gandhi was on the threshold of triumph there came this outrage which he had striven to avoid all through the struggle to imperil at the eleventh hour the fruits of his struggles.

Manfully he tried to retrieve the situation. He spoke in most moving terms of the disaster at this meeting of the Subjects Committee, he secured the appointment of a committee to investigate the situation for the Congress, he set on foot immediate preparations to safeguard against a fresh outbreak in other cities.

But it was too late. The Moslems were aflame with indignation from one end of India to another. They were thirsting for revenge. They have not yet had it, but it will be a long time before they forgo the desire for it.

The stock-in-trade of Gandhi's opponents at Karachi was that he had betrayed the cause of independence at Delhi. Its greatest set-back came not

from those conversations in the Viceroy's study but from the hot, roaring streets of Cawnpore.

But what an ironical situation it was! Here in Karachi Congress had spent a happy afternoon passing resolution after resolution in one form or another condoning murder and excusing rapine, and before the day was out they were face to face with the situation that their thoughts and actions had created. Seldom in the world does punishment follow with such swift and smashing force.

CHAPTER XXIX

# GANDHI AT THE MICROPHONE

I must return to Gandhi's struggles at Karachi. My diary tells the story fairly fully.

*March 29th.*

I appear to have fluttered the dovecotes in Whitehall with my cable about the safeguards. Benn has issued a statement that he did not send a telegram as I suggested to Gandhi saying that the safeguards were entirely open to discussion. Questions have been put down in the House of Commons about it and the India Office, to judge from telegrams from the Paper, is on its hind legs.

I have investigated the situation again and found the position to be this. G. complained to the Viceroy about Sankey's speech on the inviolability of the safeguards in the new constitution (see previous entry), and the Viceroy communicated with Benn on the subject. Benn answered through the Viceroy that of course the methods by which the safeguards should operate were open to discussion. ——, when telling me about it, originally said, "Gandhi has heard from Benn. All is well about the safeguards."

I see now that my telegram suggests that Benn sent a telegram personally to Gandhi, which of course would be highly improper, as the Secretary of State must always act through the Viceroy.

But the denial seems to go much too far. I wonder what G. will have to say now to the specific denial that the safeguards are entirely open to discussion.

It is vital that the matter should be cleared up. For it is infinitely better that Gandhi should not come to London at all than that he should come under false pretences.

Well, Gandhi has triumphed in the Subjects Committee. I had invested the scene in imagination with all the atmosphere of first-class political drama. I had imagined that he would come forth and passionately defend his settlement with the Viceroy, hitting out with a straight left at the young revolutionaries who were in his path. I had thought that he would dramatise the situation as a struggle between himself and the party of catastrophe for the soul of the Congress Party.

I completely misjudged him. He did nothing of the kind. It was a most uninteresting business.

The great moment at last arrived when he was to champion his daring stroke of statesmanship in the Viceroy's study. Imagine how the scene would have worked out in England in a comparable situation. As the time grew near for the great man to stand up in his own defence there would be an atmosphere of noisy impatience, back-bench speakers would have been shouted down and there would have been cries of "We want Erasmus." At last the great man ostentatiously squaring his shoulders would have come to the table. The cheers would crash out and last for several minutes mingled with a few isolated boos in the gallery and then the whole audience would stumble to their feet and busy reporters would record that "the Right Honourable gentleman had been received with musical honours."

But in India they manage these things differently. Gandhi was called upon and there was the sort of feeble hand-clapping that greets the appearance at a party meeting in England of one whom the chairman, having forgotten his name, describes as "a speaker from London." He did not even rise to speak. He just squatted in front of the microphone as if it were his spinning wheel. It was not even a speech that he delivered. It was just a rather mournful chat. Without the microphone he could not have been heard beyond the first three rows.

There were no tricks of oratory, no appeals to emotion, no dramatic gestures. At first he did not even address himself to the point at issue. He began with a long-winded homily on the need of everybody learning Hindi.

After a quarter of an hour of it the audience was frankly bored. It was very hot and they started calling for water from the water-carriers who were scattered about the audience like programme sellers in a theatre. Some chattered to their neighbours; others just sat and stared. All seemed unutterably bored.

On went Gandhi quite unconcernedly. In calm, level, conversational tones he explained to them his own view of the Delhi pact. They could take it or leave it. He begged them to have no thought for him but just to do what they believed to be right. The whole speech was just a measured expression of the common-sense point of view. It was ponderous, it was indistinct, it was long-winded, it was frequently irrelevant, but it was the most effective speech I have ever heard.

It just silenced opposition. Its supreme merit was that it robbed his enemies of a platform. It destroyed the background of his opponents.

Passionate speeches on one side create passionate speeches on the other. There is some merit to be gained from attacking a fighter. It used to be said that to cross swords with Gladstone was a career. To fight with Gandhi would be like trying to have a bout with Gilbert Murray.

He just will not fight. If you do not agree with him that is your concern. After all you may be right. You cannot rouse an opposition against a man like that.

Gandhi, indeed, may have invented a new technique of political warfare. He is showing that the best way to win a battle is to refuse to fight. It is the gospel of non-violence carried from the street to the party platform.

But whatever the psychological reason, Gandhi, after he had completed an hour and a quarter of the dullest speech to which I have ever listened, had completely routed all his enemies.

Even Subhas Bose, who had come prepared to arouse an opposition against him, put his notes in his pocket and said that, though he opposed the Delhi pact, he would not divide the committee against it.

A few wild men from Bombay followed, but to all intents and purposes the united front of Congress has been triumphantly maintained.

G. began the Congress faced with a real threat to his personal position and after his first speech there is less opposition to him than there is to the Committee of the Trades Union Congress from the Communists at home.

To-night the issue was taken to the verdict of the whole Congress in solemn session.

The working conditions are infinitely more comfortable there than in the committee tent. Congress meets in the open air in the comparative cool of the evening.

But there is still no accommodation for the weaker brethren who prefer sitting on a chair to squatting on their haunches. The Press enclosure is an amusing sight. It is filled with scores and scores of little desks a few inches from the ground. In front of these squat the journalists looking in the distance like frogs crouching before a succession of toadstools.

Punctuality is not an Indian virtue and the pandits were forty-five minutes late in arrival. The proceedings opened with some kind of singing by Congress choirs, but Indian music is unfortunately quite meaningless to me.

I amused myself with my fellow Indian journalists. They meant to be very friendly. But they would begin by abusing the British Raj and all that

appertained to it, and end by begging me to try and get them a job in Fleet Street.

Congress in session is a sight I shall not easily forget. A vast open amphitheatre as big as Wembley Stadium had been constructed. Every available inch of space was occupied. There must have been fifty thousand people there. They were all wearing their white Gandhi caps and, from the height on which I was sitting, it looked as if thousands of large snowflakes had fallen on the dark bare earth.

In the centre was a structure like a watch-tower which, fitted elaborately with microphones, was obviously the rostrum up which the speakers would mount to address the vast audience. It must be quite twenty feet high.

At last the Congress committee arrive headed by Vallabhai Patel, the President, with Gandhi looking more mournful and shrunken than ever pattering behind.

They take their seats in the centre on a throne covered with a canopy of the sort one sees in all the old Indian palaces, from which the Moghul Emperors used to dispense justice. In the middle of the throne sits Gandhi talking to none, for his day of silence began at four-thirty this afternoon.

The event of the evening was the speech of Vallabhai Patel. He it was who nearly wrecked the Delhi settlement at the eleventh hour.

To-night he is more uncompromising than ever. The most significant passage in his speech was where he said:

"Under the constitution clause of the settlement it is open for us to ask for complete control over our defence forces, foreign affairs, finance, fiscal policy, and the like."

Well, is it, or is it not? Some definite statement must be made one way or the other—or disaster will attend G.'s visit to London. If only there was some directive force from Whitehall! Benn seems to have no mind on the matter. If he has any colours he has nailed them to a wet blanket.

I hear to-day that Gandhi has been refused leave to visit the frontier. Mrs. Naidu denies this and says that Gandhi is not going because he does not think it necessary.

Whatever the reason, it is wholly satisfactory that he is not going. Following on Cawnpore, for Gandhi to go wantonly into Moslem territory would put a match to the powder magazine.

It is clear from the reports that are coming through from Cawnpore that the Moslems regard Congress as purely a Hindu organisation, and they

regarded the Congress orders about a *hartal* for Bhagat Singh as Congress dictation.

Apart from the Red Shirts I see very few Moslems here. There is Dr. Ansari, of course. But on the whole Congress Moslems are as rare as working-men at a Conservative conference and the few that do exist are most of them, also like Conservative working-men at the party conference, just a little bogus.

*March 31st.*

Gandhi has taken his last fence. At half-past ten this evening by an overwhelming majority the All India Congress in full session gave its approval to the Irwin-Gandhi agreement.

This time Gandhi spoke last and so gave his opponents full opportunity to have their fling. They took their opportunity, and all through the stifling evening they have been mounting the rostrum to denounce the agreement.

Some of it was pretty effective stuff. But for some obscure reason most of them could only speak English. Congress, for an Indian audience, became surprisingly animated and with the intolerance of a majority shouted "speak Hindi." It was distinctly disconcerting for a young man who began his speech:

"The Delhi agreement has riveted the yoke of the English Raj more strongly than ever upon our backs"—to be greeted with the mocking cry —"Don't speak in English."

One man could not get through his speech at all, and the President had to make a personal appeal for the freedom of speech.

The most courageous speech came from Jamnadas Mehta, a Bombay politician. He has had the courage to stand up against Gandhi and the almost hypnotic power that he wields.

He said: "Gandhi has such a powerful hold on us that in his presence all thought is benumbed, all judgment paralysed, and the courage of conviction is regarded with the greatest disapproval. I consider this an unhealthy sign of the public life of our country. Instead of proving our fitness for freedom it tends to prove the contrary."

When G. made his final speech he appeared to think it unnecessary even to reply to his opponents. It was more a philosophic discourse than the speech of a party leader. I was struck again by his extraordinary fluency whether in Hindi or in English. He had not a note and he never stumbled for a word.

But it was a very feeble exhibition of oratory, and again the audience, his own hero-worshippers almost to a man, began to trickle out. Soon the trickle became a stream and before he had finished they were pouring out of the amphitheatre as if the show was already over.

I waited for the trumpet notes of the peroration. By then he had switched into English and I thought that at least the opportunity of space in the Press of the world would tempt him to a purple patch. Not a bit of it. He ended with the lame promise that whatever he might do or fail to do in London, "he would not bring back a worse bondage than they already had."

Without a trace of excitement the momentous vote on the Delhi pact was taken. Only a few scattered hands in the whole rapidly emptying amphitheatre were raised in dissent, so few in fact that nobody appeared to think it worth while to have them counted.

I suppose it was a dramatic moment—this setting of the seal of Congress approval upon the Delhi conversations, but it could hardly have had a more unemotional setting.

Well, what are the assets and liabilities?

The truce has been signed by the only really popular political organisation in India. Gandhi has received his marching orders to proceed to London in their name. The war is over. It is now full steam ahead to peace.

Those are tremendous achievements.

At the same time I am not very happy about the position.

Patel has indicated bluntly that he does not accept the safeguards and G. more indirectly has done the same. Every Congress leader with whom I have discussed the situation appears to contemplate as a result of the new constitution a connection with the Empire only in name.

No British Government could accept such a situation and the Congress leaders ought to be told so quite definitely.

To do them justice they welcome plain speaking. Mrs. Naidu said to me this morning:

"There must be no 'lollipop' atmosphere in our next conference as there was at the last. There must be no smoothing over difficulties with pious words."

Then there is the communal question quite unsettled—made more insoluble than ever by the Cawnpore riots. For the first time I have realised the naked truth of the assertion that Congress is a Hindu organisation. I have not heard the voice of India but only that of Hindu political India.

There are the seventy million Moslems outside. They were sullen and suspicious before. The events of Cawnpore have produced something akin to terror. Something has got to be done to reassure them or the settlement will be doomed before it is ratified.

There is no ending to this Indian situation. You round one corner only to find another just as precipitous in front.

Still the Civil Disobedience movement is called off. That is one triumph. Now for the working out of the communal problem. It is good news that Gandhi is proceeding almost immediately to Delhi to meet the Moslems. I don't think that he understands the seriousness of the communal problem, but it is something that he means to tackle it.

P.S. I have just had a note from Mrs. Naidu fixing an appointment with Gandhi at 6 a.m. to-morrow. Heavens, what an hour! But it will give me an opportunity of reviewing with him the whole results of Congress.

CHAPTER XXX

# A GHOSTLY INTERVIEW

*April 1st.*

My interview with Gandhi was rather ghostly. It was still dark when my bearer woke me. It seemed at first as if I should not find any means of transport across the five miles to the Congress camp. But at last I found a creature sleeping under his *tonga*. A horse was saddled and we went like the wind.

(I might add here that horse-traffic in India is very different from the stumbling, decrepit creatures that still, in a few English towns, shamble in front of an aged growler. There are few macadamised roads, and the *tonga* horse treats the ordinary dusty track as if it were "a ride" through a forest, going at it at full gallop. In fact, a *tonga* drive has all the excitement and thrill of a chariot race. In Delhi I once persuaded two kindred spirits to hire *tongas* to race against mine. We had a glorious chariot race down Queen Victoria Road.)

The Congress *nagar* in the half-light looked like the tents of a sleeping army in the Bible. When I arrived at Gandhi's tent door the simile seemed even more appropriate. There was a sentry in the Congress uniform outside, and Miss Slade flitting mysteriously in and out through the tent flaps.

Will they not say that Gandhi, with all his saintliness, gets a kick out of being waited upon by a white woman? Certainly it has an effect on his supporters. All their lives they have suffered insults fancied or real from the hated English caste, and here is an English girl, an admiral's daughter, who humbles herself in the dust, is content to do the most menial duties if only she can be near and serve their Holy Man. They would not have the ordinary human passions if they did not enjoy it.

But Gandhi does not enjoy it, for he has not the ordinary human passions. He has so resolutely thrust down the sexual urge that I believe that it just does not exist for him at all.

Mrs. Naidu told me the other day that Gandhi came round to see her once, wanting a long conversation. She said, "But I am just about to have a bath." Gandhi said quite naturally, "Well, I will come and talk to you while you have it." According to Mrs. Naidu, he was genuinely surprised when she suggested that perhaps the conversation had better be postponed until after the bath. I felt an irresistible desire to send, in the manner of

messengers in the Old Testament, "greetings to my Lord the King." In that atmosphere a visiting-card seemed rather like plus fours in a mediæval Court. However, I sent one in. A chair was brought for me and I was bidden to wait.

As I watched the strange scene I wondered how Gandhi and his entourage will appear in the raw light of an autumnal morning in the East End of London. What, for instance, will Londoners think of Miss Slade?

Here she is taken for granted. She is Gandhi's *ayah*, his nurse. She is with him at all times, attending to his lightest want, waiting on him night as well as day, worshipping him. I am told that she actually shampoos his legs every night.

That will shock public opinion at home. But on the background of the East it is not shocking at all. After all, there was a woman in the Bible who wiped Christ's feet with her hair. Nobody thinks that shocking. Yet that is the same kind of consuming devotion that Miss Slade feels for Gandhi.

But will they understand it in England? The English don't easily take to this kind of viewpoint. For a Christian country, they are strangely intolerant of saints. To them they are either mad or bad.

Eventually I saw Gandhi. This is how I describe him in one of my letters home.

"Karachi,
"*March 31st.*

"I rose in inky darkness at 5.45 in order to go and see Gandhi again. We had a ghostly talk in a tent—his hideous face casting weird shadows. I felt as if I had gone to consult the witch at Endor. We had roaring fun together. I can't help liking the old boy. He is as artful as a cartload of monkeys, as our nurses used to say."

I return to my diary.

