



35

CSL

LEAVES FROM A POLICEMAN'S DIARY

AS025960

B. N. LAHIRI
I.P. (Retd.)



MEENAKSHI PRAKASHAN
MEERUT DELHI CALCUTTA



CSL

1534
B
Lah-1

025960



MEENAKSHI PRAKASHAN
Begum Bridge, MEERUT
Offices also at : Delhi and Calcutta

PRINTED IN INDIA
at Prakash Printing Press, Meerut

© MEENAKSHI PRAKASHAN

PREFACE

THIS book is intended merely to present, as faithfully as possible, certain of my experiences as a Police Officer from the time I joined this service to the time I retired, that is, roughly from 1922 to 1952. Notwithstanding, therefore, an abundance of the first person singular in it, it is not to be taken for an autobiography nor for a book of words containing my observations for the benefit of future generations of mankind !

I have divided the book into three parts corresponding to the early, middle and concluding periods of my career, each extending over a spell of approximately ten years.

As will appear from their very captions, the episodes related herein have been specially selected by me to cover a wide range of subjects, beginning with my first impressions as a Police Probationer and ending with a pen-picture of my visit to Dharchula in 1952. All of them concern topics that should be of interest not only to policemen in particular, but also to the public in general.

I have deliberately left the incidents to speak for themselves, as I consider this to be the best way of presenting them. Being true to life they may seem to lack 'the limbs and outward flourishes' associated with tales that go under the name of fiction. Even so, I hope, they will be found to be no less interesting, for there is no denying that truth, if not stranger than fiction, can be at times just as captivating.

The book can be said to have an additional attraction as reflecting the life of a policeman in India during a very interesting period of her history, when she witnessed the close of one era and the birth of another.

I am particularly thankful to Professor M. S. Doraiswami, Dr. V. S. Narvane and Mr. G. Waddell I.P. (Retd.), for their going through the manuscript and giving some valuable suggestions.

CONTENTS

I

✓ THE PROBATIONER	3
✓ A NOVEL EXPERIENCE	18
✓ RAID ON A GAMBLING DEN	24
✓ A COCAINE SMUGGLER	27
✓ WITNESS FOR THE DEFENCE	32
✓ THE POLICE HAVE THEIR WAYS	35
✓ A BICYCLE RIDE	40
✓ ABLAKH—A FIEND OF A HORSE	46
✓ SMALL FRY AND BIG FISH	49
✓ ALL IS WELL THAT ENDS WELL	54
✓ THE TALUQDARS OF OUDH	56
✓ THE VANISHING TRICK	60
✓ AN ANGRY TIGER	63
✓ THE VICEREGAL SPECIAL	71
✓ A CHRISTMAS CAMP	75
✓ THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT OF 1930	81

II

✓ INNOCENCE AND GUILF	89
✓ BAM MAHADEO	92
✓ ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK	94
✓ A CASE OF MASS HYSTERIA	98
✓ SIR MALCOLM HAILEY	109
✓ A PENITENT HUSBAND	113
✓ WHEN PATRIOTISM WAS A CRIME	115
✓ MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING	117
✓ JANKI THE SORCERER	120
✓ TWO ODD CHARACTERS	124
✓ THE WAGES OF SIN	129
✓ ON THE POLO GROUND	134
✓ SADHO SINGH—THE OUTLAW	137



X BELIEVE IT OR NOT	143
X RAM DASS BREAKS JAIL	147

III

X BALLIA IN THE GRIP OF THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT	153
X AN ITALIAN PRISONER OF WAR	161
X THEFT FROM A REGIMENTAL ARMOURY	163
X A MURDER STORY RETOLD	166
X A RAILWAY MAIL VAN DACOITY	170
X A DRUNKEN ORGY AND ITS SEQUEL	178
X MUSIC BEFORE A MOSQUE	186
X THE PASSING AWAY OF SAROJINI NAIDU	193
PILGRIMS TO ETERNITY	198
X A CLEVER IMPOSTER	205
X ALL FOR LOVE	209
X DÉPARTED GLORIES	214
NAINITAL BANK DACOITY	222
BASHIR THE BANDIT	232
X A LADY WITH A MISSION	241



CSL

PART ONE



THE PROBATIONER

THOSE were the days when direct recruitment to the Indian (Imperial) Police, as it was then called, was open only to the British. When, therefore, an announcement was made in 1921 that such recruitment was being thrown open to Indians through a competitive examination held in India, it came as a surprise to many. Only one Indian was to be taken in each 'Province' and it was largely through a stroke of good luck that I got in.

My orders were that I should report to the Principal, Police Training School at Moradabad. Accordingly, I left for that station by the Doon Express from Allahabad on the forenoon of August 8, 1922, arriving there in the small hours of the next morning. But as there was no one to receive me at that odd hour, I decided to mark time in the waiting room of the Railway Station, before getting ready for my meeting with the Principal, later in the day.

All my worldly belongings at the time comprised a small steel trunk containing my clothes, a hold-all containing my bedding, and a bicycle. Having loaded all these articles on a tonga, I set out at about eight o'clock for the Principal's house, where, much to my confusion, the first person to accost me was the Principal's wife, Mrs. Dodd. Shy as I felt in her presence, I had to give her my name, whereupon she appeared to be very pleased and called out to her husband to announce my arrival. Mr. Dodd, who was then seated in his office room, asked that I be sent in. When I walked in, he shook hands with me and then put me a few polite questions, before scribbling a note which he instructed me to take to the Senior A.S.P. of the Officers' Mess, one George Reeve, who, he said, would look after me. From the demeanour of both Mr. and Mrs. Dodd I could discern that they had been looking forward to my arrival with some interest and also a measure of curiosity, since I was going to be the only Indian among all the Probationer



On my arrival at the Mess, I found the aforesaid dignitary, Mr. George Reeve, lying flat on his back under the chassis of his 'tin lizzy' in the porch and I could only see his two long legs sticking out. In the circumstances, there was nothing I could do but wait until such time as he scrambled out which, happily, he did soon after. Thereafter, the introductions over, he took me into the Mess where I found a number of officers, all British, having breakfast. Now followed a round of introductions after which the head *khidmatgar* of the Mess, one Masit, made a place for me at the table and I sat down to join the others, feeling all the time extremely ill-at-ease in such strange company.

My companions, on their part, seemed to take little notice of me which, I later understood, was only meant kindly. At any rate, I was glad to be left to myself, as I had never in my life seen such a puzzling display of knives and forks and other table accessories as I saw arrayed in front of me. Much to my relief, I got through the ordeal without any mishap. It now remained for me to be initiated into the mysteries of Mess life by the Mess President, George Parkin, a lad of nineteen or so, who had come out to India only the previous December.

Parkin took me to his room and there explained that there were 'Mess nights' and 'Guest nights', for which one was required to wear Mess-kit and 'Supper nights', for which one was free to wear any informal dress, so long as it did not offend against common decorum. Luckily for me, the day I arrived coincided with 'Supper night'. So I did not have to worry about my dress for dinner. On the other hand, the next day being one fixed for 'Mess night', I had to turn out in Mess-kit and, failing that, at least in ordinary dinner dress. But since I did not happen to possess either of these, my friend was good enough to order for me a summer Mess-kit, consisting of a white drill jacket and a pair of overalls of the same material, to be made ready by the afternoon of the next day. He also fished out for me a pair of old Wellingtons which was for sale, besides lending me a stiff-front shirt and a bow-tie to go with it. He also told me how one had to stick to the time fixed for

dinner and in case of delay apologise to the Mess President ; how one had to get up at the end of the last course to drink to the health of the King ; how one had to click one's heels to greet a senior officer and so on.

One other thing Parkin did for me. Before showing me the room I was to occupy, he engaged a bearer for me on a salary of Rs. 25 p.m. which he told me was the standard rate. In short, as a result of my talk with him, I felt I had absorbed enough information for the day and could now retire to the privacy of my room to ruminate over all that I had heard or seen.

My bearer, Sukkhan, quickly arranged my scanty belongings and I looked on admiringly at the expert manner in which he did so. In fact, the more I saw of him, the more did he go up in my estimation. His one aim, I noticed, was to save me the least trouble. If, for instance, I wanted to put on my trousers he would tuck in the loose ends of my shirt into them or help with fastening the belt. All this made me rather scared of him. So much so, that if I wanted to change my dress, I tried my best not to attract his attention. But whatever I might do, howsoever stealthily I might tiptoe into my dressing room, he seemed to be endowed with a sixth sense that enabled him to anticipate my movements and unfailingly rush in to play his accustomed role. Therefore, I had, in the end, to submit to his ministrations tamely, much as I disliked them at heart.

But let me revert to the tale of my first day's experiences. Soon after I got into my room from George Parkin's, I lay down to rest until lunch time when I again met the same crowd as I had in the morning. And once again, I hardly exchanged a word with any of them. Lunch over, I adjourned to my room till the afternoon, when I went for a ride on my bicycle to while away the time. Not knowing anybody in the station, I wandered about aimlessly till I tired. On my return to the Mess, I had a quiet meal—as it was a supper night—and then retired for the night, feeling thoroughly bored and lonely.

The next day also was as uneventful as the first, except that it took me quite some time to get into my Mess-kit. The



item that gave me the most trouble was the bow tie which, try as I might, would not get properly fastened into a knot. To my shame, therefore, I had to seek the assistance of my expert bearer who did the thing for me in no time.

Dinner at the Mess, I came to realise, was something in the nature of a ritual. For a novice like me much practice was required in addition to close observation. But what was striking was the drill and discipline that went with it. I remember that on Ladies' Guest Nights that came off once a month on an average, the entire place assumed the appearance of a fairy land, with the huge board in front of us artistically arranged and making a brave display of all the silver plates that the Mess possessed, while the subdued light from small hooded candles played upon the faces of the fair guests seated, alternately with the men, in their colourful and gay evening dresses.

But if these nights were marked by a certain amount of drill and discipline, they were not at all dull and dreary. On the contrary, the clatter of the knives and forks combined with the lively chatter that went on, helped to create on such occasions a din that could perhaps be heard for miles. In short, they breathed an air of gaiety and freedom from care that the Englishmen, by marked contrast with an average Indian, knew how to enjoy to the full, after the day's labour.

Dinner over, some settled down to cards while others paired off for a dance. On such occasions, I generally played the role of a spectator, since I cared neither for a dance—an accomplishment I was devoid of—nor for bridge.

It was amusing to notice that when there happened to be among the ladies any one particularly attractive, there was sure to be a scramble for a dance with her. This not infrequently gave rise to much bad blood among the rival claimants, a circumstance that, I must confess, filled me in my position as a mere spectator, with a peculiar sense of self-satisfaction, hard to describe.

One of the things that struck me most about life in the Mess which I, as an Indian, had a rare opportunity to witness in those days, was the quantity of drink an average Englishman

THE PROBATIONER

was able to consume during the course of a day. It was mostly beer by day and whisky by night which some one has aptly described as the basic standing refreshment of the white officer in the East. It is not surprising, therefore, that the drink bill of my mess-mates, on an average, exceeded a hundred rupees a month when whisky could be had for five annas a 'bara peg'.

This reminds me that it was customary in my time for all officers to drink to the King's health on Mess nights, usually in port or sherry. But for those who had any scruples about taking either of these beverages, it was permissible to drink the toast in water, which I, for one, invariably did. True to my practice, therefore, when one evening I was pouring water into my glass for the purpose, I was sharply pulled up by no less a person than the then Inspector General of Police, Mr. L. M. Kaye, on the ground that the King might catch a cold! I can say, however, that my aforesaid practice, which I continued all through my stay at the Mess, had no harmful effect on His Majesty's health and my conscience is, therefore, quite clear on that score.

By the way, the practice of drinking, if not to the King's, but to the President's health, I believe, is in vogue even today in all Regimental and Police Messes. But it seems to me that to continue a practice in pure imitation of one that held good in the British days is sheer folly. Perhaps an appropriate and more sensible thing to do would be to stand up after the last course and simply say, 'The President', God bless him, instead of raising to one's lips in dumb show a glass generally filled with water.

To continue, I thus got more and more reconciled to my life in the Mess, although the feeling of loneliness from which I suffered did not leave me at any time. On occasions, when the Mess used to be full and yet there was not a single Indian to be seen among the crowd, I wondered where I was and whether I stood on my native soil. I could not also resist a feeling that, while I was welcome to my companions as an individual, as an Indian I had no place in their midst. And this was markedly brought home to me when I was passed over for the office of Mess President when my turn came.



To explain myself, I should mention here that every two months the Principal nominated three officers from among us who were designated A, B and C officers—'A' officer being the Mess President, 'B' officer the one responsible for maintaining drink accounts and 'C' officer, for looking after sanitation. As was customary, I was nominated 'C' officer to begin with, then, when my turn came, I became 'B' officer. But alas! all through my eighteen months in the Police Training School, I was never given an opportunity to serve as 'A' officer, although I was shortly to hold charge as a District Superintendent of Police!

But in spite of this occasional discrimination against me on account of my colour, I was, on the whole, treated well by my companions and accepted as one of them. This was due to the fact that I did not indulge in the odious habit of chewing *pan* or have a craze for playing Indian records, unlike an Indian predecessor of mine at the Training School who had been given to both these habits, apart from being fond of smoking the hubble bubble.

I have alluded above to the discrimination I had to suffer on account of my colour. But there was at least one occasion when my colour stood me in good stead and earned me a privileged position. It was New Year's eve when we were assembled at the Principal's residence. We had quite a number of games after dinner till it was close on midnight, when I was beckoned to an adjoining room by Phyllis Dodd, the eldest daughter of the Principal. There I saw a black cat which she wanted me to carry just at the stroke of 12 into the sitting room, before wishing Mrs. Dodd a happy New Year! I asked Phyllis how it was that this special honour was being accorded to me, whereupon she explained the prevailing superstition among Europeans about black cats and dark men. That I brought the Dodds good luck should be evident from the fact that, not long after, Mr. Dodd was elevated to the rank of Deputy Inspector General of Police.

I will now refer to an episode that, as I came to know later, raised me in the estimation of my mess-mates. One evening we were, as usual, indulging in some horseplay in the



Mess, in the course of which my friend, George Parkin, gave me a push from behind to which I retaliated with a square kick on his back. Unconstitutional as this act of mine was, it was hailed as a very good gesture on my part and as representing a mark of my friendliness.

Talking of horseplay, I was at times amazed at the boisterousness, that my companions were capable of and that appeared to form almost a regular feature of our Mess life. One evening, for instance, on his return from the Station Club one of them took it into his head to play ducks and drakes with the glass-ware on the dining table and, as he started the game, the others joined in with much gusto, till not a piece was left standing on the table and the floor was littered with broken pieces, big and small.

On another evening, we had a regular wrestling match in the Mess, following a challenge given by a visiting Policeman, named Warren, to take on any two of us, in a trial of strength against him. He was a man of towering height and very strong build. Still this challenge of his seemed to be very fair and now it only remained to select the two of us who were to be pitted against him in this match. The choice, by popular consent, fell on George Parkin and me, who were the smallest of the lot. For, it was felt that to select any of the others, would not be fair to Warren.

The rules of the game required that we should, first of all, remove the spurs from our Wellingtons, which we did. This done, Warren was made to stand on one side and the two of us, on the other. Then at a signal from the referee, we closed in, the understanding being that the match was to be carried out in the 'catch-as-catch-can' style. For my part, I felt convinced that Parkin and I would be able to make short work of our adversary. In the combat that ensued, while I grappled with one of Warren's massive legs in an effort to pull him down, Parkin flung himself on his torso to get the better of him and soon all the three of us were to be seen rolling on the ground in a confused heap.

Now, imagine to yourself, three men of the Indian (Imperial) Police, turned out in their full Mess-kit, except for

their peak caps and their spurs, lying in this state and you will come to realise the piquancy of the situation !

To cut a long story short, Perkin and I found our opponent invincible and the result was that instead of our getting the better of him, he ultimately got the better of us !

Another favourite indoor game was mock pigsticking in which my companions would start spearing—to the accompaniment of much shouting and yelling—everything that came in their way, sofas included. They would even pick up the stuffed bears and alligators on the floor, for a war dance with them as partners ! But although such behaviour made me occasionally wonder whether these folk had gone crazy, I knew within myself that it was all merely an expression of their surplus energy and that there was really nothing wrong with them.

Evidence of this surplus energy was also to be had in the manner in which my companions gave themselves up to shikar and other manly pursuits, pigsticking and polo being the two most popular. They even confessed at times the thing that had attracted them to service in India was the prospect of shikar, in which they proposed to indulge in full measure. No big game being available while they were at Moradabad, most of them went after small game every Sunday and returned in the evening, generally carrying a string of game birds that they had been able to drop after much toil and trouble in the course of the day.

As for pigsticking and polo, I could not but marvel at the tenacity with which they pursued these sports in spite of occasional tosses or the hottest of hot winds that made most Indians take shelter behind closed doors.

My own adventure at polo one day ended somewhat disastrously for me. I was at the time riding my own horse which happened to be a frisky animal, not broken to stick or ball. As was perhaps to be expected, after a round or two, he got very excited and bolted with me as fast as his legs would carry him. Naturally, I was scared stiff and, even though I pulled with all my might at the reins that I held in my left hand, I failed to stop him. On and on he went, careering at a mad speed towards a gaping well at some distance from the polo

ground.

My plight was indeed unenviable, the more so because with the strap of the polo stick wrapped round the wrist of my right hand, I had to bend all my energy towards keeping the stick from fouling the animal's legs. I must say luck was in my favour in that I managed to steer clear of the well, although there was no slackening of pace on the part of my steed. But now there loomed large, in front of me, a formidable looking hedge that encircled a lone bungalow standing in one corner of the 'Maidan'. In another second or two my charger in trying to clear the obstacle stumbled, with the result that I fell sprawling on the ground, happily without any serious damage to my limbs. The tenants of this bungalow, Mr. and Mrs. Kidwai, whom I happened to know, rushed out and invited me to a hot cup of coffee which I accepted gratefully and relished very much after my harrowing experience. Following this incident, I said to myself, no more polo for me!

Among our other diversions, one was paperchase on horseback in the afternoons and another, a ride by moonlight that generally ended up with a picnic supper on the sands of the Ram Ganga, with much of the fun being provided by ladies of the station who loved to accompany us on these excursions.

By and large, uneventful as my life in the Mess was, it was not without comic interludes such as the one that came to pass one evening a few days after my arrival when they said I must sing a song to mark my introduction to the Mess. This, however, happened to be a tall order for me, as I did not know how to sing and so I wanted to be excused. But they went on pressing me till it was well past midnight. Cornered as I felt, I did not know what to do until it occurred to me that if I recited a Bengali poem which I had committed to memory in my childhood, I might be able to get away with it. So I mounted a small table and with much flourish rattled off the few lines I remembered of this poem and it was thus that in the end I was allowed to go to bed.

During these days I made the acquaintance of one Mr. Young, popularly known as Freddie, whom I found to be a jewel of a man, very kind and considerate. He was then



engaged in a hunt for a notorious outlaw named Sultana and in that connection occasionally came to Moradabad where he used to stay in the room next to mine in our Mess. This gave me an excellent opportunity to observe him at close quarters. Freddie, incidentally, happened to be very bulky weighing, I believe, well over twenty stone.

On the day of which I am reminded, he was engaged in a conversation with one of his officers till a very late hour so that I was kept awake all the time. However, all was quiet when he retired to bed and this enabled me also to compose myself to sleep. But it was not long before I was awakened by a faint creaking noise emanating from Freddie's room that soon developed into a peculiar sound, metallic in tone. It went something like 'kring', 'kring', 'krang'. At first, I failed to make out what it was nor did I know what I was to do in the circumstances. I sat up and began to think hard whether I should call in the chaukidar for help or wait for developments, when it suddenly dawned on me that it was poor Freddie's spring bed that was giving way under his superior weight. Presently I heard a thud, which merely signified his coming to rest on firm ground. I was reflecting on how very awkward the position must be for him when I heard him lift himself and make his bed on the floor.

All was quiet again for a while, until I was awakened by the sound of the morning bugle and got up to dress for parade. Apparently, Freddie also woke up about the same time as I did. But the thing I was not prepared for, was that when I emerged from my room, he too came out to greet me and at the same time to apologise for any inconvenience he might have caused me during the night. I felt greatly drawn to him by his kind courtesy and afterwards it was always a pleasure for me to meet him until his death parted us in 1949.

Freddie was a type of Englishman who endeared himself to Indians by his large-heartedness and his charming manners. He was also generous to a fault with his subordinates. All in all, he was a man the like of whom it would be hard to find.

One other incident of this period which has a comic side to it, relates to an occasion in December 1922 when I was

detailed for special duty at Lucknow along with a number of other probationary A. Ss. P. in connection with the visit of His Excellency, Lord Reading, Viceroy of India. The specific duty assigned to me was that of guarding one flank of an enclosure in which a 'darbar' was to be held, and as I had to be mounted, I was given a horse for the purpose, raised locally from an Army unit.

Now, a weakness from which this horse suffered was that he could not bear the sight of elephants! The result was that whenever he saw one, he swerved away so violently that I ran the imminent risk of being thrown off his back. Unfortunately for me, a number of prize elephants had been collected for the occasion. The drill laid down for them was that they had to be drawn up in a semi-circle and at a given signal to raise their trunks in salute. I remember that they presented a most magnificent spectacle on the appointed day, turned out in their best attire, with a good deal of paint and powder on their massive bodies and with a profusion of gold and silver trappings on them.

With such a large number of elephants moving about all over the place, I had to be careful during the rehearsals and gradually learnt the trick of promptly turning my horse's head to one side whenever I saw an elephant in the distance. I found from experience that this trick worked very well and so, after some time, it came automatically to me, whenever the occasion demanded it. Once, it so happened that on a Sunday morning, which was an 'off day' for me, while I was pedalling along merrily on my bicycle towards my billet, I noticed in the distance a number of elephants being scrubbed and rubbed by their *mahouts* in a tank by the roadside. Through sheer force of habit, I promptly turned round the handle of my bicycle to find myself wheeling away from the elephants, quite oblivious of the fact that I was mounted on a bicycle and not on a horse!

In connection with this Viceregal visit to Lucknow, I remember another incident on the day of the Darbar. As was customary on such occasions, an army of Policemen in uniform had been posted all around the Darbar Tent, by way of a

precautionary measure against any possible attack by terrorists. The zero hour of the Viceroy's arrival was fast approaching and the atmosphere was getting increasingly tense in anticipation of it.

Exactly three minutes before the time fixed for the arrival, the Governor, Sir William Marris, came up in his white limousine and stood at the entrance to the Durbar tent to receive the Viceroy. Meanwhile, the Governor's liveried chauffeur drove off to one side to leave the road clear for the Viceroy and his party. Thereafter, having nothing better to do, he got out of the car to relax his muscles, holding the Governor's pet dachshund by its lead. But he had hardly taken a few steps when an ubiquitous and rather silly policeman on duty desired him to show his pass, whereupon by way of answer he quietly, and with an air of supreme insolence, pointed his finger at the dog in front of him !

I should record here that those were the days when diarchy had just been introduced in India. In the Uttar Pradesh, a beginning had been made with the appointment of two Ministers, named Jagat Narain Mulla and C. Y. Chintamani, both men of repute and outstanding personality. But the thing that my British companions were anxious to impress upon me all the time, was that they had no use for these Ministers. They even used to say that they would very much welcome a rebellion in India that would give them a chance to conquer it for a second time and impose the same old benevolent rule that knew no restrictions of any kind. Little could they, or for that matter even I, visualise at the time that in another twenty-five years or so, the last vestiges of British rule would disappear from this country for ever.

I have referred to the drill and discipline that characterised our life in the Mess. One evening our new Principal, Mr. Gordon, an excellent man, was among those who dined with us. Dinner being over, all of us, including Mr. Gordon, joined in community singing which went on till well past one o'clock. In consequence, when the morning bugle was sounded, we had to pull ourselves out of our beds to attend parade. But it so happened that we got to the parade ground a fraction of a



second after the Principal, which being something unpardonable, earned for us a sharp rebuke from him. He now looked quite a different person from the one who had been singing smutty songs in our company only the previous evening. This was an incident that served as an object lesson for me which I have not felt tired of repeating ever since.

They say we all live and learn. The truth of this was fully demonstrated to me with reference to the social obligation of 'calling'. Soon after my admission to the Police Training School I was given a list of married couples on whom I was required to drop my cards, the Crakers and the Baldocks being among them. Unfortunately for me, I had not been told that all one had to do was to leave two cards with some servant or other and, if this could not be done, then to drop them in the not-at-home box that was generally to be found at the gate. When I got to the residence of the Crakers and a servant came up to enquire my business, I said I wanted to call on the Crakers. He asked for my cards and I gave them to him. The correct thing for me to do at that stage would have been to go away and wait for an invitation to tea or lunch or dinner at a future date. But since I knew that at least Mrs. Craker was in, I kept on waiting until the servant turned up again to ascertain my intentions. On my part, I stuck to my guns and so poor Mrs. Craker had to give in and see me, although she was not quite ready to receive any visitors at the time.

In the case of the Baldocks, it so happened that they were both out when I called. But I noticed a not-at-home box hung at the gate, with Mrs. Baldock's name painted on it. Therefore, I just slipped in one card into this box, instead of two. This, I came to know later, was quite wrong, since, in a contingency like this, one was required to leave cards for both the husband and the wife. Grave as my error was, I excused myself on the ground that the box did not have the name of both Mr. and Mrs. Baldock painted on it.

In this connection, I am reminded of a case that was quite amusing, the individual concerned being a young man who had recently come out from England. Inclined to be rather shy, he took the precaution of doing his rounds in the after-



noon, when the Memsahabs in India were accustomed to rest and when he would not have to come face to face with them. One day after driving up to the front verandah of a house on his motorbike, he tiptoed to the spot where the not-at-home box was hung and having dropped his cards, was about to slink away, when out came the Memsahab to greet him; for she had heard the sound of the motorbike and was anxious to meet the newcomer to the station from 'Home'. The young man, on his part, felt thoroughly shaken by this misadventure. In his confusion he expressed his apologies as best as he could and then made for his motorbike with the intention of beating a hasty retreat. But before he could get away, inexorable as fate, the lady in question motioned him to her drawing room, where he had tamely to follow her to satisfy her curiosity about him.

This business of dropping cards, I learnt by and by, was one that required great circumspection, for the rules varied. A wife, for instance, was not required to call on males, which meant that if you were out calling with your wife then your wife had to drop one card, usually of a larger size than yours, while you had to drop two.

During this probationary period I also learnt how, unless one is a professional man, such as a doctor or a lawyer, one must not have any suffixes to his name printed on his visiting card. This reminds me of the case of one of my friends, an Indian, who joined the P.T.S. after me and who happened to have his academic degrees printed on his card. One of the first persons on whom he called was the District Magistrate, an Englishman, who noticed the error and sent the card on to the Principal in a closed cover for my friend's benefit.

From the above account of my life at the Mess, it may be observed that I have confined myself mostly to the social side of it. But now that I look back on those years, I cannot resist a feeling that the main idea behind training in those days at the P.T.S. was, first to inculcate leadership in one, and, secondly, to create a sense of social poise. I believe it was on this account that, when at my request, Mr. Gordon suggested my posting to a District, after I had passed all the tests within



a year or so of my arrival, the answer he got from the Inspector General of Police was in the negative and I had to put in my full term of eighteen months before I was actually so posted, for practical training.



A NOVEL EXPERIENCE

MY first posting was at Fatehgarh, where I was to work under Mr. (now Sir John) Nott Bower, an officer of great merit who later became Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, London. Unfortunately for me, when I arrived he was out camping at a place called Indergarh, so I thought it best to go and see him there. The nearest rail head to Indergarh being Kanauj, I set out by a night train leaving Fatehgarh at about two o'clock and arriving at Kanauj at about four in the morning. But, as it was quite dark at the time and the cold was intense, I decided to relax in the waiting room till sunrise. I then set out for a place called Tirwa in a carriage-and-pair belonging to the Raja of Tirwa that had been arranged for me by the Station Officer Kanauj.

The distance to be covered was ten miles or so and I found the drive quite enjoyable. The road, however, ended at Tirwa and I was told that I would have to cover the rest of the distance, a matter of another fourteen miles or so, on the back of an elephant. The one I mounted belonged to the same Raja and now began my ordeal, for this was the first occasion in my life to ride this animal. I was seated on a pad with my orderly behind me and, for the first mile or so, I did not very much mind the rock-and-roll motion to which my body was subject. For those who have never ridden an elephant it is hard to describe this motion that involves movement of the body in all directions, forward, backward, and sideways, thus resulting in its thorough shake up.

By now it was almost midday and so I began to lose my patience. But with a big hulking animal like an elephant there is little one can do. Consequently, in spite of the best efforts of the *mahout* to make him go faster, he ambled along in his own way.

The result of this was that when I got to the S.P.'s camp at Indergarh it was past two o'clock. Mr. Nott Bower having, meanwhile, left for the Police Station, which was a mile away,

I had to go there. Our meeting necessarily was a brief one, as I had to catch the evening train from Kanauj back to Fatehgarh, having brought no change or bedding with me. As before, my elephant ride back to Tirwa was a bone-shaking experience. Still I managed somehow to stick on and when I got there I found the Raja's car, a Sunbeam Talbot, waiting to take me to Kanauj. But as luck would have it, when I got to Kanauj, the train for Fatehgarh had just left. I then moved on in the Raja's car with the idea of overtaking it before it reached the next station.

The railway track from Kanauj to Fatehgarh runs parallel to a metalled road as far as Gursahai Ganj. The race that now began gave me quite a thrill. But the advantage lay with the train in that every time I overtook it, I was up against a level crossing that I found closed. This happened three or four times till I got to Gursahai Ganj where I found the train still standing. I boarded it just in time for the last lap of my journey to Fatehgarh where I arrived at about nine o'clock in the evening, thoroughly tired and famished, having eaten nothing at all since the previous evening.

Soon after this, while he was camping at another place called Kaimganj, Mr. Nott Bower desired me to join him for a couple of days to see how a thana inspection was done. Till then I had never been in camp and the prospect of living under canvas in the countryside delighted me. On the appointed day therefore I set out for that place on horse-back, the distance to be covered being roughly twenty miles. The ride was uneventful, except that at one place, where the road passed through a ravine and the surrounding country wore a dreary and deserted look, I noticed two wild animals that I took for jackals, dogging the heels of my horse. But, as they were not very large of size, I paid little attention to them until I discovered that they would not leave me. At this I felt a little alarmed and dug my heels into the sides of my mount, so as to speed him up.

Presently the aspect of the countryside changed and I found myself passing through cornfields at a canter, which made my pursuers give up the chase. Later, when I came to



know that they were wolves, I thanked my stars for having emerged from the experience unscathed. Incidentally, the depredations caused by wolves in certain parts of Uttar Pradesh have been at times a source of great anxiety, the death toll of little children on their account being fairly heavy.

When I got to my destination, it was about five in the afternoon and Mr. Nott Bower was on the point of going out for a little partridge shoot in the neighbouring fields. He enquired whether I would like to join him, and as I had nothing better to do, I accepted his invitation, if only to watch the fun. The party accompanying him consisted of five or six men who spread out in a line, with Mr. Nott Bower in the centre, before advancing through the ripening crops. These they started beating with sticks, making at the same time a noise that disturbed the birds (mostly partridges) hidden in the fields and drew them out. But the moment up came a bird, Mr. Nott Bower's gun would go bang, bang and it would drop dead in its flight.

It was marvellous the way Mr. Nott Bower shot them down with unerring accuracy. I remember how once a hare suddenly broke cover and made a dash for safety, only to meet with the same fate before he had moved a few yards. So sure was Mr. Nott Bower's aim that, on another occasion, I saw him drop two birds that emerged at the same time but flew in different directions, by discharging the two barrels of his gun at them, right and left, in quick succession. By the time we closed in, he had dropped a dozen birds or so, apart from the hare, which I thought was a good show.

On return we went into our tents to have a hot bath before getting ready for dinner. My bearer had told me quietly that Mr. Nott Bower was accustomed to dress for dinner. So I had to follow suit. In the days of which I am writing most Englishmen did the same, so that it was by no means an unusual spectacle to see one dining in state, so to speak, even though one might be sitting all by oneself, without a soul to keep one company.

After dinner, Mr. Nott Bower drew up my tour programme for me with an eye on the shikar spots that I might be able to

explore, without having to go much out of my way. He seemed to possess a remarkably extensive knowledge of the geography of the district and pointed out to me on the map the particular spots in the Kalinadi (which lay in the way) where I might be able to shoot crocodiles.

In the afternoon of the next day, Mr. Nott Bower was scheduled to pay a visit to the Police Station at Kaimganj for his annual inspection and I accompanied him to see how it was done. We were both mounted and when we had gone some distance we met the Station Officer, Mohammad Siddiq. He had been standing on the roadside to receive us and, after saluting the two of us, he mounted his pony, taking care to keep at a respectful distance behind us.

From here onwards, there was paper bunting tied to stakes on both sides of the road. At first, I thought that it was intended for a marriage party. But I soon realised that it had been put up in honour of the S.P.'s visit and so had the triumphal arches, with the word 'WELCOME' superscribed on them in large letters of gold.