He was squatting on his bed with his papers around him. Obviously he works like any Western politician. Secretaries mark up for him what he ought to read in the newspapers, and give him only the letters that intimately concern him.

He was looking very tired. He told me that he had had, for him, a very good night. I asked him how long he had slept. It was from half-past one to

half-past four—and that was a good night. But the strange thing is that it is not insomnia that he suffers from, but just overwork. He feels that he cannot sleep longer than that, for he cannot spare the time.

It is quite extraordinary how these great men can do without sleep. I remember Asquith telling me as an undergraduate how that, when he combined the Bar and politics, his working day consisted of: work at the courts from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., attendance at the House from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m., often a reception afterwards, and then, whatever the hour he returned home, two hours reading before he went to bed.

How do they do it!

G. and I immediately plunged into the subject of the safeguards. He is as mystified as I am about the wording of Benn's denial of my statement that they are open to discussion. He said:

"The Secretary of State is saying one thing and the Viceroy another. Before I came here I had assurances from the Viceroy that the safeguards were entirely open to discussion. Now it is being denied from the India Office. I do not understand the position. I shall have to seek fresh assurances from the Viceroy at once.

"For the question is vital. The British Government at any conference must be open, not merely to discussion on these questions, but to conviction. We must be allowed to state our case before Great Britain and the world. Otherwise it would be impossible for me to attend. Indeed the whole negotiations would be off. If these safeguards are not open, then it is a definite breach of the agreement. Look at Clause 2 of the Delhi pact. Read your own Prime Minister's speech on the subject."

I tried to pin him down on the question of the precise nature of the safeguards he contemplated.

"Would you admit that the army," I asked, "should be a reserved subject?"

"I must be in a position to insist upon complete control by India of the Army. The Commander-in-Chief must obey the Civil Power. Mere Indianisation of the Army does not give us what we want. We must have supreme control over it. We have to rid ourselves of this terrible feeling of helplessness which afflicts India. We must control our finance too. Of course, we shall make mistakes, so do your own Chancellors of the Exchequer. When you have a Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, you Liberals are always saying he is making a mess of things—aren't you? Without financial control there can be no responsible government."

I interrupted to ask him what safeguard he did contemplate, which would be acceptable to him. This was how he replied:

"I will give you one instance. We may still require, for some years, the help of British officers to train our Army, and even for a time a few British privates. I would be prepared to guarantee their salaries. That would be reasonable. There might be other questions involved in finance that would have to be treated in the same way. But, for instance, we would never agree to this maintenance of the rupee at one shilling and sixpence until the reserve bank is established. Why, Sir George Schuster says it may take years to establish. No, we can only accept safeguards that are demonstrably in the interests of India."

(I made it a rule never to argue with Gandhi. I was there merely as a reporter. I therefore did not suggest that if he thought that safeguards meant merely the guarantee of a few salaries he would be disappointed.)

I reminded him instead of a statement that he had made to me at Allahabad that communal riots were fomented by the British. Was that true of Cawnpore?

"Well, I do not know enough about it yet, but I can say this that we are already getting evidence that there have been secret agents at work fomenting trouble."

Gandhi does not lie. I do not suppose that he has ever consciously told a lie since he became a Mahatma. But he far too readily believes that his agents speak the truth.

His engaging vanity appeared when I asked him what he thought of this year's Congress. His face beamed with delight. "It is shaping extremely well. I invited opposition. I expected it. I wanted it. Yet those who dislike the Delhi truce did not even carry their opposition to a division."

Gandhi is such a charming man to talk to that I find it very difficult to tear myself away from him. He has a real genius for personal contacts, which will stand him in good stead in England. I cannot imagine anyone disliking him personally who has ever met him.

He is such a kindly little man. Before taking my departure, I ventured on one more question. Are you hopeful that the communal question will be settled?

"Well, I am going to make a tremendous effort. That is my first task after I leave here."

Miss Slade then appeared, and I had to go. But not before I had seen that our conversation had been diligently taken down by a secretary in a corner.

Wise in his generation, Gandhi has a record made of all he says nowadays. Saints nowadays have to know something of shorthand.

I rattled home in my *tonga* to eat an enormous breakfast. It seemed strange, after a morning with an embodied Old Testament, to come back to bacon and eggs.

*April 2nd.*

Congress is breaking up. Back to the four corners of the sub-continent the delegates are pouring. Struggling processions of men and women with little bundles are proceeding to the stations and the steamships.

For the first time I have had leisure to notice what an unsuitable background Karachi is for the meeting of the Prophet and his followers. For Karachi is a new city. It is, in fact, curiously like one of those cities of the Middle West, which look as though they had been put up last week. Gandhi and Gopher Prairie do not go together particularly well.

In the last twenty-four hours of the Congress the delegates have been allowed a kind of field-day. The domination of the working committee has been withdrawn and they have been allowed to gambol at will across the agenda paper.

The result has been the creation by resolution of an extreme Socialist state, under the title of "A Declaration of Rights." The main clause of it is that none should receive in State service from the Viceroy downwards more than 500 rupees a month (in English money rather less than £500 a year).

Jawaralal Nehru, the theoretic Socialist, is delighted, but the attitude of most of the Congress Committee is—"of course it is all nonsense, but boys will be boys."

As a matter of fact salaries are far too high in the India Civil Service for Indians. They are based on what is considered adequate for Englishmen living under totally different conditions and expecting very rightly a substantial compensation for living overseas. Of course, the Indian gets less than the Englishman, but the difference is not commensurate with the difference in their relative expenses and sacrifices. The trouble is, too, that since the European salaries are guaranteed by statute at their present figure, none dare reduce the salaries of the Indians which, in the present desperate condition of the State finances, are quite ridiculously high.

The resolution was the spectacular reflection of the reaction against this state of affairs. Other resolutions followed, and it all became very reminiscent of the closing stages of a party conference at home. I develop this impression in the following letter I wrote to Frank Milton:

"Congress is curiously like the National Liberal Federation—same old men of 97 who have not missed a meeting for 92 years. Sir Charles Hobhouse disguised as Vallabhai Patel vaguely and vainly ringing his bell when some delegate exceeds his five minutes, the same ferocious debates on exchanging the word 'that' for 'which' in line 7, and the tranquil passing of earth-quaking resolutions without a murmur, and the same general atmosphere of babble and braggadocio. Above all, there is the same limitless capacity for enduring boredom. Gandhi is an execrable speaker, and in whatever language he speaks only a portion of his audience can hear him at any one time—yet they sit there passive and resigned hour after hour. No wonder they have endured Lord Mestons for 150 years. I must work."

Gandhi, however, reasserted his domination in the selection of his committee. In proposing the list of names he said that he took entire responsibility. If some names appeared to be omitted, he had omitted them deliberately. There was the aggressive Mr. Subhas Bose. Why was not he on the committee? Was it because he had dared even to criticise if only in a whisper the Holy Man?

Gandhi disarmed criticism by saying that he knew that Mr. Bose would co-operate with him whether he was in the team or not.

Similarly he faced up to the grievance that there was no representative of Southern India on the committee.

"He had some of his best friends in South India. He knew he could safely leave them out of the list, because his abundant love told him that he could rely on their help."

He gets away with it every time. The resolution was carried without even having to be seconded. *L'etat c'est moi.*

So ends the Karachi Congress. Up to a few weeks before its opening it had been thought that it would not take place at all. The leaders were in gaol, the rank and file to the number of sixty thousand were there too. Indeed, was it practicable to hold it at all? Congress had been proscribed as an illegal organisation. One of the reasons for deciding to hold it in the open air was in order to minimise the risks of a stampede if the police raided it.

Now it has met with the eyes of the world upon it, its leader not merely out of gaol but an honoured guest at Viceroy's House, its programme, only a few months ago regarded as the rant of irresponsible revolutionaries, now more than half accepted.

Only the sinister glare from the bazaar at Cawnpore has been here to cast weird and disturbing shadows over the exultant scene.

My diary stops here, but perhaps the following letters written on the day before are worth quotation.

"Just back from seeing Gandhi. I can't help liking the old boy. The world has moved so far from the days of the Jubilees that it is difficult really to regard him just as a disloyal *bunya* (a member of the shop-keeping caste). How strange it must be for your generation to have known two worlds. Curzon and Irwin—only a generation separates them and yet it is centuries in point of atmosphere. Gandhi is getting very tiresome now and I see rocks ahead, especially if Winston gets control of the Conservative Party, as seems likely.

"It has been a gruelling week. Daily I have wedged myself into the heaving mass of smelting humanity in the Congress tents. The heat and stench have been awful. I have taken to lavender water and bath salts.

"It looks as if I shall have to go back to flaming Delhi as soon as this is over. Benn and the Viceroy seem to be at loggerheads and Gandhi says one thing about the safeguards and the India Office deny it. Benn seems to be dreadfully silly—weak when he ought to be strong and strong when he ought to be weak, and he is never either for any length of time. Poor Viceroy, he will be thankful to get out of it.

"I dread the journey back across the Sind desert. At one time the temperature rose to 104. For hundreds and hundreds of miles it is just scrub and sand—extraordinarily weary for the eyes. The sand gets in everywhere. If one shuts the window one is bathed in perspiration, and if one opens it one is suffocated with sand. My books are running out, and in any case it needs a masterpiece to absorb one under such conditions.

"But I am glad for my own understanding of India that I am experiencing something of what the hot weather is like. I am getting more sympathetic with the hard, irascible Indian mentality. The incompetence of the Indian gets very exasperating when the temperature is in the hundreds. These English people do sacrifice a great deal. They work terribly hard under gruelling conditions and they sacrifice their children and their homes to this bewildering sad country. It must be pretty sickening to see it sliding away from them. I cannot understand why they go on recruiting for the I.C.S.—still 50 per cent. Englishmen. What *can* the future be?"

Here is another extract from a letter to Frank Milton.

"Your letters are such a joy to me. They bring back the smack of the wet London pavements, the amiable chatter of the N.L.C. at lunch time and memories of those *droschke* week-ends that we have spent together in various corners of Europe. And here I swear and sweat in dusty cantonments, among exasperating babu politicians, in peril of every disease in the directory of tropical medicine.

"The Karachi Conference is over and though it has acclaimed the truce peace seems farther off than ever. For wild and whirling words have been uttered here which have no doubt sent Churchill jibbering on every platform in the country.

"All is confusion. Of course the fact is that Benn is one of the difficulties. . . . He is swept by every wind of doctrine. The poor bewildered Irwin is never certain that 'what Benn says to-day is what Benn will say to-morrow.' "

To Mr. Stuart Hodgson I wrote at the same time as follows:

"How I have hated this Karachi Congress. You and Cummings (assistant editor of the *News-Chronicle*) would have smiled to see me wedged hour after hour in the broiling sun into a sweltering mass of Asiatic humanity. I sighed for the comforts even of Slater's and the *N.-C.* Canteen seemed like a Buckingham Palace drawing-room in comparison.

"The Indian seems all right in a *N.-C.* leader, but in a temperature of 100 he is a chattering, greasy, exasperating creature—alternately grovelling and grotesquely arrogant. But I suppose that he is only what we have made him.

"To-night I made the terrible journey back across the blazing Sind desert. If I shut the carriage window I am drowned in sweat and if I open it I am suffocated in sand. There are some disadvantages in being your special correspondent in India.

"You all seem very optimistic about the future in London. But the peace envisaged by Gandhi in my view is outside the bounds of possibility. Did you see that Garvin described me as 'an ardent pro-Gandhist.' I jibbered with rage.

"At the moment I am rather disgruntled and depressed. Cheer me up with some descriptions of the Liberal Parliamentary Party meetings. . . . I could collect a better Government anywhere than the present Labour

Government. You all shout how marvellously they have done in India, but that was exclusively Irwin and Sapru. All Benn did was to send contradictory telegrams and generally get in the way like a clown in a circus.

"As for the poor Libs., their plight seems pitiable. I would say with the Zulu chief—'If we go forward we die, if we go backward we die; let us go forward and die.' "

CHAPTER XXXI

# GANDHI MEETS HIS MATCH

I had hoped to get a respite from politics with a few days' holiday on the Frontier. I wired to my paper, putting to them the two alternatives, Delhi or the Frontier. The answer came back, "Better return Delhi." So I set off to report the All India Moslem Conference. The Hindus had stated their case at Karachi. Now I was to hear the Moslem counterblast at Delhi.

*April 3rd.*

A terrible journey back across the Sind desert. In the hottest part of it the engine broke down and the driver had to walk miles and miles along the line in search of another. From 1 o'clock to 4 o'clock we sat and frizzled in that awful desert. We arrived at Lahore 4½ hours late to find that every berth on the Frontier Mail to Delhi was taken. The first-class carriages at night only hold two passengers, so it is necessary to book one's ticket several days ahead.

What made it more crowded yesterday was that it was a leave-train. The mail-boat leaves Bombay on Saturday at one o'clock in the afternoon, and all trains connecting with it from every port of India are always crowded so far as the first-class carriages are concerned. Particularly is this true in April, when all who can get home leave are hurrying back to be in time for the English spring and to escape the Indian hot weather.

At any rate neither bribes nor curses could get me accommodation, and we crawled in at 12.30 this afternoon on an exasperatingly slow train.

All is very black. —— (a fellow journalist) has just told me that the C.I.D. (Criminal Investigation Department) have been put on to my tracks owing to my cable about Benn's assurance to Gandhi on the subject of the safeguards.

I am infuriated.

1. That I should be made a subject of interest to the C.I.D.

2. That the fact that I am should be common property.

I suppose that it is Benn's doing. He seems to think that he is Secretary of State in a Phillips Oppenheim novel. He has already burnt his fingers over the Lobby correspondent of the *Chronicle* last year. If this is followed up I shall wire to L. G. to get questions asked in the House.

Delhi is dull and empty. It is Good Friday and everybody is away for the Easter week-end.

I tried to cheer myself up at a movie to-night. It is extraordinary how even in a thriving city like Delhi one realises how tremendously India is behind the times. The cinema is still called "the Bioscope," as it was in the early days of King Edward, and the seats are hard, wooden benches.

But the Indians love it. They crowd into the cinemas, presumably in the joy of discovering in the flickering inanities of New York night-life, as seen by Hollywood, exactly how the sahib and the memsahib comport themselves in the white porticoed bungalows of New Delhi. They neither smile nor applaud. They just sit with stolid, staring eyes. They are not even openly contemptuous.

But for all that, if we lose the Indian Empire, the fault will lie neither in New Delhi nor in Whitehall, but in Los Angeles. The white man's superiority myth disappeared for ever in the studios of Metro-Goldwyn.

I have heard to-day the news that Gandhi will definitely be the sole Congress delegate at the autumn Conference in London.

*April 4th.*

The heat is something that I have never experienced before. It hits one in great waves, and it is as dry and as fierce as if it came out of an oven. The paper curls up as I write.

I have had to have my bed moved from the hotel sitting-room into the bedroom, to be under the fan. Last night I was woken up three times by the heat and had to go and cool myself on the balcony outside. I now realise why the floor of every Indian hotel is ringed with an open balcony, like Dickensian inns in England.

I pity from my soul the poor seven per cent. who are doomed by their jobs to remain here instead of making the trek to Simla. It must be awful to see the temperature mounting higher and higher and know that there is no release until July—and that all their friends have deserted them.

I tongaed up to the Delhi Ridge to-night and was able to get the atmosphere of the hot stifling night, when the news came through on the wonderful electric telegraph that the mutiny had broken out at Meerut.

*April 5th. Easter Day.*

The All India Moslem Conference opened to-day and the wretched and interminable communal question has now taken the centre of the stage.

The whole subject hinges on the question of separate or joint electorates. I have been trying to get to grips with the problem. At present the Moslems vote in separate electorates. It is as if all the Jews in Whitechapel were grouped together and returned a Jewish member to the House of Commons. That is what happens in Indian towns. The Moslems vote not as citizens of India but as followers of the Prophet. This system was guaranteed to them under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919.