At the entrance to the Police Station, there was an even more colourful display of bunting and banners, which lent a festive look to the whole place and attracted the townsfolk in their hundreds. As we entered the courtyard of the Police Station, we saw the entire staff drawn up in two rows for kit inspection, looking very smart in their best uniform, their red turbans making a splash of colour that was quite distinctive.

Kit inspection over, Mr. Nott Bower proceeded to inspect the *thana* records which, I noticed, had been arranged neatly in row upon row, with paper coverings of all imaginable colours, red, blue, yellow, green and so on, their titles written on the back in Urdu calligraphy of the finest style.

This amused me not a little. But what was even more diverting was the sight of the table and the two chairs which had been specially secured for our use. The table had a rich red velvet cloth on it with heavy gold embroidery, while of the two chairs, both of which had velvet seats and were made in the shape of a throne, one had gold and the other silver plating on it, the gold one being intended for the S.P. and the silver



one for me. I found it difficult to suppress my laughter at this sight. But that was not the case with Mr. Nott Bower who seemed to accept all that he saw with supreme indifference, without even once batting an eyelid.

Here let me state how I obtained my Practical Certificate to qualify for district charge. I was then posted as A.S.P. Meerut and so was my friend, George Parkin. Our D.I.G. at the time was Mr. Dodd, the same who had been our Principal at the P.T.S. He had asked us to dinner at the Circuit House in Meerut and on our arrival said that he would give us an oral test to see if we were fit for this Certificate.

With this object in view, Mr. Dodd got off the mark by telling us the facts of a case of rioting-cum-murder of District Etah that had ended in acquittal owing to bad handling by the Police in the initial stages of its investigation. But the manner in which he related them was so rambling that I, for one, soon lost the thread of the case and it became difficult for me to follow what he was saying. I felt increasingly nervous as he drew towards the close of his tale, not knowing what his question would be and how I should answer it. At long last, when he had come to the end of his tale, he looked at me and said, 'Now, tell me, what would you have done in the circumstances if you were S.P. of the district ?'

The question was indeed a difficult one for me to answer, for the simple reason that I had not been able to make head or tail of what he had been saying. In my confusion, therefore, I just blurted out, 'The first thing I would have done, Sir, is to go to the spot and find out the facts for myself.'

To my great relief, Mr. Dodd exclaimed, 'Quite right ! This is exactly what.....failed to do.'

In the result I got through the test with flying colours and so did George Parkin, who shared with me the honours of the reply I gave !

I am sure Mr. Dodd had not the foggiest notion how my answer to his question was no more than a random shot in the predicament in which I found myself.

In any case, I made it a practice ever afterwards, in all cases of any importance, to get to the spot without loss of time



A NOVEL EXPERIENCE

CSL
23

and find out the facts for myself at first hand, instead of just relying on others' reports. And this, I found, paid enormous dividends.



RAID ON A GAMBLING DEN

THE following account relates to a raid I carried out on a gambling den in Farrukhabad that had gained some notoriety. From all accounts, the keeper of this den was hand-in-glove with the City Police. This made action against him difficult. I had, therefore, decided to act independently of the local Police and for this reason had taken into confidence a probationary Sub-Inspector, named Abdul Wahid, who was attached to the Reserve Lines.

On the appointed day, Abdul Wahid Khan and I, dressed in plain clothes, boarded an *ekka* and left for Mohalla Sadhwara where the den was situated. We had previously made a survey of this place by night and drawn up a scheme for the raid. According to this, the two of us were to enter the house in question by a back-door, while the rest of our party were to make a cordon around the place, so as to be able to apprehend such of the offenders as might make a bid for escape. They were to consist of a dozen select men drawn from the Reserve Police Lines and follow us in covered *ekkas* after a suitable interval.

Our arrival in Mohalla Sadhwara passed unnoticed. But since we had to wait for the rest of the party to arrive, the question that arose was how to pass the time and where. For one thing, if we sauntered about in the locality in which we now found ourselves, the chances were that we might give ourselves away. For another, it was necessary for us to establish ourselves at some place from where we could be sure of obtaining the latest information and where we could conveniently chalk out our further line of action.

Luckily for us, adjoining the house we proposed to raid, there was one belonging to a well-known Vaid that suited us to the hilt. It had a small courtyard in front, with a verandah facing it where the Vaid received his patients. Behind this verandah there was a large sitting room, apparently meant for 'State' occasions. When Abdul Wahid Khan and I walked up



RAID ON A GAMBLING DEN

CSL
25

to the Vaid, he asked us to be seated and then enquired what had brought us there. Upon this, Abdul Wahid Khan pointed to me and said apologetically, 'The Babujee here, who is my master, suffers from an ailment which he can disclose only privately. So if you will let us into your sitting room, he can tell you what it is.'

Impressed perhaps by our appearance and demeanour, the Vaid was only too ready to oblige us. Once we were safe from observation, Abdul Wahid Khan told him confidentially who I was and what had brought us to his place. The Vaid in his turn declared that he would be delighted to carry out any orders that we might give him and having made us comfortable he returned to attend to his patients.

Abdul Wahid Khan and I were thus able to sit back and wait till the stage was set for the final assault. Then according to plan we gently knocked at a door at the back of the house we were raiding. A little girl opened it and let us into a courtyard of fair size. We saw a group of men seated in a circle on top of a room in front of us, to which access could be gained only by a ladder. We made a dash for this ladder and scaled it as fast as we could, so as to get to the roof, where we found ourselves in the midst of a motley crowd, much too absorbed in the game to notice our arrival.

I then announced in a loud voice who I was and what I had come for. For a second or two, they seemed to be too taken aback to display any positive reaction. But once they had overcome the initial shock, they got up in a body and made a dash for safety. Almost instinctively, they attempted to escape in the direction away from us. But as there was no exit for them that way, one after another, they jumped in their mad rush, into the street below, thus dropping into the arms of our men who were already there. In this way, a large number of arrests were made and much cash was recovered.

The raid over, I adjourned to my friend the Vaid's house to complete the formalities. Meanwhile, news of this event had spread all over the city and resulted in a large crowd collecting to have a look at me, in my alleged disguise. I waited for some time in the hope that those people would

67-

6 SEP 1967



disperse. But they seemed determined to satisfy their curiosity and would not go, no matter what they were told.

So ultimately, I had to give in and, to this day, I well remember how, as the rickety old *ekka* on which I was seated in my *dhoti* and *kurta*, slowly worked its way through the milling crowd, the men, women and children who had gathered looked admiringly at me and showered their greetings, which made me feel extremely self-conscious. But embarrassed as I felt at this exaggerated tribute, it more than made up for the toil and trouble I had to undergo to smash up one of the worst gambling houses in Farrukhabad.



A COCAINE SMUGGLER

TRADE on the quiet in cocaine, a contraband article, used to be a very profitable business at one time and flourished in a number of cities in Northern India. One of them was Farrukhabad, where the doyen of the trade was one Karamat, a notorious bully, under police surveillance. But the problem was how to rope him in, for he was known to be extremely shrewd and elusive.

One day in August 1924, the City Magistrate, Mr. Sridhar, and I quietly planted ourselves in an empty first class carriage in a siding at the Farrukhabad railway station. We then arranged a test purchase for a rupee through a source and, thereafter, we changed into *dhoti* and *kurta* like those worn by the wealthy 'Seths' of these parts, before setting out for Karamat's house with the intention of trapping him.

The scheme we had drawn up was that we would first purchase some cocaine from Karamat in exchange for a marked hundred rupee note. After that, at an agreed signal from us, some policemen in plain clothes, who would be close at hand, would rush in to do the rest, including a search of his house for his stock of cocaine. But we soon came to realise that there was much wishful thinking in this scheme.

The house in which Karamat lived was by no means imposing. It was one of country tiles, with a small verandah in front and a courtyard at the back having a number of poky little rooms all around it. The locality in which this house was situated was, again, far from inviting, being tenanted by working class people. Worst of all, it was very congested and its sanitation left much to be desired.

When the two of us got to Karamat's house, he was seated on a charpoy in front of it. We noticed he was a thickset man with close cropped hair, who looked the very picture of a town rough in his '*tehmat*' (loin cloth). On our walking up to him, he got up and enquired politely, 'Babujee, who are you and what can I do for you?'

Mr. Sridhar pointed to me and said, 'Look, this gentleman here is a rich Seth from Kanpur. He has heard of your reputation and has come to conclude a big deal with you.'

This seemed to please Karamat and, if he had been polite before, he was now affability itself in the way he addressed us; 'Oh, that is perfectly simple. Let Sethji place his order with me and I shall be glad to meet it.'

Mr. Sridhar then said, 'Tell us how much cocaine you have got.'

Karamat cleverly parried this question and said in reply, 'That need not worry you. I can supply any quantity. You have simply to let me have money first. By the way, where are you staying?'

Mr. Sridhar then produced the marked hundred rupee note he had with him and told him in reply, 'We are both putting up at the *dharamshala*, opposite the railway station. For the present Sethji (meaning me), simply by way of making a test purchase, wants you to give him a sample in exchange for this note. But you may take it, he will want you to sell him stuff for a much larger sum at a later date.'

Karamat took the note in his hand and examined it very closely against the light to see whether it was genuine or not or whether it had any suspicious markings on it. Apparently satisfied, he said, 'All right, you may go now and I shall have the stuff sent to you at your *dharamshala*.'

This turn of events put us in a quandary; for we felt disinclined for two reasons to go away, leaving the money behind. First, because he might deny ever having received it and thus make fools of us; secondly, that in case he had the stuff sent through someone else, we would not be able to effect his arrest along with it or to lay our hands on his stock. So Mr. Sridhar said, 'Listen, we are strangers here and we do not know you. So, how can you expect us to leave the money with you?' Upon this, Karamat coolly returned the note and said, 'Well, in that case, I regret I cannot do anything for you. I am, after all, a middleman and I shall have to get the stuff for you from a friend of mine, which will take time.'

We thought hard what we should do in the circumstances.

One thing we could see was that there was an unwritten code of honour among dealers of contraband goods, since much of their business depended upon mutual trust. Therefore, if we left the money with Karamat, the chances were that he would keep his word, which would at least give us an opening for further action.

We, therefore, decided to take him at his word and gave him back the hundred rupee note, saying we would prefer to wait. He then detailed one of his men to conduct us to a spot under a *neem* tree some distance from his house and leave us there.

And now began a wait that seemed to be unending. The piquancy of the situation lay in the fact that we found ourselves absolutely at Karamat's mercy. Time hung heavy upon us and we felt very miserable.

We had been thus cooling our heels for over two hours when a man turned up with word from Karamat that he had sent for the stuff and that as soon as it arrived, he would send it along to us. As may be imagined, this was small consolation for us. But what could we do ?

When another hour had passed without any sign of the man we had been waiting for, we walked over to Karamat's house to find him seated as before on his charpoy. The only difference was that he was now surrounded by a number of his associates who, from their looks, appeared to be anything but respectable.

At sight of us, Karamat got up and taking us aside told us in a whisper, 'Babujee, do not get impatient ! Some Policemen, including the Kotwal Sahab, have been seen knocking about in the vicinity and so I have detailed my men to watch their movements. As soon as I am satisfied that the coast is clear and that the Kotwal Sahab has returned to his quarter, I shall bring the stuff you have been waiting for and then arrange for you to be conducted safely to your Dharamshala. You may be sure no harm will come to you.'

Amused as we felt by the information Karamat had to give us, we were at least re-assured that, so far as the two of us were concerned, he entertained no suspicions whatever. At



the same time, our heart sank at the thought that we could no longer count on any help from the Police in an emergency. In any case, we had to return to our post under the *neem* tree for another indefinite period of waiting.

Meanwhile, the sun had set and, to make matters worse, soon after it started raining, which compelled us to go back to Karamat's house to seek shelter. Then started another long wait, with the rain pouring down in sheets all the while.

Partly to while away the time and partly to assure himself about our bonafides, Karamat put us a volley of questions, not by any means easy to answer. Mr. Sridhar, however, who did most of the talking for us, managed to satisfy his curiosity about the exact locality in Kanpur in which we resided, the business that we carried on, our names, parentage and the like. We could see that, while talking to us, Karamat was looking hard at our faces in the light of matchsticks that he struck one after another.

By this time, it was past eight and the Police had meanwhile withdrawn from the scene under the impression that the idea of the raid had fallen through. Thus the prospect was by no means rosy for us. All the same, we held on in the hope that our patience would be rewarded in the end.

At long last, when a thin young man, wearing a *lungi*, arrived, Karamat signalled to us to get up. The four of us then set out, the young man and I walking in front, followed by Karamat and Mr. Sridhar at some distance in the rear. The lane through which we had to pass was dark for the most part, except for the uncertain light cast at long intervals by kerosene lamp posts which made the darkness all the more pronounced. And, what was still more disconcerting, the rain had turned the lane into a running stream.

When we had gone some distance paddling as best as we could through ankle-deep water, the young man by my side quietly slipped a small packet into my hand. I then closely examined its contents under a lamp post before slipping it into the front pocket of my *kurta*. Thereafter, grim as death, I tightly caught hold of his two hands and shouted, 'I am the Superintendent of Police. I put you under arrest.' I also called out to my

companion, 'Sridhar, arrest your man'.

For a second or two my captive appeared to be stunned. Then, all of a sudden, he flung himself upon me and began squeezing my pocket. Not realising at the time what he was after, I bent all my energy to the task of holding on to him and, in the struggle that ensued, we both fell down and rolled in the water under our feet. Ultimately, however, I managed to overpower my adversary and pin him down under me. But my companion did not have much difficulty in securing the arrest of Karamat who stood stock-still, the moment Mr. Sridhar took out his pistol and threatened to shoot.

Our shouts, punctuated as they were with loud imprecations, attracted the notice of the mohalla people who came out of their houses to see what the matter was. We called out to them in an authoritative voice to come and help us, which they did and then some one rushed to the Kotwali to break the news.

But, alas ! when I felt my pocket, I found that the cocaine which would have constituted the material and most important evidence in the case, was gone, having melted in the course of my struggle in the water and that I was merely left with the paper cover in which it had been wrapped !

Nor were we able to recover any of the stuff from the search of Karamat's house. Obviously, he took good care not to store the thing there. Thus ended one of my early encounters with men of the underworld.

I had given up this case as lost. But imagine my joy when it came to pass that the trial court, being impressed by the evidence on the side of the prosecution, sentenced Karamat to one year's R.I. coupled with a fine of Rs. 1000. In fact, it was the test purchase for a rupee made before our visit to Karamat's house coupled with the depositions made in court by Mr. Sridhar and me, that did the trick for us.



WITNESS FOR THE DEFENCE

According to popular belief among certain sections of the Hindus, gambling on Deothan Ekadashi day, which falls shortly after Dipawali, brings good luck. Naturally, therefore, there are attempts to take advantage of this belief, by professional gaming house-keepers who usually carry on a roaring trade on this day. Such being the case, I had no cause for surprise when, in anticipation of this day, the city Kotwal came to me one morning with a sheaf of blank search warrant forms for me to sign. One thing I noticed was that he had failed to specify the houses he intended to raid. When, therefore, I raised an objection on this score, he gave me to understand that since the men who ran these dens took the precaution of changing the venue every now and then, it was not possible to specify them in advance, but that he would fill in the blanks in due course and I was not to worry on that account. Armed with these, he carried out a number of raids on the appointed day and effected a good many arrests.

Later, when one of the cases sent up by him for trial came up in Court, I was astonished to find that I had been cited as a witness for the defence. All the same, being fairly sure of my ground, I remained unperturbed. But almost the first question the Counsel for the defence put me was whether, when I had signed the warrant in this case, the particulars of the house mentioned therein had been entered in it. Directly I found myself on the horns of a dilemma. If I said, 'No', the case would certainly end in a discharge the warrant being *ultra vires* of the law. If, on the other hand, I said, 'Yes', I would render myself liable to a charge of perjury, because of the oath I had taken to 'tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth'. So, naturally, I chose the lesser of the two evils and confessed the truth.

To this day, I have a vivid recollection of the painful expression, nay, the look of amazement, doubt and despair, on the face of the Prosecuting Counsel, when I owned up my

responsibility! I heard a titter in the Court, the presiding magistrate felt amused, while there was a distinct look of triumph on the face of the counsel for the defence. Indeed, at that moment I felt miserable and so I hurriedly slunk out of the Court room, chased by the Prosecuting Counsel who, I have not the faintest doubt, took me for an utter idiot, the like of whom he had never seen!

I am not sure how the defence ever came to know of the flaw in the warrant, although I have a shrewd suspicion that the Kotwal himself may have given me away. For, unfortunately, such double-faced Januses, who would run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, are not unknown in the ranks of the Police.

The incident was closed. But I had learnt a lesson.

I am able to recall another incident setting off the same Kotwal in an equally dubious light.

One fine morning during the course of my posting to this very district of Farrukhabad, I received a letter through the post. It stated that there was a young widow in the town who had contacted friendship with a neighbour. On this account her brother, in order to save the family from disgrace, had removed her to some unknown destination, with the intention of having her murdered. The sender of this letter had subscribed himself as a philanthropist and ended it with a fervent prayer that I should get an immediate enquiry instituted into this complaint, failing which the death of the girl would be on my head. Knowing fully well, that there was a catch in this letter I took no notice of it. But the next morning I received another one still more frantic of tone, and a third, the morning after. All the same, I was still undecided in my mind about the action to be taken, when I received a cryptic note from the District Magistrate, Mr. A. P. Collet, stirring me up to the rescue, like a knight errant of old, of a poor helpless maiden of sweet sixteen! I then concluded I must do something about the complaint and, so, in the usual way referred it to the Kotwal for enquiry and report.

Soon after, the Kotwal came to see me and explained how these letters had originated from the very person from whose

influence it was the intention of the brother to save his sister. He also added that the girl was perfectly safe and sound, in support of which he produced a letter from her to her brother, written in her own hand. As there was nothing to be done now, I filed the papers.

Some three or four months later, I was chatting with a friend of mine, Mr. Dube, who belonged to the local bar. Our talk somehow turned to the subject of the Kotwal who, I said, appeared to me to be quite clever and efficient. In answer to this, my friend, who apparently held a different opinion from mine, remarked that, perhaps, I did not know all about that officer. On my asking him to explain himself further, he referred to the foregoing complaint and related all that had passed between the Kotwal and himself. According to Mr. Dube, the Kotwal had threatened the girl's brother with a formal enquiry unless he gave him a substantial sum as hush money. The brother had sent for Mr. Dube who had been able to settle the case for Rs. 75.

'What I did', so said Mr. Dube to me, 'was to go and call on the Kotwal to request him to reduce his demand and make it less exacting. Upon this request the Kotwal's lips parted in a smile and he declared, 'I am not one of those who would beat about the bush. I would much rather come to the point. There is an order from the Superintendent of Police for a formal enquiry. Unless, therefore, the party concerned wishes to bring shame on himself and his family, he should listen to reason. Frankly speaking, the occasion demands a greasing of the palm.'

Mr. Dube then went on to say, 'In reply to this homily, I said to the Kotwal, "Why not accept Rs. 50/- and drop the case?" At this the Kotwal apparently felt extremely amused and burst into a fit of laughter saying, "What? Do you expect me to abandon my principle which, as you should know, is never to accept anything under a hundred rupees in a case like this?"'

After this, I must say I became extremely careful in dealing with anonymous petitions.



THE POLICE HAVE THEIR WAYS

IN these days of soaring prices, one's thoughts go back to the good old days when the rupee had a value that cannot be even conceived today. To illustrate my point, let me relate an incident within my experience that occurred while I was posted at Farrukhabad.

One morning in the month of June I was out for a ride through the city on horse-back when I passed a fruit-cum-vegetable market in front of the Kotwali and was attracted by the sight of baskets full of ripe plums for sale. About the same time, the Station Officer Kotwali, Md. Yaqoob, came up to greet me. I then gave him a rupee with instructions to buy some for me. I also asked him to buy me some sugarcane and a couple of small hand-punkhas made of palm leaves.

The same afternoon when I returned home from office, I noticed waiting for my inspection, a heap of plums weighing some five seers, a whole bundle of sugarcane stalks, numbering more than two dozen, and as many as eight attractive looking hand-punkhas, two of which were of the over-size type intended for use on the occasion of large gatherings. Even at a conservative estimate, I thought, the things must have cost some four to five rupees to buy. On being questioned, my bearer informed me that they had been left by the Kotwal Sahab along with a balance of six annas due to me out of the rupee that I had given him!

I was simply amazed at this extraordinary purchase and feeling somewhat annoyed decided to give the Kotwal a bit of my mind when he would next come to see me. When, therefore, the very next morning he called on me, I asked him curtly how it was that he had been able to buy me all those things for almost a song, a thing that was not at all right or to my liking?

In answer to my question he broke into a broad grin and said by way of explanation, 'Begging your pardon, Hazoorlog are apt to be cheated by local vendors who have no conscience

at all. But they cannot cheat us who know the prevailing prices. Moreover, they allow us some concession of their free will. The plums are worth only two annas and the same is the case with bundle of sugarcane you see before you.'

At this stage I interrupted him to say, 'But you do not mean to say that the eight punkhas you have got for me are worth only six annas?' I thought I had floored him this time and he would not be able to give me any satisfactory explanation. But he was not the person to be so easily beaten and the reply he gave was indeed a masterpiece. It was something like this: 'Hazoor may be able to recall that there is a palm tree within the compound of Outpost Mau Darwaza. But Hazur may not remember that there are some men living in the immediate neighbourhood of this Outpost, who specialise in making punkhas. It is they who made these punkhas and since the leaves were from our tree, they had to be given merely their wages for the making!'

The Kotwal gave this explanation with such an air of innocence that I did not have the heart to scold him for his highhandedness, however much I felt like doing so. I, therefore, ultimately let him go with just a few words of advice and at the same time vowed to myself that never again would I ask him, or, for that matter, any of his subordinates, to make any purchases for me!

... ..

Let me now turn to an incident relating to another Sub-inspector named Pt. Yadunandan Pandey, who fills me with a sense of admiration for him whenever I think of him.

I was then posted at Lucknow and was on my way to Faizabad by road, to give evidence in the Court of the District and Sessions Judge there. Those who have seen this road will recall that it is dead straight for most of the way, besides being fairly wide. It is, in fact, one of the best roads in Uttar Pradesh, with tall trees standing on both sides of it and providing welcome shade to the weary passer-by. To add to my enjoyment, I was driving a 30 horse-power car that was tuned to respond to the slightest pressure on its accelerator. The only fly in the

THE POLICE HAVE THEIR WAYS

ointment was that its brakes, which were mechanical and not hydraulic, were not in perfect order. But I am a cautious driver and I took particular care on this occasion to avoid all risks.

All went well till I had covered more than three-quarters of the distance when I noticed two pairs of bullocks ahead of me, each hitched to a yoke. They were being driven down the centre of the road. I sounded my horn for them to make way and went on doing so till I was within a few yards of them. I anticipated that they would move off to the left of the road leaving me enough room to pass by. But here I went wrong, for, instead of behaving as I had thought they would, the two moved one right, one left, thus completely blocking my way! I promptly came down on the brakes of my car, as best I could. But I failed to pull up in time. The result was that my car gave a push from behind to one of the bullocks, who fell down, thus fracturing a leg.

I felt very unhappy about this and stopped to apologize and also, if necessary, to compensate the owner for the loss I had caused him. Within a very short time, a number of village folk were attracted to the scene. This seemed to have an adverse effect on the man I was going to placate, for he now adopted a very truculent attitude.

It then struck me that if I entered into an argument with this man, he would only pitch his demand higher and higher and I might not be able to satisfy him. I also felt that if I tarried too long I would be late for my attendance in Court that day. So I decided to drive off, which I managed to do with some difficulty. But instead of going to the Court directly, I first called at the nearest Police Station, at Raunahi. There I met the Station Officer, Pt. Yadunandan Pandey, and told him all that there was to tell. I also informed him that I was anxious to pay something to the aggrieved party as compensation and that he (S.I. Yadunandan Pandey) should go to the spot and wait for me there till my arrival in the evening on my way back to Lucknow.

Having lodged my report, I proceeded to Faizabad and remained there till about six in the evening when I set out

on the return journey. I must own that all this time I felt extremely ill at ease and, the nearer I came to the spot where the accident had taken place, the more disturbed I became. But I went on till, in the beam thrown by the headlights of my car, I saw two long rows of men lining both sides of the road at some distance from me. I at once knew that this was the place where the meeting that I had been dreading was to take place and I slowed down my car till it came to a halt.

By this time I had fully prepared myself for an unpleasant experience. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when I noticed a couple of men (who, I was later told, were the local headman and the lambardar) advance towards my car, garland in hand, to welcome me. This was indeed too good to be true and I began by expressing my deep regret for the damage I had caused. Those men, however, would not allow me to speak in that strain and insisted that the fault lay not with me, but with the man who drove the bullocks. One of them even said; 'Sir, it was our great good fortune that, through this incident, petty as it was, we have had the honour of meeting you!' And with these words he placed round my neck, with a flourish, the garland that he held in his hands! I wanted to pay some money to the bullock owner to compensate him for his loss. But so vehement was the opposition to the idea that I had ultimately to force him to accept it from me.

All this while I could see Pt. Yadunandan Pandey standing unobtrusively in the background, with a broad grin on his face, indicative of the part he had played so well!

...

...

...

Here is another example of Police efficiency worth recounting. I had received my orders of posting to Sitapur as S.P. and arrived there by rail on the morning of the 20th April 1925, to take over charge from one Mr. Wilkinson. I had written to him earlier requesting him to arrange accommodation for me in the local P.W.D. Inspection House. All I knew was that, on my arrival at the Railway Station, I was going to hire a tonga and drive straight to this place where my personal servant, whom I had sent in advance, would be

THE POLICE HAVE THEIR WAYS

waiting to receive me. I had not the ghost of an idea that I was going to be met by anybody at all at the Railway Station.

When, therefore, my train slowed down before entering the station yard and I put my head out to see if I had come to the end of my journey, great indeed was my surprise at the sight of almost a sea of heads in red turbans on the platform, looking like a veritable field of poppies. A reception of this sort being something novel for me at the time, I was thrown into a state of utter confusion and could hardly collect myself by the time my train came to a halt.

The contingent lined up on the platform was led by the local Deputy Superintendent of Police, Mr. Fida Husain, who came up to take charge of me and my belongings. Then he led me to the line of waiting Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors of Police and I shook hands with each and every one of them with much assumed dignity. By now I felt I was acting like an automaton, having entirely lost my initiative to those who had come to receive me. To add to my self-consciousness, the entire station crowd, composed of a cross-section of the local population, stood like a solid phalanx to see what was on. Nevertheless, I somehow managed to keep my wits and kept raising my hands as well as bowing this way and that, at the head of what I might call a triumphal procession, until I came up to a gaily decorated T model Ford car which had been parked inside the passenger hall! My reaction at the sight of this car was that it was most likely intended for some marriage party or other. So, when I was told that it was meant for me, I had almost a fit! But I knew this was no occasion for any demonstration or protest on my part and once again I had to submit to the inevitable and to take my seat in it with as much composure as I could command. At one time I wanted to make sure about my luggage. But the only information I could elicit was that it had been taken charge of and would reach me in good time.

My car then drove off and when I landed at the P.W.D. Inspection House I felt completely exhausted by the very novelty of the experience I had undergone.



A BICYCLE RIDE

OF all the foolhardy things I remember having done in my life, the pride of place should undoubtedly go to a bicycle ride I had in the middle of the day towards the end of May 1925 over a distance of some twentyfour miles from Biswan to Sitapur.

It was on the 29th of this month, to be exact, that I went to Biswan by rail from Sitapur to enquire into a case of murder of which a report had been received by me a few days previously. My train having arrived at day break, I had the whole of the morning for my enquiries and was free to return home by about 11 o'clock.

Unluckily for me, there was no return train to Sitapur till the evening. So I thought of borrowing a car from a local Taluqdar who lived in the neighbourhood. But the man who had gone to fetch it, returned with the news that, as it was not available, the Taluqdar had been good enough to send his carriage-and-pair for the journey! Obviously a drive in a carriage-and-pair to Sitapur at that time of the day and, that too, in the hottest part of the year, with the mercury touching 117° or so, was inconceivable. I, therefore, decided to borrow a bicycle from the local Sub-Inspector of Police and push off on it without any further ado.

By now, the sun was riding high in the sky and the heat was intense. The road in front of me looked like a thin white ribbon that lost itself in the horizon. The glare from the sun was such that it hurt the eyes. The entire countryside presented a deserted look, except for some trees here and there, that only seemed to invite the weary traveller to rest his tired body under their shade.

Even though I was wearing a thick sola hat, I began to perspire profusely before I had covered a mile or two. The sweat trickling down my sun-glasses obscured my vision and I had to wipe them dry every now and then. I was riding with one of my hands in my trouser pocket and the other on the

handle bar of my bicycle.

But soon I discovered that this would not do. I, therefore, wrapped a handkerchief round the hand that was exposed which afforded me some relief. At one stage, the thought of a cold bath, in a tubful of water at the end of the journey, seemed to fill me with renewed vigour that kept me going till I found I had covered more than six miles.

And now, I said to myself, I must make a halt to have some rest. There was a shady mango tree just ahead of me by the side of the road and I could not have asked for anything better in the whole world at that time. So I dismounted and sat down under the tree, with its trunk as support for my aching back. I felt I could have sat there for a millennium, forgetful of the world around me.

But my will to get back home without delay seemed to re-assert itself and I got up to hit the road once again. My eyes caught sight of some unripe mangoes hanging from the tree and, starved as I felt, having had nothing to eat since the previous evening, I lunged at one of them, plucking it off its stem. I then dug my teeth into the fruit. But alas! found it too sour to be of any use to me. So I flung it away with disgust and mounted my bicycle, with a grim resolution to move on, till I was able to cover another six miles, which would mean half the battle for me.

The sun was now riding the sky at an angle that was increasingly uncomfortable. But what could one do? To my amusement, I was reminded of Tennyson's famous lines 'Half a league, half a league, half a league onward'. For, was this also not a case of my charging into the very jaws of what had all the alarming features of death, an unrelenting sky with a burning sun looking like an inferno? And what was worse, there was not a soul to keep me company. But here I am losing myself in poetic fervour, for I did occasionally either pass or overtake an odd bullock-cart, with the driver lying fast asleep. On such occasions I wondered how it was that the bullock-cart man did not seem to mind the sun and the heat in the least while this bicycle ride I was having was a case of blood, toil, sweat and tears for me.

Near the twelfth mile from Biswan, my eyes caught sight of a Persian wheel which was being worked in a well by the roadside. This was a signal for me to dismount and bathe my parched body in its refreshing water that fell in cascades down its platform. Oh! at that moment how soothing was the sight of this water for me! I bathed my head, my face, my neck, my hands in it and then I repeated the process over and over again. I also drenched my clothes to cool down my fevered body and, having done this, I felt once more ready to face the elements.

By now it was close on one o'clock in the day and I kept shutting my eyes to escape the unrelenting glare from the light that seemed to envelop both earth and sky. At one time, my energy seemed to be ebbing away. But still, I went on pedalling doggedly through sheer will power and every mile-post that I passed infused renewed vigour into me. In this way, I got to Khairabad, where there was a Police Outpost by the side of the road and where I had made up my mind to make my next halt.

I had by now covered eighteen miles and, as I entered the outpost, my legs did not feel at all steady. Nevertheless, I somehow managed to stagger into the office room and lower myself, all in a heap, into the only chair that lay there.

On their part, the outpost staff, not being ready to meet me, disappeared, helter-skelter, in all directions, and I could catch glimpses of one or other of them frantically tying his spiral putties, before showing himself to me! In that moment of agony, how amused I felt at this spectacle!

It must be said to the credit of the Head Constable writer, that he was the first to venture forth from his hiding place. And, when he saw the state I was in, he promptly picked up one of the big bound registers lying in front of him and began to fan me frantically with it. For a few minutes, no words were exchanged between us. But I saw in his eyes marked concern combined with great solicitude. Then, when I was able to speak I begged for a cold drink with heaps of ice in it. In reply, he told me to take it easy or I might get a stroke.

When I had fully quenched my thirst, I set out on the last lap of my journey home. My feelings at the time were,

perhaps, not much different from those of a marathon runner who is nearing the winning post and whose one and only aim is to complete the course. He is not at all conscious of what is going on all around him, nor of the shouts of people cheering him. Half dazed he struggles on till he is within sight of his goal, when he calls forth every ounce of the energy still left in him and dashes forward in one supreme effort to breast the winning tape, ahead of his competitors.

I vaguely remember that as I entered the gate of my house I started ringing my bicycle-bell frantically. But, as there was no response, I just pushed the bicycle away from me and went staggering into my bedroom, where I flung myself on my bed to lie there motionless, until I was once more able to take an interest in the things around me. I have no idea how long I lay there like that. The only thing I was aware of was the old-time punkha swishing to and fro over my head, of which the breeze felt like an elixir to me and gradually helped to bring me back to life.

Then, when I felt somewhat refreshed I got up, though still feeling very exhausted, and plunged into a tubful of cold water, to lie there for as long as I liked. And, I am sure, if it were not for the announcement by my bearer that lunch was on the table, I would have continued for ever in this state of bliss in which I found myself. Lunch over, I lay down on my bed again and slept like a top till well into the evening. What a day!

...

...

...

Equally nerve-wrecking was an experience I had when I was S.P. Pilibhit and was out on night patrol. I was on horseback and so was the sub-inspector who accompanied me. The night was a dark one and it had been raining hard till a late hour. In consequence, all the water courses were full to overflowing, including the open municipal drains, which happened to be fairly deep.

In the course of our round, while passing through a rather narrow lane, we came to a spot where there had been a case of burglary by hole-digging the previous night. We reined



our horses in for a local inspection. I must say the look, particularly by night, of a gaping hole in the wall like the one we had before us, has something uncanny about it and makes one forget oneself. Quite unmindful, therefore, of my surroundings, while I kept my attention focussed on this hole, the Sub-Inspector went on relating to me details of the case.

Suddenly, the hind quarters of my horse began to sink. Down, down, they went, till I fell off his back and both horse and I, found ourselves floundering in water that came up to my neck.

At first, I failed to realize what had happened. But soon enough it was clear to me that we were cast into a filthy municipal drain—a situation that I had never anticipated. The water in it was now racing like a raging torrent and worse luck, my horse started struggling furiously to scramble out. In the process, his hind legs went on hitting the rear wall of the drain with the rapidity of lightening and the force of a sledge hammer.

On the instant, I knew that if once his heels struck me on the head, it would be reduced to pulp. Instinctively, I sought cover under his belly, which act, to my great good luck, saved me from annihilation.

After my horse had been able to scramble out, I too managed to do the same. All this must have taken a few seconds only, but at the time they seemed an eternity. Meanwhile, the Sub-Inspector accompanying me stood aghast and speechless. The amusing part of it was that only after I had got out, that he could open his mouth to exclaim repeatedly, '*Gazab ho gaya*' '*Gazab ho gaya*' (Oh, how awful, how awful).

My anxiety now was to get home as speedily as possible, for the stink from the sousing I had had was terrible. Fortunately for me, my horse stood stockstill in the middle of the road, as if waiting for me to mount. I lost no time in springing on his back and trotting home as fast as he could carry me. On the way, much to my relief, the rain again came down in sheets. This helped to mitigate the foul odour I was exuding from all over my body. The first thing I did on reaching home was to rush to the bath and there plunge into a tubful of

water, before giving myself a thorough rub with a cake of carbolic soap.

This incident would appear to have gained me some local publicity at the time, as I came to discover years later, when I had risen to be the Inspector-General of Police. The occasion was a party meeting of Congress Legislators in the Council House at Lucknow. It had been arranged by the Chief Minister, the late Pt. G. B. Pant, to enable me to answer certain charges commonly levelled against the Police. As was to be expected, most of those present got up, one after another, to bring various accusations against particular officers, mostly of the lower ranks. But what I had not expected was an indirect compliment paid to me by a Legislator of Pilibhit who rose to say something like this, 'When I was a boy, I used to hear that the local Superintendent of Police, who happens to be our Police Chief today, was in the habit of going round the town by night, incognito. So, I would ask, why can't the same thing be done by Superintendents of Police today?'

After that the meeting broke up in an atmosphere of great good will towards me and I returned home, immensely pleased with myself.

ABLAKH—A FIEND OF A HORSE

IN the district of Sitapur, there is a small township, named Kamalapur. Its importance at one time lay in the fact that it was the seat of a landed magnate, Raja Suraj Baksh Singh, who was a grand old man commanding much respect in the neighbourhood. Here there was also a Police Station of which the Station Officer in my time was one Mohammad Faiyaz, a big burly man, risen from the ranks.

One day, during the period of my posting in this district, I had a special report from Kamalapur to say that there had been a case of cold-blooded murder by night at a village lying within its borders. I at once decided to pay a visit to the spot and, accordingly, fixed a date for it. But, in order to get to the village in question, I had to go to Kamalapur first. I actually arrived there by car on a Sunday morning at about 9.

There being no motorable road beyond Kamalapur, Sub-Inspector Md. Faiyaz offered to get me on loan for the journey one of the horses of the Raja. Luckily, we met the Raja Saheb on our way to his palace and, after exchange of the customary greetings, I asked him if I could borrow one of his horses. He promptly acceded to my request and took me to his stables to let me choose one for myself.

There I saw quite a number of horses. Among these were Walers, Arabs, English thoroughbreds, Kathiawaris and country-breds and all of them started neighing and stamping their feet, the moment they saw us. Raja Suraj Baksh pointed to two particularly handsome horses, both stallions, that he had received as marriage dowry for his only son, a year or so back. One of them was named Ablakh and the other Tablakh, both being Arabs in perfect fettle.

According to the Raja Saheb, the only 'snag' about these mounts was that they had not been ridden for some time. I could see that for myself from the size of their bellies. Frankly speaking, I felt rather frightened at the prospect of having to ride one of them. But was there any alternative? For other-

wise, I did not see how I could get to my destination. Also to refuse the offer, so kindly made, would be to admit defeat, which would certainly lower me in the estimation, not only of the Raja Saheb, but also of the others gathered there to watch the fun !

Taking my courage in both hands, I enquired of the Raja Saheb which of the two horses he would recommend. He seemed to have a preference for Ablakh and had the steed brought out. But, this did not appear to be at all to Ablakh's liking. With his neck curved in an arch, his eyes glaring, his nostrils breathing fire and his hooves stamping the ground under him, he gave expression to his feelings in no uncertain manner.

It was now too late for me to withdraw. I found myself holding the horse by his reins and walking him in order to quieten him, the idea being to spring on his back, the moment he would let me do so. But, each time I made an attempt, he moved away, with his head menacingly lowered towards me in a defensive attitude. So what I did was to lead him by the reins along-side a low earthen embankment. This gave me an advantage over him in that I was now on a higher level. It was thus that, after some anxious moments, during which I was the object of much critical assessment by the bystanders, I swiftly managed to get on his back.

Ablakh, on his part, made a determined effort to unseat me. He first reared in the air on his hind legs and, when this proved abortive, he tried the opposite motion, with his hind legs kicking upwards. Happily, in spite of these vigorous efforts on his part to throw me off his back, I remained glued to my seat, a feat for which I thank my stars to this day. I then made him do a few circles, which helped to calm him down a little.

Having brought him fully under control and thus established myself in the eyes of everyone present, I set out for my destination, closely followed by Sub-Inspector Md. Faiyaz who was mounted on his own horse. The distance we had to cover was roughly ten miles. The road was straight and particularly suited for riding. So, I give my horse his head

and he tore away at a gallop for part of the way, till he had thoroughly spent himself and was sweating profusely. I now let him go at a walk and had no more complaints against his behaviour except that, every now and then, he made a dive with his head towards my right or left leg to have a bite at it. Therefore, I had to take good care to keep my legs as far removed from his head as was possible.

After some time, Sub-Inspector Md. Faiyaz whom I had left far behind, drew level with me and this provided me with an opportunity to have a talk with him about the case that I was going to investigate. The two of us moved on side by side at a walk, without any misgivings.

But suddenly, before I could realise what was happening my mount made a plunge with his head at Sub-Inspector Md. Faiyaz's hind quarters and caught him by his breeches. This was most disturbing. I tugged as hard as I could at his reins and, at the same time, made free use of my stick on his thick neck, but try as might, he refused to let go his hold. Meanwhile, the poor Sub-Inspector, terror-stricken, started shrieking at the top of his voice. My role was reduced to that of an unwilling spectator at a tug-of-war, the like of which I had never seen before—my horse, on the one side, pulling hard with his teeth at the Sub-Inspector's hind quarters and the latter, on the other, engaged in a heroic effort to free himself from the iron grip that held him fast.

After this somewhat unequal struggle had gone on for some time, luckily for the Sub-Inspector, the girth of his saddle gave way, with the result that he came down on the ground and was thus separated from his adversary whose fury knew no bounds. By way of punishing him for his misdemeanour, I gave Ablakh a sound thrashing with my stick and was thereafter particularly watchful to avoid any further misadventure.

On my return to Kamalapur, I had the horse sent back to his stable with—ironical as it may seem—a word of thanks to the Raja Saheb. And that was the first and last time I set my eyes on good old Ablakh, for which I have no regrets whatsoever.



SMALL FRY AND BIG FISH

AT a small village lying in a remote corner of district Pilibhit, there lived two brothers, Hari Ram and Gopal Ram. They had made themselves notorious on account of their high-handedness. So much so, that their very names struck terror into the hearts of those who had the misfortune to live in their neighbourhood. Although they were petty zamindars with very limited income from their estate, they lived in marked affluence, a fact that gave rise to various rumours and conjectures about the source of their fortunes. But as there was nothing specific that could be brought home against them, nobody was in a position to denounce them openly. Consequently, they continued to live merrily without interference from any quarter and to terrorise the countryside.

In the meantime, reports of highway robberies in the neighbourhood of their village came pouring in and the local Police were at their wits end to trace the offenders. News was also received of a case of serious burglary involving a loss of goods worth several thousand rupees, from a cloth shop in a nearby village named Gola Gokarannath. But there was no clue to this case either.

One day it so happened that a man was caught red-handed in a case of burglary not far from where Hari Ram and Gopal Ram lived. In pursuance of a standing order passed by me, he was brought before me. I had found from experience that it always paid to have a straight talk with persons charged with serious offences before they were transferred to the judicial lock-up from Police custody.

In the case of this particular accused, as soon as I asked him what he had to say for himself, he explained somewhat bitterly, 'It is *always* the smaller fry who are roped in, while the big fish are left undisturbed.'

This was certainly intriguing. So I asked, 'What do you mean by that?'

In reply, he said, 'Why don't the Police get hold of Hari

Ram and Gopal Ram who are the men behind many a case of highway robbery and burglary in our neighbourhood. The worst thing about them is that, while they appropriate to themselves the lion's share of the gains, they dole out only a few coins to us as our share !

The information the man gave was highly interesting. He even volunteered to assist in recovery of most of the stolen property from these men's houses. I, therefore, immediately drew up a plan of action in consultation with a few picked men of my staff and decided to lead the assault that very night.

The nearest rail head for the village where Hari Ram and Gopal Ram lived was Puranpur. We left for that station by a night train from Pilibhit at about 10 o'clock, after taking every precaution against giving ourselves away. I got my informer to travel in the same compartment with me, while the rest of the party, a dozen or so in number, sat dispersed in different parts of the train, in plain clothes.

On arrival at Puranpur, soon after midnight, the first thing we did was to get all the passengers alighting there, detained till early next morning. This we did for fear one or other of them should otherwise relay the news of our arrival. Our next step was to try and collect some more men for the raid. With this end in view, we walked over to a house close by where, we were told, we would find the village headman. Luckily for us, that fellow happened to be lying asleep in an open courtyard of the house with a number of others.

Now followed a somewhat comic interlude. On being roused from sleep these men took us for dacoits, and while some started shouting for help others felt so scared that they could hardly raise their voice beyond a pitful croak. It was not long before they realized that we were not dacoits and, as soon as they did so, they went all out to help us. Thus we were able to collect a large number of volunteers. The Headman was even obliging enough to get me a mount for the next stage of my journey which lay across country.

With the preliminaries over, we set out in a body which soon converted itself into a long straggling line, with myself

SMALL FRY AND BIG FISH

leaping on horseback. It was a night in August, close to the moon. Flecks of white clouds sailed across the sky in an uninterrupted procession, throwing dark patches on the ground below, while frogs, big and small, kept up a din that drowned all other sounds. There was water, water, all around and it shone like molten silver, lending an unearthly look to the entire scene, against the background of which the men following me moved like silent spectres.

When we had thus covered a little over three miles, we found ourselves in a mango grove where we came to a halt. Here we divided ourselves into small parties, each in charge of a leader, with the over-all command remaining in my hands. Like conspirators we moved about stealthily and talked in whispers, till it was close on 4 o'clock in the morning when at a signal from me, the parties set out in different directions so as to throw a cordon around the village we were raiding. This done, we waited for the first signs of dawn, before proceeding any further. The very secrecy of the undertaking heightened its charm.

I had chosen to be with the party detailed for the assault on Hari Ram's house. As soon as there was sufficient light for one to be able to distinguish faces, one of the members of my party—a dashing young fellow—vaulted to the roof of this house with the aid of his lathi and having done so jumped down into the courtyard below to open the front door and thus let us in.

Hari Ram lay asleep on a charpoy in this courtyard. Quick as lightening, another member of my party who was of a particularly strong build pounced upon him and thus tried to pin him down. Upon this, he woke up and gave such a violent jerk that this man fell sprawling on the ground a few feet away. In the twinkling of an eye, Hari Ram whipped out a dagger from under his pillow and brandished it in the face of all of us. But the moment he realized that he was hopelessly outnumbered, he composed himself and stood still. I then told him who we were and what we wanted. He said we were free to search his house to our hearts' content, for he had nothing in it that did not belong to him.

To begin with, we searched all the boxes in the house, and went through their contents with great care. There were sarees as well as skirts, and blouses of all shapes and sizes, stowed away in them. But these were of no interest to us, as there was nothing to show that they were stolen property. Nor was there anything to interest us in the trinkets—some of gold, others of silver—which we saw neatly arranged in small caskets, buried under the clothes.

We next turned our attention to a corner room, stacked with fodder almost upto the ceiling, and here our labours were soon crowned with success. Hidden under the straw we discovered some entire pieces of different varieties of cloth, with their trademarks still intact. This was encouraging and as we delved deeper and deeper, more and more things came to light. Among them, there was a collection of silver ornaments turned grey with rust and weighing almost half a maund. And, most important of all, there was a single barrel breech-loading gun without a licence.

Meanwhile, Hari Ram sat handcuffed in one corner, looking sullen and disdainful, while the rest of the inmates of his house sat huddled in another, looking the very picture of misery, except for a small child of some three years who little realized what was going on around him and what all the pother was about. Suddenly, he toddled up to his father and clasped him round the neck. But this was too much for Hari Ram and two large tear drops rolled down his cheeks as he fondly told the boy to go back to his mother.

The search of Gopal Ram's house proved equally fruitful and yielded a mass of stolen property in the nature of cloth goods and trinkets, mostly of silver. All these articles recovered from the houses of the two brothers were later correctly identified by their respective owners. Among them there was the cloth dealer of Gola Gokarannath mentioned earlier.

News in India travels fast. This fact was borne in upon me in the afternoon of the same day, when I was returning to my headquarters at Pilibhit by rail. There were scores of men present at all the stations on the way, to felicitate me on the success of my mission!



SMALL FRY AND BIG FISH

In the sequel, Hari Ram and Gopal Ram were each sentenced to 7 years rigorous imprisonment. This led to much rejoicing in the locality to which they belonged.

ALL IS WELL THAT ENDS WELL

'Comic' is the word for what once came to pass while I was posted at Pilibhit. One afternoon as I was returning home from my office, I noticed a fairly large crowd in the compound of my Reserve Inspector's house that happened to fall on my way. This officer was a thoroughbred Cockney, with a wife and five children. Among those assembled were a couple of men dressed in loose white garments, who looked like Mullahs, while others were obviously riff-raff who had come to watch the fun.

My curiosity was naturally aroused by this rather unusual spectacle. So, as soon as I got home, I called my orderly, Ahmad Hasan (a grand old man who had served under many a Superintendent of Police before me) and enquired whether he knew why there was a crowd at the 'Line Sahib's' place. Ahmad Hasan, (just a flicker of a smile playing on his lips), said, 'Does not Hazur know that Line Sahib is getting married to a Muslim woman? The Mullahs have come to perform the *Nikah* ceremony.'

This was news to me and I instantly felt that I must do something to prevent the marriage, if only in the interest of the man's legitimate wife and children who had only recently gone to Agra for a holiday. Consequently, I sent for the Reserve Inspector and asked him if what I had heard about his projected wedding was true. He told me that it was so. I then explained to him how he would be liable to a charge of bigamy if he married again. Quite unperturbed by this prospect, he coolly replied, 'But, Sir, since I am going to embrace Islam, the law pertaining to bigamy will not apply to me.'

This was indeed more than I had bargained for and I felt nonplussed. Then I thought of appealing to his better sense and said, 'Why should you change your religion? What is wrong with it?'

By way of answer, he assumed a serious countenance and

said, 'Sir, I have seriously thought over the comparative merits of the two religions and I feel it in my conscience that there is a good deal to be said for Islam.'

I now realised that his was a hopeless case and to argue with him would be futile. So I quietly sent for the Subedar who, I felt, had been at the bottom of the mischief and warned him that unless he was able to clear out the rabble he would be taken seriously to task. I also contacted the City Kotwal and gave him clearly to understand that the lady who had been the cause of the trouble must be made to leave the station by the first available train.

Having issued these instructions, I resumed my conversation with the Reserve Inspector whom I had left sitting in my office room. After a while I took him out for a walk that lasted until I was sure that my instructions had been carried out. Then, on our return I let him go back to his bungalow to reflect on the events of the day.

A few days later, when his wife and children had rejoined him and he appeared to have abandoned the idea of a '*Nikah*', I asked him how it was that he had made up his mind to marry the Muslim woman. In reply, he said, 'Sir, I had been introduced to her by my Subedar and used to pay her frequent visits by night, she being a woman of great charm but easy virtue. On the last occasion of my visit, she gave me a *pan* to eat which, I now realise, must have contained some stuff (meaning a love potion) potent enough to turn my head.'

All is well that ends well and so I did not consider it necessary to pursue the matter further. Incidentally, I got a pat on my back from my Range Deputy Inspector-General, Mr. (later Sir) Horace Williamson, for my tactful handling of the case. But what amused me was that, in reporting it to the Inspector-General, he coupled my name with that of the District Magistrate, an Englishman, who had actually nothing to do with it, having been away on a holiday in Mussoorie at the time!



THE TALUQDARS OF OUDH

GONE are the days when the Taluqdars, otherwise known as the 'Barons of Oudh', constituted a class by themselves. Steeped in traditions having their origin in the days of old, when life flowed in its smooth onward course without the suspicion of a ripple, they were looked upon as ornaments of society, whose motto was '*noblesse oblige*'. They were also great patrons of art, with a special liking for music and dancing which were very much in evidence in their courts at one time. In fact, some of them were great exponents of the art of music.

One common feature of their mansions was a *mahfilkhana* in which large gatherings assembled to listen to the performance of a noted star, say, a Gauhar Jan or a Janki Bai, who usually charged fabulous sums for it. Let us imagine a large gaily decorated hall with a balcony reserved for ladies; a glass chandelier hung from the ceiling in the centre, shedding a joyous light all around; rich Persian carpets spread to cover every inch of the floor; and an audience dressed in the finest of muslins, sitting in a group facing the artist and enjoying, to a point of self-forgetfulness, the melodious notes that pour forth from her throat, or from the *Sarangi* played as accompaniment; and we have a complete picture of the scene that was quite common in those days.

It was not that all these mansions were to be found concentrated at one place. You might be passing a small township, miles away from the metropolis that was Lucknow and you might suddenly come upon a majestic pile, built in the style of John Company's days, standing as a firm reminder of the undisputed position held by its august owner.

If you happened to be a Government official of some rank, you could be sure of a warm welcome. Hospitality, particularly towards high ranking officers, was a creed with this class of people. Some of them were even prepared to go any length to keep the district officers on the right side of them.

THE TALUQDARS OF OUDH

For instance, a Taluqdar of Sitapur I know of, had a carriage-and-pair of his, left permanently at the disposal of his District Magistrate. Let me also confess to my shame that I had at my bungalow in this district, a pair of bullocks and their attendant, doing service for me free-of-cost. These I had inherited from my predecessor-in-office and they belonged to the same Taluqdar. In a neighbouring district, my opposite number had a milch cow placed at his disposal as a permanent arrangement, so that whenever she went dry, another was sent to replace her. Today, the acceptance of such benefits may appear to be irregular. But in those days, it had the sanction of custom and so one never thought twice about it. On the other hand, if one refused the offer, then one was liable to be misunderstood and the refusal to be construed as an insult.

Another practice that has died out now, was one of presentation of *dalis*. These were both given and received as a matter of custom, in season and out of season. On Christmas day particularly, it was a common spectacle to see heaps of them stacked on the roof of *band garees* (closed box-like vehicles) being conveyed from place to place. And what a variety of edibles was included in them, such as cakes, pastry, sweets, dried fruits, fresh fruits, vegetables and tinned provisions of all kinds.

To revert to the subject of Taluqdars, it was commonly believed that a certain Governor of Uttar Pradesh was so fond of them that he actually moved his headquarters from Allahabad to Lucknow where most Taluqdars, who were of any consequence in those days, had their abode. This is probably one of the reasons why his regime came to be known at the time as *Nawab-kabab-sharab-ka-raj* (*Nawab* meaning Nabob; *Kabab* meaning meat cutlets and *Sharab* meaning wine). It must, however, be said to their credit that if these gentlemen lived an easy and carefree life, full of luxury, they did not hesitate occasionally to loosen their purse strings for good causes. The King George's Medical College, the University Buildings, the Colvin Taluqdars' College and many other smaller institutions in Lucknow, bear ample testimony to their munificence.



On the other hand, it is well known that some of them were inclined to be extremely hard on their tenants at times. For instance, if one of them wanted to buy a motor car, he would collect a toll called *Motorana*. Likewise, if he wanted to buy an elephant, he would call the toll *Hathiana* and so on. A marriage in the family or a birth provided a further occasion for such extortion, a thing that made the tenants extremely unhappy and rush to the district authorities for help which the latter generally found themselves unable to extend.

Let me recall a delightful evening I once spent at a place called 'D' in Sultanpur district that is still fresh in my mind with the memory of a certain Taluqdar I knew. The occasion was a courtesy visit by my wife and me to his country seat on a date in February in response to an invitation extended by him. The programme arranged in our honour began with a boating trip down the Gomti that flowed past the very door-steps of his delightful mansion. Bathed in the light of the setting sun, the country all round, rich with a luxuriant growth of wheat and barley and mustard stretching right up to the horizon, presented a scene hard to forget. To add to our sense of delight, we were treated to the strains of vocal music sung by a professional singer in a tune that seemed to be fully in accord with the evening silence, the gentle breeze playing upon our faces and the soft splashing of the water against the sides of our boat.

But all good things must come to an end and so did this boating trip of ours. We were next treated to a short spell of foot drill executed by the young hopefuls of the Raj family, numbering half a dozen or so, dressed in their best attire, made of blue velvet, embroidered in gold. Whatever might be the merit of their performance, I must say that their pretty cherubic faces, flushed with exercise, made up for any defects that would otherwise have hit the eye.

This part of the programme being over, we were taken for a stroll round the garden till it was dark, when we adjourned to the sitting room. Here, we found ourselves surrounded by the entire family including the Raja Mata, a good old lady, who spoke for the rest of the family most of the time.

Exactly on the stroke of eight, a gong announced dinner

THE TALUQDARS OF OUDH

and this was a signal for the party, except for the Raj Mata, to move into the dining hall that looked resplendent with large bevelled mirrors and fine mural paintings decorating the walls. But the bravest sight of all was made up by the bearers, waiting on us in their full dress of red velvet, cut in a style borrowed from the mid-Victorian days. As for the food, it comprised numberless courses and represented a combination of English and Indian dishes to which it was impossible to do full justice.

When dinner was over, we were treated to *pan* specially ordered from Lucknow and then followed a round of handshakes and *namastes* which brought the evening's proceedings to a close.

To come to think of it, who can deny that today, although the Taluqdars of Oudh may still be living, virtually dead is the race that at one time strutted across the centre of the stage in Uttar Pradesh with so much sound and fury?



THE VANISHING TRICK

THOSE who have passed Najibabad by rail must have noticed an old Fort that looks a majestic pile against the background of the distant hills. Though in ruins, its high walls made of massive blocks of granite, still stand firm and four square to the winds, thus making it eminently suitable as a detention camp for delinquents. Such, in fact, was the purpose it was made to serve in the twenties, when it used to be a Settlement for Bhantus, a criminal tribe of marked notoriety, generally given in those days to marauding in the submontane tracts of Uttar Pradesh. Incidentally, Sultana, whose name came to be a by-word at one time, was a Bhantu, who had escaped from this very Settlement, to lead a reign of terror for several years, till he was liquidated by Frederick Young of the Indian Police.

In the year 1927, the Government of India took a decision in favour of transfer to the Andamans, on a voluntary basis, of such criminal tribesmen as desired to settle there. As a result of this, I was required in the month of January of the following year, to escort as far as Howrah, a large party of these tribesmen—men, women and children—from the Settlements at Najibabad, Moradabad and Bareilly.

I had arranged for a third class carriage to be attached to the Dehra Express at Najibabad for the accommodation of this party and all was well till we came to Bareilly. Here the Superintendent of the local Settlement met me and made over to my charge a number of families, mostly Bhantus, bound for the Andamans. By now it was past midnight and the cold was severe. The time at our disposal being very limited, it was no simple matter to get them properly seated. The more so, as they carried with them every conceivable form of household article that they felt they might need in their new home, such as charpoys, mill stones, spinning wheels, pots and pans of various sizes, all of which being very cumbersome took a great deal of space. However, by the

THE VANISHING TRICK

time the train was due to leave, we managed somehow to cram them all in, along with their belongings and then I walked over to my compartment in another carriage. Simultaneously, at a signal from me, the guard blew his whistle and the train began to move. Just then I heard a frantic cry from one of the party I was escorting, a woman who had boarded the train at Bareilly. She was repeatedly calling out 'Mirchania', 'Mirchania', 'Mirchania' and the sound of her voice was being echoed back from every block of building that we passed as the train gathered speed, till it seemed to get lost in the enveloping darkness. I wondered what the matter was. But there was nothing I could do till our next halt.

Mirchania, I discovered, was an unmarried daughter of the woman who had been calling out her name. She was to go with her parents to the Andamans which she was not prepared to do, having lost her heart to a young man who was staying behind. So she cleverly managed to give her parents the slip, in the general confusion that prevailed at the time of departure of the train carrying them. Mirchania's mother being inconsolable, I had to detail my next-in-command to go back to Bareilly and fetch Mirchania to Calcutta.

When we got to Varanasi the next day, at about noon, we saw a great rush of passengers there. But the train being full to capacity they moved about helplessly from one carriage to another. Some of them noticed that the carriage reserved for the party under me was not quite so full as the others. So they came up to me and begged my permission to squeeze themselves in. Reluctantly I granted their request, little anticipating what was going to follow.

Once these persons had been able to get inside the carriage, they made themselves comfortable by depositing their belongings wherever they found it convenient to do so. But soon they began missing them and this was the beginning of the trouble, with imprecations and counter-imprecations being hurled without a break between the parties. The moment the train came to a halt, I was besieged by the aggrieved persons and asked to mediate. I heard one girl say to her brother who was escorting her, 'Dada, I had my hand bag just by my



side and I saw that woman there, slip it under her skirt.'

From the account I got from these people, it seemed as if their things had been spirited away by magic. I pleaded with the men and women in my charge to surrender them but all of them solemnly affirmed their innocence. When we got to Howrah, I had a search parade carried out ; but, again, without any success. And how could it be otherwise, considering that I was conducting some of the worst criminals of this country, who had raised their profession to a fine art ? To me it remains a mystery to this day how they managed to make those things vanish altogether.



AN ANGRY TIGER

WITHIN close range of Robertsganj, a small moffussil town in Mirzapur district, there lies a fairly thick belt of forest that used to be good for shikar. I was then new to the district and had no particular interest in big game hunting. All the same, the moment I arrived at this place during the course of my winter tour, the Officer Incharge of the local Police Station, Sub-Inspector Baldeo Singh, brought me news that there had been a 'kill' in the forest near by and requested me to get ready for the hunt that he had arranged for me.

It had become a tradition with my predecessors-in-office to combine business with pleasure, while out on tour. Therefore, in making arrangements for a tiger shoot for me in anticipation of my visit, Thakur Baldeo Singh had done nothing unusual.

The technique for this hunt is quite simple. Inside the jungle there are tracks that a tiger usually follows on his night rounds in quest of prey. At various points of these tracks, young he-buffaloes are tied to serve as bait. In case a tiger comes along and feeds on one of these animals by night, then he generally carries off the carcass or what is left of it, to a safe place, to have a second helping by day. So, if a drive, or what is commonly called a *hakwa*, is intended against the beast, the most appropriate time for it is midday, when the tiger is likely to be resting, if not fast asleep.

The actual drill for this drive is something like this. If you are the person wishing to 'bag' the tiger, then you sit on a *machan* rigged up at a strategic point that the tiger is most likely to pass in his attempt to get away. The 'stops' spread out in fan shape in the direction of the tiger, forming two sides of a triangle with you at its apex, while the beaters are ranged in a line facing you, to make up the third side of the triangle.

The duty of the 'stops' is to see to it that the tiger does not break away from the triangle. They are seated on trees,



usually with small axes in their hands, and, as soon as they notice any inclination on the tiger's part to do so, they gently tap the trees on which they are seated, thus producing a sound that makes the tiger turn inwards.

When all is set, the beaters move forward at a given signal from the leader of their party, making at the same time as much noise as possible with the aid of an odd variety of instruments that they carry for the purpose, such as drums, gongs, cymbals, flutes, trumpets and even canisters and tin pots. The din thus caused is deafening and it compels the tiger to get up and move away from the beaters towards the machan provided, of course, the 'stops' carry out their part of the job effectively. Then when the tiger comes within his view, the hunter takes aim and fires. It happens, however, that luck plays a great part in these shoots and notwithstanding the most careful arrangements, the tiger may well get away.

Great was the excitement caused in my camp when Sub-Inspector Baldeo Singh brought news of the 'kill'. Word was immediately sent to the nearest villages for beaters who soon turned up in large numbers. They were made to sit in rows, for the distribution of small paper tokens which they were required to exchange at the end of the shoot for two annas each. Today, this sum may seem ridiculously small as wages for a day's work. But in those days, it was alluring enough to attract a host of beaters, who came as much for the sake of the money as for the fun of the shikar.

In this context, I am reminded of an old man, a rather miserable specimen of humanity, who sat among the beaters with a wooden flute in hand. Except for a slip of cloth around his loins, he was naked from head to foot, a sight that made me feel sorry for him. I asked him in a friendly manner, 'Old man, what do you think you are going to do with that instrument of yours?' By way of reply he made a vigorous motion with his fingers, to point towards the inside of his flute, and declared with supreme assurance, '*Sasura, ehi ma se to nikase*' (meaning, 'why? the blighter is going to issue forth from the bowels of this very flute!')

Distribution of the paper tokens over, all the assembled

men were formed into parties, each in the charge of a leader, and after detailed instructions as to what each party was required to do, they were told to march off. I was given in charge of a man who took me quietly to a 'machan' set up on top of a tree. For the benefit of those who have not seen one, I might explain that it is usually made of sticks fastened to the fork of a tree and is so camouflaged that it is not easily discernible. It has a loophole in front which serves both as an observation window and as an opening for the barrel of one's gun or rifle to pass through.

After I had been comfortably seated on my 'machan', it was the turn of the 'stops' to take up their seats on both flanks. Meanwhile, the beaters had spread out in a line facing me at some distance.

The preliminaries being over, it was now time for the beat to commence. At the word 'go' from the leader of their party, the beaters swung into action. Now was the time for me to sit up and, with my eyes and ears straining, to look out for the least movement or for the slightest noise, such as might give me warning of the approach of my quarry.

As time passed and the beaters advanced slowly but surely, the tension within me kept mounting till it became almost unbearable. Suddenly, I heard a footfall, a very soft footfall. With my ears pricked up, I looked in the direction from which it had come. But, except for the loud pounding of my heart I could hear nothing.

After a brief spell, my ears again picked up the same muffled footfall. This time there could be no mistake, 'thump', 'thump', it went, till I noticed an object moving cautiously forward through the brushwood in front of me. It had a dark shaggy coat and every now and then it stood up on its hind legs to make sure the coast was clear. Soon enough, my doubts were resolved. The mysterious intruder was a bear trying to escape from its pursuers. Purposely, I desisted from firing at him, for I knew that if I fired the tiger would break away. So I let the bear pass.

After a brief interval, again, it was the same muffled sound of approaching feet, the same cautious movement



culminating in the appearance of a second bear! Again, I let this one go, for the sake of the tiger I was after.

The beaters had by now advanced within a hundred yards or so of the spot where I was seated and I could even see one or other of them emerging from a thicket, only to disappear again from view. Surely, I said to myself, there could not be any tiger in the beat or he would have put in an appearance by now?

And while I was cogitating like this, what should I hear again, but the same muffled sound of a bear's footfall! But this time I was not going to let him pass. So, as soon as he broke cover, bang went my rifle and the animal dropped dead, a few yards in front of me. I now stood up in my machan to make it known that the beaters might close in. The shot fired, my rifle was no longer at the ready. It hung loosely by my side.