The Hindus stand for joint electorates. They claim that for the Moslems to vote separately is to perpetuate the disastrous communal divisions.

The Moslems reply that joint electorates may be all very well in theory but they would inevitably mean that they themselves would be totally swallowed up in a Hindu Raj. They would have no voice in the councils of the nation, and shut out of any control by their votes they would have to champion their position by physical force.

To this the Hindus reply that, in any case, joint electorates have not prevented communal riots, and Moslems can quite safely trust the Hindus to give them a square deal.

So the interminable wrangle goes on. One thing is certain, from what I saw of to-day's debate at the Moslem All India Conference, which is being held in the shadow of the glorious Jumna Musjid mosque, the Moslems will not give way.

Cawnpore has undoubtedly hardened their attitude.

Shaukat Ali said this morning in his presidential address:

"It is absolutely impossible to make any big section of Moslems agree to unconditional joint electorates."

Before they could consent to give way "they had to wait for a change in the Hindu mentality which would react favourably on the Moslems."

There lies the crux of the whole situation.

Almost for the first time in history there has been some communal disorder in the villages. Delhi itself is regarded as a danger-point.

The best news is that Irwin himself is taking a part in the negotiations.

The criticism is made that the Delhi pact ignored the Moslems. It had nothing to do with them. It was a negotiation involving the calling-off of the Civil Disobedience movement and nothing more.

All the same, it is a wise move on Irwin's part to see the Moslem leaders.

All sections are wishing that he could be induced to stay out a few months longer and become the mediator in the communal disputes. His

personal prestige is such that it alone might produce a settlement.

Of course, it cannot be. His continued presence would create an impossible position for Willingdon. In any case, relations between Irwin and the India Office are, in the language affected by Lobby correspondents, "correct rather than cordial."

In the meantime, Gandhi is also taking a hand at settling the Moslem question. All day long he sees successive Moslem leaders on the balcony of Ansari's house, but so far without much effect. I don't see how the Hindu leaders can hope to succeed when all that they say to the Moslem leaders amounts to: "Look here, you are being awfully unreasonable about this question of separate electorates, can't you see that you have nothing to fear from us?"

The Moslems merely reply: "We have everything to fear from you."

However, G. has allotted four days to solving it, so he must have confidence in himself.

The Viceroy came to Old Delhi church this morning—no fuss, just with one A.D.C. Though there were troops in the church there was no nonsense about a guard of honour outside.

How times have changed in military administration. The British troops now attend church-parade in motor-lorries. They look very smart and well, and seem extraordinarily young—hardly any over twenty-five.

I hear they hate it out here. The chief difficulty is the absence of girls. The average life of an English nursery maid as a single woman is about six weeks.

Their bounds are very restricted. They can never go into the bazaar.

And their job is often very unpleasant. Keeping order in a street riot, among a wholly alien population with strange habits and even stranger gods, must be a grim business.

I am dining with the Grahams to-night (Sir Launcelot Graham, the secretary to the Legislative Assembly). It is the only ray of sunshine. For my mail has not arrived. It is extraordinary what home letters mean to one out here. I read mine at least three times over. Time is reckoned not as at home by Sundays but by mail-days.

*April 6th.*

Gandhi *is* astute.

He announced that he would persuade the Hindus to give the Moslems everything they wanted if they could formulate their demands.

The Moslem parties on Sunday made demands for the continuance of separate electorates.

G. now says that he only meant that he would grant their demands if they were unanimous. But they are not. They might be unanimous at Delhi, but the Nationalist Moslems were not represented there.

Of course he knows that his offer was entirely safe, because if there was a mental reservation that the demands must be unanimous there was not the smallest chance that he would ever be called upon to fulfil them. There are occasions when the saint is lost in the slim politician. At any rate, no Western eye can detect the infinite shades of subtlety that can be hidden in an apparently plain and straightforward statement.

I spent the morning at the Moslem Conference. I was the only Englishman there. But I was treated with extraordinary courtesy. I was invited up on to the platform, given an arm-chair, and even provided with an interpreter.

In contrast with Congress, clad in sombre white home-spun cotton, it was a very colourful assembly. They were all in gorgeous tunics and wearing every form of rakish head-gear. The long beards, that most of them cultivate, gave an additional touch of distinction.

Equally in contrast with the proceedings of Congress there was no semblance of unity. Everybody seemed to be on their feet, shouting and gesticulating. There was no dominant personality, and that, probably, is the tragedy of the Moslem position.

Shaukat Ali is the best of them. His rugged appearance and enormous stature give an impression of dominance, even if it is only superficial. He has a fascinating way of gesticulating with both hands. He has also a powerful deep-toned voice which, in all that noise and confusion, was a most valuable asset.

For all its disorder there was a note of real passion in the meeting. There was a note of genuine fear for the future, that of a community, intensely proud of its history and traditions, now seeing them in danger of being swallowed up. It was all rather moving.

Such differences as existed were in degree and not in principle. One section wanted to boycott the London Conference altogether, unless the full

demands of the Moslems for separate electorates, a due share of the offices of State, and weightage in all areas for minorities were granted.

Against this course Shaukat Ali pleaded powerfully in favour of full co-operation at the London Conference. A division would have disclosed a deep cleavage.

In the end, neither side won, for it was wisely not put to the vote. It was agreed that the resolution should just remain on the minute book as having been moved and seconded.

I recall an impression now which I had at the time but which is not recorded in my diary. It is that there was a definite movement on foot to get in touch with Mr. Winston Churchill, with the view of having some definite contact between Mr. Churchill's party in England and the Moslem party in India.

I attended a tea-party of the Moslem leaders that afternoon at Maiden's Hotel and that project of making contacts with Churchill was the one subject of conversation.

It is an awful possibility which may easily come about if the Round Table Conference is not a success. India may in very truth become another Ireland, and for thirty years the Right and Left Wing parties may be divided on communal lines.

For if the Conservatives support the Moslems as they supported Protestant Ulster, then Liberals and Labour will have no other course than to stand by the Hindus as they once stood by the Catholic Irish.

The beginnings of it emerged in the Cawnpore debate this July. The Moslems have already got a Curzon in Mr. Winston Churchill. It only remains for the Hindus to produce a John Redmond.

*April 8th.*

It is after midnight and I am just back from a Viceregal ball—the last party that the Irwins will give.

It was made additionally sad by the fact that there were so comparatively few there. The advance guard has already left for Simla and the exodus to England is in full swing.

It was a wonderful warm evening, the sort that one dreams might happen for an Oxford Commemoration ball and never does. The gardens were illuminated and were infinitely more popular than the ballroom. With the background of Lutyens' fountains, and the lights of Imperial Delhi, and the gay uniforms of the men, and the long flowing dresses of the women, and the distant music of the band it seemed as if old Versailles had come to life.

It is fun being out here at this time. It is the kind of atmosphere that must have pervaded the closing years of the Second Empire. We enjoy the great gala nights of Viceregal hospitality all the more because we wonder uneasily how much longer they will continue.

*April 9th.*

Still we mark time in India. The home Government just waits on events.

Delay is driving the various entities further apart. Moslem and Hindu, Gandhi and the Government of India, Princes and the idea of Federation are all drifting further apart.

I dined with the Chetwodes to-night. We had it on the verandah overlooking the lights of Delhi. It was superb. Afterwards we went off and explored the Parma Quila by night. It is one of the seven cities of Old Delhi. The railway runs just in front of it, and among the ruins was hidden the infernal machine which two years ago blew up the Viceroy's train. It was extraordinarily ghostly. Figures would suddenly appear on the sky-line on the ruined battlements. One would look again and they had vanished.

I could imagine the conspirators hiding on the walls, waiting and watching for the Viceroy's train, wondering if any improvement could be made in their preparations. Then in the silence of the morning the bomb explodes with a report that can be heard five miles away at Viceroy's House, and when the smoke clears they see that all they have done is to blow up the wrong carriage.

*April 12th.*

The Viceroy had an informal meeting of the delegates to the last Conference to discuss the arrangements for the next. Gandhi appeared for the first time in the crowd, just as an ordinary potential delegate. But I am told that he maintained his position of isolation and only gave his views when everybody else had given theirs. That will be the difficulty in London. Will he be content to work as an ordinary delegate?

The Nationalist Moslems are busy organising a counterblast to the recent Moslem Conference in Delhi. They are to meet at Lucknow, a centre of Moslem culture as important as Delhi. Strenuous efforts are being made to whip up a larger and more impressive gathering than that at Delhi.

The news of the murder of Peddie[5] has created a big stir. He was at a prize-giving at some local school when, in the sight of all men, he was set upon and murdered. Dozens must have seen the assassins and yet none will

come forward and help the police. How like the Irish days, when citizens dared not give evidence nor juries convict!

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[5] James Peddie, district magistrate Midnapore.

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I went to a garden-party this afternoon where the Viceroy described it as "a senseless outrage." I wonder, by the way, if any Viceroy has been as personally popular as this one. It was a characteristically happy thought of his to give the other day a garden-party at Viceroy's House to the Indian clerks in the Government offices. It was an amazing business. They were invited for 3 p.m. and began arriving at 1.30. By 4.30 every vestige of tea—emergency supplies and all—had been wolfed. In despair the A.D.C.s, who had arranged that H.E. should not come out until 5 p.m., had to go and fetch him. He had a tremendous reception. They followed him round the garden in one solid phalanx. Finally he had to make a speech, and the Indian, who is usually content, even when Gandhi passes by, merely to stare, broke into delighted cheering.

*April 13th.*

A fresh threat to the success of the Conference. This time it is this wretched rupee. The Chambers of Commerce who have been meeting in Delhi have been declaring in favour of inflation. In the opinion of Schuster and all the financial experts it would be disastrous. Indian credit is in a rickety enough condition now, but inflation would send it crashing to nothing.

Unfortunately there are two vested interests in the rupee, both of them accusing the other of taking their stand on enlightened selfishness.

There are the merchants who have invested heavily abroad with the rupee at 1*s.* 6*d.*, in the sure and certain hope that it will fall to 10*d.* or 8*d.*, when they will bring it back and a large fortune with it. With this object in view they have subscribed heavily to the Congress funds as the best way of ensuring that the collapse comes to pass. So much for the high-souled patriotism of Gandhi's commercial friends!

Then there is the vested interest of the unfortunate English community. With great difficulty most of them have to maintain two establishments—one for themselves out here and one for their children at home. This means the constant shipment of a portion of their salary to England, and the consequent conversion of rupees into sterling. Even a comparatively small

decline in the rupee to them means the cutting down of school fees and the curtailment of home leave, while a real crash spells ruin.

It is now proposed that the Indian delegation to the Autumn Conference should include representatives of the Indian business community who boycotted the Conference last time. But who is to go? If the Congress merchants have their way it will only be those who advocate a financial crash.

*April 14th.*

I leave for Bombay to-morrow to see the Viceroy depart and Willingdon arrive.

The position does not improve.

Six weeks have gone past now since the Delhi truce, and no proposal as to time, date, or procedure has come from London. What is Benn doing? As —— said to me the other day, Benn is "just a bullfinch twittering on a branch."

In the meantime the communal problem grows worse. This week, following on the Karachi Congress, has shown, firstly, that the Moslems will not have joint electorates, charm the Hindus ever so wisely, and secondly, that Gandhi's influence is confined to the Hindus—factors which enormously complicate the settlement, and will complicate it still more the longer it is delayed.

CHAPTER XXXII

# APOLLO BUNDER

*Jhansi, April 4th.*

I broke my journey on my way down from Delhi to stay with ——, a young I.C.S. man just out from England.

A lot of nonsense is talked about the poor material that the Civil Service has to work with nowadays. —— had a Winchester and Oxford education, and is just as fine a type of man as his predecessors. Of course, there are far more men in Indian administration who did not go to Winchester and Oxford, and have, in consequence, a different type of accent and do not learn to play polo. But that is true of all professions, and it has yet to be shown that they are any the worse for it.

I watched the polo last night and decided that I could never hope to be G.C. Men certainly live dangerously out here. If they are not killing themselves at polo they are risking mutilation at pig-sticking.

Jhansi is the great military station in the centre of India. It is where the reserves are kept in readiness to be rushed to any centre.

In appearance and atmosphere I should imagine it has changed little in the passage of years. The club is its meeting-place, and the polo-ground its playing-field, and the loves and hates of its neighbours its staple topic of conversation. To add the last touch of Kipling similitude, many of the officers still drive about the station in dog-carts.

It is insufferably hot. We had our beds taken out on to the lawn, complete with mosquito-nets, but by seven o'clock in the morning the sun had driven us inside the bungalow again.

Still, we agreed over breakfast that India in many ways must be infinitely pleasanter than it was thirty years ago, contrary to the opinion of old warriors in Cheltenham and Bedford. Everybody now has comprehensive inoculations, which make the dangers of disease no more than those of street accidents.

Yet illness used to take a terrible toll. I have examined the gravestones in an old churchyard in Bombay at Wlabor. The percentage of men who were recorded as dying in their early twenties was enormous. The dates admittedly were in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. But up to our own time most families intimately associated with India have had some near relation who has died in India of the climate.

Refrigerators have robbed the heat of many of its terrors. Even on a railway journey it is possible to get iced water at any time and in any place.

The cheapness and speed of steamships make far more frequent the breaks in the years of exile.

Railways have removed famines altogether, and enormously reduced the dangers of decimation by cholera, for doctors and medical supplies can be rushed so quickly to the danger-point.

Machine-guns have swept away any real danger of another Indian Mutiny.

One forgets that behind the romanticism of Kipling was disease and loneliness, and neither ice nor electric fans nor even sane clothing to relieve the horrors of the hot weather.

But the impression of the old India came back when I visited the fort. It rises straight out of the desert, and is absolutely untouched as Shah Jehan left it. Half a company of Highlanders were in occupation of it, for it is still regarded rather humourlessly as an important fortification.

The soldier who took me round pointed out in a rich Cockney accent the gun emplacements, the loopholes for machine-guns, the prison for the captured, the stores of shells, the place where the sentry stood every night on the battlements, and most proudly of all, the notice forbidding the taking of photographs. He radiated a charming "I am the king of the castle" atmosphere, and I wonder if it is not directly encouraged by the authorities to keep the men amused.

At any rate, I forbore to suggest to him that half a dozen well-planted shells would effectively blow up the whole place.

We gazed down on the city at the foot of the walls, and I heard his news about what he called—and it was almost the first time I had heard the word in India—"the native." He talked of him with the sort of affectionate contempt that he would discuss the antics of a monkey. Then his eye caught the roof of the city gaol. Was I going to see the gaol? . . . No? . . . Oh, they 'ad some fine 'angings there; I really ought to find time to go and see a 'anging.

I closed my eyes, and for a glorious moment felt that I was with Ortheris, spitting into the ditch with Mr. Kipling, in the late eighties, outside the sun-baked Lahore cantonments.

*April 15th.*

Back in Bombay again. If I had to live in India, it would be Bombay that I would choose. For it is the nearest in spirit and in fact to Europe. It escapes

the provincialism of the rest of India. It is the one place in India where the conversation is not exclusively about the foibles of one's neighbours.

It is the sort of Piccadilly Circus of India. If you stay there long enough you will meet everybody worth meeting in India. For they all pass through it to or from London.

The liner the *Viceroy of India* is in the bay to-night. So Willingdon is in Indian waters.

What a task before him!

All sections seem to be drifting farther away from one another. There are sighs of profound depression in Congress circles. Leaders with whom I discussed the situation to-day confess that they do not see a ray of hope.

G. had a farewell interview with Irwin this afternoon, and devoted all his time to discussing the communal problem. G. has the sort of mind that gets obsessed with one problem, to the exclusion of everything else.