Suddenly, for no particular reason, I turned my eyes towards a *semal* (silk cotton) tree standing some thirty yards in front and saw a tiger, large as life, emerge from behind its trunk! I looked at him, disbelief in my eyes, he looked at me, with a questioning gaze. In this way, as we looked at each other motionless, it was as though we had lost count of time.

Presently, the tiger took possession of himself and pointedly raising his head towards me, delivered himself of two resounding roars, as if saying to me, 'What the hell, do you mean by standing up there gun-in-hand? Don't you *dare* to fire at me while I make off.' With this warning addressed to me in no uncertain terms, he bounced forward like a ball of fire. Automatically, I lifted my 401 Winchester Repeater and fired at him—once, twice and then, in the heat of the moment, I lost my balance. I was about to fall off my machan, but managed to hold on by sheer instinct. Meanwhile, the tiger disappeared into the bushes in my rear, like a streak of lightning.

It has taken me much longer to relate this incident than the time actually taken in the enactment of it. At any rate, it was now known to everybody that I had twice fired at the tiger. So the question was, whether I had hit him or not. To make sure, I carefully went over the ground on which he had

been standing when I first fired at him. Initially, I could see no signs of any damage done to the beast. But, a minute examination of the ground revealed faint traces of blood and, what was more important, a small piece of bone smeared with it.

This was proof enough that the tiger had been hit. An examination of the course he had followed in his wild flight revealed more traces of blood and these became increasingly marked as I advanced in the direction in which he had fled. The occasion demanded a council of war. We all knew it would be folly to proceed any further; for there are few things more dangerous than a wounded tiger. So, it was unanimously decided that we should come the next day and carry out a combing operation with the help of a herd of buffaloes.

A wounded tiger, if he has not been so incapacitated as to be unable to move, is sure to retaliate. In such a situation, the best thing to do is to go after him the next day with a herd of buffaloes. The buffaloes, as soon as they spot him, usually start snorting and, with their horns lowered and menacingly pointed at him, form a solid phalanx in the shape of an arc facing him. The rest is simple. The hunter is provided with an opportunity to fire at him from behind cover as it were, and thus give him the quietus.

To take up where I left off, some of my companions, whose number had now swelled considerably had, in the meantime, spotted more blood further up and called out to me to come and have a look. The invitation was one that could not be ignored and on my walking up to the spot, I was told of the existence of many more traces of blood further on. In this way, little by little and without any conscious exercise of the will, I must have advanced some fifty yards or so in the direction in which the tiger had disappeared. Judging from the speed that had marked his mad rush past my machan, I felt sure he had gone a considerable distance before coming to a halt, so that there was no cause for worry.

All of a sudden, one of my companions shook me by the shoulder to say 'There he is.' At first, I failed to grasp the meaning of what he was saying. It was soon, however, clear

that he was referring to the tiger, for he was pointing to a spot some thirty yards to the right of us. I strained my eyes hard to place the animal. But it was not at all easy to do so, because the time was past midday and the light-and-shade effect of the surrounding trees blended nicely with the black-and-tan of the tiger.

However, I managed after a little while to distinguish the outline of the beast's head lying flat on the ground, with his eyes glowing like two red lights. Strangely enough, this discovery did not unnerve me in the least. For, at the back of my mind was the reassuring thought that the tiger had been mortally wounded and was unable to move. Little did I realise then the position of his head was a sure sign that he was crouching for a spring!

Unmindful of the imminent danger to which I stood exposed, I started calculating what I should next do. But the tiger was in no mood to wait upon my convenience! With a terrific roar, he flung himself through mid air with the force of a projectile. Not prepared for such a sudden assault, I was taken aback and a thick layer of haze seemed to spread before my eyes, as if I were in a trance.

Nevertheless, I fully realized that this might mean the end of my life, which struck me as rather funny. I seemed to say to myself, 'Here I stand, a sure prey to the tiger whom I had set out to kill and, yet, when I woke up in the morning, little did I know that such would be my fate before the day had run out.' I thought of my people at home—of how they would grieve over their loss. These and similar other stray thoughts flashed past on my mind's curtain as I stood rooted to the spot, with the tiger still poised in mid-air. Somehow, it did not occur to me to fire. But, even if I had done so, it would have been worse than useless, considering that to try and stop a charging tiger with a light sporting rifle such as the one I held, is like attempting to stave off a tidal bore with one's bare hands. Instinctively, I stepped aside to dodge the beast, which move, I am sure, saved my life, for to turn and make a headlong flight would have been suicidal. Next, to save myself from falling into the tiger's clutches, I scrambled up a

nearby tree, as had been done by my numerous companions, who were seen dangling precariously from every tree, big or small, that stood around.

Now began a count to ascertain whether any one of us was missing and, sure enough, there was no sign of Constable Basawan Singh, who had joined the crowd at a later stage when the beaters had closed in. Soon, it was discovered that he was lying on the ground close by, unable to move. Even so, how could one help him? There sat the tiger under a tree not far from him, giving vent to his rage through periodic roars that gave us the shivers. Our talking to one another from across the trees seemed to provoke him all the more. So we lapsed into silence which seemed to appease him somewhat. Unluckily for me, the beast was not visible from where I was perched. But one of my orderlies, who had chanced to climb up the very tree under which the tiger now sat roaring, was able to communicate to me the animal's movements.

Time hung heavy on us and we did not know what to do. To stay indefinitely where we were, was not feasible, and yet, to descend to the ground meant coming face to face with the beast. As time went by, the tiger's roars became less and less frequent and this emboldened me to come down quietly and climb up another tree, from where I could command a good view of him. Simple as this operation was, it gave me a rare thrill, for I felt as though I was challenging my adversary to come and get me, if he could.

From this other tree, I could see the tiger sitting with his head up, looking rather morose and meditative. Probably he sensed that his time was up. On my side, I felt there was not much time to lose, for it was past four in the afternoon and the sun was fast receding. I took careful aim and fired, hitting him in the neck, which action strangely enough, merely made him get up and walk towards me without showing the least sign of distress.

At that moment, he looked very majestic indeed, with the light from the setting sun playing upon his head. A thing I noticed for the first time was that as he walked his hind quarters dragged, indicating that his spine had been broken.



I at once knew that this had been caused by my second shot, fired as he was passing under my *machan*. This also explained his subsequent conduct in not fleeing still further away as might have been expected. But majestic as he looked, I did not hesitate to fire another shot at him, getting him in the head this time, with the result that he fell in a heap, dead.

The first thing I did after this was to run up to the spot where Constable Basawan Singh still lay prone. I found he had been badly mauled by the tiger, who had evidently dealt him first a terrific blow from behind with his paw—thus breaking his spine and then dug his teeth in, a few inches below the nape of his neck.

I had the Constable turned over, whereupon he did something that I remember to this day. As soon as he saw me standing there, he raised his hand in salute, an act that greatly moved me. I stood there grief-stricken while a stretcher was being rigged up. When this was ready, I had him removed, as expeditiously as possible, to the hospital at Robertsganj, where he was given the best medical attention available. But alas ! he quietly passed away in the small hours of the morning.

Much distressed by this tragic occurrence, I resolved never to go on a tiger shoot again. But the lure of big game was so great that I was unable to abide by my resolution when the chance for a hunt offered itself again.

THE VICEREGAL SPECIAL

THE passage of a Viceregal 'Special' through one's district was an event of rare importance in the days of old, entailing much hard work for all concerned with it. I am reminded of one such occasion when Lord Willingdon was scheduled to travel to Patna from Delhi by rail.

According to the Viceroy's original programme, he was to halt for a few hours at Kanpur on the way. But after he had left Delhi, there had to be a last-minute change in his itinerary owing to the disturbed conditions then prevailing at Kanpur. No alteration was possible in the timing for his arrival at Patna, which was to be a formal affair and for which all the arrangements had been worked out to the minutest detail. It was, therefore, decided to cut out his programme for Kanpur and so run his 'Special' as to get to Patna as originally scheduled. This, in effect, meant imposition of an average speed limit on it of something like fifteen miles an hour.

The orders for me were that I should be present at Ahraora Road, a wayside station in Mirzapur, where the train was to stop for forty-five minutes, to allow time for the Viceroy and his party to have dinner. This might sound strange. But it was said that Lord Willingdon did not like having dinner while his train was in motion.

My duty at Ahraora Road was to supervise the Police arrangements there, owing to its proximity to Varanasi, a place with a reputation at that time as a hotbed of terrorists; these arrangements had, in fact, to be fairly elaborate and made in accordance with standing orders on the subject, requiring every culvert, every level crossing on the route, being guarded and Chaukidars (village watchmen) posted all along the track, at intervals of a hundred yards or so.

Exactly ten minutes before the arrival of the 'Special', a pilot engine steamed in. It hummed and buzzed for a brief while and then went on its way. This was a signal for everybody to be on the alert and all eyes were now turned in

the direction of the approaching train. It was a brilliantly moonlit night, against the background of which everything one saw looked unsubstantial. Even the 'Special' with all its carriages gleaming white in the bright light of the moon, when it emerged from the distant gloom and slowly steamed in, looked phantom-like. But the illusion was short-lived. For, no sooner did it halt than the quiet that had prevailed for so long, was succeeded by an atmosphere of bustle and excitement with all sorts of men of subordinate ranks, belonging to the Viceregal entourage, rushing to and fro in search of refreshments.

Presently, I saw the sliding doors in the rear of the Viceroy's saloon quietly open, as if automatically, to let His Excellency pass. Just then one of his attendants placed a step ladder in position for him to descend to the platform. Both these operations were carried out with such finesse that one could not help marvelling at the drill and discipline that went with them. With his silvery hair brushed back, his tall, slim, handsome figure immaculately attired in a dress suit of the finest cut, Lord Willingdon looked most distinguished and the very picture of elegance. He paced a few steps up and down the platform for a brief while and thereafter boarded the Dining Saloon, to join a number of others present there to keep him company.

The dinner was a long and tedious affair. The Viceroy was engaged all the times in serious conversation with two of his colleagues who sat on both sides of him. While it is true I could not overhear him, I felt almost certain that he was talking of Mahatma Gandhi and how to get him to participate in the Round Table Conference that was shortly to sit in London. That was the burning topic of the hour and exercised the Viceroy's mind more than anything else.

The train, as I have stated, was scheduled to halt at Ahroara Road only for forty-five minutes. But more than an hour had now passed, and yet the Viceroy showed no signs of stirring. I could see him sipping his coffee and smoking a che-root abstractedly, quite oblivious of the time. Meanwhile, trains were held up, up and down the line, and traffic was be-

THE VICEREGAL SPECIAL

ing thrown entirely out of gear. For no train, for reasons of security, could be allowed, at other than junction stations, to cross the Viceregal Special which had to be given precedence over all other trains.

The poor Traffic Superintendent escorting the 'Special' was getting restless. He stood outside the Dining Car and repeatedly tried to catch the eye of the A.D.C. on duty to convey to him by signs that the train was getting delayed. But each time he succeeded in doing so, the A.D.C. with a cautious movement of the head from side to side, seemed to say to him in reply, 'Nothing doing. You must wait.' In sheer despair, therefore, the Traffic Superintendent gave up all further attempts to get the train moving and stood motionless on one side, looking the very picture of misery. In this way, by the time the Viceroy had finished his coffee as well as his fund of talk and was back in his saloon, the train had been kept waiting at Ahraora Road for exactly one hour and thirty-five minutes, against a scheduled halt of forty-five minutes.

...

...

...

Let me relate a similar occasion in January 1925 when I was detailed for special duty at Railway Station Khurja for the Viceregal Special that was due to pass that station on its way to Delhi at about four in the morning. My headquarters being at Meerut in those days, I travelled by rail from there, arriving at Khurja at about ten thirty or so, the previous evening.

The usual drill laid down for such occasions provided, among other things, for a search being carried out of the station premises for any suspicious persons that might be hiding themselves. But once the search was over and all the men detailed for specific duties were in position, there was nothing left for one to do until the train arrived. And here I might add that only those who have had to keep a vigil like mine, will be able to realise fully the tedium of such waiting for over four hours, particularly on a frosty night with scarcely anything to engage one's attention. To while away the time, I kept walking up and down the platform, times without number with



the stars overhead as my sole companions.

After a lapse of what seemed to me an eternity, I was suddenly brought back to the immediate present by a perception of some hurry and bustle among the station staff, heralding the approach of the 'Special' that made so much work for countless persons in its passsge from one end of the country to another. As was customary on such occasions, a pilot engine that was running ten minutes ahead was the first to arrive. As soon as it had gone, everybody seemed to hold his breath in expectation, until the Special steamed in and then quietly came to a halt, without making a sound or a murmur. This being a watering station, its engine drew up by the side of the water column and, as it stood there drawing water, the hissing caused by its steam was the only sound that broke the silence of the night.

I wondered what the Viceroy looked like—the man who ruled with an iron hand over the destinies of over three hundred million souls of India. But alas! there was not the least chance of my curiosity being satisfied as he was then, in all probability, fast asleep, quite oblivious of the vigil that had to be kept by so many on his account.

There stood the 'Special' in front of me, looking in the enveloping silence more like a ghost train than what it actually was. Presently, the wheels started moving ever so slowly and noiselessly, and soon enough the train was again swallowed up in the surrounding gloom from which it had made its appearance only a short while ago, leaving not a trace behind.



A CHRISTMAS CAMP

THE ensuing narrative relates to a Christmas Camp at Hathinala—a remote spot in the district of Mirzapur—which I had specially arranged in honour of my Range Deputy Inspector-General of Police, one Mr. Bell, who was anxious to shoot a tiger or two during this camp. Including myself, the party consisted of four men, three women and two infants.

The distance to be covered from Mirzapur was something like eighty miles, of which only sixty were motorable. The arrangement was that we should drive by car as far as Chopan and do the rest of the journey by various other means of conveyance. All went well as far as Chopan where we met the District Magistrate and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Bomford, and spent some time with them having tea. Thus, when we were ready to set out again, it was past four o'clock in the afternoon.

We were to camp for the night at a place eight miles away and ordinarily it should have taken us not more than three hours to cover this distance. Mr. Bell (D.I.G. Police), Mr. Wells (A Subaltern) and Miss Murphy (a young girl come from England only recently), all of whom were on horseback, were the first to leave. Then followed Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Grant and Mr. Bruce on the back of an elephant. The two infants (one eighteen and the other sixteen months old) came next in palanquins while I, on my horse, brought up the rear.

The entire length of the journey lay through a forest, parts of which were fairly thick. As usually happens on such occasions, the parties after a time got reshuffled. Mr. Bell on horseback, Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Grant and Mr. Bruce on an elephant now took the lead. Then followed Mr. Wells and Miss Murphy on their horses, while I still brought up the rear, closely following the two babies in palanquins. I did so for fear the palanquin bearers might break down under the loads they were carrying. That was indeed a hard task, for the palanquins were fairly heavy and so were the two fat waddling South Indian *ayahs*

who were seated in them, along with their charges. The result was that by the time they had covered hardly a mile, the palanquin-bearers began to falter and stumble. To add to the delay, they changed shoulders every few minutes and, when this failed to give them the desired relief, they began to make brief halts to recover their breath. Consequently, before we had been able to cover a couple of miles, the sun went down and it got darker and darker till we found some difficulty in picking our way. This was indeed alarming, for we had yet another six miles to go with only the stars to light us on our way !

When I found we were hardly making any headway I pleaded with the two *ayahs* to leave their perch and follow me on foot. This they did for a brief while. But the sight of the thick jungle on both sides of them was apparently too much for their nerves. So, after walking for a mere fifty yards or so, they refused to budge an inch further. I then offered them a ride by turns on my horse, which they declined ! In the circumstances, there was nothing I could do except urge the poor bearers on. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven ! Thus I went on counting, to put heart into them. At intervals, I called out '*Shabas, Shabas*'. But all in vain. It was like flogging a dead horse. They were too tired to respond to my words of encouragement. So ultimately, I let them have it their own way. I looked this way and that to see if I could spot a shelter in which to pass the night. But there was none to be found. To stay on the road was also out of the question. The more so, with two infants on one's hands, separated from their mothers. It was a case of the jungle to the right of us, jungle to the left of us and jungle in front of us. I felt a heavy burden of responsibility resting on my shoulders. So I said to myself, come what may, we have got to make the remaining distance, howsoever long it may take us to do it. Stumbling, fumbling, we went on and on. The road appeared to be endless, while the hours seemed to go noiselessly by without a cessation.

After a lapse of what appeared to be ages, I seemed to catch a faint noise in my ear. Presently, it became more and more distinct till there could be no doubt about it. I was filled

with joy, for it meant that we were not far from our destination. We shouted in a body to draw attention towards us and this had the desired effect in that our shout was answered back. What was more, a number of camp followers presently came hurrying, lanterns in hand, to guide us on our way to the Camp. What a relief to have come to the end of our journey. It was close on eleven o'clock by now and we had taken exactly seven hours to cover eight miles! Even so, this was a record of which I think anybody might be envious, considering the circumstance in which we found ourselves placed.

The two babies, I must say, behaved admirably, not crying even once on the way. The meeting that ensued with the rest of the party was in the nature of a reunion. Each of us recounted his or her experience and by popular vote I was declared to be the hero of the day.

Mr. Wells and Miss Murphy related how they had lost their way, how, in their wanderings, they had seen a light in the distance and how, going up to it, they had found a little girl, of whom they wanted to enquire the way to the Camping Ground. It may be mentioned here that of the two, while Miss Murphy knew not a word of Hindustani, Mr. Wells flattered himself for having passed his departmental test in it. What he did was to walk up to the girl and say in his best style *Par-rao kid-ar?* meaning 'Which way is it to the camp?'

Now imagine an Indian girl of nine, brought up in the jungles, who had probably never set her eyes on a European, suddenly confronted by two ruddy faces emerging from the surrounding darkness and bawling out at her something she has never heard! What is she to make of them except that they are 'djins' come to spirit her away? What would you expect her to do? Naturally enough, she shrieked, '*Are mayya re, mayya!*' ('O mother! O mother!') and then bolted as fast as her little legs would carry her. In consequence, poor Mr. Wells and Miss Murphy found themselves no better off than before and went groping their way as best they could till they landed up at the '*parao*' they were seeking. Incidentally, in spite of the very graphic account they gave of their experience that had delayed them *en route*, few of us were prepared to take them at their



word. Mr. Bruce insisted that they had got up this story by way of self-defence !

The whole of the next day and part of the night it rained heavily. Luckily for them, Mr. and Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Grant, Miss Murphy and the two babies were safely accommodated in a small forest bungalow with a tin roofing. But the rest of us had a miserable time in our small tents with the water flowing under our very cots. There was nothing one could do but sit huddled up praying for the rain to stop.

The morning that followed was bright and sparkling, with the sun playing on the foliage round us. This was a signal for us to break up camp, which we did soon after breakfast. This time, the going was easy with a fresh and stronger set of palanquin-bearers to take the place of the old ones. Consequently, when we reached Hathinala, it was still daylight, with a clear blue sky overhead.

On our arrival at the place, the first thing that greeted our eyes was a red banner spread over the entrance to the camping ground with the words 'Welcome to Hathinala Camp' super-scribed on it in bold letters. The entire landscape looked idyllic with a stream flowing past at our feet. Across it lay a clearing in the nature of a glade, flanked by *sal* trees on both sides of it. Down this glade there was a pathway. On both sides of this pathway there were stakes fixed into the ground with paper buntings tied to them. I instantly knew the gateway and the bunting were the doing of the local Station Officer, Sub-Inspector Shamsuddin, and I admired his resourcefulness. There stood our tents, with neat pathways covered with powdered brick inter-linking them. Here and there green branches of trees were to be seen stuck into the ground with oranges and apples and pears and bananas hanging from them. Inside the tents, thick Mirzapur carpets were spread on the floor, while outside, there were any number of petromax lamps hung from poles, which when lit up at night made a brave display.

I was not a little surprised at this pomp and show in the heart of the jungle. But it was the commissariat that worried me. So I took Sub-Inspector Shamsuddin aside and

enquired what he had done about the supply of eggs, meat and milk. He took me to a staff quarter, where he had set up his lodging. He showed me into a room where there was a neat pile of about a thousand eggs to be seen, made in the shape of a miniature hillock. He then took me to a courtyard where I saw some twentyfive to thirty young goats huddled up which he said were intended for our consumption. Now remained the question of supply of milk. To show me what he had done about it, he took me some distance into the jungle and there pointed to a pen with some fifty to sixty head of milch cows. These, he said, had been rounded up from the surrounding forests where they had been left free to graze.

By now my admiration of Sub-Inspector Shamsuddin knew no bounds. But there was still one other problem that gave me cause for anxiety, namely, how to collect beaters for our daily hunt, considering that the nearest village lay some twelve miles away? To set my mind at rest, Sub-Inspector Shamsuddin took me to another part of the jungle where almost an army of men were to be seen cooking their food. I asked him, 'How did you manage to get so many men together?' 'Why, Sir', said he, 'They have all come from the nearest villages. But since these villages are some distance away, I thought it would be best if they brought their food with them and stayed here for the period of the camp.'

But these were not the only surprises S.I. Shamshuddin had up his sleeve. In the evenings when we used to sit round a fire, he invariably had some entertainment or other ready for us. One evening, for instance, he arranged a folk dance for us to witness, the performers being men and women of a local tribe who with their hands interlinked faced each other, the men on one side, the women on the other, the latter wearing sarees of all the colours of the rainbow. Then they swayed rhythmically, forwards and backwards, to the sound of tom-toms. On another evening we had a show of mock fireworks in which the fun was supplied by faggots of a local wood called 'tend' which, when set on fire, sent up a fusillade of sparks into the air.

In fact, there was no end of S.I. Shamsaaddin's ingenuity.



For instance, the day Mr. Bell shot a tigress we noticed that the words 'Welcome to Hathinala Camp' superscribed on the banner over the entrance to the camp, had been substituted by the words, 'Hearty Congratulations, Sir'. I also remember how on New Years Day, when I woke up, the first thing that greeted my eyes was a banner with the words 'Happy New Year, Sir', so placed that as soon as the front purdah of my tent was lifted I could see it.

Needless to say, the Camp was a great success. My guests departed in high spirits, pleased with themselves and with the arrangements made for their comfort.

S. I. Shamsuddin, I regret to say, ended up badly. I felt sorry for him, for I knew that he would have gone far, if he had only kept straight, a thing that was perhaps not in his blood.



THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT OF 1930

THE year 1930 will always be remembered for the wave of popular enthusiasm that swayed the country following the call of Mahatma Gandhi for Civil Disobedience. The Police had a correspondingly difficult time, having to deal with the Salt Campaign and other forms of agitation that appeared to have caught the imagination of the people from one end of the country to the other.

During this period, one afternoon at about five, as I was about to leave my office at Mirzapur after the day's work, I received a telephonic message from the local Station Superintendent to say that a batch of some one hundred persons, mostly boys, had arrived by rail from Chunar without ticket. I was taken completely by surprise, for so far the Police did not have to combat ticketless travel carried out in an organised manner. Promptly, I hurried to the Railway Station to find that almost the entire town had turned out to watch the fun. Some were perched on the boundary wall, while others were jostling one another in the open ground in front. As soon as they saw me they rent the sky with shouts of '*Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai*', '*Motilal Nehru ki Jai*', '*Jawaharlal ki Jai*', obviously intended as a challenge to me. An old woman put in her head into my car and said, 'My son, why do you bother? Why not let the youngsters have it in their own way?'

I felt embarrassed. I knew that the police were like a red rag to the masses and that any wrong step on my part might precipitate an ugly situation. The best thing for me to do was to keep smiling and humour the crowd. This I found had the desired effect. I then walked up to the platform and came face to face with the boys from Chunar. They were drawn up in double file under the command of their leader, who was holding a Congress flag in his hand, and looked calm and collected. Much as I tried to find out from them who they were and whose was the brain behind them, they just kept



...
mum, so that I was unable to get anything out of them. They were there only to court arrest.

My sole anxiety at the time was to avoid any unpleasantness. So I had them removed post-haste to the District Jail close by, before coming to any decision as to the line of action to be taken. To detain so many persons for trial would mean overcrowding of the jail and was, therefore, not desirable. One other thing for consideration was that most of them were boys in their teens. So I had them drawn up in a line and proceeded to pick out those below sixteen with a view to releasing them. But as soon as they saw through this, boy after boy addressed me saying, 'Sir, I am over sixteen.' Even so, I had most of them sent away by motor vehicles to a place outside the city and released them to avoid any demonstration. But soon enough they found their way back into the city where they were made much of and given a hearty send-off before their return home.

I thought the trouble was now over. But the next day again, I had a similar message from the Station Superintendent at about the same time when I had to rush off to the railway station to take charge of the situation. There I had once again to make my way through a milling crowd, fully defiant and busy rending the skies with their '*Jais*' and, finally, I had to take the same action as I had taken the previous day.

Thereafter, when yet another batch arrived by the same train on the third day, I felt my nerves giving way. By way of a solution of this recurrent nuisance, I got into touch with the Divisional Railway Superintendent at Allahabad who arranged for a party of ticket collectors to travel by this train from Moghalserai. On my part, I had a strong detachment of the police posted at Chunar so as to stop persons without tickets from boarding the train there. Meanwhile, instructions came from the Congress High Command at Allahabad that ticketless travel was not on their programme. Consequently, there were no more instances of this kind after the third day, which was a great relief to me.

...

The trouble continued in one shape or another for a whole year giving the Police no end of worries. This reminds me of a memorable ride I had on a date in January 1931, following receipt of a secret message from Government about the impending arrest of Mahatma Gandhi.

I was at the time camping at Kuldumri, a little over a hundred miles away from Mirzapur. The date for the arrest was fixed as the 30th January, while I received the message late on the evening of the 28th. The orders of Government were that no demonstrations in the nature of protest meetings or processions were to be allowed. So, if I wanted to get back to my headquarters in time I had to look sharp about it.

To leave during the night was not practicable, as the road as far as Robertsganj over a distance of some fiftytwo miles was no better than a mule track and lay through a thick forest. The best I could do was to leave early in the morning and I made arrangements accordingly. Fortunately, within a few miles of Kuldumri there lived a Rani who owned a string of horses, mostly for purposes of display. I arranged to borrow one for my ride to Robertsganj and also took one of the Rani's *sowars* to keep me company.

My plan was to go as far as Obra, a distance of some twentyfour miles, and spend the night there. We left Kuldumri at about eight in the morning hoping to reach our destination by midday. A clear sky with the sun's rays glinting off every leaf and every pebble wet with the morning dew, a soft breeze with a nip in it, a long undulating road through lovely forest country and a mount that responded to my least suggestion, created just the conditions that make life worth living. So I went on and on at a slow canter, smoothly, effortlessly and feeling as if I were seated on a spring cushion. My companion, the *sowar*, fell far behind me. But this did not matter. I was fully immersed in myself and lost in contemplation of the surrounding beauty.

Occasionally on the way, I came across narrow water-courses gone dry. While crossing them I felt a thrill apprehending that I might encounter a tiger at any moment, for I knew that he generally preferred walking along these beds on

his daily rounds. A thing that specially attracted my notice was that pyramids of rough stones called 'Baghauts' were to be seen at odd places on the way, intended as memorials to hapless wayfarers, who had fallen victim to man-eating tigers. The practice, I was told, is that whenever a fatality of this type takes place, the relations of the deceased, after collecting his bones, place them under a heap of stones, to mark the spot where he was killed. Thereafter, every time a man passes this heap, he puts another stone on it, thus making it into a mound several feet high. Various explanations are given for this practice. One of them is based on a notion that in case a person dies an unnatural death, his soul is apt to wander about aimlessly, unless care is taken to have it pressed down properly !

On my arrival at Obra after a ride of some twentyfour miles, I met Sub-Inspector Yadunandan Pandey of Chopan who had reached the place only a few minutes ahead of me. He was not expecting me till the next day, for he thought I would make a halt for the night at the earlier *Parao* (camping ground) at Semartar, that stood half-way between Kuldumri and Obra. The fact was I felt the going so good that it never occurred to me to stay at Semartar. Besides, I was so hard pressed for time that I could not afford to do so.

The question before me was whether I should move on or make a halt at Obra. I did not feel tired. My horse also showed no signs of fatigue. So I said to myself, why not continue, considering that it was only midday? Pandey arranged for some forage for my horse, as well as some food for me, which I ate with great gusto. I then stretched myself on a string cot in the cool shade of a mango tree, while my horse had a breather. But if we were to go to Chopan there was not much time to lose. So promptly at one o'clock I got up and set out again. This time I was accompanied by Pandey. The *sowar* had taken leave of me.

The journey from Obra to Chopan, again, lay through a forest and it took us three hours to cover a distance of some fourteen miles. By the time we arrived at Chopan it was close on four o'clock. This, I thought, was excellent. And

THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

now, I said to myself, why not move on to Robertsganj, a distance of another fourteen miles, instead of making a halt at Chopan for the night? I still felt fresh, but I could not say that of my horse. Pandey offered to get me a pony locally. But the search for one proved vain. So, instead of waiting any further I decided to carry on as best as I could on the same old mount that had carried me as far as Chopan.

At Chopan I had to cross the Sone by ferry which took some time. In the result, by the time I was off again, the sun had disappeared behind the trees. Here I parted company with Pandey and went ahead by myself. But I could see that my horse was now feeling tired. I made him go at a trot instead of a canter. Even then he relaxed into a walk quite frequently, thus showing that it was getting increasingly difficult for him to proceed any further. I felt sorry for him and after a while let him go at a walk. By now the sun had set down the horizon and the light was failing. I had still more than half the distance of the last lap to cover. To make matters worse, my horse would now come to a sudden halt every few yards. He would even turn round occasionally to face the direction from which he had been coming, thus showing his reluctance to go any further. I then chose to dismount and lead him by the reins. But with a thick jungle on both sides of me and only the stars overhead to light my way, this was not a very pleasant thing to do. What I feared most was an encounter with a bear, for I knew he could be an ugly customer, in case I suddenly came face to face with him. I had a revolver with me, which I held loaded in my hand against an emergency.

While I was thus moving, at almost a snail's pace, I noticed a cattle pen by the roadside with a small shed in it at one end. It looked very inviting. So I made up my mind to pass the night in the comparative security of this pen and proceeded to undo its latch. Just then I heard a jingle of bells and then saw a man emerging from the darkness. Fortunately, he turned out to be a thana Chaukidar. He told me that he was carrying 'dak' for the Kaptan Saheb, meaning myself. The rest was plain sailing. I took him along with me to



Robertsganj where I arrived at about 8 o'clock, having covered a distance of fiftytwo miles on horseback in twelve hours. I flattered myself for this achievement. But at the same time I knew that the credit for it went more to my horse than to me.

From Robertsganj I had a message sent to the District Magistrate, Mr. Wood, through a canal wire and then I boarded a public bus that was ready to leave for Mirzapur, arriving there at about ten p.m. and thus establishing a record that I believe remains unbeaten till today.

The news of Mahatma Gandhi's arrest came out next day. But, contrary to expectations, there were no demonstrations at Mirzapur. This saved me any unpleasantness that I might otherwise have been required to face.

My wife and child, whom I had left at Kuldumri, joined me four days later, having come as far as Robertsganj on the back of an elephant.



87
CSL

PART TWO



INNOCENCE AND GUILT

WITH an area of over 5000 square miles, Mirzapur happens to be one of the largest districts of Uttar Pradesh, some of its outlying parts lying more than a hundred miles away from its headquarters. Communications in those days were far from satisfactory in this district, particularly in the region south of the river Sone and this meant slackness of supervision with all that it entails. In other words, the administrative staff of this region enjoyed some measure of immunity from frequent or surprise checks by supervisory officers and found themselves free to take certain liberties that otherwise they would have taken care to avoid.

A case of Police Circle, Khairwa, situated in the southernmost extremity of this district, will bear testimony to this. One morning, during the course of my winter tour, while I was camping at Khairwa and sitting under a tree behind my tent, I noticed a man advancing in my direction very cautiously on his haunches through an arhar field. When he got clear of it, I could see that he was an ordinary village youth. But he had the appearance of a hunted beast and looked furtively this way and that to see if the coast was clear. I could at once see that he had something to tell me in confidence. So I beckoned to him whereupon he approached me with alacrity. Then he fell at my feet and prayed for my intercession.

He told me he had been robbed by the local Police of all his savings. He then gave me details of his case. I took pity on him and decided to institute an immediate enquiry. So I took him along with me to his village a few miles away and there examined a number of people who could throw light on the case.

This youth, I discovered, worked as a labourer in a tea estate in Assam and came home on leave with his accumulated savings, once every two or three years. At home he had only his old mother living, for whom this home-coming of her only son on these rare occasions was a great event. On his part



also, he enjoyed every minute of his stay in the company of his mother—whom he very much loved.

In this village there lived a girl, only a little younger than this boy, who used to be his playmate when he was a child. In those days they suffered from no inhibitions and wandered about freely all over the countryside wherever their fancy took them. But that was some years ago and now the same girl had grown into a maiden who was not free to do as she pleased.