In February it was the police enquiry; in March it was the safeguards; now in April it is the communal problem.

He still takes his stand against separate electorates on the divisions among the Moslems themselves. He said to Irwin, "To which voice am I to listen? To the orthodox Moslems who demand separate electorates, or to the Nationalist Moslems, who want united electorates?"

It all sounds very plausible. But to anyone who has studied the problem it is obvious that it is Shaukat Ali, with his separate electorates, who really represents the feeling of the rank and file. Dr. Ansari's group of Nationalist Moslems has impressive names, but no following. Does Gandhi truthfully not realise this, or is it once more the toga of the politician peeping over the top of the hair shirt of the saint?

Irwin addressed the Byculla Club last night. It is the oldest club in India, and has the honour of being the last organisation to entertain departing Viceroys. The speech is entirely private, but, as usual on such occasions, those who thought that the Viceroy would let himself go were disappointed.

I wonder what sort of reception he will get in England. He has had an enormous batch of abusive letters from members of his own party. But I am told that Winston has written to welcome him home, even though they will soon be at it hammer and tongs, and has added the significant postscript: "But I fear that you are on the side of the big battalions."

Well, is he?

I have no diary record of the arrival of the Willingdons. I can therefore only give what I cabled home to my paper, which in the cold light of three months afterwards appears rather lyrical, but it really was a faithful record of my impressions on that hot April morning on the Apollo Bunder.

*Bombay, April 16th.*

"Even the sea seemed to be dancing with delight in the early morning sunshine as Lord and Lady Willingdon made their State entry into Bombay this morning.

"The ceremony of welcome was a delightful mixture of dignity and friendliness. The background of the Gateway of India at the water's edge through which all Viceroys pass to their duties is superb. It was built to commemorate the visit of the King and Queen in 1911, and in its beauty and simplicity seems to embody the noblest visions of Empire.

"Half the notabilities of India were wedged on it this morning to greet the new Viceroy.

"His actual arrival was extraordinarily impressive. From the liner anchored a few hundred yards out in the bay there rang out across the water a cheer from the crew and passengers as Lord and Lady Willingdon entered their launch.

"Slowly they came towards us. The Governor of Bombay and Lady Sykes moved down the red-carpeted steps to the water's edge, the bands crashed out the National Anthem, and Lord and Lady Willingdon had entered India.

"From that moment, for all its pomp and majesty, the reception took on the form of a family reunion.

"Lady Willingdon's dress had a lot to do with it. It was mauve, and everyone remembered that it was her favourite colour, and therefore instinctively felt that, even though she was now Vicereine, she was still the Lady Willingdon that they had known and loved in Bombay a dozen years ago.

"Whatever the cause, the ceremonies of welcome became the greetings of old friends. Lord and Lady Willingdon seemed to know everybody.

"It was the same when they were escorted to their thrones on the centre of the Gateway, and the great of the earth were being presented to them. Great Princes in their gorgeous raiment were greeted by the new Viceroy with the gay reminder that 'You were a boy when I last saw you.'

"With each one it was obvious that Lord Willingdon wanted to have a really long talk. Anxious aides-de-camp tried to hurry up the proceedings, but it was long after the time prescribed for the ceremonies that their Excellencies reluctantly tore themselves away from their friends and at last entered their carriage and drove through cheering crowds to Government House for breakfast.

"So in glorious sunshine and to the welcome of old friends Lord Willingdon has entered on his momentous Viceroyalty."

They certainly were a magnificent couple. They looked the part so well —Lord Willingdon straight and slim and very tall in a long, old-fashioned grey frock coat, and Lady Willingdon looking positively regal in a garden-party dress—that it almost seemed to be over-acted.

I describe it in a more unorthodox way in an extract from a letter I give below:

"I am down seeing Viceroys arrive and depart. The landing of the Willingdons was a great sight. They acted and looked their parts. So marvellously that I felt like searching for my programme, half expecting to see:
"The Viceroy . . . *Owen Nares*.
"His wife . . . *Lilian Braithwaite*."

*April 18th.*

All official India went once more to the Gateway of India to see Lord Irwin off, and the same ceremony was repeated, except that it was midday and quite intolerably hot—so much so that the stones of the Gateway were like red-hot irons.

This is how I describe the scene in my diary:

My most vivid impression is of Irwin looking unutterably sad standing up in the Viceregal launch, with hat off, acknowledging our cheers as he is sped to the waiting liner. We see him grow fainter and fainter in the distance. A few minutes afterwards the siren blares out from the liner, she glides silently out of the bay—carrying away from India the best friend she has had in our generation.

We slowly and rather solemnly drifted away to lunch at the Yacht Club. Irwin's last words are difficult to get out of one's head. They were a

quotation from the inscription on the Jaipur column in front of Viceroy's House at Delhi:

*In thought faith,*
*In word wisdom,*
*In deed courage—*
*So may India be great.*

Irwin said, after quoting it, "I can wish India nothing better, and so I would say to you, and to all those in this country that I have tried to serve —'In your thinking, in your speaking, in your doing: God be with you.' "

It was all very moving, and quite different to Willingdon's arrival, which seemed to take one back to the spacious days of the undisputed British Raj.

Lady W. looked the incarnation of Edwardian grandeur, and W. himself gave an address as correct and unimaginative as any Victorian pro-consul.

But it was a great spectacle in the April sunshine—the red of the bodyguard, the white of the Bombay Light Horse, the khaki of the British troops. The Empire, even in its sunset, is a great show.

I am just off for a week-end with Glorney—if I have not already missed the train (Glorney Boulton, assistant editor of the *Times of India*).

We are going to Matheran, one of the Bombay hill stations. I feel I want a quiet week-end—I have not had one the whole time I have been in India.

I find that the same morning I wrote a letter to my Editor. Indiscreet though it is, I cannot resist giving portions of it.

"As from Cecil Hotel,
"Simla,
"*April 25th*.

"This Indian trip really has been a wonderful experience—probably the happiest year of my life.

"But Benn is no earthly—is he? Neither side thinks anything of him. I was furious when I saw the House of Commons had cheered him on the Gandhi-Irwin settlement, for he contributed nothing to it. Throughout he wobbled from defeatism to diehardism, and for days he refused to answer telegrams at all. He has had material in which to

smash up Brailsford's silly stories about police barbarism, and he never had the courage to use it.

"I wonder if the Government will use Irwin at all. His next job is to interpret Gandhi to the British people. But your politicians are so saturated with jealousies that I wonder if Irwin will get any limelight. . . .

"It has been amusing to work out a technique of approach to the great men who alone can give me the news. Gandhi I load with flattery. 'You know, Mr. Gandhi, the whole world is listening to you. You have the greatest news value of any man in the world except the Prince of Wales.' He just purrs with delight. To —— I frankly make love! To the military caste I talk polo and damn the Air Force! Governors I treat as an embodied British Empire.

"But it has been very pleasant to be in Bombay a few days where there are other distractions. I have been able to get some hours off the eternal Indian imbroglio and get some bathing and riding and tennis with men of my own age. I should think that I was the youngest man in Delhi by about twenty years.

"But the Indian climate is beginning to take its toll. I am greying about the temples.

"The situation is not as good as it was. This continued delay in carrying on the work is disastrous. Still, Willingdon's first speech created a good impression, and it is much too early to judge him.

"By the way, my article on Delhi headed, I think, 'The Man on the Spot,' caused some offence to the Viceroy's staff. It was mailed out to a Congress paper in a mangled form. Of course, they all thought I had written it for a Congress paper. The phrase to which exception was taken was, 'There is something of the atmosphere of the grand finale of a musical comedy about Viceroy's House.' The A.D.C.s were livid. It was naughty of me. I ought not to have written it; but it was a very early effort, when I thought I should not be returning to Delhi, and, in any case, had not plumbed the full pomp and circumstance of Viceregal society.

"Please give my affectionate salaams—you see how Anglo-Indian I am becoming—to all my friends in the office. I am looking forward to bringing the Mahatma to an office lunch. Give him a cabbage and a betel-nut and he will be as happy as you and I are at Claridges."

*Matheran, April 19th.*

We are week-ending on the top of a mountain. We climbed up about six miles straight up the mountain-side from the station yesterday. The moment I got on my horse in the station yard it bolted, but as its stable was four or five thousand feet farther up it fortunately soon got tired.

It is a glorious spot. There are magnificent opportunities for riding—great drives and wonderful vistas from every part of the mountain, and even a racecourse.

Not that we have raced there. Another party of young men tried this morning. The horses are only exercised at rare intervals, when people come up for the week-end. The result was that one of them bolted. Its rider passed me at full gallop, shouting, "For God's sake stop your horse!" in that ghastly voice that men use when frightened. The next thing I saw was the horse leap over the wall round the bend, apparently to destruction. Fortunately it threw its rider first on to the wall, and he escaped miraculously with a few bad cuts. But it rather sobered us down, and we have ridden no more to-day.

The precipices are terrific—rugged and barren and rather frightening; the sort of scene which artists used to paint as the background of Christ's temptations.

The whole mountain is a bewildering mixture of the primitive and the civilised. At first all seems peace and order. There are rickshaws and old ladies and neat notices pointing to Panorama Walk and Porcupine Point, and polite requests that "horses should not be cantered through the villages"—the general atmosphere, in fact, of a south coast resort in the eighties. One almost expects to find Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Armistead in earnest conversation round every corner. But stray away from the gravel paths and the trim drives and one is in the land of tigers and panthers.

Perhaps it is all a simile of our position in India. We live calmly and peacefully in the European quarter, and we have only to turn down one street and we are in the bazaar, where lurk passions and hatreds, the ferocity of which we in our clubs and our bungalows know absolutely nothing.

India offers a great life even now. Here is our week-end party—a couple of journalists, a solicitor, and a man in a paint business. At home we should probably be at the tennis club of our local suburb. Here we are surrounded by horses and servants.

India is still the paradise of the middle classes.

*April 22nd.*

Gandhi has evidently aroused great hostility by his unfortunate references to missionaries. He has tried to put it right in his weekly article in

*Young India*.

As far as I can understand it, his position is this. He does not object to missionaries, but only medical missionaries. He objects to the methods by which a dose of medicine imposes an obligation on the patient to listen to the Christian message. He does not object to Christianity, but only to those who proselytise for it.

It is all very closely reasoned, and I wonder if the British public will understand it. It is not that Gandhi himself is confused in his thought. On the contrary, he has the clearest mind of anyone I have ever met. But it is a subtle mind, and the British public, who rarely understand more than two points of view in any question, will be quite unable to follow the infinite shades and nuances, qualifications and reservations, in Gandhi's simplest utterances.

CHAPTER XXXIII

# SIMLA—INDIA'S WHISPERING GALLERY

"Suggest stay four weeks longer see Willingdon start." This was the telegram from my paper that I found awaiting me on my return from my Matheran week-end.

I was delighted. For seeing Lord Willingdon start meant seeing Simla, and to me, soaked in Kipling, Simla was the most thrilling place in the Indian Empire.

Lord and Lady Willingdon had gone to Dehra Dun for ten days' recuperation after their voyage. There was therefore no need to hurry and I delayed a few days in my beloved Bombay. These are the entries I find in my diary:

*April 21st.*

I left Matheran this morning. An eight-mile rickshaw drive down to the station. It was a terrifying experience—like toboganning down the side of a house. We whirl round hair-raising corners and every moment I thought that I should be swept over the precipice to eternity. But the coolies knew the corners to a nicety and every time we just managed to escape destruction.

I went to lunch with the Governor of Bombay to say good-bye. H. E. has to go to England on sick leave. I tried to force myself into a European lounge-suit for the lunch-party for my Indian clothes all seem cheap and nasty. But the heat was too great. I simply had not the will-power to encase myself in Bradford wool, however thin, and I went as I was—rather dirty and dishevelled.

I was asked at 1 p.m. in order to have half an hour's conversation first. H. E. really is very kind. I like him more every time I see him.

Bikanir was there to lunch. He spoke like an Etonian and except for his dark skin he might have been an English landowner. He has charm, but is not, I should think, particularly clever.

I got the impression that there would be rather a different atmosphere from the Princes' side at the next conference. Many of them seem to have been swept away at the last conference by a desire at all costs for unity.

"Bikky"—I believe that is the way one refers to His Highness the Maharajah of Bikanir if one is really in the social swim—said very firmly, "we shall certainly not accept the terms of Congress."

He too wants the conference speeded up. He said: “How can any of us get on with the management of our States if we don’t know when we shall be called upon suddenly to spend another three months in London?”

I have just had a glorious bathe in the Breach Candy swimming-bath. The temperature of the water was in the middle eighties. I believe in England a swimming-bath is regarded as quite warm if it is sixty.

*April 22nd.*

Another long talk with Mrs. Naidu in her room at the Taj Hotel over some wonderful concoction which is called iced coffee but puts to shame any iced coffee that I have ever had in England.

She is evidently uneasy about the truce and thinks that the difficulties are growing.

Everything she judges by Gandhi’s reactions. She thinks that all these committees—on the division of Sind, and the frontier and the franchise—now beginning to be summoned to Simla are quite futile unless Gandhi gives his views first.

“What is the good,” she said, “of a franchise committee now meeting in Simla and devising fancy franchises if the Congress stands by full adult franchise. It is just waste of time. The British Government ought to have a preliminary talk with Gandhi before ever the Conference meets.”

Of course, this is ridiculous. His Majesty’s Government cannot possibly treat with Gandhi first and then afterwards with all the rest of the delegates. Gandhi has got to come and win his position round the Conference table.

But clearly he and his friends are looking to the Round Table Conference as a glorious extension in Downing Street of the private conversations in Viceroy’s House. That idea ought to be stamped on with both feet at once.

All the same I think it was a mistake of Willingdon not to see Gandhi the moment he arrived. I am told that it was due to a misunderstanding. G. thought that Willingdon if he wanted to see him would invite him to an interview and W. thought that G. if he wanted an interview would ask for it. It all sounds rather silly.

For W. to have seen Gandhi would have been a great gesture to show India that the new Viceroy would carry on precisely where Lord Irwin had left off.

*April 24th.*

Various problems in connection with G.'s visit to London are exercising the minds of his friends. For instance, what will he wear?

For ten years he has worn nothing but a two-piece garment of coarse home-spun cotton. It is a misnomer by the way to call this a loin-cloth as the English papers do, although he frequently discards in the hot weather the upper portion of it and becomes not half-naked but three-quarters naked.

Mrs. Naidu has promised to knit him a warm dressing-gown to wear on top of the cotton. I am quite certain that he won't appear in European dress.

Where will he stay? At the recent Round Table Conference the delegates stayed as the guests of the Government but Congress will not do so. It regards itself as coming as a definite opposition and believes therefore that the acceptance of hospitality would create an altogether false position.

Gandhi will not dine out in the ordinary sense of the term while he is in London.

He has absolutely no small talk. The idea of talking about the weather to Gandhi is as ludicrous to anyone who knows him as, in the reverse direction, talking about the nature of the Deity to a chorus-girl.

In any case there is his diet. He does not stray by a hair's breadth from the food that he has prescribed for himself.

However, he will go to Buckingham Palace if he is invited. He has already met the King—during the War I believe in connection with recruiting—when Gandhi was easily the most valuable recruiting sergeant in the Indian Empire. What a change—and Dyer's machine-guns have done more than any other single factor to bring it about.

How he will be lionised in England! Charles Chaplin won't be in it. Gandhi will be something that the British public has never seen in its life before. Indeed he is, however much he may be disliked, the most remarkable man in the world, and what is more, he looks it.

Mrs. Naidu, who knows London intimately, suggested to me that he would have to travel about London in an iron cage to prevent being mobbed.

He is such a frail little man that it will need all the protection the burly London policemen can give him to prevent his being crushed.