One day, the two took into their head to go to a neighbouring village where a fair was being held. It did not occur to them to consult their elders and, left to themselves, they made a day of it, going from booth to booth and enjoying the sight of all the wonderful things. They also regaled themselves with titbits to their heart's content.

Later, when they returned home in the evening, they discovered that they had fallen from grace. The outing they had had was viewed by their village folk as an escapade and, therefore, frowned upon. But what is done cannot be undone. The storm blew over and they settled down to their normal life.

Thereafter, all went well till a beat constable arrived in the village some weeks later in the course of his periodical round. As was usual with him, he first called on the village Chaukidar to get all the local news. The latter, in his turn, having nothing better to report, related the aforesaid boy-and-girl affair, with such embellishments as he was capable of. A fact he stressed was that the boy had brought home with him as much as Rs. 300 he had saved up. Here, said the constable to himself, was an opportunity to make some money. So he sent for the boy and said something like this to him: 'Well, what do I hear about you? Is it a fact that you ran away with Ramu's young daughter?' The boy could only mumble, 'No, *Malik*, I did nothing of the kind. I merely went to see the mela at Singrauli along with her.' 'But' said his interlocutor sternly, 'You should have known that this was irregular. How can you, grown-up as you are, go to another village with a grown-up girl belonging to another family? I am afraid you must suffer the consequences of it. What you

INNOCENCE AND GUILT

have done is an offence against the law of the land. It is a case of abduction, pure and simple.'

So, the boy was marched off to the Police Station at Khairwa and shut up in the lock-up. Naturally, his poor mother was stricken with grief and went from door to door to seek help. Ultimately, she went to the village headman, who was actually in league with the local Police. He expressed his sympathy for her and said, 'You know I am a wellwisher of your son. But he has committed a grave offence. My advice to you is to spend some money and thus get him released.'

Meanwhile, the case had reached the hands of the *Dewanji* (Writer Head Constable) of the Police Station who demanded Rs. 500 for the release. Now started a higgledy-hoggedy, the village headman acting as intermediary, till the deal was finally settled for Rs. 250. This was all that the poor woman had left with her, out of the earnings of her son. All this time, the Station Officer purposely remained in the background. But the money was shared by him along with the others who had participated in this drama.

Having thus satisfied myself about the facts of the case, I decided in the interest of the aggrieved party, that I should get the money returned to him. So in the end, much as the offenders in this case hated having to disgorge it, they had to do so at my bidding. Thus the curtain was rung down upon an episode that did no credit to the Police of Khairwa.

BAM MAHADEO

ONE day at my house in Mirzapur, I had a visitor who appeared to be much agitated. When I asked him the purpose of his visit, he produced a Court process from his pocket and implored me to save him. But when I saw that it was merely a summons for his attendance in the Court as a witness in a theft case, I told him that he had no cause for worry. Simple as he looked, he was unable to believe me for a time. So I took pity on him and by way of an assurance told him that if ever he found himself in trouble he could come to me for help. This seemed to hearten him and he left quite pleased, while I had nothing to keep in my mind.

The next day while I was working in my office, my attention was drawn to a man sitting outside with a little boy by his side and occasionally shouting '*Bam Mahadeo*', '*Bam Mahadeo*' at the top of his voice. I could instantly identify him as the one who had been to my house the previous day. But I said to myself he must have come to Court on some business. So I thought of him no more till late in the afternoon when I found him still waiting at the same spot and from time to time calling out '*Bam Mahadeo*' in a voice that rang throughout the office buildings.

Here I should mention that it is not at all unusual for residents of Varanasi and its neighbourhood who are religious-minded, to call out like this. Still, I thought I might find out what the man wanted and sent my '*Peshkar*' (reader) to enquire from him. And when the '*Peshkar*' returned to say that the man wanted to see me, I readily granted his request.

As soon as the man had my permission to come in, he did so, leading by the hand his little son who had smartly turned out in his best clothes. He had a small bundle with him which he laid open on my table, disclosing a bunch of bananas, a coconut, a handful of rice and some flowers, besides some other articles that are offered for worship. Then he promptly knelt down by the side of my table, facing me

with folded hands and a prayerful attitude, having at the same time a beatific look on his face. It did not take me long to realise that he had completely gone off his head. I felt sorry for him. So I said to him, 'Tell me what do you want?' In reply he simply said, 'Nothing', and then continued looking at me with supreme satisfaction writ large on his face. I then said to him, 'All right, you may go now.' Whereupon, he said, 'Bhagwan (Supreme Being), I have just one prayer to make, namely, that you will be pleased to give me your *darshan* (audience) whenever I may wish to have it.'

My anxiety now was to be rid of the man. So I promptly granted his request in the conviction that he would not trouble me any more. But hardly had a day or two passed when I heard loud cries of '*Bam Mahadeo*', '*Bam Mahadeo*' coming from the same man, while he was locked in combat outside my bungalow, with a couple of my orderlies trying to prevent him from getting into my room without permission. The moment I came up to him he became a changed man and dropped down to his knees to strike the same prayerful attitude as he had adopted before in my presence. On enquiry as to what he wanted he had nothing to say. So I signalled him to go home, which he did quietly as a lamb.

This incident gave me some cause for alarm, as I feared that he might turn up at any hour and enter my house. In fact, I was still wondering what to do about him when he again presented himself after a couple of days or so, making the same loud exclamations of '*Bam Mahadeo*'. But this time my orderlies stopped him outside the gate, while I thought it best not to see him at all. Then I sent for his elder brother, who told me that ever since this man met me for the first time, he had been frantically asking to be allowed to see me and no amount of argument or coaxing would placate him. This was indeed very embarrassing for me. So I asked for him to be put under proper treatment. Whether he was cured of his mental aberration or not, I cannot say, but I was glad that I had no further visitations from him.



ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK

BANG, bang, bang, rang out three clear shots in quick succession breaking the evening silence. Almost simultaneously, someone shouted, '*Hai Bhagwan, Mai to mara*', (Oh God! I am dying). Then followed the sound of hurried footsteps, punctuated by two more shots at brief intervals that gave the quietus to the victim of this grim tragedy enacted one winter evening within a mile or so of Vindhyachal in District Mirzapur. The scene lay on a beaten track running through crops of 'arhar' standing shoulder high, while the time was soon after sunset when there was not a soul to be seen anywhere near the place.

The deceased was a village headman named Jagannath Singh, a giant of a man, who had been a terror to all. He was building a cottage for himself at some distance from his village and was returning home in the evening after the day's work when he was waylaid and brutally murdered in this manner. Apparently, he was first hit in the stomach with a 455 revolver at almost point blank range and, thereafter, when he ran for his life, he was followed till he fell down dead, his body riddled with bullets.

The motive for the murder was a desire for revenge for past wrongs done by him to more than one person, among whom there was a certain '*Teli*', who happened to be a man of substance. In fact, it was he who was belived to have engaged a hired assassin to do this fell deed.

Who then was the assassin? It was clear that he was no ordinary criminal, judging from the cold and calculated manner in which he had carried out his allotted task.

About this very time, came to our notice the fact that a man named Dirgaj Singh, who was wanted by the Police of Allahabad for a series of murders of a like nature and for whose arrest a reward of Rs. 5,000 had been announced. Therefore, it was inferred that none other than this Dirgaj Singh could be the culprit and steps were, therefore, taken to track him down

with the help of informers.

More or less as a direct sequel to this action, one of the informers detailed by Sub-Inspector Saeed Ahmed of Kotwali Mirzapur, brought him news one day of a man answering to the description of Durgaj Singh. He had been seen walking, revolver in hand, along the railway track between Mirzapur and Vindhychal, before disappearing into a small house that stood by the side of this track. Sub-Inspector Saeed Ahmad produced this informer before me. He gave a detailed account of what he had seen.

The house which the suspect in this case had been seen entering was one of a cluster of similar buildings that formed part of an estate belonging to a local Mahant and mostly lay vacant. The Mahant himself lived in a palatial building in the same compound. On one side of this compound was a metalled road and on the other a railway track, both connecting Mirzapur with Vindhychal.

Our problem was, how to proceed in the matter of arrest of the man we were after. To make a raid straightway might prove infructuous. He might in that event even remove himself to some other place, unknown to us, to elude arrest. Therefore, the proper thing to do was to arrange for an unobtrusive watch over him, so as to leave nothing to chance. Meanwhile, S.I. Saeed Ahmed undertook to keep in touch with his informer so that as soon as the time was ripe for it, we might make a raid.

Our quarry, it was observed, kept mostly indoors, coming out once in the morning for a bath at a well outside his quarters and, again, once in the evening, for a stroll alongside the railway track immediately in the rear of his quarters. Having thus made sure of his movements, we decided one evening to raid his house the next morning at eight, when we might be sure of his capture.

True to schedule, we set out at the appointed hour in a bus hired for the occasion. The party, among others, included Inspector Mohammad Siddiq and Sub-Inspector Saeed Ahmad. The first thing we did on reaching the house was to seal it off by placing a cordon all around



it. It then occurred to me to take the Mahant along with us as a search witness. So I went over to his apartments and explained the object of my visit. He feigned surprise at what I had to tell him. But, all the same, he offered to accompany me. It was thus that, accompanied by Inspector Mohammad Siddiq, S.I. Saeed Ahmad and the Mahant, I entered the house in question for a search.

In front of this house was a courtyard overgrown with rank vegetation. Facing this courtyard there was a row of rooms on the ground floor and another row on the first floor. The entire place presented a deserted and dismal look. But on entering the very first room we noticed a string cot on which lay a pillow with visible signs of its having been used till a few seconds earlier. By the side of this pillow, there was an open Hindi scripture and a white cap with some 455 bore revolver cartridges in it. Obviously, the man we were after had hurriedly moved off and hidden himself somewhere. Desperate as he was, he might even be lurking in a corner, revolver in hand, ready to shoot at us. Worse still, he had the advantage over us, in that while we were unable to see him or anticipate his movements, he could anticipate ours. Nevertheless, the search had to be continued. Siddiq, Saeed Ahmad and I rushed from room to room on the ground floor in the hope of getting at him before he had time to fire, but in vain. The only inference possible was that he had withdrawn himself into the first floor. We saw a steep staircase leading up to it. For all we knew, he might be hiding on one side of the landing, ready to fire at us the moment we came close enough to him.

The situation was now getting tense. But where was the remedy? To retrace our steps at this stage would not be quite manly. The thing to do was to rush up the staircase without giving ourselves time to think and we actually did so, revolver in hand, with hearts throbbing and hands trembling with excitement. I, for one, expected our adversary to shoot at us any moment. But surprisingly enough, I heard no shot. Nor were there any signs of him anywhere on the first floor. This was intriguing and while we were wondering what had

become of him, we heard a loud report. It came from the courtyard below and I said to myself someone from among our party must have been hit. I rushed to a terrace overlooking this yard to find a wisp of smoke floating in the air from a spot where the vegetation was the thickest. But this was enough to give away our quarry. I shouted to him to surrender and when I got no answer, I ordered a round of small shot to be fired at him. Still, there was no response. Finally, I led a charge against him. And it was only then that we discovered him lying dead with his face on the ground and his revolver pressed under his chest in which there was a clean hole with blood oozing from it. Except for a loin cloth, the deceased had nothing on. He was well built and had the body of an athlete.

Nobody could tell us who the man was or where he had come from. It was disappointing to find that he was not Dirgaj Singh. His finger impressions were sent to the Finger Print Bureau at Allahabad and it came to be known that he was a resident of Rae Bareli named Kunj Behari Singh, with one previous conviction against him for vagrancy. It was also discovered that he had been a sepoy in the Army during World War I. But beyond this scanty information about his antecedents, we failed to find out anything about him. Nor were we able to get much out of the Mahant. But I have a suspicion to this day that he had been harbouring this man for some sinister purpose known to him alone.

Incidentally, much to our regret, the murder of the Village Headman Jagannath remained untraced, like so many other cases in which the Police have to acknowledge defeat for lack of sufficient evidence.



A CASE OF MASS HYSTERIA

SOME sixtyfour miles to the southeast of Mirzapur, there lies a village named Machi. A number of mud huts, some thatched and others tiled, all huddled together on a patch of level ground; a sluggish stream with a rocky bed—for the most part dry—girdling it on three sides; a scrub jungle interspersed with *sal* saplings, forming a ring in the nature of an outer circle round it and some low hills for a background, make up this insignificant little village, where life on ordinary days would appear to have suddenly come to a halt. Who could ever imagine that this veritable sleepy hollow of a place would one day provide the scene for one of the most tragic events on record in this district?

There lived in Machi people of many communities, the most numerous of them being Kharwars, a backward but peaceful tribe, mostly cultivators by profession. Among others, there were two Muslim families—one headed by Mohammad Baksh and the other by Mohammad Husain—and a Brahmin family headed by two brothers named Tapeshwari and Bindeshwari. All these people lived as one family and, at least outwardly, in terms of perfect amity and friendship born out of generations of mutual dealings. So much so, that they addressed one another by make-believe relationships of *Chacha*, *Mama*, *Kaka* etc. But despite this surface cordiality, there existed an undercurrent of animosity between Mohammad Baksh on the one hand and Tapeshwari and Bindeshwari on the other, owing largely to bad blood arising out of litigation between the parties. Such, in fact, was the background against which the ensuing events have to be viewed.

One day, it so happened that Mohammad Baksh, while out hunting in the jungle around his village, came across the remnants of a deer. Most of it had been devoured by some wild animal and there was only a leg left over. It being strictly forbidden for all true Muslims to partake of any game not slaughtered in the orthodox way, Mohammad Baksh, in

A CASE OF MASS HYSTERIA

all innocence, thought fit to make a present of his find to his Kharwar ploughman and had it sent to him. On his part, the ploughman, on seeing it, took it for the leg of his missing bull-calf. So, he sought the advice of Tapeshwari and Bindeshwari who only added fuel to the fire, saying that Mohammad Baksh had, without doubt, killed the missing bull-calf and made a present of its leg to defile his caste.

Thereafter, at the instance of the two brothers, a secret meeting of the local Kharwars was held at which a decision was taken to invite all Kharwars of the neighbourhood to a Panchayat. Accordingly, a brief note was scribbled by Tapeshwari and circulated among the local people. It stated that a cow had been slaughtered at Machi, whosoever received the message should despatch four such messages to his friends and relations and himself come to village Machi without fail on the following Friday.

In fairness to Tapeshwari and Bindeshwari it must be acknowledged that before they called the Panchayat, they had a petition sent to the Tehsildar-Magistrate at Robertsganj, seeking redress for the wrong done by Mohammad Baksh. It was only when they failed to hear from him that they chose to take the law into their own hands.

As a result of this chain message, hundreds of Kharwars from far and near assembled at Machi on the following Thursday afternoon, in anticipation of the tribal panchayat fixed for Friday. They dispersed themselves in small groups all along the stream flowing past the village. According to eye witnesses, when they started cooking their meal, they looked like an invading army bivouacking for the night. But the only person to feel somewhat frightened over the arrival of these men was Mohammad Husain, the doyen of the village, who went to Tapeshwari and Bindeshwari to seek their advice. In answer, the latter gave him an assurance that so long as they lived, they would not allow a hair on his person to be touched. It was thus that Mohammad Husain abandoned the idea of quitting the village for safety.

With nightfall silence reigned all over the place and everybody, friend and foe alike, surrendered himself to sleep. When

day broke, preparation began to be made for a Panchayat to be held in front of the local Primary School building. Sheets of cloth were spread on the ground and all the elders of the village were invited to participate in it. Mohammad Baksh somehow sensed danger and thought it prudent to stay away from the meeting. Emissary after emissary were despatched to secure his attendance, but in vain.

As time wore on, feelings ran higher and higher, till someone gave a call to set fire to Mohammad Baksh's house. Soon bedlam was let loose and the gathering, almost to a man, in the name of Mahatma Gandhi, led an assault on it to the accompaniment of drums and set it ablaze with the help of lighted faggots.

It being a Friday, a number of his friends and relations had assembled at Mohammad Baksh's house to participate in the Juma (Friday) prayers that were to be held in a local mosque. As these men emerged one after another, being unable any longer to bear the heat from the raging fire, the crowd outside the house, which had by now turned into a shrieking, gesticulating and frenzied mob, chased them with their lathis, spears, tabbals and other crude weapons, until they were overtaken and done to death. In this way, as many as six men were killed.

At about this time, an itinerant pedlar, a Muslim, who used to visit this village now and then with his merchandise, turned up on his small pony, quite unaware of the happenings. He was accosted by some of the villagers who told him not to worry. But some others came up with a threatening attitude and, in trying to escape them, he was first thrown off the pony, then battered to death.

Another victim of this mob fury was poor Mohammad Husain who had shut himself up along with his wife and children. The greedy Tapeshwari and Bindeshwari first extorted some money from him and, thereafter, made short work of him with their swords.

Let it be said to the credit of the rioters, that they did not harm any of the women and children of either Mohammad Baksh or Mohammad Husain's family, on the ground that

such were Mahatma Gandhi's orders. On the other hand, they made them sit at one place as helpless spectators of the orgy of bloodshed that was being enacted before their eyes.

Mohammad Baksh, on his part, remained in hiding all this time in the ruins of an adjoining house and thus escaped detection. But such was his state of mind that he did not venture out till long after the rioters had dispersed and night had set in. Almost instinctively, he first went to his maternal uncle, Mohammad Ibrahim, at village Raiya, to acquaint him with the happenings of the day. Having done so, he moved on to the Police Station at Pannuganj to lodge a report.

When Mohammad Baksh, tired and worn out, arrived next morning at the Police Station, he was hardly in a position to give a coherent account of what he had seen or heard. The Head Constable Writer, in the absence of the Station Officer, prepared a First Information Report of the case and sent to the Police Headquarters at Mirzapur a cryptic message by canal wire asking for help. It was received by the Reserve Inspector, Mohammad Siddiq, in my absence on tour, and he promptly arranged for an armed guard to be despatched to the scene, and passed on the message to my house.

On my return home, I found this message on my table. It was fairly late in the evening. So I decided to leave early next morning, having at the same time taken care to despatch another armed guard in charge of Circle Inspector Sheonath Singh.

Meanwhile, the first flush of their excitement over, the rioters began to reflect over the consequences of their mad act and finally decided to do away with the dead bodies to save their own skin. With this object in view, they collected some of the poor villagers and made them carry the corpses suspended from sticks, for a distance of over a mile into the interior of the forest, two men acting as bearers for each corpse.

There being in all eight bodies to be disposed of, the procession was a long one as it wended its way through the forest. It was escorted by a few of the stalwarts from among the rioters who being in no hurry now fell well behind the corpse



bearers. This, in fact, proved to be a blessing in disguise for one of the victims who had been taken for dead, but was actually alive. Realising that his only chance of escape lay in rousing the sympathy of his two bearers, he appealed to them in a whisper to save him, whereupon they quietly stepped aside—unnoticed by the others—and when safe from observation, let him go. Thus, there were only seven bodies now left to be disposed of. These were put in a heap inside a ditch and then cremated with the help of dry wood cut from the forest.

This part of the episode being over, the attention of the ring-leaders turned once again to Mohammad Baksh who was believed to have sought asylum in Raiya at the house of his uncle Mohammad Ibrahim. The latter was another well-to-do man who had for some reasons become an eyesore to certain residents of village Raipur of which Raiya was only a hamlet. Tapeshwari and Bindeshwari soon joined hands with them. Consequently, a major portion of the rioters marched to Raipur on the third day and made a concerted attack on the house of Mohammad Ibrahim at Raiya, which stood all by itself in a cornfield and in which Mohammad Ibrahim resided along with his large family, inclusive of his sons, his brothers and a host of womenfolk and children.

At first, the inmates of the house had no inkling of the conspiracy that was being hatched against them. But on seeing the mob they hastily armed themselves with whatever weapons came handy and stood ready for the fray. Then followed a tussle between the two parties—unevenly matched as they were—which dragged on for hours without remission. All this while, Mohammad Ibrahim being fairly advanced in years remained in the background, while his sturdy brothers took up position at various vantage points and brandished their swords in the face of all who came within close range. A rioter then thought of an ingenious plan to outwit his opponents. He bored a hole in the mud wall at the back of the house to let in his muzzle-loading gun. But since his quarry took good care to move away from the line of the gun, his strategy failed. But another rioter who had got on the top

of the roof, managed to knock down one of Mohammad Ibrahim's brothers by firing through a hole in it.

In another part of the house, one of the inmates having completely lost his nerves made a bid for escape, only to be beaten to death by his pursuers.

By the afternoon, the house had been reduced to a shambles and the few remaining survivors had lost all hope of saving their lives. They had even embraced one another and said good-bye, preparatory to meeting their fate calmly. Unquestionably, it was only a case of touch and go for these men when, the party under Inspector Sheonath Singh was spotted on the horizon, coming down the high ground that lay to the east. Such was the magic effect of the sudden appearance of this party that the rioters began to melt away, leaving only the stragglers from among them, to be rounded up.

Inspector Sheonath Singh found Mohammad Ibrahim and his family in a state of complete prostration. They were hardly able to speak even. But when the first shock of their surprise was over, they wept for sheer joy and acclaimed the Police as their deliverers. In all, about seventy men were rounded up by Inspector Sheonath Singh and his party. But since they far outnumbered the Police, he had to deal with them very tactfully, to be able to conduct them to the Police Station some ten miles away, without any handcuffs and with only a couple of constables as escort.

To revert to an account of my personal role in this drama, I set out in my car early in the morning and arrived at Police Station Pannuganj at about ten o'clock. I had hoped that on my arrival there, I would be able to get an authentic account of the occurrence from Mohammad Baksh. But I failed to do so as he had seen almost nothing personally. So, I had to proceed to Machi over a distance of fourteen miles and that too, on foot, as there was no motorable road beyond Pannuganj.

My route from Pannuganj to Machi lay through scrub jungle for most part of the way and my journey was, on the whole, uneventful, except for an odd *cheetal* or *neelgai* that chanced to pass by. Ultimately, when I arrived at Machi, it



was 3 in the afternoon. But there was not a soul stirring anywhere within sight and the village wore a look that had something uncanny about it. As I went round, I noticed quantities of ashes heaped here and there and, worse still, Mohammad Baksh's entire house burnt down to the ground.

While I was thus engaged in my inspection of the village which appeared to have been abandoned *en masse*, I saw a Chaukidar coming in my direction in hot haste. He had been deputed by Inspector Sheonath Singh to accompany me to Raiya, eight miles away, where he told me a great killing had been going on. Tired as I felt after my trek to Machi from Pannuganj, this news was far from welcome to me. All the same, I set out for Raiya at once along with the Chaukidar who had come to fetch me.

Our track again lay for the most part through scrub jungle, intersected at places by minor streams with rocky beds which made the going somewhat difficult. The sun was about to set when we came within sight of Raiya. The village lay below us at some distance, the ground suddenly dropping a couple of hundred feet to merge into a plain, which, being covered with ripening grain as far as the eye could travel, looked golden in the evening sun.

As at Machi, at Raiya also there was no sign of life and the sight of wisps of smoke emerging from a couple of places alarmed me. My guide took me straight to Mohammad Ibrahim's house and, on entering it, I was faced with a most pathetic sight of the dead and dying, one of whom, a boy, was rolling his head from side to side in an unconscious state in his mother's lap. The whole place was littered with pieces of tiles and brickbats that had been used as missiles against the victims of what appeared to be an instance of mob fury of an unprecedented kind.

Inspector Sheonath Singh, whom I had expected to meet at this place, was not there. He had already left for the Police Station about ten miles away, with a large body of men whom he had been able to round up. As it was getting late I, too, decided to leave for the Police Station, taking along with me the corpses, six in all. Luckily, I managed to get

some men to carry them. By now it was almost night-fall and so, having acquired a couple of lanterns to light our way, I set out at the head of a procession of a most unusual and rather dismal kind that will be difficult to match.

The track this time, again, lay through a forest for part of the way. To add to our difficulties, there was a fairly wide stream in our path which we had to ford to get to the other side. We somehow managed to do this and, thereafter, helped by the feeble light of the two lanterns that we had with us, continued on our course as best as we could, undeterred by the dense jungle that stood on both sides of us. To cut a long story short, when we reached the Police Station, it was nearly 11 o'clock in the night !

I immediately got busy sending telegrams to various quarters, asking for assistance in the shape of armed guards, motor transport and supplies of different kinds, including handcuffs. Having done this, I got down to the task of eliciting the facts of the case from the seventy odd accused who sat huddled up in the none-too-spacious courtyard of the Police Station, some dozing, others fairly wide awake, but all absolutely indifferent to the goings on all around them.

These men, I must say, presented a strange spectacle with the light from four incandescent lamps posted at the four corners beating upon them and an equal number of sentries holding their firearms at the ready, mounting guard. The scene was one not easily to be forgotten. What was particularly striking was the utter unconcern in the proceedings displayed by the men under arrest. As they came up before me, one after another, to give their statements, they invariably laid particular stress on the fact that they had merely acted in vindication of their faith and, as such, were fully entitled to the right of private defence.

Next morning, I again left for Machi where I camped for a week or so. During the course of the day, several contingents of Police, including a troop of *sowars* (mounted police) from Banaras joined me and so did the District Magistrate, Mr. Wood, transforming the one time sleepy village of Machi into a veritable hive of activity.

As I had done at Pannuganj, I addressed myself here also to the task of recording the statements of all concerned. I remember one little boy who offered to make a statement and how he reeled off the names of almost a hundred men whom he claimed to have seen participating in various acts of violence. So well did he act his part that I had little reason to disbelieve him. But Inspector Sheonath Singh, who was a much more seasoned officer than I was at the time, warned me against taking the boy at his word. Thereafter, when we cross-examined him, he burst into tears and confessed to having been tutored by his uncle. This acted as an eye-opener for me and I became extremely cautious ever afterwards about taking any so called eye-witness at his word. There was, however, no dearth of reliable witnesses and with the record of their depositions, the mystery of the tragic drama began to unfold itself.

For the first two or three days¹¹ of my stay at Machi, I found myself engaged by day in recording the statements of witnesses and by night in ferreting out the numerous culprits, most of whom remained in hiding during day time in the neighbouring jungle. The strategy I employed to catch them was to leave Machi quietly at the dead of night and throw a cordon round their villages preliminary to carrying out a house-to-house search early next morning.

On one such occasion, as I stood waiting at my end of the cordon, I noticed the torch light moving towards me. Thereupon, I also flashed my torch to ascertain whether it was a friend or foe who was coming in my direction. In reply, the other man raised his revolver and was on the point of firing at me when I shouted to him to desist, my adversary being none other than the Station Officer Pannuganj, Sub-Inspector Ram Sri Upadhyaya.

It was quite an experience keeping a vigil like this by night and watching the slow march of the stars across the sky until they faded away one by one. We were rewarded by a catch of varying size, as a result of our nocturnal raids. Our joy knew no bounds one morning when we surprised Tapeshwari and Bindeshwari, the two arch offenders in this case, who had

come under the cover of darkness to collect some foodstuffs from their house.

To sum up, as a result of investigation into this dual case of rioting combined with murder and arson, a charge was drawn up against some 200 accused. Of these, following a protracted trial by the Court of Sessions lasting for nearly two years, 19, including Tapeshwari and Bindeshwari, were sentenced to death and 40 others to transportation for life, thus bringing to a close one of the most sensational cases of mob fury within my knowledge.

... ..

But if this was a case of mass hysteria that ended disastrously, let me cite one in which the situation was saved by the presence of mind shown by a solitary beat constable.

Nowadays from the law and order point of view, Bakrid is a tame affair. But there was a time when the Police had to go all-out to avert any untoward happening on this day. By and large, the trouble resulted more from considerations of prestige than from any other cause, the Muslims insisting on their right of cow-sacrifice and the Hindus opposing it, tooth and nail, on principle. Naturally, the administration often found itself between two stools and their only salvation lay in strict adherence to local custom. If, for instance, 'A' had been doing this sacrifice in the past then it was held that he or his descendants had a prescriptive right that it was the duty of the administration to uphold, opposition or no opposition. Detailed lists of all such persons were maintained at Police Stations for guidance and, by way of a further precautionary measure, arrangements were made for vigorous patrolling by beat constables of all places where trouble might be apprehended.

Here is a case of District Pratapgarh in which there might have been serious bloodshed, but for the timely arrival of a beat constable. It had its origin in a bull-calf belonging to a Muslim that had gone astray on this day. Its owner succeeded in tracing it after much toil and trouble and was leading it home by a cord when he was noticed doing so by a number of

his village folk, who were Hindus. They instantly inferred that he meant to slaughter it on the quiet, inside his house, for which he had no licence. News of this incident went round the neighbouring villages in no time and soon, scores of Hindus armed with lathis, started rushing in, determined to teach him a lesson, till their number swelled to a few thousand. The poor man, who was the object of all this commotion, insisted that he had no intention of slaughtering the calf. But nobody was prepared to believe him. In this way, as time passed, the crowd got more and more excited, till it was a case of touch and go.

Meanwhile, a constable who had been detailed from the local Police Station to go round and see if all was well in his beat was attracted to the spot by the sight of the crowd that had assembled. He was at once able to size up the situation, but what could he do single-handed unarmed as he was? Obviously, there was no point in his arguing with the mob. Nor was he in a position to send them away by just telling them to go home. He, therefore, thought of an alternative. He took out his note book and pencil and went round noting the names and addresses of the people who had collected there. But this was a thing for which they were not prepared. For, it required no imagination on their part to realize that, in case there was any rioting, they would be in for trouble. Consequently, they looked at one another and, thinking that discretion was the better part of valour, started melting away, till not a soul from among them was left to greet us when the District Magistrate, Mr. Vishnu Sahay, and I arrived there, post-haste, on receipt of news of the impending trouble !



SIR MALCOLM HAILEY

AMONG all the Governors in Uttar Pradesh of the pre-independence days Sir Malcolm Hailey was one of the most distinguished. Gifted with a tall handsome figure and a commanding personality, he was sure to create an impression wherever he went. Even before he came to U. P., he had made a name for himself as a parliamentarian, while he was Home Member in the Government of India and there were few who could equal him in his rapier thrusts. Many a time he found himself pitted on the floor of the House at Delhi against Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya and Pt. Moti Lal Nehru, two stalwarts of the Opposition benches in those days. Yet, more often than not, he scored a victory over them, not so much by the weight of his own argument, as by the manner in which he was able to demolish theirs.

I met Sir Malcolm for the first time when he came to Mirzapur on a date towards the end of 1928. He was to receive a welcome address in the Town Hall from the District and Municipal Boards and arrangements had been made for a Guard of Honour to be given him by the Police, outside this building. But a thing I particularly remember in this connection is that when the day's ceremonies were over, the Governor's Secretary took the District Magistrate, Mr. Finlay, aside and told him, under instruction from the Governor, that he should have let His Excellency know beforehand about the Guard of Honour, which he had failed to do. I am sure, Mr. Finlay never repeated the mistake again.

Coming to more recent times, let me here recall an incident connected with an informal visit which our late Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru was due to make to Lucknow towards the end of 1949. True to pattern, instructions were received by me for a Police Guard of Honour to be given him at the airport. I knew that he did not like this formality being observed in season and out of season. So, when the order came, I suggested that by way of a precautionary measure, in-



formation of the arrangement made for his reception had better be sent in advance to his Secretary. But, although I was given an assurance that this would be done, no such action was actually taken. Thus the order received by me held good and an entire Company of the P.A.C., looking resplendent in their best uniform, their bayonets glittering like polished silver, stood drawn up at the airport on the appointed day, to give a salute to the Prime Minister.

As the time for arrival of the plane drew near, all eyes were turned towards the sky. Presently, a tiny speck appeared in the distance and as it came nearer it grew bigger and bigger in size till its outline could be clearly seen silhouetted against the sky. But instead of landing straightway, it sailed over our heads towards the east, before taking a turn and then gradually coming down to touch the ground, with all the grace of a giant eagle. It then taxied to the spot marked out to indicate where it should come to a stop and then suddenly the spark of its life seemed to go out. This, on the other hand, provided a signal for the waiting crowd, irrespective of denomination, high and low alike, to swarm towards it in a body.

Meanwhile, a step ladder had been put in position against the plane and the first person to emerge from it was Pt. Jawaharlal himself. There, as he stood on the platform of this ladder, dressed in a closely fitting *achkan* and *choori-dar* pyjamas, with his starched and dazzlingly white cap, worn at an angle of which the secret was known to him alone; and a red rose, chosen with all the care of a connoisseur, stuck in a buttonhole of his *achkan*; a short parade stick held carelessly in his hand and a gentle smile playing on his lips; indeed, he looked like one born to rule. But lo and behold! Suddenly, the smile on his lips faded away and his eyes seemed to dart fire. For a second or two, there was an awkward pause and then the storm broke with all the force of a cloudburst. He wanted to know why he must be put through a drill every time he came and why must the Police be put up on parade for his inspection, and so on. However, the storm soon blew over, the Prime Minister took the salute and then drove off in the midst of a burst of cheers.