Not that I think that there will be any hostility to him. His appearance is far too mild to be provocative. My only fear is that the public won't take him seriously enough and that he may become a music-hall joke. It is not easy at first sight to realise that the little man with the big ears and the shaven head and the massive steel spectacles is in fact regarded by millions as a Messiah. The success or failure of his visit may well depend on the attitude of half a dozen news editors. Gandhi is abnormally sensitive and any guying of him in the Press will wound him deeply. It is no good hoping that he will not see it, for he is an inveterate reader of the newspapers.

I remember when I saw him again in Delhi after having interviewed him the first time in Allahabad he said, "you reported me very well last time. That is why I have let you come and see me again."

He had apparently secured specially a copy of the newspaper to see how he had been reported.

*April 26th*, on way to Simla.

For days my bearer has been badgering me to tell him by which of two routes I intend to travel to Simla. I put him off, for I never know five minutes before I start where I am going or if I am going at all.

Now I have discovered that my route makes all the difference in the world. By going by way of the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway instead of by the Grand Indian Peninsular, we pass the station where he lives and he can see for the first time the baby boy which has been born to him while he has been with me.

Fortunately, quite by accident, I chose the right route, and there was a great family rejoicing on the platform. But imagine not telling me why he wanted to go one of two ways—the choice of which made absolutely no difference to me. The servility of the servant to his master is very trying, more particularly if the servant is, as mine happens to be, a Hindu.

It has been a sweltering day. The temperature is in the region of 110 degrees in the shade. I could not face the idea of climbing out of the carriage for lunch, so I have starved myself all day.

*April 27th.*

We arrived at Kalka, the junction for Simla, at half-past five this morning. Up to a few years before the War there was no railway up the mountain at all. The journey of about fifty miles was made up the mountain road by *tonga*.

Now one pounds up in a motor train. It's a most exhilarating experience for as one rises slowly out of the plain it begins to get cooler and cooler. The track is rather like the scenic railway at the old White City. It climbs round and round the mountain, like a gigantic spiral staircase.

We stopped half way up for breakfast, as they used to do in the early days of Bradshaw's Railway Guide. Then when all the passengers had paid their bill in the refreshment-room we set off again.

The whole journey of about fifty miles takes four hours. We arrived in a dust storm.

* * *

Simla is quite unlike anything else in the world, and is worth description. I will give a sketch of it that I wrote a week after reaching it. It will be a convenient background for the extracts from my diary.

*"Simla, May 6th, 1930.*

"This is the time of year when India is governed from a series of mountain tops. In the great cities of the plains the secretariats are empty and the council chambers given over to sweepers.

"Bombay is no longer the seat of Government of the Presidency. The capital is Mableshwar, far away in the Eastern Ghats.

"Calcutta is likewise deserted. The Government servants have transported their files and their blue-books to Darjeeling, in the shadow of Mount Everest.

"Lucknow has been transferred to Naini Tal and the Government of the Central Provinces, where the thermometer is flaming up to 115 deg. in the shade, has been transferred to Pachmarhi.

"The whole length of the Himalayas is, in fact, a series of Government departments.

"But the most spectacular trek is that of the Central Government from Delhi to Simla. It is difficult to realise that this long, straggling city in the pine woods, in the shadow of the eternal snows of the Himalayas, with its Swiss châlet and baronial castle styles of architecture, its narrow, dusty lanes, its glorious panorama of mountain peaks stretching endlessly into the distance, is where the destinies of 320 millions are guarded and guided for rather more than half the year.

"The civil servants are probably as hard-worked here as anywhere else, but, for all that, Simla has about it the atmosphere of a rather

exclusive English holiday resort.

"It may be the presence of English children again. In the plains they have to go home soon after their fifth birthday. Here, where the temperature is never higher than on a pleasant English summer day, they can stay almost indefinitely.

"It is the strange means of transport too, that accentuates the holiday idea. For the roads are little more than mountain paths, and in consequence only three people are allowed in motor-cars—the Viceroy, the Commander-in-Chief and the Governor of the Punjab. The rest of us travel about either in rickshaws or on horseback.

"It is an extraordinarily picturesque sight. The rickshaws are one-man carriages drawn by jhampannies or rickshaw coolies. If they are in private service they are dressed in green, or blue, or yellow, or red, or even white liveries.

"To see the Mall on a sunny morning when the women are shopping from their rickshaws and the men riding to their offices is to be transported right back to the eighteenth century with its sedan chairs and its statesmen on horseback.

"One gets an impression of the glorious silence that must have reigned in the world before the discovery of internal combustion.

"But why need I describe Simla? To the reader of Kipling it is the best known city in the Empire. In appearance it is untouched, though it was Simla of the eighties that he brought to life. Quite unaltered are the Ladies' Mile, the lovely Jakko peak with its monkey temple and its priests torturing themselves on spikes, the Annandale racecourse three thousand feet below still the scene of weekly gymkhanas where the rank and beauty of Simla play musical chairs on horseback and perform other hair-raising feats of daring; and outside the theatre the same uproarious searching for one's rickshaw that has neither name nor number.

"Go a little deeper and in essentials Simla is still the same.

"It is a whispering gallery where an indiscretion at a picnic is repeated in half the dinner-parties of Simla the same night.

"It is a marriage market where a girl can seldom survive single more than a couple of seasons. It could not be anything else in a place where the men are in proportion of about five to one to the girls, and where there are limitless opportunities for romance in moonlight picnics and long rides back from a remote tennis party with the sun setting in a red aureole behind the mountains, and the lights coming out in the pine woods like so many Wendy cottages in *Peter Pan*.

"Only the social habits have changed. A walk down the Ladies' Mile in the cool of the evening is no longer like the church-parade in Hyde Park.

"The beautiful women that once took the evening air in their rickshaws and the gallant young men who escorted them on horseback have vanished. Their successors are playing tennis or attending bridge parties.

"For when Kipling wrote, bridge had not been invented and lawn tennis was barely in its infancy.

"Gone, too, have the grass widows who used to leave their husbands in the scorching plains and come and play havoc with men's hearts through the long, gay summer nights of a Simla season.

"They can all go home now, for the journey is both shorter and cheaper.

"The tragedies in Simla now are of a different kind. They are the inevitable result of the forthcoming constitutional changes.

"Simla is full of men whose families have been associated for generations with the service of India. They are now wondering uneasily if India holds out a career for their sons. They are sadly speculating whether, indeed, they will be able to finish their own careers. They are cutting down their expenses and weaving plans for the future.

"So the great dinner-parties are beginning to disappear, and the old *joie de vivre* to give way to a certain very understandable anxiety.

"But still in these days the glories of Simla are very fair to see. The long rides in the early morning sunshine, the meetings at Annandale delightfully reminiscent of "the Picnic races" in Australia, the jolly rickshaw queues up the precipitous drive to Viceregal Lodge as we all proceed to the same party, the well-informed, stimulating conversation over the cigars at dinner-parties of men who know their jobs and do them supremely well, the splendid sense of companionship that one gets from living amongst a community entirely dependent on itself for its work and its amusement, are all delights that few other places can provide.

"Simla and probably all the other hill stations have escaped so far the general standardisation of the age, and though I have been three-quarters round the world there are sadly few spots of which I can write the same."

CHAPTER XXXIV

# LORD WILLINGDON AT WORK

*April 30th.*

I lunched to-day with the Schusters. They are at Peterhoff, which was once Viceregal Lodge and as such forms the *mise en scène* of "A Germ Destroyer," one of the most entertaining stories in *Plain Tales from the Hills*. It is a lovely place, with glorious views over the Himalayas. But in size it is no bigger than a small English country house. It shows how simple was the British Raj in its greatest days.

I suppose that much of the present Viceregal magnificence came with Curzon. It is an importation that India could well have done without.

Simla is definitely perturbed about the delay in summoning the next Conference. But I believe that this time it is not Benn. Suggestions have come from him to the Viceroy. But it will be some time before an answer can be sent. Willingdon has delayed his departure from Dehra Dun and will not be here until the end of the week.

At present the Secretary of State and the Viceroy between them are missing the tide.

Since the informal conference on procedure took place five weeks ago, neither Gandhi nor anyone else has had any communication, official or unofficial, as to the next step in constitution building.

How can enthusiasm be kept up through these aimless weeks of waiting? With the long delay has come inevitably the strengthening of doubts and the hardening of incipient opposition.

The Cawnpore enquiry is revealing that the man on the spot did not take sufficiently strong measures, for fear of the consequences.

It is freely suggested that weakness in the local executive was responsible for the heavy loss of life.

Here is my first letter from Simla, dated April 30th:

"This is very difficult to write, for behind my back a *dhersey* (tailor) is haggling with my bearer over the price he shall charge for making some shirts. He has asked fifteen rupees and I have said ten. We are both adamant, and shall therefore probably compromise on twelve rupees.

"I am actually booking passages for home. I shall become just too Kipling when I see the white cliffs again. With any luck I shall be home early in June, either the 6th or the 13th—just in time to trot off with you and see Middlesex and Yorkshire at Lord's, and other delights.

"Here a pause while we compromised on twelve rupees.

"Simla is a queer city, perched on a mountain-top 8,000 feet high, facing range after range of mountains, until in the distance, when the mist clears, the snow tops of the Himalayas heave into view—all very impressive.

"It is the most G.C. place in India—a sort of Frinton in the background of Indian mountains. No motor-cars are allowed inside the boundaries—not even the equivalent of droshkies—only rickshaws drawn by no fewer than four attendant coolies and horses.

"One rides everywhere—to dances, picnics, tennis-parties, even the cinema. All frightfully hearty, of course. I am riding down this afternoon to a gymkhana on the racecourse where the *jeunesse dorée* of Simla cut apples on horseback suspended from poles—I mean the apples not the horses—and thread needles without stirrups—that kind of thing."

*May 1st.*

What a gulf separates English and Indian, even when they are both in the highest positions.

For instance, the Moslem member of the Viceroy's Executive Council has his wife still in *purdah*. It is not etiquette so much as to enquire after her in conversation.

Even Indians in the highest position have to keep all their relations. In fact, the higher is their salary the more relations they have to keep.

—— when he was a member of council a few years ago, began by indenting for twenty-two beds.

Lord Willingdon is still at Dehra Dun. No Minister has yet seen him. He has sent, however, for Sir Tej Sapru—a wise choice, for none could put him into quicker touch with Indian opinion.

Judging from the cables from England, the question of the safeguards is causing uneasiness in London.

The position is now quite plain. It was cleared up before Irwin left for England. G. has accepted in principle the safeguards. He only asks that the methods by which they shall be made operative shall be open to discussion. Thus, for instance, the reserve bank is accepted by Congress as an essential girder of the constitution. What will be open to debate will be the precise method by which it is to be constructed.

The general belief is that, though G. is making some unwise speeches, he intends to go to London. He promised Lord Irwin that he would, and go he will.

In England they seem to be taking an altogether too alarmist view of the situation. To read the speeches in the House of Lords yesterday is to imagine that we were all in danger of being murdered in our beds to-morrow.

To get the right perspective it is necessary to compare the present situation with that which existed at the same time last year. In April 1930 there were riots in a dozen different industrial towns all over India. To-day the whole sub-continent is virtually quiet.

It was the Moslem festival of *Bakr Id* yesterday, and there was general nervousness as to what might happen. We were telephoning one another all day to find out the last news, as if it were a Test Match. On the surface all is peace and quietness. Underneath it is not so good. To a certain extent the peace yesterday was artificial. Congress threw the whole of its weight into the effort to prevent another Cawnpore. They have a first-class organisation in the industrial towns and they were able to form conciliation committees of leading citizens of both faiths to preserve the peace.

Mrs. Naidu was in charge of the situation in Bombay, and, for days beforehand, bearded Moslems poured into her room and formed themselves into a committee with her Hindu friends.

It is possible to do that on an isolated occasion. But something more radical than ointment is needed to heal the wounds of Cawnpore. The Moslems have vowed vengeance, and in the end I fear that they will wreak it.

There is no sign of the permanent solution of the communal problem being any nearer. Indeed, the conversations have, temporarily at any rate, ceased.

The Governor of the Punjab has done well to proclaim in a speech that "leniency has only bred licence," and that authority must be respected. That

was the trouble at Cawnpore. The official concerned was frightened to take action, for fear that he would not be supported.

The Delhi pact undoubtedly did create a feeling that the administration was relaxing in its efforts to maintain order. It had no basis in fact, but it did lead to officials believing that there had been some psychological change in the views of the Central Government on the subject of authority.

If Irwin did make one mistake in his Viceroyalty, it was that he did not sufficiently realise the vital importance of the continued and undisputed reign of law. Willingdon will never let that happen.

I imagined, when I first read Montmorency's speech, that he had been on the telephone to Dehra Dun, but I am assured that he made it without consultation with the Viceroy. It is certainly a line that H.E. will support.

*May 2nd.*

The Willingdons arrived to-day. It was a great sight—the salute of the guns echoing from mountain to mountain, the outriders in scarlet and white, the phaeton carrying the Viceroy and Lady Willingdon, flanked by the bodyguard with gleaming pennons.

The lack of humour behind the scenes in these State processions always amuses me. Their Excellencies had come up earlier in the morning by the mountain train. It had been stopped at Summer Hill, the station for Viceregal Lodge; their Excellencies disentrained, were raced up to the lodge to change into gala clothes, and then solemnly re-entered the train and were driven on to Simla station for the official welcome.

There was a reception on the Viceregal lawn after their arrival, but, like the fool I am, I had sent my morning coat home. I was told that Simla was the sort of Balmoral of India, and that therefore a top-hat would be absurd.

But the invitation was quite definite—"morning coats will be worn." So evidently, as was thought likely, Lady W. will tighten up the etiquette to what it was in the Readings' time.

*May 5th.*

As far as I can gather, Willingdon has come out here without any plans or instructions. Benn has no ideas and has just handed him the baby to hold.

Everybody seems to like Willingdon very much. He seems very pleasant and friendly.

There was a great church-parade to-day. Their Excellencies came in state, with an A.D.C. in full dress uniform and a carload of A.D.C.s behind in top-hats. H.E., looking remarkably impressive, read the lessons.

Simla is much perturbed by a rumour that Lady Willingdon intends to give a garden-party every Sunday afternoon. Sunday is the day when everyone scatters over the mountains for picnics.

Controversy is now centering on the subject of the representation of officials at the London Conference. Benn does not want them. He will have no rival near the throne. Oh these politicians! If only they would get on with the job instead of haggling about their dignities.

It seems to be the Montagu situation, revealed in his diary, over again. Only this time it is the Secretary of State, and not the Viceroy, who is taking the exasperatingly small view of the situation.

I have just heard that Gandhi will visit Malcolm Hailey (Sir Malcolm Hailey, the Governor of the United Provinces). That is good news. The "no rent" campaign is still a serious factor there. That Gandhi is coming up himself seems to indicate that he means to play the game on the Delhi truce.

*May 6th.*

I lunched with the Willingdons yesterday. It began badly. I had forgotten or, rather, did not know about the steep pull up the drive to Viceregal Lodge, which is perched on a hill. I was so anxious not to be too early that I was the last to arrive. My rickshaw coolies were puffing and blowing half-way up as the Commander-in-Chief's car passed me. I got out and raced up, arriving hot and dusty.

Lady Willingdon is the most wonderful hostess I have ever seen off the stage. She swept along the line of waiting guests with a word for everybody —and, what is more, it was the right word.

But conversation, as the term is usually meant, is impossible. She is so anxious to put you at your ease that she forgets the possibility of your being there already. She makes conversation so fast that she neither hears nor attempts to hear one's own poor little observations.

After lunch I was rescued to go and talk with Lord Willingdon. He has the mentality and appearance of a first-class back-bench Member of Parliament. He has charm and modesty and a certain strain of shrewd common sense. He is not in the least clever, and he looks very tired.