But to go back to Sir Malcolm, he was not only very meticulous about his engagements but also a true sportsman. Mirzapur being a district noted for shikar, Mr. Finlay, the District Magistrate, had laid on a fairly elaborate programme for a shoot by Sir Malcolm and his party, in one of the forests of this district. Preliminaries being over and the guests having taken their position, the beaters started their drive through the forest in all seriousness. But as luck would have it, they failed to put up a single game bird or animal. Upon this, Mr. Finlay was anxious to have a second beat done in another part of the forest. But Sir Malcolm said, 'No', since that would not be sport. So, the party had to return home empty-handed and this was a source of great disappointment to most of us.

Another time that I met Sir Malcolm was when he was passing through Pratapgarh by car on his way to Lucknow from Allahabad and I had to follow him in a tail car. It was about 10 o'clock or so in the morning when I saw his car coming in my direction and trailing a cloud or dust that rose to the skies. Presently, it drove up to the spot where I was standing and then stopped. Sir Malcolm next alighted from it and warmly shook hands with me before saying a few kind words. Meanwhile, my opposite number, Mr. Conlin of Allahabad, drove up. Sir Malcolm had a few words to say to him also and then boarded his car to hit the road once again. But before doing so, he said to me banteringly, 'Now come and eat the dust after me.'

Those who have had any experience of the road in Pratapgarh in the days of which I am writing, need not be told how unenviable was the position in which I found myself, having to drive a car in the wake of another, travelling at a speed of some fifty miles an hour. For me it was like hurtling through a curtain of dust that settled on me in thicker and thicker layers as I moved on. But my worry was that I might abruptly run into something or somebody with disastrous results. How I survived the ordeal, I am unable to explain. But the fact is that I arrived without a mishap at the border of my district where I found Sir Malcolm waiting to say good-



bye to me. Coated with a thick layer of dust from head to foot, I am sure I must have presented a most ridiculous sight in my full dress uniform, my long Sycamore dangling by my side.

Be that as it may, what I remember to this day is the kindly smile that Sir Malcolm gave me before he sped away on his onward journey, followed closely behind by Kazim Raza, my opposite number of Rae Bareilly, who had come to 'tail car' him through his district in the same way as I had done through mine. And this was for the last time I was privileged to set my eyes on good old Sir Malcolm.

A PENITENT HUSBAND

As he stood there in front of me, balanced on one leg and with folded hands, he looked like any other villager, simple and submissive, if somewhat nervous. His very demeanour, particularly his eyes, announced that he had something to confess. But neither the time nor the place was fit enough for me to record a confession. For, it was a Sunday morning in the month of December when, newspaper in hand, I was sitting in an armchair, enjoying the sun, in the front verandah of my house at Unnao. How he managed to evade my orderlies, I cannot say. But there he was, looking the very picture of penitence. I felt some sympathy for him and, therefore, said to him, 'Well, what is it you want?' But instead of giving a straight reply to my question, he merely said, 'Hazoor, I want you to sentence me to death or to inflict on me any other punishment that you may deem fit.'

'How can I do this?', said I, 'You have not told me what you have done to earn any punishment at all.'

By way of answer, he promptly took down an *angocha* (a piece of cloth) from his shoulder and, after squatting on the floor, began to undo a small knot that was tied in one corner of it. This was intriguing and I felt inquisitive to know what he had to show me, for he was taking his own time over his operation. At last, when with hands that were not quite steady, he undid the knot and laid before my eyes the thing it held, I could not, for the life of me, make out what it was. Nor did the man in front of me seem to be at all keen on clearing up the mystery. I looked hard at the thing and, by and by, I was able to discern a bit of flesh gone dry, with a silver ring, the size of a four-anna piece, attached to it. I felt puzzled and asked, 'What is that stuff you want to show me?'

'Hazoor', he said, 'this is the tip of my wife's nose.' The announcement he thus made to me was astonishing and, for a second or two I just looked on without being able to

utter a word. Then, after I had been able to collect myself, I said to him, 'Now, what have you to say about this tip of your wife's nose?'

'Why, I just sliced it off with a sickle', was his plain and simple answer, which he gave me with a nonchalance that took my breath away.

'And, why did you do so?' I enquired after some hesitation. At this he again got up, stood there in front of me with folded hands and this is what he had to say to explain his conduct.

'Hazoor, I am a poor villager. I have a field at some distance from my house with a crop of barley standing on it. It has been my practice to go to my field every evening to keep watch over the crop. Yesterday, when I got back home from my field, it was still dark. I went into my room to lie down for a while. But when I entered it, I had the shock of my life. I saw my neighbour, a man of very loose morals, sleeping with my wife. I saw red and felt like killing both of them. But the man bolted. My wife stood in front of me, looking guilty. I then got hold of a sickle and before she could do anything to protect herself, I just cut off the tip of her nose and here it is before you. Now, you may please yourself and order any punishment that, in your superior wisdom, you may think fit.'

Startling as this confession was, it was made in simple, clear words, without any frills. It was a case of the primitive in man asserting itself. For my part, all I could do was to call my orderly and tell him to take this man to the Kotwali to be locked up. The law, I said to myself, must be allowed to run its course. And, so it did in that the accused was ultimately sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for two years.



WHEN PATRIOTISM WAS A CRIME

ONE day towards the end of 1935, Mahatma Gandhi was scheduled to pass through Unnao on his way from Kanpur to Lucknow by rail. He was then a *persona non-grata* with Government. Still, it was necessary to make suitable police arrangements at all the stations *en route* where his train was to halt. This was because it was anticipated that people from far and near would turn out to have his *darshan*, thus giving rise to a law and order problem for the Police to tackle. They might even impede the progress of the train by swarming all round it.

The only two stations in my district where the train was to stop were Unnao and Ajgain and I was glad that all went well on the appointed day. But a few days later, I received a letter from the D.I.G., C.I.D., one Mr. Horton, which gave me no small cause for concern. It said that, according to source information in his possession, Sub-Inspector Suraj Narain Tewari of my district had been seen garlanding Mahatma Gandhi at Ajgain Station and I should take suitable disciplinary action against him. This put me in a quandary, as I did not relish the idea of having to punish a good officer like Tewari for an act that according to me did not at all constitute an offence. I knew at the same time that if the information supplied to Mr. Horton proved to be correct, I would not be able to save him.

However, on receipt of this letter, I decided to make an on-the-spot enquiry to verify for myself whether or not the allegation was true. So, I, at once, left for Railway Station Ajgain and made enquiries of the station staff, who were in the best position to give me first hand information about the happenings of the day in question.

According to them, the moment the train carrying Mahatma Gandhi arrived, shouts of *Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai* rent the air and all the men, women and children who had been waiting at the station since early morning in their hund-



reds, rushed to his carriage to have a close view of him. Gandhiji was seated in a third class compartment, opposite an open window in one corner, holding a cloth bag in his outstretched hands for the collection of gifts for the Congress Fund. Meanwhile, the crowd started jostling one another. So much so, that there was grave risk of Gandhiji being mobbed. At this stage, Sub-Inspector Suraj Narain Tewari, who had been watching the scene from a distance, moved forward and planted himself in front of Gandhiji's carriage window. With his arms extended on both sides of him and resting on its side posts, he thus created a barrier between Mahatma Gandhi and the crowd. All the same, the crowd continued to shower flowers and garlands at Gandhiji from behind, some of which fell on the Sub-Inspector who passed them on to him.

Not one of the witnesses examined by me corroborated Mr. Horton's information. This made my task comparatively easy and I forwarded the statements of all the witnesses to him along with my finding, exonerating the Sub-Inspector of any such monstrous offence as the garlanding of Mahatma Gandhi! I regret to say that for all my pains the reply I received from Mr. Horton was that there could be no mistake about his information, but that he could see that the Sub-Inspector stood well protected. This, I knew, was really a fling at me. I was, however, glad. The episode was thus closed and I heard nothing further about it.



MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

UNNAO had a larger share of dacoities than most other districts of Uttar Pradesh. The reason for this is not far to seek. In the first place, it had been a breeding ground for dacoits for generations ; secondly, owing to its close proximity to Kanpur, it provided a happy hunting ground for the numerous professional criminals who resided there, mostly as mill hands. In a majority of cases, the information was supplied by local men, working as day labourers in one or other of the factories at Kanpur. The technique employed was quite simple. The gang, usually composed of a dozen men or so, left Kanpur after dusk in small batches, either by bus or by rail and assembled at a pre-arranged place within a convenient distance of the scene of occurrence. Here the 'informer' in the case took charge of the party and conducted it to the scene. The action that ensued was a sharp and swift one. The assailants fired their guns immediately after their arrival, which acted as a deterrent against any resistance. But in case there was one, they were not afraid of taking a toll of one or two lives. The action over, they swiftly dispersed along with the booty, which was carried home by the leader of the party, for convenient disposal. In the end, the sale proceeds thereof were divided among the participants in equal shares, the gun-bearer or bearers receiving double the ordinary share. As a rule, these dacoities took place on Saturday nights which suited the principals, as they did not have to go to their factories for work the next morning.

I am reminded of one occasion when information was conveyed to me through a 'source' that some dacoits from Kanpur had planned to loot a wedding party the same night at a village close to Maurawan in my district. I held a secret discussion with my officers and then decided to proceed to the village in question by a hired bus and there sit in ambush for the dacoits. Accordingly, we commandeered a bus and set out at about nine o'clock arriving at the other end soon

after eleven.

The wedding party, we could see from a distance, had set up its camp in a mango grove outside the village. But if we disclosed our presence to them, then the chances were that our purpose would be defeated. So we proceeded to throw a cordon round the grove, without giving ourselves away. To do this, we took a little time. But once the ring had been completed, there was nothing to do but to wait for developments.

To recapitulate the scene, let us conjure up a mango grove with a group of men lying fast asleep in it, a couple of petromax lamps burning bright and throwing a hectic light over them, a Police party mounting guard in the form of a circle round the grove and, finally, a dark night acting as a pall over the entire setting.

To come to think of it, here we were armed to the teeth, keeping a vigil for the least sign that might announce the arrival of our quarry, while those who provided the cause for all this concern, lay there in deep slumber, quite oblivious of the danger that hung over them.

For the first hour or so of this wait, we felt fully keyed up and every little movement, every little sound, the sigh of the winds, or the rustle of leaves, sent a rush of blood through our veins. But as time wore on and the measure of our hopes dropped by degrees, we felt increasingly tired, till we were lost in a reverie without a beginning or an end. With the first signs of dawn, which was heralded by just a suspicion of paleness in the sky, we seemed to wake up and, thereafter, it was a delight to watch the night merge, slowly but surely, into day. But the loveliest vision that greeted the eyes was the sight of the policemen sitting motionless round the grove, and looking with the red turbans on their heads, like so many plants of red poppy embedded in the ground.

Simultaneously with the advent of dawn, the men in the mango grove stirred and then sat up in their beds rubbing their eyes. After this, *lotas* in hand, as they set out, one after another for their morning routine, they came face to face with their overnight protectors who, much to their surprise,



made them sit down for a while. Unique though this spectacle was, now that there was no prospect of the dacoits turning up any more, I gave a signal for the Police to close in and then left for Unnao, feeling thoroughly miserable and no less disappointed with the outcome of our night-long vigil.

JANKI THE SORCERER

ONE Sunday afternoon in September 1937, as I was composing myself for a little rest, I heard a noise outside my bungalow. I came out and found a recruit Constable named Subhkaran Singh running fast, chased by a number of men, including some of my orderlies. He had a big stick in his hand and his *dhoti* was trailing behind him. He was also ceaselessly uttering a loud wail. But he was soon overtaken by his pursuers and held down to the ground with some effort. We all thought that he had gone berserk. As a preliminary measure, several buckets-ful of water were poured over his head, before word was sent to the Civil Surgeon.

Presently, the man became much quieter and he seemed to improve still further after the application of some ice to his head. But the wild look in his eyes was rather disturbing to all of us. So he was removed to the Police Hospital for further treatment.

At about 8 o'clock that evening, I came to know that the man had again turned violent and on my arrival at his bedside I found five or six men holding him down. The Civil Surgeon, who came soon after, gave him an injection which seemed to make no difference, as he continued to have violent convulsions. Meanwhile, a rumour had gone round that a couple of months previously, he had been bitten in the leg by a rabid dog. Hence at one time it was thought that this was a case of hydrophobia. But the convulsions gradually subsided and the man regained consciousness after some time when he complained of a chill. He had another attack at 2 a.m. and, thereafter, the fits came at intervals. So it was clear that it was not a case of hydrophobia, both because the man had at intervals been fit enough to take some nourishment and because he denied having ever been bitten by a dog.

Subhkaran Singh's relatives arrived the following morning. They were convinced that his was a case of visitation by a spirit. So with the permission of the Civil Surgeon they

arranged to obtain the services of an *Ojha*, by the name of Janki, who arrived the same evening at about 8. At about 8/30 or so, when I came to enquire how Subhkaran Singh was doing, I found the *Ojha* trying to appease, in somewhat flattering terms, the alleged spirit, who was believed to have descended on Subhkaran Singh. At that time, the latter was in the throes of a violent fit, with his eyes upturned, frothing at the mouth and all the muscles of his body taut with effort.

There ensued one of the most remarkable scenes that I have ever witnessed. After Janki had been at his job for quite some time, it seemed as if the spirit were making an effort to articulate some words in response to Janki's entreaties. These were very indistinct at first. But soon I was able to make them out. They sounded as though they were being spoken by some one other than Subhkaran Singh. Such was my wonder that I could hardly believe my eyes. The words gradually became more distinct till a regular colloquy went on between Janki and the Spirit which kept everyone present spell-bound.

The conversation between the two ran somewhat like this :

Janki I have now been entreating you for quite a long time. My earnest request to you is that you reveal your identity. I implore you to have mercy on this man and leave him.

Spirit I will not do so. You may do your worst. I am not an ordinary man. I understand you are a *Neotiha*.* Now you may try your skill on me.

Janki Pray do not be angry. I am no *Neotiha*. I am a layman. Whoever you may be, whether a Muslim or a Hindu, I salute you.

Spirit You pretend to be a *Johri*.† So find out for yourself who I am. I am not going to tell you.

Janki I am no *Johri*. I am a poor villager. I beg you to

* *Neotiha* is a sorcerer who has come by invitation.

† This was obviously said by way of a taunt. A *Johri* is one who deals in jewels and can tell a precious stone from a false one.



reveal yourself so that we may pay our homage to you.

Spirit I am a Brahm (the spirit of a dead Brahmin).

Janki I touch your feet. Now tell us what you want, how has this man offended you ?

Spirit He used to swear at me. I am not going to leave him.

Janki Now leave him please. He has suffered much and paid for his folly. Tell us what we must offer to appease you.

Spirit I want nothing.

Janki Here we are, all waiting for you to let us know your pleasure. Do please speak out.

Spirit I want you to offer me milk, water, a *khatia* (string bed), sandals and rice.

Janki Very good. We shall do so. This very man will take the things to you. But please do let us know your name and your abode.

Spirit I am known as Bhari Baba.

Janki But where do you live ?

Spirit Don't you know me ?

Janki As I told you, I am an ignoramus. Do you live somewhere near this man's home ?

In reply to this question the Spirit uttered something which sounded like *iske ghar se teen kos purab*.

Janki You mean three *kos* to the east of this man's house ? (a *kos* corresponds to two miles).

Spirit No ! No ! three *khet** to the east. (This was said somewhat petulantly).

Janki Very well. This man will go and make the offerings himself.

Spirit All right. Let him do so first on Saturday morning, then I shall leave him.

Janki I implore you once again to have pity on him. The offerings will be taken to you.

Spirit All right.

* A *khet* means a field.

Janki Now say it three times.

Spirit Must I say it three times ? Don't you trust me ?

Janki Not that ! I pray you to do so.

Spirit I leave him. I leave him. I leave him.

Janki Now, will you please set this man on his feet ?

As he said this, Janki patted Subhkaran Singh on the head and asked him to get up, which he did. Incidentally, the time taken in this dialogue was much longer than would appear from this account. Very often, Janki had to put the same question repeatedly to the Spirit, before he could coax an answer out of him. Another noticeable thing was that as the conversation continued between the two, Subhkaran Singh's condition went on improving till the convulsions ceased altogether. Later, when he got up at the command of Janki, he looked dazed and much the worse for his experience. When I asked him, how he felt, he said that his body was aching all over (which was not at all surprising) and he felt hungry.

Arrangements were promptly made to have the promised offerings carried to Bhari Baba at Bahraich (where Subhkaran Singh came from) and the fits, so far as I am aware, did not recur. It so happened, however, that about a couple of months later, while at home on leave, Subhkaran Singh once attempted in a fit of depression to cut his throat with a razor, which compelled me to remove him from service.



TWO ODD CHARACTERS

My first acquaintance with Mr. X, an I.C.S. officer of the old days, was a casual one. He was then District Magistrate of Muzaffarnagar and had come on a week-end visit to Meerut where I was posted at the time. A man of medium height, of a somewhat thickset build with a prominent jaw, he not only looked like a typical John Bull, but also gave one the impression of carrying the weight of the entire British empire on his shoulders. Another marked trait of his character was that he was inclined to be rather fussy.

I did not see much of Mr. X till he came to Lucknow as Divisional Commissioner and paid occasional visits to Unnao, where I was posted. Meanwhile, I had heard numerous interesting legends about him. One was that he felt pleased if his visitors referred to his wife as Lady X instead of plain Mrs. X. I was also told that some people who wanted to curry favour with him, therefore, never failed, during the course of their conversation with him, deliberately to introduce a mention of this mythical Lady X.

His tour programmes were drawn up by him with all the punctiliousness that marked a Governor's programme, leaving little or nothing to the imagination. They ran on the following lines :

The Commissioner, Lucknow Division, will arrive at Unnao Railway Station at 1005 on the 1st March 1935 by the Bombay Mail. He will be met by the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police, among others. He will next drive to the Canal Inspection House, accompanied by the District Magistrate.

The Tehsildar Sadar will arrange for transport of his personal effects from the Railway Station to the Canal Inspection House.

He will grant interviews next day as follows etc. etc.

One thing about which he was very particular was his personal guard. I, therefore, took good care to detail for

TWO ODD CHARACTERS

duty at his camp a smart one that would give him a really good 'General Salute'. This, I believe, helped to keep me in his good books.

I remember an instance in which he put me in a very awkward position. In Unnao there are a number of Canal Inspection Houses which are very handy for touring officers. The Barra Sahib wanted the District Magistrate to book one of these for him in Safipur Tehsil for a couple of days. Accordingly, the latter booked one within close range of the Tehsil headquarters. When I called on Mr. X, I casually remarked to him in all innocence that the Inspection House booked for him being of 'C' class was not very spacious though otherwise it was all right and that, if he wished it, he could stay in a 'B' class House a little further away.

When I said this, I did not have the least idea of the effect it would have on Mr. X. He seemed to feel both scandalized and aggrieved that the District Magistrate had thought fit to book a 'C' class Rest House for him, when there was a 'B' class one nearby. He immediately sent for the District Magistrate and said to him, 'Look here, Lahiri says you have booked a 'C' class Inspection House for me, when there is one of 'B' class in the neighbourhood. I want you to get the booking changed at once.' This was, in fact, very embarrassing for me, for it looked as though I had been deliberately trying to cause a misunderstanding between him and the District Magistrate.

But the most magnificent piece about Mr. X relates to a visit he paid to Purwa Tehsil and the talk he gave on the occasion to the crowd assembled there to greet him. It happened some time in 1937, soon after the Congress had taken over the reins of Government. His main object was to make it known that the Congress Ministers who had assumed charge did not really matter.

This is how he spoke :

'Listen, you folk, you should know that at the very apex of the administration, there is the Lat Saheb (meaning the Governor). Immediately below him, there is the Commissioner Saheb (meaning himself). Next to him, there is the



Collector Saheb and then comes the Tehsildar Saheb. If you ever have any grievance, you should first approach the Tehsildar Saheb and, if he fails to help you, you may go to the Collector Saheb. But if he also fails to give you satisfaction, it is open to you to come to me. There is, of course, finally the Lat Saheb, that is the God-head, the fountain of all power, who watches over all and guards everybody's interest without fear or favour.'

The beauty of this brilliant speech of his, lay not so much in the words as in the gestures with which he tried to bring them home to his listeners.

With the palm of his right hand half crooked and turned outwards, he made a few jabs high into the air in front of him, in an effort to indicate where sat the high and mighty Governor. Then with the self-same palm he made a few similar jabs slightly lower down followed by a tapping of his chest to show the place that he occupied as Divisional Commissioner.

Whether or not his audience felt impressed by the exhortation, I cannot say. But I am sure he felt fully satisfied, on his side, that he had done his duty by his King and Country.

But if Mr. X represented a type of Burra Saheb in the I.C.S. he had his counterpart in Mr. Y of the I.P., who was no less high and mighty in his bearing. Made of a powerful build, if somewhat stocky, and having a massive head, a thick moustache, bushy eye brows and eyes of which the whites were abnormally large, he looked forbidding. Quite delectable were the stories in circulation about him, most of them being characteristic of the man. Here is one told by an officer who, as a Junior Assistant, was posted to work under him. The day this officer—whom I shall call Mr. A—arrived, Mr. Y was due to inspect his office. He invited Mr. A to come along and see how this was done.

The first person to be called up was the Burra Babu or the Head Clerk. The poor man knew of the Saheb's temper and so, his wits quite gone, he stood like a sacrificial goat in the great man's presence. Mr. Y began by putting him a few questions about office routine and by degrees he worked him-

self up into a violent fit of temper and let off a regular fusillade of the choicest Indian swear words. This went on for some ten minutes, after which he sent away the Burra Babu and called up the Khazanchi, that is, the Accountant, and gave him a similar burst of abusive epithets—and all for nothing. Then came the turn, successively, of a few other office hands, all of whom were likewise treated indiscriminately to a string of Indian swear words, which Mr. Y had got up by heart and was anxious to make use of at the least provocation. Having thus exhausted his stock of them, he turned to Mr. A and said to him proudly, 'Now you have seen how an office inspection should be carried out.'

The usual practice with Mr. Y was to attend office daily for barely an hour or so in the afternoon. The Peshkar (reader) was required to put up before him only the most urgent papers awaiting his orders. One day, as he sat in the office, in came a man with a petition written in Urdu and containing a request for permission to let off some *Atashbazi* (fireworks) and release into the air a few *gubbaras* (balloons), in celebration of his son's wedding. After the Peshkar had read out the petition, the Sahab enquired of him, *Atashbazi sala kya hota hai?* that is, what does *atashbazi* mean? (*Sala* of which the literal meaning is brother-in-law, is used as a swear word in Hindustani.) After the Peshkar had explained to him what it meant, Mr. Y asked, *Aur gubbarah sala kya hota hai?* (And what does *gubbarah* mean?) And having got a reply to his query, he thundered, *Ab hukum likho; Atashbazi sala manzoor, gubbarah sala namanzoor.* (Now take down the order—Fireworks permitted, balloons refused.) In this way after he had summarily disposed of a few more papers, Mr. Y drove back home in his smart little trap which was in attendance.

By virtue of his violent and most unorthodox methods, Mr. Y had built up in Government circles of those days, a reputation for himself as a very efficient and strong officer. He was, therefore, chosen at one time for posting to Rae Bareli which was reported to have gone out of hand, with its incidence of dacoities touching a very high figure. Mr. Y's



method to put a stop to them was indeed very simple. The day the very first special report bearing the news of a dacoity came to his hand, he sent for the Station Officer concerned and stormed at him for his inefficiency. This acted as a cue, not only for this particular officer, but also for every other Station Officer in the district, to refuse registration of all further cases of dacoity. In the sequel, at the end of the year Rae Bareilly with its solitary case of dacoity on record, was declared to be, far and away, the best run district in the State, thus earning further distinction for Mr. Y.

A confirmed bachelor by choice, Mr. Y had decided to take life easy. He was accustomed to say repeatedly that he was not prepared to work any more than he was paid for. It was his practice to sit up till late into the night at home and ply himself with drinks, even if there was no one to keep him company. To beguile the time, he used to have four bottles of wine on tap at the same time, one at each corner of his sitting room and replenish his glass from each of them by turn, whenever he felt like doing so—which was quite often—as he kept pacing the four sides of his room, in an anxiety to give himself some exercise. His time for dinner, which he usually had in solitary grandeur, was around midnight. Consequently, he was a late riser. So much so, that he was generally to be found fast asleep till about eleven in the morning. This also meant that he never encouraged visitors, that is *Mulaqatis* or *mollycats* as the Britishers jocularly called them.

His morning routine over, Mr. Y had his lunch at 1 o'clock and, thereafter, a brief siesta till about 3 in the afternoon, when he went over to his office to dispose of his papers which, as I have already said, took him barely an hour or so to do. This done, he returned home and got ready for his daily visit to the club to play bridge and meet the ladies of the station.

All this may sound like fiction today. But such was life in the services in those days that all types of queer characters managed to get on famously, in spite of their idiosyncrasies.



THE WAGES OF SIN

TWELVE miles to the north of Unnao, a district town in Uttar Pradesh, there is a village named Pansaria. It had gained some notoriety owing to one Lallu, a bully of the worst type, who lived there. Unfortunately, much as I wished to see him behind the bars, it was not easy to touch him because of the dread in which he was generally held. On his part, he always kept himself on the right side of the local Police. Thus, he went on living merrily until one day nemesis overtook him and he had to pay for his misdeeds.

One winter evening during the period of my posting at Unnao at about 10, when I was preparing to go to bed, there came a special report from Police Station Achalganj. It said that following a dispute over a dead tree, two villagers of Jeonathpur named Ramnath and Sukhram, had been shot dead earlier in the day in the course of an armed attack by Lallu and his brother Hari Ram, among others, and that their bodies had been removed to some unknown place. To all appearances, this was something very serious. It called for my personal attention and, so, in a few minutes I was off for the scene in my car along with an armed guard, arriving there at about 11.

My next move was to proceed to Pansaria, where I found Lallu and his brother waiting to receive me. Neither of them seemed to be perturbed in the least. On the other hand, when I reproached them over what they had done, Lallu grinned broadly and expressed his ignorance of the entire affair. He had even the audacity to say that the report lodged against him was a pure concoction, designed to implicate him falsely. All the same, I had him and his brother handcuffed on the spot and taken to the Police Station at Achalgaj for custody.

Soon I returned to Jeonathpur and started a detailed examination of the case. The deceased were Kachis by caste who owned a few bighas of land between them and lived quite comfortably. The only obstacle in their peaceful life was Lallu, who wanted to bully them into subjection—a thing they

resented very much.

One day, Ramnath and Sukhram were felling a dead tree that stood outside their house. Lallu came to know of this and since he claimed its ownership, he immediately rushed to the spot gun-in-hand, along with his brother Hari Ram and some of his henchmen, numbering twenty in all, determined to teach the brothers a lesson. Ramnath and Sukhram finding that they were greatly outnumbered, promptly withdrew into their house and, having locked the doors went up to the roof whence they started an exchange of hot words. They also hurled a few brickbats at their adversaries from the comparative safety of their position. But this was too much for Lallu. He aimed his gun at Ramnath and fired, dropping him with a shot in the temple. Hari Ram also did likewise with Sukhram.

The question that now faced Lallu was what to do next? To leave the dead bodies behind, he knew, would be asking for trouble. So, he decided to get rid of them as speedily as possible. He had a ladder placed against the house and with its help climbed to the roof. By this time, Sukhram lay stone dead, while Ramnath was still gasping for breath, with his head resting on the lap of his mother, who was trying to revive him by pouring some water into his parched throat. Heartless as he was, Lallu first dragged Sukhram's body to the edge of the roof and pushed it to the ground below. He next snatched away the unconscious Ram Nath and similarly threw him down, thus ending whatever little life was left in him.

Thereafter, Lallu had a bullock cart made ready and arranged to send under escort to the Ganga some miles away, the two corpses hidden under a heap of straw. Having done this, he posted a number of his men around the village to make sure that till the bodies had been safely disposed of no one left for the Police Station to carry the news. Although the occurrence was witnessed by scores of the village folk, they felt too terrified to raise even a little finger in protest.

I had small parties of men despatched in all directions in pursuit of the two dead bodies which were to constitute the material evidence in the case and without which it was bound

to fail in Court. But the news that reached me was most conflicting. Some said that the bullock cart had been seen going north and others maintained it had been seen going south.

At long last, after a lapse of three days, it came to be known that the bullock cart in question had been definitely seen going to a *ghat* some ten miles from the scene of occurrence. Its wheel tracks were, in fact, clearly visible on the sands right up to the edge of the river. Accordingly, the Station Officer had a search carried out of the river-bed opposite this *ghat*, but in vain. Undeterred, I then decided to have a supreme and final effort made in my presence on the following Sunday with the help of some fishermen from Gangaghat who were to bring with them their *mahajals* or big fishing nets.

The operation began early in the morning. The Ganga at this spot has a wide bed. But since winter had set in, most of it had gone dry and we were required to confine our attention to the main stream only, which measured from two to three hundred yards across and was for the most part fairly shallow. A thing that gave us cause for some vexation was that the Ganga being a veritable depository for human bones, one or other of the men engaged in the search, often chanced to strike one such bone under the water and the moment he did so, raised it aloft for identification. It was indeed an eerie sight to see one man lifting a leg bone with flesh still sticking to it, another a forearm, a third a human head with deep sockets in it where the eyes and the nostrils had been. But although hours passed in this way, no one was able to spot the corpses we were after.

Suddenly, one member of our party noticed a float tucked away at one place on our side of the bank. Obviously, it was intended for use as a ferry across the stream in front of us, to get to a *sankbank* on the opposite side where there was a melon field. Our next step was to send for the owners of this ferry for interrogation. But when they came, they declared they had seen nothing. At this stage, a Sub-Inspector of Police who was with us had a brain wave. He demanded

of the men to stand knee-deep in water and, when they did so, said to them, 'Now that you are in the lap of mother Ganga, you have to swear by her that you know nothing.' Surprisingly enough, instead of vehemently denying any knowledge this time, they kept absolutely mum which was very tell-tale. In brief, it was not long before they broke down completely and asked to be pardoned for having told a lie.

One of them stated :

We had been tending our melon field when we noticed a bullock cart come up to the edge of the river on the other side, escorted by half a dozen men of whom one was armed with a gun. We saw two of these men take out a dead body hidden under a heap of straw—one holding it by its arms and the other by its legs—and swing it in the air a number of times before consigning it into the river. There being nothing unusual about this we did not attach much importance to it. When, however, we saw another body being taken out and flung in the same way, we became suspicious.

It so happened that one of the bodies got stuck in the sand, whereupon we saw one man give it a push with his lathi to make it float down with the current. Thereafter, the bullock cart as well as the men accompanying it went away. Our curiosity having been fully aroused by now, as soon as they had left, we went over to the other side and, to our great surprise, noticed some blood oozing from the temple of one of the dead bodies. We at once inferred that there had been some foul play. All the same, we thought it prudent not to whisper a word to anybody of what we had witnessed, lest this should get us into trouble.

These men pointed out the exact spot where they had seen the two dead bodies lying under the water. This had a magic effect all round, resulting in a redoubling of efforts by the search party, who presently succeeded in recovering them a few yards downstream.

There could be no mistake about the identity of these bodies. One of them had clinging to it a sacred thread with a key that fitted into a lock used by the deceased. It had also a hole in the region of the temple, marking the spot where the man had been hit by gun shot. The other body could be identified by

THE WAGES OF SIN

a dhoti that the deceased had been wearing at the time he was killed.

One would have thought that after this, all would be plain sailing. But it was not so. The prosecution had to fight every inch of the ground all along the line. I had taken permission of the Civil Surgeon to be present at the mortuary at the time of the 'Post Mortem' to be carried out by him the next morning. This was the first time for me to watch an examination of this kind and the experience was one that I would not care to undergo for a second time. But, much as I abhorred the sight of the two dead bodies being cut up, piece by piece, for record of various particulars about them, I stuck it out through my keen resolve to see the case brought to a successful conclusion. In fact, my interest in the examination rose to almost fever heat when the ward boy sawed open Ram Nath's skull to reveal the presence, imbedded inside the brain, of some lead shots that had been flattened out by impact with the skull. Now there could be no doubt about the identity of the deceased. Still, when the Civil Surgeon proceeded to record his findings, I noticed that he had begun by putting down the probable age of the deceased, Ram Nath, as being approximately 13. But since this did not tally with my information about the deceased's actual age, which was in the neighbourhood of 20, I requested the Civil Surgeon to let me know the basis for his inference. In reply he quoted a book of medical jurisprudence that he had by his side. When, however, at my request he actually referred to the measurements, as recorded in this book, he had to acknowledge his mistake and correct the entry made by him !

In the end, Lallu and Hari Ram were sent up for prosecution along with a number of others. They engaged the best lawyers to defend them. But even though they managed to secure a verdict in their favour in the Sessions Court, they met with their deserts when the case went up in appeal to the Chief Court at Lucknow. Lallu and Hari Ram were sentenced to death by this Court, while most of the others were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, much to the joy of the entire population of Pansariya and its neighbourhood.