But he has the outlook on India which will never allow him to make any big mistake. He knows India and he loves it in the orthodox Indian Civil Service way. He will never forget the seventy million Moslems, he will

never allow authority to be relaxed; he will always back up his Civil Service, and he will never rise to supreme statesmanship.

That was substantially the impression I had of W. before I met him, and it was certainly confirmed yesterday.

In the afternoon I walked with Lady Graham to Snowdon, to sign the Commander-in-Chief's book. This business of ceremonial calls is very tiresome. One signs the books of the Viceroy, the Commander-in-Chief, and the Governor of the Punjab, and leaves cards on the five members of the Viceroy's Executive Council. As they all live at opposite ends of Simla, it takes weeks to complete.

By Simla Church I saw a perfect scene—a rickshaw came round the corner with a lovely lady inside, and a slim young man walking and talking by the side—it might have been an illustration to a Kipling story.

A delightful dinner-party at the Schusters—the sort of party that could only take place in Simla—the rickshaw coolies waiting outside, and everybody talking of "home" and fixing up riding-parties for the next day. Simla is definitely fun. I wish that I were going to be out here for the season.

*May 7th.*

Gandhi is to come and meet Willingdon in Simla. He is coming up with other important delegates to the conference, and they will thresh out with the Viceroy the plans for the next conference.

It is amusing to see the pains that are being taken in official quarters to pretend that Gandhi's visit has no political significance. It is even given out that it is not yet settled that he will see Willingdon at all.

It is all part of Lord Willingdon's policy not to elevate Gandhi above the other Indian leaders. He feels strongly that the practice of independent negotiation can be carried too far.

That is all very well as far as it goes. At the same time, it has to be remembered that Gandhi, as the sole delegate of the vast Congress organisation, is in a different position to the other leaders.

They represent very little but themselves. He represents educated Hindu India.

Unlike the others, too, he has his own extremist element to contend with, and the Viceroy, by the way he handles him, can do much to help him to maintain his present control over them.

Willingdon has relaxed the custom of Ministers who have interviews with the Viceroy in the morning wearing morning coats.

This is in contrast with Lady W., who insists that A.D.C.s shall appear every night for dinner in full mess dress. Under the Irwin régime, when it was not an official dinner-party they came down in dinner-coats.

It is an engaging weakness, this love of pomp. Really at heart she is very kind, and has the reputation of going to any lengths to help people in time of trouble.

Incidentally, she is also a first-class social worker. When she was out here before she did not just lend her name to good causes; she worked at them as hard as any organising secretary.

In the old days, when she was in Bombay, Gandhi was much affected by the work that she was doing for the Indian women. As I have indicated before, he is a tremendous sentimentalist. When he met her one day when he was having an audience with the Governor, he was so overcome that he fell down and literally kissed the hem of her garment.

A very wet night. It is strange to see rain again, after five months of almost uninterrupted sunshine. Dick Schuster and I went to the cinema, and came back muffled up in rickshaws, as tightly packed in as in the old days of hansom cabs when the glass doors were shut.

But it is awful for the rickshaw coolies. They have no proper covering, and they stand about, hour after hour, with their bare feet in the mud. Most of them die, before middle age, of lung trouble. The conditions of labour in India are horrible to see.

*May 12th.*

There is an element of pleasant comedy about the arrival of Mr. Gandhi here to-morrow.

His secretary has asked permission for the presence of four cars at the station to meet him and his entourage.

Now it is the inviolable rule in Simla that, owing to the narrowness of the streets, which are little more than mountain lanes, no motor-cars except those of the Viceroy, Commander-in-Chief, and Governor of Punjab are permitted. The rest of us travel in rickshaws.

Permission was therefore refused to Mr. Gandhi to have his motor-cars.

It was then pointed out by Mr. Gandhi's secretary that Mr. Gandhi was a frail old man and that a car was a necessity to his health, and that in any case

he had the gravest objections on principle to being pulled by his fellow-men in a rickshaw.

The official reply from the Punjab Government was that, in that case, one car might be used by Mr. Gandhi. The reply from Mr. Gandhi was that, since he could not have cars for his friends, rather than have one for himself, he would prefer to walk.

There the matter rests.

I have just been playing execrable tennis with Dick (Schuster). The back-cloths were down, and in the alternate glare and shade of the Indian evening I played literally as through a glass darkly.

The absence of twilight is remarkable in India. One may begin one set in ordinary light and be groping for the balls in the dark before it is half-way through.

Willingdon is only giving interviews in the morning. He goes to sleep every afternoon. After Irwin's eighteen hours a day it is a bewildering change.

But no harm may come of it, for Willingdon has the invaluable gift of being able to delegate. Irwin was never very good at that.

All the same, I wonder if W. will be able to stay the five years' course. It must be a gruelling change after Canada.

*May 16th.*

Gandhi has arrived, and by car after all. The men in the club blaspheme, but there was no other course.

The authorities feared a demonstration if G. walked, and as a detachment of police was already required for Lady Willingdon, who was visiting a hospital, they gave way, and Gandhi had his four cars. In the end, he produced five. But this the police would not stand for, and when the fifth car arrived in the sacred precincts of the Simla Mall they stopped it and bundled out the occupants, baggage and all.

The strange thing is that G., apparently, subsequently called upon Emerson (the Home Secretary) in a rickshaw. He and Emerson still seem to get on extraordinarily well. Both think that they handle the other so cleverly and that is so satisfactory for everybody.

G. is going to walk to Viceregal Lodge to-morrow. A rumour has got round that the Viceroy is sending his own car for Gandhi. Furious denials have been issued from the Court.

*May 18th.*

Mr. Gandhi has seen the Viceroy and, I understand, conveyed to him his belief that the communal problem can be solved in India.

I hear that he reiterated his offer to persuade the Hindus to accept any demands the Moslems might make, provided that they were made in the name of the whole community.

No reply has yet come from the Home Government as to the date of the Conference. Judging from the communications which I understand have already passed between Downing Street and Simla, it will be in September.

The Cabinet flatly declines the suggestion of the Government here that it should give up its August holidays. It points out that it will have had a gruelling session, that the Prime Minister has been ordered by his doctor a complete rest, that Mr. Snowden is ill, that, in August, Mr. Thomas will be in Ottawa and Mr. Henderson probably at Geneva.

Mr. Gandhi's plea for a longer time to solve the communal question will probably clinch the decision in favour of September.

"Is the English Conservative Party trying to back out of the implications of the last Round Table Conference?"

This question, which I have heard everywhere in Simla recently, illustrates what serious misgivings Sir Samuel Hoare's speech in the House of Commons has created in India, even among the Princes.

Sir Samuel Hoare, who was one of the Conservative representatives at the Round Table Conference, had said in the Commons that the real issue was whether there was to be sufficient goodwill in India to make possible an advance on the lines discussed at the Round Table Conference. Since that conference the question of safeguards had been pushed into the background in India.

What mystifies opinion out here is the view apparently taken in England that India is in a highly combustible condition. In actual fact, it is quieter than it has been probably at any time since the War.

The only really serious breaches of the Irwin-Gandhi agreement are in the United Provinces, where the "no rent" campaign still continues, but Sir Malcolm Hailey, the ablest of the Governors, has the situation well in hand.

As for the boycott of Lancashire trade, it is pointed out that the agreement was not signed until March 7, and there has been no time for any

marked improvement.

An important factor in the situation is the large stocks of cloth that were unsold during the Civil Disobedience movement and are at present sufficient for the market.

When these are exhausted, orders will come to Lancashire again.

But what surprises the Round Table delegates most of all is the Conservative attitude to the safeguards.

Sir Tej Sapru, whom I met at a garden-party this afternoon, spoke very forcibly on the question. He said:

"I am amazed at the speech of Sir Samuel Hoare. The Conservatives wobbled to the last on safeguards.

"It is absurd to expect us to come to London pledged to accept in detail all the safeguards. The whole point of the Conference is that it is a free and open one. In any case, two can play the game of insisting that principles should be accepted before the Conference opens.

"Do the Conservatives accept the principle of Dominion Status and responsibility at the Centre? We might very well reply that we will not come to London unless they definitely declare their agreement. But, surely, the time for all these debates is when we are in London, and not weeks before we are even going to sail."

So far as the political situation is concerned, Mr. Gandhi's visit to Simla had been a great success. One interesting result is that he has promised to use his influence with Abdul Guffar Khan, the formidable leader of the militant "Red Shirts" on the Frontier, to keep the peace. Guffar Khan is the immediate danger point in the Indian situation.

Here is a more intimate picture of Mr. Gandhi's visit, conveyed in a letter dated May 20th:

> "My dear Frank,—Great excitement over here over the arrival of Gandhi and the rest of them. G. is rather disappointing. To talk with him one would think that the payment or non-payment of land revenue in Gujerat transcended the future of India in importance. Occasionally, Gandhi shrinks amazingly in size, and from the high-souled statesman becomes the petty-minded, haggling minor official.
>
> "His point is that it was he who persuaded these peasants to break the law, and that now if they have a grievance he must stand by them.

Quite so. But why cannot we leave that part of the business to a subordinate and get on with the constructive work.

"The whole question of land revenue is terribly complicated by the appalling distress of India. The poverty of the peasants is heartrending—but no one hears about it, for behind their mud walls they starve in silence. Already thirty per cent. of the land revenue has been remitted, but it is not enough. Gandhi says that when they won't pay they can't pay. But Malcolm Hailey, the best by far of the Governors out here, put to G. this poser: 'Is it a mere coincidence, Mr. Gandhi, that those who won't pay their land revenue are, in almost all cases, members of the Congress Party?'

"I think Willingdon is on the right lines when he says that he wants to get the politicians to London as soon as possible, and concentrate himself upon the appalling domestic distresses of India. Congress are not really concerned with social reform. Social workers have lost most of their helpers to the politicians. It is more exciting to lie down in front of a tram than wash medicine-glasses in a dispensary. Ahmedabad, where most of the Congress mill-owners live and from which Gandhi issues forth in his great crusades, has more hellish social conditions than any town, probably, in the world. What a strange irony it is that the money subscribed for the political freedom of the masses is paid out of the profits of industrial slavery. I suppose that was true of the Corn Law agitation. It was financed by the Lancashire mill-owners, waxing fat on child labour. But, still, that did produce cheap bread, and this seems only likely to produce cheap politicians.

"Willingdon is deliberately trying to end the personal-negotiation policy so successfully worked by Irwin. He thinks that it is a great mistake to treat Gandhi differently from any other delegate. In logic, he is right. But, in practice, I think it a mistake. Gandhi is different from any other delegate. No settlement can be permanent that does not have his approval. It is absurd to class him with some obscure Bengal politician. So far as educated Hindu India has a voice, he is it. Even Sapru—able, charming, eloquent, in every way a big man—represents nobody but himself, and would, indeed, admit as much. It is vital that the personal touch with Gandhi should be maintained. He is a sentimentalist—very responsive to any appeals to the heart—and if he is approached in the right way he will be perfectly reasonable. That is why Irwin's presence on the next Round Table Conference is imperative.

"How awfully serious I am becoming. Forgive me. I eat and drink this India problem from breakfast to the last whisky and soda at

midnight. I ride, and play tennis a good deal, but I am so bad at both. Anglo-India has as high an average in sports as in work. The only thing that they can't do is to act. I went to the A.D.C. show at Simla, over the week-end. It was quite extraordinarily bad. Perhaps even that is symptomatic. Acting is all a question of personality, and that is one thing the British official lacks. They all tend to be rather dull. The really interesting people are men like Schuster, the Finance member, who has just come out here to do a special job."

The situation had now obviously cleared. The Civil Disobedience movement was at an end. Gandhi was ready to work in with the Round Table delegates; even the date of the next conference had been settled.

It was true that the communal problem had not been settled. But could it be settled out there? There were continuously false dawns. First Gandhi was going to settle it, then the Nawab of Bhopal was actually reported to have settled it. A compromise was supposed to have been arranged.

It was all of no avail. The Moslems would not withdraw their demands and the Hindus would not grant them. It was the case of the immovable object and the irresistible force.

My office wired to me to come home and I had no excuse for not doing so. But I determined first to pay a brief visit to the Frontier.

The following letter describes my last week-end in Simla:

"Simla,
*May 25th*.

"I am writing this in the train as it rockets down the mountain to the steaming plains below. It is only about fifty miles away but it takes four hours to complete the journey for it is like a scenic railway. One goes round and round the mountain until finally one reaches the bottom.

"I have had another amusing week-end with the Chetwodes.

"My antics on a horse are 'just too shaming.' I came out to ride one early morning to find one of the horses prancing round like a Derby thoroughbred. I had an uneasy fear that that was the horse marked out for me. It was. The A.D.C. said rather nervously, 'I don't know how you will like this horse, Bernays.' I said, 'What is his name?' 'Pepper-pot,' was the answer, and I knew the worst. In two minutes I was doubtful if I could control it—in five I was certain that I could not. By Simla Church we broke into a canter, then into a gallop and before I could even be frightened I was charging the Commander-in-Chief. Only the merciful Providence that looks after incompetents prevented us both crashing into

the plains below, for all Simla is built on the edge of a precipice so that one false step and I was in the abyss. After that, with a face flaming with shame I had to change horses—altogether the most ignominious incident in my Indian career.

"Snowden, their official house here, is a glorious place—perched on a promontory with the whole panorama of mountain and pinewood in front. The background are the eternal snows of the Himalayas. The whole scene is like the back-cloth of a musical comedy with life breathed into it.

"I went to Sippi Fair on Friday, where the wives are exposed for sale. They looked so charming in their gay frocks all sitting on a mound together. I wanted to bring one back to Finchley. But I remembered my father—and his congregation.

"Unfortunately it rained—and how! Rain in India comes down like Niagara. In five minutes one is really as wet as if one had fallen into a swimming bath with one's clothes on. In Bombay last year, in twenty-four hours there were thirty inches, more than the whole rainfall of England in a year. I hope I shall miss the rains. India is made for sunshine. Its scenery and its buildings are just made to reflect the sunlight. A Sunday in Hull is exhilarating compared to a day's rain in India.

"I shall return a greater gossiper even than when I went. Here the women have nothing to do except discuss one another. The men are little better.

"But Simla is not the place it was. Most people up here now have come to work. In the old days the women would leave their husbands in the plains and smash up the happy home in Simla. Now they go to England or up to Kashmir where there is more to do.

"But as a matter of fact, contrary to popular belief, India is a place of happy marriages. I have found more people happily married in India than anywhere else in the world. Perhaps it is that they just have to make a success of it. Imagine a remote station in the desert with perhaps only a Eurasian doctor and a planter as companions. In those circumstances you have just got to love your wife or shoot yourself."

*May 20th.*

I came down the hill this afternoon from Simla. I have left behind once more my London suits and am now in cotton again. I have just been

breakfasting in Lahore. The European quarter is as deserted as the City on a Sunday afternoon. The Government have left for Simla—and all is silence.

I pencilled the following letter to Frank Milton in the train.

"I am on the way to the Khyber. I have just reached Rawalpindi, I believe the greatest military station in the world. It is all rather grim. I am now in the region of strategic railways and concentration points and cantonments and cavalry squadrons and all the rest of the crackling jargon of murder.

"At the moment I am only concerned about the heat. It is now 4.30 and all day long I have ploughed through a burning fiery furnace. I am sitting in shorts and a cricket shirt and my skin cleaves to the shorts. An extremely painful process of disentanglement then arises as I am very sore from riding again in the cavalcade of the C.-in-C.

"Chetwode is good for India at the moment for he has the rare virtue in generals of obeying the politicians. He is now genuinely trying to Indianise. But we have been disgracefully dilatory about it. Do you know that there are less Indian officers per regiment than there were before the Mutiny?"