ON THE POLO GROUND

WHEN I accepted an invitation to a banquet given by the Maharani of Ayodhya in honour of Mr. Lane, President, Court of Wards, little did I know what I had let myself in for. The Maharani being in strict purdah, her special manager, Mr. Coombs, did the honours for her on the occasion. The invitees included all the Europeans of the station and a few Indians, including my wife and myself. It was altogether a gala affair, the food and the drinks left nothing to be desired. Naturally, everybody at table seemed to be fully pleased with himself and conversation flowed freely.

I was seated opposite an Army Major who commanded a local Artillery Unit. Suddenly, he called out to me, asking, 'Lahiri, do you play polo?'

Not having played this game, I had to say, 'I am afraid I don't.'

But this did not seem to quell his ardour in the least and he promptly asked, 'But you have a horse, haven't you?'

At this stage the Major's wife, who was sitting on my right, intervened to say that her husband was anxious to raise a polo team to which I would be most welcome.

I could see that the trap was already laid for me. Yet, in an effort to escape, I said apologetically that I would not be able to play the game, since my horse was not broken in to stick and ball.

To this the Major's reply was, 'But you and your horse should be able to pick up the game in no time! We are going to play only slow *chukcars* in the beginning.'

With this remark he more or less took it for granted that the matter was settled and simply added that he would expect me at the polo ground at 4 p.m. sharp the next day.

The banquet over, the party broke up and everybody went home. For my part, although I tried hard during the night to forget about my commitment, I found I could not get my mind off the certain catastrophe that seemed to be hanging

over me. I felt considerably disturbed for the greater part of the next day, till it was time for me to go and meet my doom. I had instructed my syce that I would be coming by car to the polo ground and that he should meet me there with my hack. When I reached the place at the appointed hour, I found my excellent charger waiting for me. But I was not quite prepared for the sight that greeted me.

There stretched the polo ground before me, looking magnificent; the green grass spread out like a carpet, the goal posts and the markers all in position and a group of men, stick-in-hand, some wearing red and some white slipovers, exercising their ponies like mad! Obviously enough, the stage was set for a match between two teams. As if in confirmation of my conjecture, the moment he saw me arrive, a Subaltern of the gunners walked up to me and held out a red slipover for me to wear, thus indicating that I was to play on the side of the reds! To say that at this stage my heart went into my boots, would perhaps be no exaggeration. But what added to my discomfiture still more, was the sight of the entire female population of the local European community, seated under a marquee on one side of the polo ground to witness the game. I am sure I would have paid anything to get out of the hole in which, willy nilly, I was now landed. But there was no line of escape for me left now and I had to accept my fate with a smile on my face.

Soon, the gong sounded for the match to begin and henceforth I was led in my conduct more by intuition than by my knowledge of the game. Some one said that I was to play as Number Three. I then noticed the opposite teams making an effort to stand in two single files, halfway between the two goal posts and at right angles to one of the side lines, with their faces towards the centre of the field. This I took as a cue for me to move into position, which I did without much difficulty. Facing us, there stood Mr. Shirreff—the referee—on horseback, ball in hand, poised for a throw. He had a number of other balls kept in a haversack slung across his shoulder.

The moment the referee threw the ball, a state of chaos set in, with everybody bent on riding off everybody else,

which struck me as rather rude ! After a while somehow the ball got detached from the jumble of men and horses and I found it lying temptingly in front of me. Instinctively, I took a swipe at it with my polo stick and much to my delight, found it tearing away from me. I now gave it a chase and, as I did so, I heard the rest of the cavalcade thundering after me. Quite undaunted, I took a swipe at the ball for a second time and, lo and behold, I managed to hit it again, although quite unmindful of the direction in which I was required to send it !

By now, my horse seemed to have had enough and he simply refused to play ball ! So he reared and bucked, then dashed across the field this way and that, like a perfect fiend. In my right hand was the polo stick, so I had only my left arm free to pull at the reins. But no matter how hard I tried I failed to curb the spirit of my mount. He continued to give an exhibition of his mettle in full view of the gallery and quite independently of the game that was proceeding in another part of the field with which he and I had no connection any more. In an effort to keep my prancing steed under some sort of a check, I felt a void in my stomach and a lump in my throat with my tongue gone quite dry.

However, it was not long before the gong sounded for the close of play when I heaved a sigh of relief and quietly returned home to reflect in solitude over the events of the evening.

Thank Heaven ! I was not invited again to any more 'slow *chukkars*' of the kind I had experienced.

SADHO SINGH—THE OUTLAW

UTTAR Pradesh can perhaps claim the rather unenviable distinction of owning a long and uninterrupted line of outlaws, notorious enough to hit the headlines. Who, for instance, has not heard the name of *Man Singh* or *Sultana* or *Girand Singh* or *Bashira*, to name only a few, who have held the centre of the stage at one time or another, within the last thirty years? Similarly, in the thirties, one used to hear regularly of one *Sanchit* of Gonda, who had caused a reign of terror in that district. He had a disciple named *Sadho Singh* alias *Ayodhya Singh* who, like his preceptor, was in the habit of boldly announcing his name to strike terror into the hearts of the inmates as soon as he entered a house.

The first time I had any information about Sadho Singh was in April 1938. I was then posted as Superintendent of Police, Faizabad. Mr. Bolam, my opposite number at Gonda, wrote to tell me that the man had been responsible for a crop of dacoity cases of his district, some of which were combined with murder. He might, added Mr. Bolam, very likely visit Faizabad. I, therefore, arranged for a strict look-out being kept for him. But barring one occasion, on which he was alleged to have been seen on the banks of the river Sarju, there was no other information available regarding his whereabouts, so far as my district was concerned.

On Thursday, June 16, information was conveyed to me that Sadho Singh had been seen in Manjha Tulshipur of Police Circle Nawabganj in Gonda district, which lay opposite Faizabad Cantonment and on the other side of the river. Our source in this case was an Ahir youth who had been on a visit to this place and had accidentally come across Sadho Singh in a small hut there.

The bed of the Sarju, where it flows past Faizabad, has a width of nearly three miles. But excepting the rains, when it has the appearance of almost an inlet of the sea, most of it is dry and is used for the grazing of cattle which feed upon the



pasture that grows plentifully in it. Some village folk, mostly Ahirs by caste, had their temporary huts in this area and these were the people who occasionally gave shelter to Sadho Singh for whom this place provided an excellent hide-out.

My information was not one to be disregarded and so I decided to carry out a raid the same night. I held a secret consultation with some of my officers and we worked out a plan of operation. The raiding party we organised consisted of 25 men in all and we assembled at the Guptar Park at midnight. A full moon was then riding high up in the sky. The river, which was in spate and wore a sinister look by day, now looked comparatively harmless and its beauty was heightened by the myraid reflections of the moon on its surface.

The problem before us was how to cross over to the other side. We commandeered for the purpose one of the big boats that lay anchored close by. Ordinarily, no boatman would have agreed to do the crossing at such an hour. But the boatmen we accosted were too frightened of us to say 'no' and it was thus that we soon found ourselves seated cosily in one of the boats and moving down the river at a pace that was somewhat alarming. All the same, I enjoyed the ride, with a soft breeze playing on my face and the gentle rocking of the boat under me having the effect of a lullaby.

About an hour or so later, we touched land on the other side of the river at a site that was quite some distance away from our destination. This necessitated our having to undergo a tiresome walk upstream through rather difficult country, rendered still more difficult by the monsoon having set in. At places we had to wade through water. What worried me most was the possibility of my stepping upon a snake at any moment among the bushes lying in our path. That we had no such mishap is something I owed to my lucky stars.

When we were within sight of the hamlet of Tulshipur, our informer, whom we had taken the precaution to disguise as a constable, lost his nerves completely and refused to budge an inch, in spite of all our persuasion. This gave rise to a situation that we had not anticipated. So he had to be virtually carried forward bodily, by some of the men

SADHO SINGH—THE OUTLAW

of our party, to point the way.

Unfortunately, the raid proved abortive. Sadho Singh was nowhere to be seen, having, as it came to be known later on, gone on an expedition within the district of Basti, during the course of which he had a brush with a Police party without any damage to himself. But before coming away, we thought of a ruse, in order not to give away that we were from Faizabad. We feared that if Sadho Singh came to know that the Faizabad Police were after him, he would fight shy of coming over to our side of the river and would thus deprive us of an opportunity of catching him. We, therefore, pretended that we were from Gonda and carried on a conversation in the hearing of all those present to give them this impression. The ruse worked well, for Sadho Singh soon left his hide out in the 'Khadir' area of Gonda to seek shelter in Faizabad.

The following Thursday, the date being the 23rd of June, I received a telephonic message from my Kotwal at the dead of night saying that there had been a case of dual murder in a village close by, the victims being a 'Ziladar' of the Raja of Ayodhya and a peon, both of whom had been shot dead in a cold and calculated manner. On my arrival at the scene I noticed that the building in which the deceased had been staying lay at one end of the village. In one of its outer walls, it had a peep hole which had been widened by removing a few bricks, so as to give a clear view of the interior and to admit the gun that had been used for the murder. We also gathered that the first to be hit was the peon while he was engaged in cooking his food. Thereafter, when he called out for help and the Ziladar, who was at the time preparing to go to bed in another part of the house, came rushing to see what the matter was, he too was shot and fatally wounded. It was also clear that the assassin had retracted his steps in the same direction from which he had come, since the ground being wet bore distinct and deep impressions of his feet. From the very look of it, this was a case of murder of a most diabolical type and one of the worst I had come across.

The *modus operandi* as also certain features of the case,

clearly pointed to the complicity of Sadho Singh. Our suspicion against him was further confirmed by a statement given by one Dukhi Ahir showing that Sadho Singh had crossed over to our side of the river from Basti on Tuesday, June 21, at the invitation of the very individual whom we believed to be at the bottom of this case of murder and whom I shall refer to as Jangi Singh. Our task was, therefore, made easier and we managed to bring some pressure to bear upon this man, resulting in his offer to put us in touch with our quarry, provided we gave him one of our trusted men to act as informer. The man we chose for the purpose was Sher Bahadur Singh, a constable of the city police, who in the role of an absconded offender succeeded within a day or two in establishing contact with Sadho Singh.

From the information supplied by Constable Sher Bahadur Singh, we came to know that Sadho Singh had his hide-out in a thicket only a short distance away from Faizabad City. The account he gave of his meeting with the latter in this thicket was a hair-raising one. According to him, it was quite dark when Jangi Singh took him there and no one was to be seen anywhere in the neighbourhood. Jangi Singh blew a whistle which was meant as a signal for Sadho Singh to appear on the scene. Soon enough, his footsteps were heard and he was seen emerging cautiously, gun-in-hand, from the surrounding gloom, ready to fire at the least sign of danger. The moment Sadho Singh noticed Sher Bahadur Singh, he asked who this man was and why he had come. Jangi Singh introduced him as another fugitive from the law who would keep Sadho Singh company, if he had no objection. Before accepting him, Sadho Singh in order to assure himself of his bonafides, put Sher Bahadur Singh a number of questions, to all of which Sher Bahadur Singh gave prompt replies as tutored previously. In short, this is how it was possible to 'plant' Sher Bahadur Singh on Sadho Singh.

The problem was how to proceed. A raid by night was not feasible as there was no guarantee that our quarry would oblige us by his presence in the grove according to our convenience. Moreover, even if he were there, he would have a



distinct advantage over us and spy us out long before we could spot him. In consultation, therefore, with Sher Bahadur Singh, it was settled that we should make a raid at exactly 1 in the afternoon of June 28. On his part, he was to ply Sadho Singh with some country liquor and thus help to put him out of action at the appointed hour.

Disguised as a wedding party, we left Faizabad at about noon. The Circle Inspector, Thakur Bhagwati Singh, and the Station Officer, Kotwali, Sub-Inspector Jumna Prasad, with a score of other policemen, accompanied me. Arriving within a few hundred yards of the hide-out, we took cover in a grove and waited for information.

At about two o'clock Constable Sher Bahadur Singh who was in a state of extreme nervousness, came to tell us that Sadho Singh had moved off and would come back only at dusk. This was disappointing and we, therefore, hit upon a fresh plan to trap him. Constable Sher Bahadur Singh was to tell Sadho Singh that the Police were after them and that they should therefore leave for Bombay by the night train. Fortunately for us, the trick worked and Sadho Singh agreed to escape to Bombay. Arrangement was, therefore, made for a tonga to take the two to the Railway Station. Meanwhile, we hid ourselves around a culvert on the pucca road closeby, which offered excellent cover.

Our scheme was that on a signal from me, those nearest the tonga would close in upon it. Thereafter, according to plan, when the tonga carrying Sadho Singh as well as Sher Bahadur Singh came along at about 8-30 or so in the night, I blew my whistle and planted myself in the middle of the road to stop it. At the same time, I flashed my torch on the tonga. Quick as lightening, Sadho Singh jumped off and fired his gun towards the rear, in the direction of the man who had been seen crouching there. But, fortunately, the shot went wide, hitting the culvert and, before he could fire again, S.I. Jumna Prasad and Constable Nabi Rasool fired at him from close range almost simultaneously.

All this happened in the twinkling of an eye and as my torch, which I had switched off the moment I saw a flash from

Sadho Singh's gun, failed to work again at this critical moment, I could not at all make out in the prevailing confusion who had shot whom. Presently, someone who had another torch with him, came to my rescue and in its light I saw a man rolling on the ground gasping for breath and about to die. He was wearing a belt of cartridges and had a gun and a five cell electric torch by his side. His features, which struck me as being of an unusually villainous cast, tallied with the description of Sadho Singh already on record and, what was more, his name was found tattooed on his right forearm.

An inquest was held by the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Stephenson, soon after the event and the body was identified by a number of people who knew the deceased. This was the end of Sadho Singh and it was thus that his lurid career was at long last cut short.

Incidentally, the cool courage shown by Constable Sher Bahadur Singh throughout this episode, was later recognised by award of the King's Police Medal to him—a distinction he richly deserved. Jangi Singh, I am sorry to say, could not be prosecuted for want of adequate evidence against him.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

THEY say truth is stranger than fiction. Such, in fact, was my experience, some twenty years ago at Faizabad (a district town in Uttar Pradesh) where one fine morning my Reserve Inspector, Mohammad Siddiq, informed me that he had found one 303 rifle short in the Armoury. But thinking that he might have made a mistake in the counting, I simply asked him to carry out a further check and then let me know.

After a couple of days or so when Mohammad Siddiq repeated the same story, I said I would have to institute a formal enquiry to fix the responsibility for the loss. Upon this, he begged me to allow him some more time, his idea being to requisition the services of a certain Shahji of Lucknow, famed for his occult powers. On my part although I mentally scoffed at this idea, I saw no harm in granting his request.

A couple of days later, I had a most agreeable surprise when this officer turned up at my residence, along with Shahji, and held up to me the missing rifle! He told me that Shahji had desired that he should get him (Shahji) some sweets. With these, Shahji had gone to Guptar Ghat (a bathing place on the bank of the river Sarju in Faizabad), and there made a slit on his forehead with a penknife, to draw out a few drops of blood. These he had thrown into the river along with the sweets saying 'Here you are! I have done so much for you and now it is your turn to do your best for me.' On Shahji's return from Guptar Ghat, while he had been making preparation to leave for Lucknow, some men had rushed up with the glad tidings that the missing rifle had been discovered lying under a culvert in front of the Armoury!

Incidentally, this very culvert and, for that matter, all likely places in and around the Reserve Lines had been most systematically searched by scores of men, time and again, but in vain. Therefore, the only inference possible was that the person who had stolen the rifle had quietly brought it out of



its hiding place, subsequent to Shahji's arrival, and left it under the culvert. Whatever others may have thought of this recovery, I dismissed it simply as a sequel to sheer fright on the part of the offender, lest some harm should come to him as a result of black magic exercised by the old faqir from Lucknow.

Some six months later, news was conveyed to me one evening that the Deputy Commissioner's wife, Mrs. D, had lost her pearl necklace at the Ladies' Club that afternoon. I had an enquiry instituted straightway into this case, besides having the Club building as well as its grounds, thoroughly searched in my presence, but without any success. I then got the Kotwal to register a case of theft and carry on with its investigation. This he did for some weeks without making any headway. I was, therefore, about to give up the case as untraced when my Deputy Mr. R suggested that we again try our friend the Shahji, a suggestion that only made me laugh. On Mr. R's insistence, however, I told him to please himself and, as a result, a messenger was once again despatched to Lucknow to fetch the faqir.

On Shahji's arrival, I took it upon myself to introduce him to the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. D, who readily gave his consent to Shahji trying his hand. Shahji was a man of fairly advanced age and totally blind. On being led by the hand to the sitting room of the Deputy Commissioner's house he squatted on the floor. Then he put the palm of his outstretched right hand on the ground and said very meekly, 'Will Rani Saheba (meaning Mrs. D) be pleased to place her right foot on this palm of mine?' On her doing so, he again said, 'May I know Rani Saheba's name please?' Mrs. D said in reply, 'Kamala.' After a brief pause Shahji enquired, 'Does the Rani Saheba remember if among the ladies present in the Club on the afternoon of the occurrence, there was one—wearing a saree of the colour of *phalsa* (meaning a berry of purple colour)?' To this Mrs. D replied after some reflection, 'Yes, I believe there was one.'

At this stage, Shahji made a request for any old garment she had been wearing next to her body, to be given to him

along with a sum of thirteen rupees. Profit was certainly not his motive. His reason for making the request was that he proposed, on his return home, to perform on the river bank there, for thirteen days, certain rites that would require his hiring a tonga (a horse-drawn carriage) at one rupee per trip. Shahji's other request was that, in case Mrs. D had any dreams, some one should write and inform him of the details. Shahji then went away to Lucknow, while my Deputy, Mr. R, offered to communicate to him the details of any dreams that Mrs. D might have.

Some weeks, even months rolled by. Still, there was no clue to the missing necklace. I lost interest in the case and felt sure that this time nothing was going to come out of Shahji's intervention.

The occurrence had taken place in October and now we were in April. The incident that I am going to relate took place one afternoon when a few of us were assembled at Mr. D's house for tennis. Having finished our game, we were all seated in small groups and having ice cream. I happened to be at the same table as Mrs. D and enquired of her jokingly, 'I wonder if you have had any more dreams of late?' Upon this, she told me cheerfully, 'Surprisingly enough, only this afternoon, while I was having my siesta, I saw in a dream my mali (gardner) approach me with my necklace in his hands shouting '*Mil gaya*' '*Mil gaya*' (it has been found, it has been found) and I saw myself dancing, out of sheer joy.'

Mrs. D was relating this account of her dream and repeating what the mali had been saying, when I heard a noise from the direction of a fig tree across the tennis court. Presently, I heard someone shouting '*Mil gaya*' '*Mil gaya*' and as I looked in the direction of the tree, whom should I see but the mali of the Ladies' Club advancing towards us, necklace in hand, followed by a host of others, to place it on the table in front of us! I could hardly believe my eyes but there it was, the pearl necklace.

The mali said that he had found it in a bush in the Club compound. How it came to be there is a mystery to me to this day. But what I believe to be even more striking



CSL

Leaves from A Policeman's Diary

than the recovery, is the most extraordinary coincidence, of the order of, perhaps, one in a million, to which this find bears testimony.



RAM DAS BREAKS JAIL

ONE day a man named Ram Das was put up before me in my office on the ground that he wished to make a confession. I was told that he was a resident of Police Circle Tanda and that, although he had been arrested for vagrancy, he wished to confess to a case of burglary involving loss of a good deal of property. Short and dark as he was, he looked like any other villager of his part of the country, except that he gave the impression of being very 'cute'. Questioned by me, he repeated his tale and, at the same time, offered to surrender his share of the stolen property which, according to him, he had left buried in a sugar-cane field in the outskirts of his village.

I promptly put Ram Das in my car and set out for Tanda along with the Station Officer of that place, who had come with him. I found the going pretty good and, to add to my delight, our charge appeared to be in just the right mood. On our arrival at Tanda, he proceeded to take us by foot to the spot where the stolen property allegedly lay buried. For a while, we walked close on his heels with bated breath and suppressed joy at the prospect of making the promised recovery. Thereafter, when apparently lost in thought, he took us from place to place on the pretext of pointing out the right spot, we suspected that he was merely trying to lead us up the garden path. Upon this my companion, the Station Officer, gave him a slap. This seemed to have some effect on him, for he next took us to a clearing inside a thick sugarcane field where there was a pit dug in the ground. He pointed to it, saying that this was the spot where he had buried the property, but that someone appeared to have removed it in his absence. The expression on his face at this time, feigning both surprise and grief, made a perfect study.

But plausible as his story was, it was obvious that he was telling a lie. At any rate, as there was nothing one could do about it, I drove back to Faizabad, leaving him in charge of

the Station Officer with instructions that he should further interrogate the man. But in spite of all efforts, he remained uncommunicative. Consequently, he was sent to the lock-up, pending his trial for vagrancy, which was actually the offence charged against him and for which he was ultimately sentenced to a year's rigorous imprisonment.

This, I thought at the time, was the end of the affair. I, therefore, forgot all about it till a few weeks later when I came to know that our friend Ram Das had been staging a '*Satyagraha*' against the Jailor, for having given him a slap in the face for some act of indiscipline on his part. He had climbed up a tall tree standing in the inner enclosure of the jail and put a noose round his neck, threatening to hang himself if nothing was done to redress his grievance.

The situation was indeed too comic for words. On the one side, there sat, hour after hour, our friend Ram Das, the cynosure of all eyes, on the fork of the tree looking grave and unperturbed like a true Yogi, while, on the other, there passed under the tree a regular procession of jail officials and others, bent on breaking his resolution to kill himself. The first to come in this series of parleys, which lasted for some forty eight hours, was the Jailor. Next came the Superintendent Jail and then followed, successively, the City Magistrate and the District Magistrate—all of whom pleaded with him in turns to come down from his perch—but in vain. On the third day, however, better sense seemed to prevail with him and he came down, when he was ordered to be kept in a solitary cell by night as a punishment for his misconduct. This happened some time in October, after which all went well till the following December when one fine morning an alarm was sounded in the local jail announcing the escape of a prisoner. On my arrival there I learnt that the culprit in the case was the same Ram Das who had made himself famous by his exploit on the tree-top.

One could clearly see that this case of escape was the result of much planning of which only a master mind was capable. The first thing the culprit had done was to ingratiate himself with the Head Warder and thus arrange his allotment for

RAM DAS BREAKS JAIL

work to a shed where there were various building materials ready at hand. Out of these he had selected a spike and had cleverly smuggled it into his cell. Thereafter, he had been busy, night after night, dislodging one by one, with the aid of this spike, the bricks from one of its outer walls, to make for himself a hole large enough to pass through. This must have taken him some days. But he was cunning enough to put back the dislodged bricks in their place before the night was over.

After he had managed to get out of his cell through this hole at the dead of night, he had let himself into the work-shed by removing its tiles and had improvised a long bamboo pole by tying together two smaller ones of the same variety. The rest was easy enough, for he had already made a survey of the entire topography of the place from the tree top where he had perched himself previously for two consecutive days. With the aid of this pole he had easily cleared the somewhat formidable looking inner and outer walls of the jail, without attracting the least notice. To cover up his tracks, he had left the dislodged bricks of his cell neatly arranged under cover of his Dhoti giving the impression that he was still lying asleep. But this was not all the trick he had played. He had also whisked away, in order to obtain for himself a replacement for the Dhoti that he was leaving behind, a piece of turban cloth from under the head of a co-prisoner in an adjoining cell who happened to be out of his mind.

It was now crystal clear that the episode of the tree-top formed only part of a scheme that Ram Das had worked out in his mind, to gain his end.

The problem now was how to lay this man by the heels once again? I felt almost sure that he would make a bee-line for his village, where he would hang around for a while without exposing himself and then make a bid for safety. Judging from the location of his village, which stood facing the Sarju, the chances were that soon enough he would try to cross over to the other side of the river, to put as much distance between him and his pursuers as was possible. Acting on this hunch, I made arrangements for a close watch being kept on a ferry



that plied the river from a Ghat close to this village. In fact, I had a couple of constables in disguise detailed to act as helpers to the man who regularly plied this ferry.

Now began a game of waiting, till one morning Ram Das unsuspectingly walked into the trap laid for him, in the course of his attempted flight to the other side of the river and thus came to be arrested once again. But this time his arrest was made on a more serious charge, namely, that of escape from jail, for which he was awarded rigorous imprisonment for three years.



CSL

PART THREE



BALLIA IN THE GRIP OF THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

WHENEVER the history of the Quit India Movement of India in 1942 comes to be written, Ballia, one imagines, is likely to be assigned a chapter, all its own, with Chittu Pande, otherwise known as the Lion of Ballia, as hero. But whether his activities were strictly in accord with the Gandhian cult of non-violence is more than one can tell. Starting with Mahatma Gandhi's 'Do or Die' call of the 9th August that year, the movement gained more and more momentum in this district, till it reached its peak around the middle of the month, when it took a somewhat violent turn in the shape of wide-spread arson and looting, mainly directed against public servants or against public property. A number of senior officers of Government who resided in the city proper (as opposed to the Civil Lines) fell victim to mob law of an unprecedented order and lost all their belongings at the hands of the rioters. According to eye witnesses, nothing escaped the attention of these men who were seen carrying away on their heads with impunity, even heavy articles of furniture, such as tables, chairs, cupboards, almirahs, bed-steads, etc., in broad daylight and in full view of the public! Meanwhile, all telegraph wires in and around the district had been cut and the railway lines uprooted at places, making communication with the outer world impossible. It is against this background that we have to view an incident that formed the subject of an enquiry by me under the orders of the then Government.

The railway line here, broadly divided the city into two parts: one being the city proper including the Bazar area, and the other the Civil Lines, where the Government offices as well as the residential quarters of most of the senior officers of Government were located. The looting to which I have referred took place on August 19. Thereafter, the victims moved to the Civil Lines for safety, because the Police had been withdrawn from the city area and concentrated in the



Civil Lines as a strategic measure, thus leaving the city area entirely under the control of Chittu Pande and his cohorts.

This was the period when both those who had actually suffered and those who apprehended a similar fate were thrown into a state of panic. The atmosphere was electric and there was no knowing what would happen next.

In a situation like this, when there were not enough Policemen available and when no help from outside was likely to be forthcoming, the District Magistrate, Mr. Nigam, felt that the wisest thing to do would be to lie low till he was in a stronger position. His main concern at this time was safety of the Government offices, particularly the Treasury. Hence something in the nature of a gentleman's agreement came to be observed between him on the one side, and Chittu Pande on the other, that each would leave the other alone. In other words, so long as the District Magistrate refrained from interference in his domain, Chittu Pande, who now held undisputed sway over the city area, would, for his part, abstain from leading his band of warriors into the Civil Lines. Like the Captains of two opposing armies of old, they kept a sharp look out for each other's movements and, in the meantime, took such precautionary measures as appeared to be necessary.

The day after the looting took place, that is, on August 20, the situation became so critical that Mr. Nigam decided to enforce the Rallying Post Scheme. As a first step towards this, he ordered that all the currency notes in the Government Treasury should be destroyed by burning. Accordingly, the Treasury Officer, Mr. Misra, set about this task and before the day was over, duly reported having consigned to the flames, with the help of two other officers, currency notes valued at Rs. 4,44,000, in all.

It so happened that soon after, some of the very currency notes which were reported to have been destroyed by burning came to notice and this inevitably led to an enquiry into the entire episode. The ball was actually set rolling by a wireless message received on November 7, 1942 from Mr. Waddell, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Eastern Range, which ran

BALLIA IN THE GRIP OF THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

as follows :

‘Reference burning four lacs currency notes Ballia one ten rupee note burnt has come to light in Ballia. Implications serious. Request immediate CID investigation.’

Here is an account of the sequence of events in this case as was revealed from my enquiries.

The order for destruction of the currency notes in the Treasury was first given verbally to the Treasury Officer, Mr. Misra, by the District Magistrate, Mr. Nigam. But since this was irregular, Mr. Misra wrote a note to the District Magistrate stating ‘The Treasurer wants written orders from you for burning the notes.’ Thereupon, Mr. Nigam wrote the following order on a slip of paper.

‘T.O., please burn the notes giving their numbers. Mr. Kakkar to supervise.’

And now began a chain of events that had a lighter side to it. The actual operation of burning started at 10 in the morning when one currency note of Rs. 10,000 denomination and a few notes of Rs. 1,000 denomination were set to fire inside the ‘double lock’ of the Treasury.

To have a complete picture of the scene that was enacted, we have to visualise a number of officials with drawn faces, huddled together in a small room closed on all sides. A candle lit up in the centre of this room and, finally, crisp Government of India currency notes first curling up and then turning into cinders, one after another, as they come into contact with its flame.

The operation had lasted barely a few minutes when some one suggested that it had better be shifted to the ‘single lock’ in the Treasury, where there was no chance of the fire spreading. It was thus that the rest of the thousand rupee notes, of which there were 38 in all, and a number of hundred rupee notes were burnt in the single lock.

A list of these notes was prepared jointly by the Treasury Officer and the Treasurer, and countersigned by Mr. Kakkar. Part of it was written in copying pencil, part in blue pencil and part in ink, thus testifying to the very casual and hurried manner in which it was drawn up. Not only this but one entry



in the list was partly in ink and partly in blue pencil, another partly in blue pencil and partly in lead pencil. There were also many overwritings to be seen in it. And, worst of all, there was no mention of the total value of the currency notes thus destroyed by burning.

Now let us turn to what Mr. Kakkar had to say about the part played by him in this fascinating drama. 'It was the Treasury Officer', says he, 'who passed on to me small bundles of hundred rupee notes by throwing them towards me from a table some six or seven feet away. I went on burning them without checking their numbers till the Treasury Officer, Mr. Misra, and the Treasurer declared that all the notes of Rs. 10,000, Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 100 denominations had been exhausted. It was midday by then. Mr. Misra and I next went to the Police Lines and saw Mr. Nigam who ordered that the rest of the currency notes in the Treasury must also be likewise burnt. Thereafter, we returned to the Treasury to carry out this order. But before we could make a beginning, we heard a report of a gun, followed by an alarm that a mob was marching towards us. This made us immediately lock up the Treasury and once again go to Mr. Nigam. However, this turned out to be a false alarm. Still, having need for some rest, I broke off at this stage and all further action was stopped till 3 in the afternoon, when Sri Jagdamba Prasad a senior Deputy Collector, undertook to relieve me.'

The scene of operation this time was shifted to an open space in front of the Treasury. It is believed that this was done under the impression that in case the burning were carried out in public view, the rioters would not have much interest left in making a raid into the Civil Lines area that had so far remained immune from attack. This goes to show the fear complex, bordering almost on panic, that had seized the Government officials concerned.

To reconstruct the scene that followed: there stood the Treasury Officer, and the Treasurer, inside the double lock, while the Head Clerk, Mr. Bhawani Sahai, stood in the single lock, watching the transit of bundles upon bundles of ten-rupee notes that were being carried by three men, namely, Sri Krishan

Prasad (Money Tester), Shiva Shankar (Treasury Clerk) and Mohammad Habib (Nazir). Outside the Treasury, at a distance of a few paces from it, we see, apart from Mr. Jagadamba Prasad, the men of the Treasury Guard, numbering fifteen in all, and some Tehsil staff, standing in the form of a ring around a fire that has been specially built up. And as the bundles of notes arrive, we see them consigned straightway to the fire which goes on devouring them with the rapacity of a veritable demon.

Meanwhile, the witnesses to this strange spectacle stand motionless, as if dazed by the very novelty of the spectacle. But soon enough, this atrophy of their senses passes and they begin to fidget. Then a whisper goes round :

‘What, if we help ourselves to these brand new notes?’
‘Could there be anything more ridiculous than consigning them to the fire?’ ‘How are they going to pay our monthly salaries if there is no money left in the Government coffers?’
‘After all, what harm could there be if, instead of allowing those notes to go waste, we turned them to our own use?’

At first, one or two men from among the guard pluck up enough courage to prod the fire with the bayonet end of their muskets and this proves to be the signal for a regular scramble among the rest of the men standing there, for the notes heaped on the fire.

Poor Mr. Jagdamba Prasad did not know what to do in the circumstances. The situation was obviously getting out of hand. No one seemed to be at all in a mood to listen to his protests. So he stopped the burning and walked over to Mr. Nigam to ask for further orders. The latter agreed that there should be no more burning. Thereupon Mr. Jagdamba Prasad returned to the Treasury to find a number of men still collected around the fire and some bundles of unburnt notes lying abandoned there. He had them returned to the double lock and this marked the close of the day’s proceedings.

After half an hour or so, the Treasury Officer, Mr. Misra, informed Mr. Jagdamba Prasad of the shortage of a whole bundle containing a thousand ten rupee notes ! The latter then held out a threat of serious consequences to whosoever might



have stolen the bundle. Thereupon Naik Ram Janam of the Guard, who had quietly removed it during its transit from the double lock to the scene of the fire, surrendered it.

The second list drawn up by the Treasury Officer of the bundles alleged to have been passed out for burning contained nineteen serials, the first recorded in red pencil, the third partly in red pencil and partly in blue, and the rest in ink. Seven of the serials were scored through in ink, while against the last seven there was a note over the signature of Mr. Jagdamba Prasad stating that they had been separated from burning. The extraordinary part of the whole show was that, on its close, no attempt was made to strike the totals or to check the balance.