The following is an extract from a letter also written in the train to my Editor.

"I am attacked by all sides—by the Congress newspapers for being in the pocket of the Liberals, by the Liberals for being the mouthpiece of the Congress and by my fellow special correspondents here for dining too much with the Government. I really think that I had better leave India before I get really unpopular!"

CHAPTER XXXV

# THE TRUTH ABOUT THE "RED SHIRTS"

Everybody knows the story of the Frontier according to the *Daily Mail*. It is an outpost of the Soviet Republic. It is to be the spear-head of the attack on India. Russian gold is pouring across the mountains. The Moslems are being armed with Russian weapons. They have formed themselves into a movement that actually has the brazen effrontery to call itself the "Red Shirts" and to take the blood-stained Soviet emblem of the hammer and sickle. Their leader is the terrible Abdul Guffar Khan, a gaolbird and a relentless enemy of all that is British.

Echoes of these sinister stories had even reached the Government offices of Simla and Delhi. The Frontier was supposed to be in a highly dangerous condition. British officers were frequently stoned on the roads, and in Charsadda the insults levelled at the British soldiers might at any moment lead to a serious clash.

Immediately I arrived in Peshawar I set out to extricate the truth.

I found that for the more lurid statements there was not a vestige of truth. Not a rouble was coming across the mountains into the coffers of the "Red Shirt" movement. The most resolute watch is kept on all their activities. Letters are opened, spies are posted, informers are encouraged. Nothing could reach Abdul Guffar Khan or any of his lieutenants without the Government being immediately in possession of the facts. The only money that has reached them is some fifty thousand rupees from Congress.

Nor has the fact that the uniform is a red shirt any political significance. Originally they were dressed in white shirts but they became dirty so quickly that they dyed them red. "Red Shirts" is merely a nickname.

Their real title is an Indian word that means "servants of God." They are a social as well as a political organisation. They have a list of rules that read very much like the code of the boy scouts.

The idea that they are a formidable army is ludicrous. I went one Sunday afternoon to Utmunzai to see their headquarters. The "army" was turned out for my inspection. I have not ceased to regret that the sun had gone too low for a photograph. For they looked like a comic turn on the music-hall stage. There were about a dozen of the most incongruous creatures I have ever seen—two boys of twelve, an old man with dark blue glasses, a man so deaf that he had to put his hand to his ear to hear the word of command, another

with a painful limp. It was a parade of the halt, the maimed, the blind, and the boys. An order was given which may have been right or left turn. It was impossible to tell which, for four turned left and five right and three did not hear the order at all. And this was "the army" that is giving sleepless nights to Mr. Churchill and his constituents!

That evening Abdul Guffar Khan returned from a tour of the villages and I had a talk with him in his brother's compound in Peshawar. It was an eerie meeting. For days no official knew where he was. Their spies had failed them. His brother, Captain Khan Sahib, suddenly rang me up on the telephone and said that if I came round at once to his bungalow I should find his brother there. Darkness had fallen and a thunderstorm was threatening. Abdul Guffar Khan, looking the embodiment of the traditional paintings of Christ, spoke in very broken English and I had to get his brother to interpret for me.

This is the gist of what he said to me: "The Government of India misunderstands my movement. I do not hate the British. I only want the same reforms for the Frontier Province as for the rest of India. I am not declaring against the payment of revenue. I am a landowner myself and I have paid my revenue.

"I have received no money from Russia. I have no connection with Russia.

"The British have put me in prison but I do not hate them. My movement is social as well as political. I teach the 'Red Shirts' to love their neighbours and to speak the truth. Moslems are a war-like race. They do not easily take to the gospel of non-violence. I am doing my best to teach it to them."

The impression of him I recorded in my diary that night is:

"A. G. K. is a kindly, gentle, and rather lovable man. As well think that old George Lansbury is a dangerous revolutionary as imagine that A. G. K. is the relentless enemy of the Raj."

At the same time though he is not formidable he very soon will be if they continue to handle him as stupidly as they are doing now. From what I heard of the Peshawar riots last year a large proportion of the trouble seems to have been quite unnecessary. On one occasion the officials mistook a mild bazaar disturbance for the revolution and descended into the narrow alleys of Peshawar with armoured-cars which, of course, inevitably crushed one of the crowd to death. It took several days to get the bazaar quiet after that.

Just when peace was being successfully restored a most unfortunate accident happened. A British soldier, a member of a military post at the

Peshawar gate, was cleaning his rifle which he did not realise was loaded. The shot went off and by a terrible accident hit and killed a woman in the street and the baby she was nursing at her breast. The whole city was in an uproar again.

The officials got really rattled and either by accident or by design a platoon of British troops, meeting the funeral procession returning down a closed street, instead of ordering them to retire, fired upon them. It was alleged in their defence that the crowd tried to seize their rifles, but even if that was so, which seems unlikely, a soldier with a rifle is so immeasurably superior to an unarmed mourner that he could surely have maintained authority without resort to the fearful employment of bullets.

At any rate again the city flared into riot. So it has been all through the last fateful year. Blunder has succeeded blunder.

It is the same in the villages. I passed Utmunzai and saw a great pile of stones obviously recently collected. I subsequently heard the story of them. A foolish colonel employed political prisoners to collect these stones as a punishment. The Indians who love symbolism have of course seized upon this pile of stones as a great place of pilgrimage. If they want an impressive political demonstration they summon it to the pile of stones at Utmunzai.

It has now had its baptism of blood. Just before the truce there was a large demonstration there. It was declared an illegal meeting and the police arrived to smash it up. Shots were fired from the crowd; the police retaliated and several deaths resulted.

I went out to explore one morning how grave was this talk of "Red Shirt" insults and incipient violence. The following extract from a letter to my Editor records what I saw:

> "There is a great deal of nonsense in all this chatter about the 'Red Shirt' revolutionaries. I have been several motor drives into the disaffected Charsadda district. Once a small boy threw some earth at my car. At intervals other small boys shouted *Inquilab*! 'Long live the Revolution.' But it had about as much political significance as when the Rugby boys at the election used to shout at me 'Vote for Margesson' (my Conservative opponent).
>
> "As for these stories about insults to British troops in Charsadda, well, there are not any British troops to insult. There is a company of Sikhs out there under a British officer. I breakfasted with him this morning—fanned by the way by a real punkah which is very rare now for they have been almost entirely superseded by electric fans. There have been no incidents or insults of any kind.

"The only ugly incident that has come under my notice is all the other way. It is a horrible story. Yesterday two British officers motoring in the afternoon thought that one of a group of small boys had thrown a stone at them. They stopped the car, seized the first small boy they could lay hands on and carried him off in the car. They subsequently set him down seven miles away from where they had picked him up.

"Since then—it is now about thirty hours afterwards the little boy, who is about nine years' old, has not been seen. A distracted father, who is a sub-inspector of police, is rushing round Peshawar trying to get somebody to do something about it.

"The superintendent of police concerned in it will do nothing. He says that he knows the names of the officers but will not divulge them. He merely says 'The father is hiding the child for political purposes.' The father on the other hand quite placidly says, 'The British have, of course, thrown the boy into the river.'

"What has quite likely happened, is that the boy has been captured by the Afridis for their favourite practice of ——. But only one man here among the officials thinks that there is anything alarming in the story.

"There is no dangerous revolutionary movement here now, but that is no fault of the administration."

The following is an extract from another letter to my Editor written at this time:

"I am glad that I saw the Frontier. It is the old India at its worst. The administration is unimaginative, callous and not particularly competent, I cannot understand how the Simon Commission ever came to report that there should be no reforms in the North-West Frontier Province. The much advertised frontier danger is largely 'poppycock.' If they spent a quarter of the Army estimates on irrigating the desert they would be able to halve the expenditure of the remainder. The Afridis loot because they are starving. I wish that I could lift the veil and expose some of the excesses up there.

"Some of the stories of the wholesale shootings and hangings last year made me—rapidly becoming a hard-boiled and cynical journalist—hang my head in shame."

In justice to the officials I ought to add that the Frontier Province is in a sense a war zone. A street riot in Peshawar is far more dangerous than

anywhere else. It is like building a bonfire near a gas works. At the same time though the administration has to be rigid it need not be harsh. I have sifted a good many stories of alleged administrative barbarism. In all places except the Peshawar district, I have found them baseless. But of what I heard and saw in that section of the North-West Frontier, I write deliberately that the administration is unimaginative, crude, totally out of touch with the spirit of the time and therefore dangerously incompetent.

CHAPTER XXXVI

# AN INDIAN TALE OF TWO CITIES

In all India I have never seen Europeans and Indians more hopelessly and dangerously separated as in Peshawar, the last town in British India.

The European community lives outside the city walls. That is true of course of all Indian cities. There are usually two railway stations, one for the city and one for the cantonments. But Peshawar is a tale not merely of two cities but of two opposing armies. In the cantonments we live in the shadow of force naked and quite unashamed.

A sentry guards my host's bungalow at night; I wake to the sound of a regiment being put through physical training on the parade ground outside in the cool first hour after dawn. There are guns down Commissioner Road outside, and they are plainly not there for ornament. All the talk at the dinner tables and over coffee in the ghostly compounds afterwards is of murders and of raiding Afridis and of the dangers from the Afghans. This is Churchill's India.

It is imperialism expressed in stripes and executions. I have heard some horrible stories of the harshness of the administration.

A few months ago a boy of seventeen imprisoned for some political offence, shouted in the gaol, *Inquilab!* which means "long live the Revolution." It was a trivial offence against gaol discipline, and at most deserved a mild schoolboy's birching. Though in the case of all corporal punishment one has to remember that Indians have not had the good fortune to be educated at an English public school, and they therefore regard a beating not merely as extremely painful but as the extremity of degradation. By the order of the gaol superintendent this boy was stripped and given thirty stripes across his back to make him more affectionate to the British Raj.

An attempt was recently made on the life of a British official. It was unsuccessful, but in less than two days the perpetrator of it had been executed. I did not hear these stories from disaffected Indians. They were told me proudly by British officials as the way they dealt with Congress activities up here.

These methods may be necessary to preserve our position. I can only record that I wish that they were not.

There have been no constitutional reforms here. The North-West Frontier Province is regarded as being in the danger zone, and is therefore subjected to the direct personal control of the British, as was all India up to a generation ago. There is little Indianisation. Out of thirty-five assistant superintendents of police only three are Indians. In the rest of India the proportion of Indians and Europeans in the Civil Service is about fifty-fifty. It will not reach that figure here at the present rate of progress until 1949.

Peshawar is a place where one seldom meets an Indian socially. Officials that are friendly disposed towards the Indians are gravely suspect. The British live as they lived in Kipling's time—efficient and just administrators of a conquered country. That is the tale of one city.

* * *

I will now tell the tale of the other city which exists by its side. There are no broad roads there or avenues of trees or spacious bungalows or flower gardens. It lives its life behind great walls which completely encircle the city. The gates are closed at night, and one might be in a fortified town of the Middle Ages. Few Europeans beyond officials venture down its narrow, squalid, swarming streets, and even then in motor-cars, and women never enter it at all.

I explored it in the company of Captain Khan Sahib. He is the brother of Abdul Guffar Khan, who is the leader of the "Red Shirt" movement and is regarded as, next to Gandhi, the most formidable foe Great Britain has to face. Captain Khan Sahib is a doctor, and like so many doctors, an enthusiastic social reformer. Cultured, charming, extensively travelled in England, and a warm admirer of English ways, it is a thousand pities that he is regarded by the officials with distrust and dislike. It shows again how wholly out of touch the cantonments are with the city.

I could have had no better guide for Peshawar. Everywhere he was greeted with affection and respect and I was able to walk at will through every part of the city.

It is the most bizarre I have ever seen. The streets in places were so narrow that not even a *tonga* could go down them. There was no sanitation at all. The children were using the open drain in the street as a public latrine. I have never felt mere numbers so repulsive. The children were so dirty and so diseased and there were so many of them. It was horrible. Fortunately there is the blistering sun to act as a disinfectant. It was so hot that in summer they all slept out of doors; the top stories of all the houses were open to the sky.

But the smell! The walls of the houses were plastered with cow dung. It is their winter's coal supply. Though the temperature rises to 120 in the summer it falls to freezing point in winter.

I visited the silk factories, where the turbans are made. They were underground dungeons where in a narrow cellar a dozen men and women would be employed. They worked and slept in the same building—probably the most pernicious form of industrial slavery since before the Factory Acts.

I saw the caravanserai where the camels arrive from across the mountains with the fruit from Kabul that they exchange for the carpets of Peshawar. Peshawar at the entrance to the Khyber remains what it has been since the dawn of history—the mart of central Asia.

I climbed to the roof of the police station, always the central building in an Indian town, and there comes up to me that peculiar tranquil murmur of a great city that the East alone produces. The whole panorama of the Frontier comes into view—the walled city dominated by the great fort outside, the cantonments of its masters, and in the distance the long black line of hills from which the marauder may still descend.

We come down again and enter the house of one of Captain Khan Sahib's friends. He is one of the richest men in Peshawar. It has a dirty courtyard and the stairs are in the open air. His drawing-room contains some of the most lovely carpets I have ever seen and on the walls a ghastly oleograph of the King and Queen and a picture of Margate beach.

On we go with the strange tour. We enter the street of vice. Women beckon from the windows. Boys also solicit for custom, for the Pathans, magnificent looking men that they are, have the unlovely vices of Sparta.

We turned a corner and I was face to face with religious asceticism in its most bestial form. It was the first day of the Moslem festival of Mohurrum and down the street chanting prayers and hymns came a group of boys stripped to their waists. A young man armed with a cane was in charge of them, and as they sang they beat themselves with the palms of their hands across their chests, which were already red and swollen. In their religious ecstasy they did not feel the pain. They were mourning the death of Mahomet's children in the Arabian wars. They would do this every day for the next ten days. On the last day of all they would use chains and thereby lacerate their bodies until they were covered with blood. This horrible ceremony of mutilation is supposed to be performed by all devout Moslems. But elderly Moslems who have not the stamina to bear the beating employ boys to receive it for them.

My guide was horrified when I suggested that this orgy of pain might have some basis in masochism. He insisted that it was purely an expression of religious ecstasy. But he deplored it all the same. He told me that many Moslems regarded it as wholly contrary to the ideas of the age but that none had the courage to stand out against it.

A little further on we came to the object of the boys' pilgrimage. A canopy had been stretched across the street and on the road a prayer carpet. There in a few minutes the boys would dedicate their poor little bruised bodies to the greater service of their god.

We reached the gate of the city and in a few minutes I was in the land of bridge and boiled shirts, and bombs and machine-guns.

Peshawar cantonments have not changed in the passage of years. Nor has Peshawar city either. Perhaps that is the reason.

CHAPTER XXXVII

# THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER RIDDLE

*Peshawar, May 1931.*

There is still a corner of the British Empire where soldiers can enjoy what presumably to them still remain the thrills of active service.

It is on the Kajauri plain, about three hundred square miles of desert in the wild North-West Frontier of India between Peshawar and the mountains that guard Afghanistan.

For this is not British India, but enemy territory.

Before the troubles of last year it was the grazing ground of the Afridis. But one blazing August night roving bands of Afridis crept down the empty beds of the countless streams which in the rains cut through the plain, reached the corner of the orchards outside the walls of Peshawar and, for ten days, or rather nights—for they remained hidden in the undergrowth until the sun went down—fired with uncomfortable effectiveness right into the sacred military cantonment itself.

Before the Higher Command had had time to recover from the insult, the Afridis retired as silently as they had come, and British officials were allowed to sleep once more in their compounds without spent bullets piercing the mosquito curtains.

But obviously the war could not end there. Something had to be done to restore British prestige.

It took the form of the occupation of the Afridi grazing ground. The frontier of India has been pushed out about nine miles to the edge of the mountains.

The India Office believe, happily, that the occupation is only temporary and that Afridis can still graze their flocks under the eyes of the soldiers.

I got the impression that neither was likely to happen. Nobody I met contemplated a retirement from the Kajauri plain. That after all is how India was won. The British always ostentatiously, for defensive purposes, pushed their frontier further and further north, until they found at last an immovable force in Afghanistan, and they decided to call it a natural frontier. As for the Afridis grazing their flocks it was summer and there was no pasture, but my impression was that they would not be allowed down even in the winter when there was.

Officials on the spot do not change. The Secretary of State may propose, but six thousand miles away it is they who dispose. There is every sign of a permanent occupation.

Three forts have been built at the bottom of the foot-hills. They look exactly as if they had been designed by the author of *Beau Geste*. They have watch-towers and bullet-proof walls, and there is the glare of the terrible sun to give the last touch of similitude. There is even the authentic thrill of danger.

For behind the bare boulders of the mountains only a few hundred feet above may be lurking an Afridi sniper. The silence of the night is occasionally broken by the crack of a rifle, and some months ago an officer was actually hit in the leg. Even when the men play football, there is a section doing outpost duty in front of them.

It is with a shock that one meets a British officer in his shirt sleeves instead of the blue tunic and képi of the Foreign Legion.

The system of defence consists of three forts or posts in a line across the plain. They are called Salop, Jhansi, and Nowshera. They are really more camps than forts. The men live in tents and the whole camp is surrounded by a thick stone wall, and there are barbed wire entanglements in front of that. There is also a watch-tower, called mysteriously a sapper-post, to enfilade the wire. This is a new form of defence and is in consequence opposed by the military experts.

I visited the forts before breakfast and therefore the heat was bearable. In July and August the temperature exceeds 120 in the shade. There is not a scrap of shade except that from the tents and huts. Only Indian troops, officered by British, are employed.

Every British officer, by the way, speaks in tremendous praise of the loyalty of his troops. Throughout these troublous times there has only been one ugly incident in the whole of the Indian army. That was the mutiny of a half company of ——, who refused to go on police duty into the town at the time of the Peshawar riots.

I wondered somewhat irreverently as I was taken over the elaborate fortifications of the plain whether it would not be both cheaper and more effective to build canals.

On the whole, tribesmen loot because they have not got enough to eat. They would not be so busy buying rifles in the Kohat Pass if they could only grow their meals in the Kajauri plain. I was told, though I remain sceptical, that engineers had already pronounced my plan of irrigation as hopelessly impracticable.

But if it is only by a lavish display of military force that we can hold back the hostile tribes, then clearly we have got to revolutionise our military methods.

At present we are dealing with a frontier affray as if it were a first-class European war.

Last year the Afridi forces numbered on one occasion 500, and on another a thousand. The army behaved as if they were dealing with the March offensive of 1918. They attacked with air squadrons, they put creeping barrages down the orchards, they used all the hideous technique learnt on the Somme.

It was wholly ineffective.

The tribesmen merely vanished into the orchards or sought shelter in friendly villages, and in the night-time they were sniping as merrily as ever.

Yet this kind of thing did not happen twenty years ago. Then we policed the Frontier with irregular forces. They were effective because they were mobile. What is the use of a brigade of troops if at night-time it has to remain behind barbed wire? A mountain pony and a crack shot in this kind of country may be of infinitely more military use than a tank and an artillery barrage—and incidentally very much cheaper.

The whole tendency, begun by Kitchener and continued by his successor, has been to militarise the unmilitary.

The Guides, for instance, were once an irregular force of frontier scallywags commanded by British officers. They are now as expensive and immobile as any other portion of the armed forces of the Crown.

How effective, too, are the Air Force? They have not saved any money on frontier defence. They have just been an addition to the burden. How far have they justified themselves?

Their efforts were certainly disappointing last year. Once the Afridis were down in the Plain they became quite invisible from the air. Through the kindness of the Air Force I was able to fly across the Plain from Peshawar to Kohat. Where there was undergrowth and deep empty beds of streams it was clear that the movement of roving bands would have been quite invisible.

Airmen themselves insist that they could have broken up the Afridis before they advanced out of their mountains. But a civilised nation cannot bomb a primitive tribe just as it suits it.

In any case a bomb scatters far more hatred and bitterness than ever did the old-fashioned bullet. For the rifle was aimed at the raider and the bomb explodes on his women and children.

The consequences are evident in the new form that the two Afridi attacks assumed last year. They were no longer as before just foraging expeditions under arms, they were political demonstrations. They attacked only white men. If they captured Indian prisoners they let them go. It was not an offensive operation so much as an organised revenge.

The Air Force may deal effectively with a raid before it starts. But it is at least arguable that for everyone they suppress they create out of anger and hate another twice as formidable.

It is true that often only the village is bombed, and that by the time full warning has been given the villagers have escaped to the caves. But smouldering ruins, even if it is only of mud huts, is not a good foundation of mutual friendliness or respect.

Is it not possible that the whole basis of our frontier defence needs overlooking? We are treating the robber tribesman as if he were a formidable disciplined soldier, like the Afghan. He is nothing of the kind. He used to be controlled by the police force. What has happened to make it necessary now to put an army against him?

It is quite absurd, as one motors along the Mohma border, to see, every few hundred yards, a fort. We are faced with a few hundred clever snipers and we oppose them with a kind of Hindenburg line.

Admittedly the frontier of Afghanistan must be defended with the Imperial Army. It is the one vulnerable point to the military security of the Empire.

Why cannot we concentrate on that and leave an irregular force to deal with an irregular enemy. It would be more effective and infinitely less costly.

The whole question goes to the root of the troubles in India to-day. The Nationalists complain that 50 per cent. of the revenue of a poor country is swallowed up in the Army estimates, and they insist that there must be retrenchment. The Army Department replies that the frontier menace is even more pressing than it was before the War.

Both sides are probably right. But though a large army is essential, it is at least worth examining whether it need be so cumbrous and costly.

The Army Department seem unable to rid themselves of the Western Front mentality. As usual, they are preparing for the War that has just happened.

The Indian Empire, on half its line at least, needs troops to face a frontier skirmish, not to grapple with a European cataclysm.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

# IN THE THROAT OF THE KHYBER

If there is one place in India that lives up to its thrilling reputation it is the Khyber Pass.

It is not easy to reach now from Peshawar. Owing to the troubles last year on the Frontier all tourist traffic has been stopped. However, the relations between the Army and the journalists are extraordinarily pleasant in India, and armed with a letter of recommendation from the Commander-in-Chief, I set off by car one blazing morning with the necessary permits to explore the Khyber.

A friend had offered me his revolver. I refused, not because I am brave, but because I am not brave. I thought that I should be far less a danger to myself without a weapon of offence than with one.

For nine miles we bumped and pitched across the sweltering plain, to Jamrud Fort, which stands sentinel over the Pass. Then the thrills began.

For it is just like a nursery fort. It even had a citadel with a flag on the top with turrets at each corner, in every detail the same as those that as a boy I used joyously to people with cannon and toy soldiers in scarlet coats before the days of the League of Nations Union.

My car was stopped, my permit examined and I was warned that I must be back not later than half-past three in the afternoon. Again I was offered protection against the perils ahead in the shape of two *khussidars* (police guards armed with rifles). Again I refused. I remembered a horrible story told me at dinner the night before of a bank clerk in Lahore who, a few years ago, had been murdered by the *khussidar* he was paying to defend him. I felt that I should be safer without them.

So we lumbered on up into the Pass alone for twenty-five miles through gorges, round precipitous corners, without even a fence protecting us from eternity, across creaking bridges.

It was a grand experience. Round every bend there was a fort, and where the Pass widened two or three side by side. These defences are not against the Afghans, but, in the event of a war, to guard against the cutting of communications from the rear by the hostile tribes who inhabit both sides of the road.

I was soon reminded of their presence. Half-way I stopped the car to take a photograph. My chauffeur, a tame Afridi, thought that I was trying to

snap some old tribeswomen who were hobbling up the road, and rushed over to warn me of the danger from their husbands.

I tried again, and walked a few yards off the road to photograph the train which was then pulling up the Pass on its daily journey with supplies for the troops. Again my driver galloped across to tell me that it was dangerous even to wander a few yards from the road.

I waited for the train to come up. It is an interesting sight, for it is made to go both ways. There is an engine pulling it in front and another engine behind with its tender tacked on to the rear carriage, so that the whole train can be pulled both ways. This queer arrangement is due to the tremendous twists in the Pass which occasionally necessitate the train backing like a motor-car turning round.

After twenty miles through the Pass I reached Landikhana. Here the main forces in defence of the Pass are concentrated. It is defended by another old-fashioned fort like the forts I had passed, only bigger and broader. It seemed strange in this outlandish scenery to find a Highlander doing sentry duty.

It always came as rather a pleasant shock to see British troops in India. They always seemed out of place by the side of ruined temples or sun-baked forts. For the British soldier remains obstinately the same wherever he is. When one sees him in peace-time one thinks instinctively of a wet football ground and a cinema round the corner.

Once inside the fort and one's surroundings are temporarily forgotten. For the officers' quarters are reminiscent of an Oxford quad. They consist of charming low-roofed houses, built round a square, with green lawns and flower-beds and shady trees.

It is quite extraordinary how the British army in India always seems to manage to carry a corner of Britain with it.

I presented my credentials to the Commanding Officer of the Brigade, and together we clambered up the side of the Pass to get a view of the whole situation. We were escorted by two men with loaded rifles—one behind and one in front—for Wee Willie Winkie's "badmen" in Kipling's moving story still live behind the bare black rocks. Two English officers on a mild Sunday afternoon walk a few years ago were captured and butchered. Now none go out without an escort.

It was so hot that, as we walked, great drops of perspiration pattered on the rocks in front of our feet. But the sight from the top was worth it all. Immediately in front was Landikotal, the outpost of the defence works, in front of that the last Frontier post, and just beyond that one could see the

road debouching out of the Pass on to the Afghan plateau—the whole problem in fact in one glorious sweep.

We climb down again, pick up my car, and are whizzed off to the Frontier post five miles further on. It is a very modest affair after the show of force behind. The frontier of British India is marked only by a sentry-box and a pole across the road.

There is not even a soldier on guard—just an untidy-looking *khussidar* with a rifle slung over his arm. He was certainly in keeping with the Afghan sentry on the other side of the pole—a dejected-looking creature in pantaloons which were neither trousers nor shorts, for they stopped three-quarters of the way down his legs.

A few hundred yards away in Afghan territory is a French château inhabited by the Afghan colonel. It was captured last year by a local tribe. A counter-attack was decided upon. A polite message was dispatched the day before by the Afghan colonel to inform the English colonel that there would be a war the next day and to warn him that some bullets might find their way across the border.

The battle took place, watched eagerly from the windows of the British officers' mess, and the château was at length recaptured.

Service in the Khyber is extraordinarily popular. There is just that spice of excitement and danger to give zest to it.

Even as we watched, lorries under a close police guard came panting up the Pass. They were carrying ·303 rifles to the Afghan king, Nadir Shah, to bolster up his precarious throne. The rifles had been brought from France and had to come through British territory to reach Kabul. But the Government of India raised no objection. They know that if Nadir Shah is safe they are safe. It is only when they are faced with revolution that Afghan kings look with hungry eyes up to the mountains that guard the approaches to India, and wonder whether a timely military diversion against their enemies would not draw away attention from their own misdoings.

So there is talk of a Holy War. Moslem feeling, always easy to stimulate, is roused against the infidel, and once more flashes of gun-fire are seen in the mountains and bullets sputter on the bare rocks.

That is what happened in 1919 when Amanullah "had waded through slaughter to a throne." Very successfully it consolidated his position, too, for a time. It may happen again if things go badly with Nadir Shah. It is well to see that they do not.

It was strange to look at the pole across the road and feel that it was not merely the end of British frontier but the frontier of civilisation.

Beyond that post there is a totally different standard of values. It was only a few years ago that it was the pleasant habit of the Afghan king to practise tent-pegging on his prisoners buried to their necks in the sand. (The same gentleman was afterwards entertained in the Royal suite at Buckingham Palace.) Even to-day horrible stories are whispered by wayfarers up the Pass of floggings and mutilations.

In Kabul to-day there is no hotel. It is comparatively easy for a Englishman to get a pass to visit Kabul, but to be effective it has to be accompanied by an invitation from the minister to stay at the Legation. There is no other house where an Englishman with safety can lodge.

For Nadir Shah is not going to make the mistake of reforming his country which cost Amanullah his throne. The motor roads that Amanullah caused to be built are now slipping back into mountain tracks again, and no more is heard of the fearsome order that Amanullah issued, fresh from the State banquets and the country-house parties of London, that every Afghan should shave his beard.

Amanullah on his travels seems to have behaved with an arrogance almost akin to insanity. He was given a Royal reception when he embarked from Bombay to England. But the Viceroy was not there to see him off. At the dinner beforehand he demanded to take precedence of the Governor, and the dinner very nearly had to be abandoned in consequence.

Nadir Shah, wise in his generation, is not going to venture out of his dominions, and he is not over-anxious that anyone should venture into them. An iron curtain has descended between Afghanistan and civilisation.

I could have stayed for hours in contemplation of that road that leads from British India into the dark heart of Afghan territory. How many times had that savage country lured the troops of the mightiest Empire the world has ever seen to disaster. In early schoolboy days how fascinated one had been by the story of that ghastly retreat, in the middle of a cruel winter, of the British from Kabul, ending in that picture still so common on cottage walls in England of Dr. Brydon, reeling into Jellalabad, the sole survivor of a host that, when it started, had numbered upwards of sixty thousand. Eighty years afterwards we were still gazing anxiously down the Kabul road and wondering what dangerous secrets it still might hold.

Well, at any rate, Britain had disproved the proverb that he who would be king of Hindustan must first be lord of Kabul.

Sadly I tore myself away from my thoughts and climbed up again to Landikhana to lunch in the Gurkha mess. The Gurkhas, I suppose, are the only purely mercenary army left in the civilised world. They definitely hire

themselves out from Nepal for fifteen years to the Government of India. They are queer little creatures—very wiry and cheerful. They are the troops with which the British soldier gets on best. They are very good at football. Incidentally, the Gurkhas can never be Indianised. They must always be commanded by British officers. It is part of the bargain with Nepal.

A project is on foot to abandon the garrison at this outpost at Landikhana. To the amateur there seems everything to be said for it. It is subject to sand-fly fever and malaria and since nothing has been done to it since 1919, it is gradually tumbling down.

I wonder if such an immense force in the Khyber at all is really necessary.

Twenty years ago it was policed by the Khyber Rifles. There were some desertions, and to-day it is as closely garrisoned as the Vosges forts. It is surely unnecessary. When the situation is tranquil the Khyber could be lightly held and heavily reinforced if necessary in time of trouble from Peshawar. This dissipation of our forces all along the frontier from Peshawar to Quetta is difficult to defend either from the point of view of strategy or expense.

Not that I minimise the importance of the Khyber. As, after a delightful lunch in the Gurkha mess, I started on my way back to Peshawar (and thence to Bombay and England), I saw on the other side of the Pass, written as it were on the rocks, the unchanging truths of history. On one spur a fort marks the scene of the bloodiest battle in the third Afghan war of 1919. Next to it are the ruins of a fort built by one of Alexander the Great's generals. In between empires have tottered, a new civilisation has come into existence, the methods of warfare have been revolutionised, but the Khyber remains what it has always been, the narrow door-way to the defenceless plains of India.

And not only the Khyber, but India as a whole, looks superficially very much the same as in the last century. That is why it is so fascinating.

Nevertheless, we are all in at the death of an epoch, and, what is more, we are all conscious of it.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Naked Fakir* by Robert Bernays]