Almost a week after this event, on August 26 to be exact, a certificate, as noted below, was signed by the Treasury Officer Mr. Misra and countersigned by Messrs. Kakkar and Jagdamba Prasad to which Mr. Norman Walker, Additional District Magistrate, Ballia, added a note :

I, JSM, Treasury Officer, Ballia, hereby certify that on the 20th of August 1942 currency notes to the value of Rs. 4,44,000 were destroyed by burning in my presence. There were no remains of any kind, the ashes being collected in my presence by the sweeper and thrown away. The burning of currency notes was done under the orders of Mr. Nigam, the District Magistrate. The value, denominations and the numbers of the notes are given in the attached list ; each page has been signed by me. The notes were burnt in two lots—the first in the presence of Mr. Kakkar, and myself. This lot included all the notes except ten rupee notes. The second lot consisting of all the ten rupee notes were burnt in the presence of Mr. Jagdamba Prasad and myself. I certify that all the notes burnt in my presence were completely and utterly destroyed.

Sd. J.S.M.

Treasury Officer, Ballia
26-8-1942



BALLIA IN THE GRIP OF THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

CSL
159

I hereby certify the above statement of Mr. Misra, Treasury Officer, to be correct.

Sd. N.D.K.
Deputy Collector
26-8-42

I hereby certify the above statement of Mr. Misra, Treasury Officer, to be correct.

Sd. J.P.
Deputy Collector
26-8-42

Note—At the time of burning, Mr. Misra and his Treasurer kept notes of the numbers of the currency notes burnt. These notes are attached in original in a sealed envelope.

Sd. Norman Walker
A.D.M. Ballia
26-8-42

All was well after this for some days till, one day in the month of September, there came a man to the Treasury at Ballia, wishing to encash a partly burnt ten rupee note bearing a number that found entry in the list of burnt notes. Again, on October 23, Sub-Inspectors Mohammad Shafiq and Zubair Mohammad of Police Station Kotwali, Ballia, came to know from a source that one Sheo Bandhan of Village Sagarpalli had received from Ram Nandan Chaprassi of Tehsil Ballia in settlement of a debt, a sum of Rs. 240 in ten-rupee notes alleged to have been burnt. They even managed to recover one of these notes and it was this that led Mr. Waddell, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Eastern Range, to send a wireless message desiring investigation by the C.I.D. into the affair of the burnt notes.

And now followed a stream of similar ten-rupee notes from different sources, giving rise to a spate of speculations. Some of the notes received were partly burnt. But the strange thing about them was that they found no mention in the list of notes said to have been burnt. Another strange thing was that one whole bundle of ten rupee notes, totalling one thousand, of which the numbers were recorded in the list, was found to be still in the Treasury. To add to the confusion, a



report was received from the currency officer at Kanpur saying that a thousand rupee note, supposed to have been burnt, had actually been cancelled at the Calcutta Office on March 19 of the previous year.

All this merely went to show that no reliance could be placed on the two lists of burnt notes prepared by the Treasury Officer, Mr. Misra. It was, moreover, established that till August 26, when fair copies were made out of these lists, he had been free to chop and change them as he liked.

To close this account of the happenings at Ballia in the wake of the August disturbance of 1942, a number of charges were ultimately framed against the officers mentioned and they were duly taken to task for their various acts of commission or omission. But today, when their names have been mostly forgotten, the series of events that culminated in this action and that earned for Chittu Pande, the title of 'The Lion of Ballia' are still talked of with much interest in that district.



AN ITALIAN PRISONER OF WAR

HERE is an account of an incident that took place at a time when I was posted at Lucknow as chief of the Investigation Branch of the C.I.D. and World War II was on. One evening while my wife and I were having a chat in our sitting room, I suddenly noticed a man, apparently a European—in white shirt and shorts but with no shoes on—standing framed against a door leading into the room from outside. He had some scratches on his person and was seemingly out of breath. Feeling a bit alarmed, I shouted at him to enquire what he wanted. But he seemed to be extremely apologetic and, after some bowings in the Continental fashion, this is how he delivered himself:

‘Eh Eh Eh.....you Indian.....Gentleman—Gentleman ?
I—I—Italian prisoner of war—you gentleman ?’

Who he was and what he wanted was now clear to me. Obviously, he had escaped from custody and desired my protection. But he did not know that he had come to the wrong man.

However, as I did not wish to cause him any alarm, I said to him, ‘Yes, I am an Indian, what can I do for you ?’

He said, in reply, ‘I, no home for years—prison—prison—sentry—sentry—all round. I run—I come here—you gentleman ?’

What he could not express by words, he expressed by signs, from which I gathered that he had been a prisoner of war for five years and had become sick of prison life, with sentries patrolling round his camp all the time. As a result, while he was being escorted in a tonga, he had jumped clear and taking to his heels had found his way into our house.

I then said to him, I see what you mean, but you had better sit down first.

Whereupon, he promptly lowered himself into the nearest chair, happy to have come where he had. But as he still appeared to be in a state of excitement, I decided to offer him

a drink and enquired what he would like to have. He asked for whisky, which I did not have. So I asked if Vermouth would do. On his saying 'Yes', I produced two bottles of Vermouth, one Italian and the other French. Not being able to contain his joy at seeing the stuff, he jumped up and pointed to the Italian one saying repeatedly, 'This—this—my home—my home—my country,' thus indicating his preference.

When he had finished the drink, I asked him to follow me, which he did like a lamb. I then took him to my garage and, bringing out my car, asked him to be seated in the rear. At this he moved his hand vertically a number of times in front of his body. By this he meant that he would like to have a sheet of some sort to cover himself with. On my telling him that there was no need for one, he promptly got in and, instead of depositing himself in the rear seat, lay down on the floor board so as to make himself invisible to any casual observer.

I, for my part, quietly drove him to the nearest Police Station, all the time feeling heavy at heart at having to betray him. When we arrived there and my captive saw the assembled policemen, his face fell. But there was little that he could do. So he sat down in a chair by my side, looking the very picture of misery.

Meanwhile, I talked with the policemen present there and while I told them how I had come by him, they explained how he had escaped *en route* to the Police lock-up from the Railway Station and how they had been carrying on a frantic search for him. From this and possibly from the manner in which the policemen addressed me, although we were talking in Hindustani, he perhaps inferred that I was a policeman of some standing, and so, looking at me questioningly said, 'You—you—Police Chief?'

On my answering in the affirmative, he saw the irony of the situation, his face brightened up, he smiled and slapping his head with both his hands, he declared, 'Oh! my forch-oo-n!'

This change in his expression, I must say, caused no small relief to me and I took the opportunity to express my regret at having had to do my duty, which he seemingly understood.

Thus we parted as friends.



THEFT FROM A REGIMENTAL ARMOURY

WHETHER there were any Japanese fifth columnists working in India during the latter half of World War II, is more than I can tell. But there were some who suspected their hand whenever there was any occurrence of an unusual type. When, therefore, information was received at Lucknow of the theft of a batch of as many as seven service revolvers from the armoury of the 10th/7th Rajput Regiment at Fatehgarh, it was at once put down to these hypothetical men, who, it was thought, were prowling about the country, bent on mischief. Necessarily, investigation into a case of such importance had to be carried out by the C.I.D. and that is how I came into the picture.

On my arrival at the spot, I was amazed to find how the theft had taken place almost under the very nose of three sentries, two of them mounting guard over the armoury itself and a third over the quarterguard, only a few paces away. It was also apparent that the offender or offenders had made use of a duplicate key to gain access into the armoury, apart from taking advantage of an *arhar* field behind the armoury to come within close range of it without being seen.

Along with the Adjutant of the Regiment, Lt. Kuldeep Singh, I interrogated a fairly large number of men belonging to the Regiment, but, unfortunately, we drew a blank. The next course open to us was to arrange for the censorship of all incoming letters, just in case any of them might provide a clue. Hardly had a fortnight passed when Lt. Kuldeep Singh came across a letter that looked suspicious. It was addressed to Naik Rampal Singh by one Ramlakhan Singh of village Barbatpur in Police Circle Pihani of District Hardoi and stated, among other things, that the latter was awaiting Rampal Singh's return home to take charge of the stuff consigned by him to the writer's care.

Straightway we got busy interrogating Rampal Singh. But he proved to be a hard nut to crack and had, therefore, to

be given up. Then followed a council of war in which it was decided that we should now interrogate another man—a recruit named Ujagar Singh—who belonged to the same village as Rampal Singh and was very friendly with him. He was a lad of about 18 who had enlisted only a couple of months previously at the same time as Ramlakhan Singh who had resigned and gone home.

At first this lad also pleaded innocence. But we continued with his cross-examination till our efforts were crowned with success and Ujagar Singh not only confessed to his knowledge of the theft, but also offered to take us to his village where the stolen revolvers were to be found. In addition he informed us that Rampal Singh and Ramlakhan Singh were the other two conspirators. Their idea was to use the revolvers in the commission of dacoities, for which Hardoi was notorious at that time. Here is the rest of the story in Ujagar Singh's own words :

The theft was actually committed by Naik Rampal Singh. Once, while he had been on sentry duty over the Quarter-guard, he had surreptitiously taken an impression of the key to the armoury and had thus got a duplicate key made for himself. On the night of the theft, he took advantage of the crop of *arhar* nearby to move stealthily to within a few feet of the Armoury, without being observed. He then slipped in at the opportune moment, when the two sentries were out of sight.

Having thus got inside, he helped himself to the seven revolvers which lay arranged on a box and tied them in a piece of cloth, before making his exit. All this time, Ramlakhan Singh and I remained hidden in the *arhar* field. Rampal Singh then carried the bundle containing the seven revolvers to a quiet spot on the bank of the Ganga, where he buried it in our presence and where it remained for some ten days till the excitement following the theft had died down. Meanwhile, Ramlakhan Singh had tendered his resignation and, as soon as he was free to go home, he left taking with him the stolen revolvers.

By the time Ujagar Singh had finished making his statement it was past midnight and the next thing to do was to



THEFT FROM A REGIMENTAL ARMOURY

take him to his village and confront him with Ramlakhan Singh. The idea of a journey by road in the month of January at that time of the night to an obscure place was by no means alluring. But our spirits were fully buoyed up by the prospect of a recovery that was going to make history in the annals of the C.I.D. So, exactly at 1 A.M., we set out in a car. There were altogether nine of us seated in it and, although the road as far as Shahjahanpur was in an abominable state and we had to cross two rivers, the Ganga and the Ramganga *en route*, yet we managed to get along without any mishap. A thing that helped us on the way was the moon which shed a refulgent light over the entire countryside and made it look bright as day. None of us spoke, as if by mutual understanding, so as not to disturb the spell that seemed to have been cast over us.

At about 2-30 in the morning, we got to Shahjahanpur and from there took the road to Sitapur, where we arrived at dawn. Here we had the petrol tank filled, before proceeding first to Bilgrami and then to village Barbatpur where we arrived at 9 in the morning.

Fortunately for us, we found Ramlakhan Singh at home. And now began another spell of interrogation, lasting for some three hours before our efforts bore fruit. Ramlakhan Singh took us to a field where he had hidden the missing revolvers and sure enough there they were, neatly tucked away in a hole dug in the ground and now ready for our recovery.



A MURDER STORY RETOLD

AMONG the cases within my knowledge, successfully worked out by the Uttar Pradesh C.I.D., the pride of place, I think, should be accorded to one of murder of Mrs. Tewari of Lucknow, which took place on the night of January 8, 1943.

The house in which Mrs. Tewari lived had a courtyard with a number of rooms facing it, including the one she used to occupy. On the night of the murder her husband Dr. Tewari who was asleep in a room in another part of the house, heard a shrill cry. But he failed to take any notice of it. A short while after this, he thought he heard an incessant groaning from the direction of the courtyard. He then got up to see what the matter was and as soon as he opened an intervening door, he was shocked to find his wife sitting huddled up on one side and bleeding profusely from numerous stab-wounds inflicted on her person. The first thing he did was to take her to the hospital. But she succumbed to her injuries on the way, without being able to tell who her assailant had been.

Two stumps of smoked 'biris', a few burnt matchsticks, one match box, two bunches of keys, a *dona* (a small receptacle made of *sal* leaves stuck together) with some sticky substance in it, lay abandoned on the open terrace above Mrs. Tewari's room, while a rope with one end fastened to a bamboo pole stuck across a ventilator, was seen dangling inside the room. In addition, immediately below an outer drain pipe leading to the roof, there lay a pair of old shoes belonging to one of the domestic servants, named Tulsi. What was more, some distinct finger-impressions were visible on this drain pipe.

All this clearly went to show that the assailant had first got to the roof by scaling the outer drain pipe and, when all was quiet, had let himself into Mrs. Tewari's room with the help of the rope seen hanging in it.

The deceased had apparently put up a good fight before

giving in. Then, when the assailant had cleared off after collecting all the valuables in the room, she had groped her way to the door and unlatching it with some difficulty gone staggering to the spot where she had been found sitting in a heap, by her husband. She had left a trail of blood behind her on the floor, as well as some blood stains on the walls of her room in the course of her effort, first to switch on the light and then to unlatch the door, to come out.

Two dogs belonging to the house used to be in the verandah outside Mrs. Tewari's room to keep guard at night. But when Dr. Tewari came to the verandah on hearing the shrieks of his wife, he found them missing. Later, when he returned from the hospital, he noticed both the animals lying unconscious at two different places inside the courtyard. Another surprise in store for Dr. Tewari was that when he looked for a 'kukri' he had in one of the rooms of the house, he found it gone!

Preparations had been afoot for some time previously in Dr. Tewari's house for the wedding of one of his daughters fixed for January 17, 1943. In that connection the deceased had been collecting gold and silver articles, to be given away in dowry. Some jewellers had also been seen paying frequent visits to the house.

A number of relations being expected to come to the wedding, Mrs. Tewari had been on the look out for some temporary servants to help her with her daily chores. About this time, on December 20, 1942, to be exact, as if in answer to her quest, a man turned up and declared that he was in search of employment. He gave his name as Tulsi and said that he lived in Daliganj along with a few of his village folk. He appeared to be a fairly decent fellow and since he readily accepted the terms offered, Mrs. Tewari engaged him straight-way. Thereafter, Tulsi worked for her without giving the least cause for complaint. He was always neatly turned out and it was his practice to come early in the morning and leave late at night. One thing about which he was very regular was his shave which he used to get done daily.

Among the duties assigned to him one was that of feeding the two dogs owned by Dr. Tewari.



On the morning following the occurrence, Tulsi failed to turn up. Enquiries made in Daliganj proved infructuous. No one there had even heard of him!

For a time there was no clue available to Tulsi's identity and the prospects of tracking him down appeared to be very thin till information was received of a case of serious theft of an identical nature in another part of the city. The victim, in this case, again, was one whose daughter was to wed shortly. He had, staying with him, a number of his close relations, some of whom had brought with them their valuables to be worn on the occasion of the wedding. One day during this period, a man who gave his name as Ram Bharosay, came to him in search of employment as a domestic servant and was engaged by him temporarily. This man remained with him for a few days and then cleared off with jewellery worth several thousand rupees. His description tallied almost exactly with that of Tulsi, while a pair of shoes left behind by him was found to be of the same size as the one left behind by Tulsi at Dr. Tewari's place.

From a search carried out through the C.I.D. records it was discovered that the *modus operandi* of these two cases was identical with that of a gang of domestic servants led by one Ram Samujh of Bara Banki, all of whom had been convicted in a case of burglary at Lucknow, in 1938. Ram Samujh had been untraced ever since his release on December 18 of the previous year.

Then followed two other cases of a similar type: one in May at Kanpur and the other in June at Lucknow. The suspect had given his name as Ram Bharosay Kahar in one case and Debi Kahar in the other.

The photograph of Ram Samujh, as contained in his release notice published in the Criminal Investigation Gazette was shown to the victims of all these cases and they instantly recognised it as that of the man engaged by them. The finger-impressions left on the drain pipe at Dr. Tewari's place were also found to tally with those on record, of Ram Samujh of Bara Banki.

The identity of the culprit in the four cases having thus

been fully established, it now remained to lay him by the heels. In this task a man named Chutku Kahar, who had seen the suspect a month previously at Haider Ganj in the company of one Babu Lal came to our assistance. Chutku had some reason to be helpful, there being a woman in the case, in whom both he and Ram Samujh were equally interested and on whose account he was only too anxious to have the latter out of the way.

And now followed a period of suspense during which Chutku went about making a search for Ram Samujh. As a result no doubt of some hard work on his part, he was able, after some time, to trace the man to a boat on the Gomti, at some distance down the river from Lucknow. Ram Samujh had chosen this as an ideal hide-out from where to go occasionally into the city for his nocturnal adventures.

Inspector Indra Kumar Sharma hired a boat late one night and set out to raid Ram Samujh's hiding place. He had a number of Policemen with him and as soon as his boat drew level with that of Ram Samujh, Constables Mohd. Yonus and Jalil Ahmad promptly jumped into it and collared Ram Samujh without much difficulty. Ram Samujh confessed to all the four cases mentioned above and named six others as his accomplices, all of whom were arrested one by one. Among them was a barber, which explained the daily shave Ram Samujh used to have before reporting to work.

Ram Samujh, when put up for trial, resiled from his confession and spun a cock-and-bull story to explain away why he had given a false name when engaged by Mrs. Tewari, how his shoes had come to be found immediately below the outer drain pipe of her house and how his finger impressions were to be seen on its surface. But the cup of his sins being full there was no escape for him and he was ultimately sent to the gallows for the murder of Mrs. Tewari, while his accomplices were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment for the possession of stolen property relating to one or other of the four cases in which they were involved.

A RAILWAY MAIL VAN DACOITY

At about 8-30 on the evening of March 24, 1942, the UP Mail of the B.N.W.R. (now known as N.E.R.) suddenly came to a halt some two miles beyond Shahjanwa railway station. For a while, all was quiet and the passengers wondered what could be the matter. Presently some reports of a gun were heard and these were followed by shouts of '*Bande Mataram*', '*Inqalab Zindabad*', '*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*', '*Subhash Babu ki jai*' and so on. A man with a sola hat walking up and down by the side of the train along its entire length, was seen distributing leaflets purporting to have been published by the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army of India, while a few of his companions kept on threatening the passengers with dire consequences if any of them attempted to offer resistance. They, moreover, announced in a loud voice that they were revolutionaries. They intended to rob the Government of the day for robbing the poor kisans and mazdoors and wanted the public to combine in overthrowing it. The Army, the Police and the Civic Guards, they declared, were ready to shake off the foreign yoke.

Though the train was full, yet none of the passengers could pick up enough courage to give fight to the intruders. The latter, on their part, pulled the engine driver out and made him sit in a first class compartment by the side of a travelling ticket collector. Likewise, they kept the Guard and the Assistant Guard under detention in another first class compartment. Thereafter, some of them went over to the mail van, gained forcible entry into it, after breaking open its glass windows, and rifled all the insured covers and cash available, to the value of approximately Rs. 10,000. Throughout the proceedings, which lasted for some fortyfive minutes, the assailants had it all their own way. But it must be said to their credit that they did not manhandle any one nor did they tamper with any personal property. Having thus gained their object, they collected at one spot when their leader took a

A RAILWAY MAIL VAN DACOITY

tally of their number before they marched off in a body to disappear into the darkness along with their booty.

Information of this outrage was first received at Police Station Shahjanwa through a Village Chaukidar. The Station Officer Shahjanwa flashed the news to Mr. Luck, Superintendent of Police at Gorakhpur, who arrived at the scene with the greatest despatch. But since the train had in the meantime left for the next station, that is, Magahar, he went over there and held a full enquiry. Having done this he had the mail van detached and hauled back to Gorakhpur after some time.

According to eye witnesses, the intruders, all young men, looked like students and wore an assortment of hats, turbans, dhoties, pyjamas and trousers. Most of them had handkerchiefs tied round their faces to hide their identity. One unexploded and five exploded crackers were found at the spot, apart from one 22 bore rook rifle bolt.

This was all the clue to be had. But by all appearances, here was a case of no ordinary type. One marked feature of it was that the culprits—one and all—appeared to be educated young men who gave themselves out as members of the H.S.R.A. Another was that they scrupulously avoided doing anything to harm the passengers. The leaflets they distributed, moreover, made no secret of their aims and objects. The only inference, therefore, possible was that this was a case of politico-criminal dacoity committed in furtherance of a deep laid plot to cause a severe jolt to the Government of the day, its pattern being the same as that of two other recent cases, one of Barbatpur in district Varanasi and the other of Nandganj in district Ghazipur.

Wires started jangling within a short time of the occurrence, to convey the news to all quarters that might be interested in it. The U.P. administration was at the time being run by a caretaker Government. Their hands were already full—what with having to make an all-out effort in support of the Great World War that was going on and what with the ticklish business of running the day-to-day administration, in face of an all-India agitation that was to culminate before long in the Quit India Movement of August 1942. To make matters



worse, the fortunes of the war were then going against the Allies, thus giving rise to a state of acute nervousness in Government circles. In this context, therefore, it was but natural for investigation of this case being entrusted promptly to the charge of the C.I.D. who were expected to be able to work it out with much greater facility than the regular Police. This also explains my association with it.

Within a few hours of the occurrence, I found myself speeding on my way to Gorakhpur by car, along with my team. Directly we got there, the first thing we did was to carry out a systematic inspection of the ill-fated Mail Van in this case. Among the scores of torn envelopes lying about on the floor of the van, there were some with finger impressions on them, stained in blood. Similar impressions were also to be seen on a broken window pane of the van. This clearly showed that at least one of the culprits had sustained a cut in the finger in an attempt to smash open the glass window and had left behind him these tell-tale impressions, in trying to wipe off the blood oozing from it.

Our next step was to have these finger prints developed and then photographed by one of our experts. This done, we turned our attention to the task of tracing the man with the injured finger. Following the age old method of working through 'sources', we soon came to know that he was one Oudhraj Tewari, of Gorakhpur. We raided his village home, we raided all his other possible haunts, but without any luck. This only meant that he had gone underground. Without giving rise to any suspicion in his mind, we then made a close study of the man's movements from such bits and pieces of information as came our way. This was a game that had its quota of thrills, its trials and tribulations. On one occasion, my Deputy, Rai Bahadur Tika Ram and I, disguised as ordinary businessmen, remained hidden in a lane for almost a whole day in wait for our quarry, without being rewarded for our pains. However, it came to be known before long that in the evenings he was in the habit of visiting on the sly a tea shop in the Gorakhpur bazar. One evening, therefore, while he was quietly sipping his tea in a dark corner of this shop,

A RAILWAY MAIL VAN DACOITY

the Rai Bahadur and I swooped upon him and whisked him away to the Kotwali without attracting much notice. There we questioned him again and again, with all the skill at our command, about his complicity in the train outrage, but he persisted in vigorously pleading his innocence. One thing he could not get away with, was a tell-tale injury mark on the tip of his right thumb, though he tried to explain it away, somewhat foolishly, by saying that it was a cut sustained from the sharp end of a ploughshare.

Oudhraj was not much to look at, being no more than a slim young man, aged about 22-23 years with a dark complexion and pock pitted face. What impressed us most about him was his grim determination not to give in to any threats or cajolery on our part to make him speak up. The only means now open to us to verify his complicity was to take his finger impressions—incidentally, not at all an easy thing to do in face of the stiff resistance he put up against it—and send them for comparison to the Finger Print Bureau at Allahabad. This we did and, sure enough, they were found to tally with the blood-stained impressions detected on a number of torn envelopes picked up from the floor of the Mail Van in question.

Thus, so far as this man was concerned, there could not be the least doubt about his complicity in the case we were investigating. But this was poor consolation to us, so long as the identity of the rest of the gang remained shrouded in mystery. At one stage we seemed to have come to a dead end, seeing that except for two interesting letters in our hand—which merely went to confirm that off-shoots of the H.S.R.A. in the eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh had been planning a 'money action' for some time—we had nothing else to go upon. In one of these letters, a person who had signed himself as 'Bengali Babu' had written to an acquaintance of his at Gorakhpur mentioning Hari Pratap Tewari. In the other one, 'Gullar' of Allahabad had written to a man of Basti to say that he (Gullar) had been requested by a Benaras student to receive and hide a large amount of money that the latter had planned to loot.



Days, even months, passed without any development and we had all but abandoned hope of making any further headway, when a 'source' again came to our rescue. The information he gave was that some local students of Gorakhpur, led by Hari Pratap Tewari and Indra Prasad, had been experimenting with the preparation of bombs in a certain rented house in the town. This was enough to revive our drooping spirits and we at once got busy trying to verify this information. The house in question turned out to be an unpretentious looking building situated in a quiet corner and used as a private hostel for boys attending some of the local schools and colleges. But, unfortunately for us, we found that the birds we were after had flown away, having left for home to enjoy their summer vacations. This was disappointing. But, in spite of this initial handicap, the information we sought was verified by a number of local residents. According to them, some time previously, there had been an explosion of a crude bomb that these youths had been trying to make surreptitiously. Fragments of the bomb were also found at their pointing, lying mixed up in a refuse dump at the back of the house !

Our next link in this chain of events was supplied by a resident of Azamgarh who made a statement throwing a flood of light on the activities in general of the H.S.R.A. in the eastern districts during the past few years. Following this disclosure, the names of many of the members of this Association were ascertained and extensive searches, interrogations and arrests carried out. Some materials, as well as tools for the manufacture of explosives, were also recovered, along with large quantities of terrorist literature. But there was no trace to be had of Hari Pratap Tewari or of Indra Prasad or any of their associates even.

Next followed the recovery, after some weeks, from the possession of one Ramadhar Singh, a contact of Indra Prasad, of a list containing the names of certain youths. In it there was mention of one Raja Ram Passi, an ex-student of the Gorakhpur High School, who was found to be absconding.

About this time, it came to be known that two students of the Queen's College at Benaras were in touch with some of



the important suspects in this case. Their houses located, a raid was carried out on November 27 when they were arrested along with three others, namely Hari Pratap Tewari of Gorakhpur, Brij Bahadur of Barabanki, and Ramji Ram Vaish of Ghazipur, all of whom had been absconding. Hari Pratap Tewari and Brij Bahadur were, moreover, found in possession of service revolvers, fully loaded. These three arrests were made by Rai Bahadur Tika Ram in somewhat dramatic circumstances. His idea was first to throw a cordon round the house and thereafter to carry out a systematic search of it, on the off chance of coming by one or other of the suspects in this case. It so happened that while he was still making his enquiries inside the house, the three very men he had been looking out for, walked in quite unsuspectingly, thus falling an easy prey into his hands! This time luck was certainly on our side!

One other suspect, Bhagwan Prasad Shukla, was arrested with a number of others on the night of December 3 at Lucknow, following a raid carried out by Khan Sahib Nasir Khan, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Special Branch. Almost thirty arrests had been made by now, and there was reason to believe that some of those arrested had been responsible, the previous April, for the blackening of Queen Victoria's statue in the Town Hall at Gorakhpur.

Kailash Pati, still another suspect of this case, was arrested in circumstances reflecting credit on certain members of the public. He had come to Gorakhpur to meet an associate of his. Not finding him at home, he had chosen to stay on at his friend's house for the night. This aroused the suspicion of a local resident, who promptly relayed the information to certain members of the Civic Guard. The latter, in their turn, took Kailash Pati to the Kotwali, where he was identified and locked up. He had been wanted in connection with both this case and a case of postal robbery of Benaras in 1939.

Raja Ram Passi, whose name found mention in a list recovered from the possession of Ramadhar Singh, surrendered himself on December 28 and gave a detailed statement, confessing his guilt and naming all his accomplices, with the



exception of three, whom he did not know. His confession ran as follows :

There were in all fourteen of us. Balrup and I left Gorakhpur by the train which was to be looted. Four others boarded it at the next station, Domingarh, while the rest were already present at the spot, where, by previous arrangement, the train was to be stopped by pulling its alarm chain. Balrup had brought some leaflets with him which he distributed among the passengers. Bhagwan Prasad Shukla directed the operations while Baijnath Singh and Balrup collected the loot. Baijnath Singh, Uma Shanker Upadhyaya and Balrup each had a revolver.

After commission of the dacoity, Vidya Sahi and I returned home on a bicycle. Thereafter, about the 15th of May, Kailashpati, Balrup and I left for a village in Nepal territory, where we met Uma Shankar, Baijnath Singh, Rajnath Singh and Bhagwan Prasad Shukla. The following day Uma Shankar and I left for Rewa, with six hundred rupees, for the purchase of arms. But, failing to obtain any there, we left for Gwalior where we rented a room. Here we were joined by Chutkun Misra, Hari Pratap Tewari, Baijnath and Balrup.

Following the record of Raja Ram Passi's statement, Rai Bahadur Tika Ram and Inspector Faizan Ullah proceeded, post-haste, to Gwalior. There they first located the house mentioned by Raja Ram Passi and after some time managed to arrest Uma Shankar, Baijnath Singh and Rajnath Singh along with two six-chamber revolvers, a large number of cartridges, a quantity of gun power, and some lead.

In this way, nearly all those involved in the case came to be rounded up. Out of them two, namely, Kailashpati and Balrup, escaped from jail. Raja Ram was tendered pardon and examined as an approver. The identity of one could not be established and two others remained at large thus leaving a balance of eight who were all sentenced to six years R.I. by the Court of Sessions at Lucknow.

With the conviction of these accused, the curtain was rung down on a serious politico-criminal case of U.P., in the course of investigation of which much information was gleaned about



the activities of a large number of youths belonging to the eastern districts of this State who were out to overthrow the Government of the day. Although misguided, most of them were inspired by high ideals and were prepared to suffer the worst of privations in the attainment of their objective. This was borne out by a letter written by Hari Pratap Tewari from his hide-out, to his newly-wedded wife, exhorting her to live up to the glorious traditions set by the women of Chittor, and, if need be, to wipe off all memory of his from her mind. But the wheel of time has turned full circle since, and those who were dubbed as rebels then, are acclaimed as heroes today!



A DRUNKEN ORGY AND ITS SEQUEL

THE murder in cold blood of as many as four innocent persons during the course of one night, is sure to make headline news at any time. This is exactly what happened one cold wintry night at Kanpur, early in January 1942. The victims of this grim tragedy were Ram Dass, Badloo, Raja Ram and Avadh Behari, all of whom had been battered to death in their sleep—the first three at a place called Kataria Bagh and the last named, outside a shop in the Civil Lines owned by one Lala Ratan Lal. The irony of it was that none of the victims had given cause for offence to anybody. Of the four, Ram Dass, Badloo and Avadh Behari were casual labourers, while Raja Ram was an ekka driver.

There runs a highway in Kanpur City known as the Mall which connects the Civil Lines with the Cantonment. At one point of this road there is a railway level crossing which practically serves as a gateway between the two. On the side of the Civil Lines there were a number of shops on this road, including the one of Lala Ratan Lal where the assault on Avadh Behari took place. On the other side, there were the Infantry Lines, then occupied by a detachment of the South Wales Borderers. Close to these Lines stood a few tamarind trees, which marked the place known as Kataria Bagh, where there were a few petty shops made of thatch.

To pick up the story from its very beginning, this is how it unfolded itself: 'Babuji', 'Babuji', such was the frantic cry that came at the dead of night between the 2nd and 3rd January, from a man standing outside Police Station Cantonment in Kanpur. The first to wake up was 'Dewanji', that is, the writer Head Constable. 'What is the matter?' said he. 'Oh, do let me in. Something terrible has happened', came the reply from Muneshwar! For, that was the name of the man who had come to make a report of the happenings at Kataria Bagh. According to him, some *gora log* (meaning British tommies) had suddenly swooped upon the place when every-



body was fast asleep and had caused red-ruin, including the murder of several of his companions.

On his arrival at the spot, the Station Officer, Sub-Inspector Ram Swaroop Sharma, found the whole place reduced to a shambles. Lying in front of him were the dead bodies of Ram Dass, Badloo and Raja Ram, which bore silent testimony to the orgy of bloodshed that had been let loose. In addition, there lay abandoned here and there, one green forage cap, two bicycles (one marked G.U. 1435, the other H.V. 3161), an ekka without its pony or driver and four paper festoons. These the Sub-Inspector took into his possession. He also took into custody a soldier named Lynch who had been seized by the Kataria Bagh men during the course of the assault.

Soon after, a man came to report that some men sleeping outside Lala Ratan Lal's shop had been likewise beaten up by a group of British soldiers. In this case also, the Sub-Inspector noticed on the scene of occurrence, distinct signs of vandalism, such as a number of broken flower-pots and some broken pieces of a beer bottle of which the label read 'Breweries—Ranikhet Royal Institute of Health and Hygiene'. What is more, there lay before him, Avadh Behari, Maya Ram and Sheo Raj with numerous injuries on their person, those of Avadh Behari being of a serious nature.

Mr. Chapman, Senior Superintendent of Police, Kanpur, had Lance Corporal Church, Lance Corporal Green and Private Rogers of the South Wales Borderers arrested on suspicion of their being implicated in the case, since they had been seen not only sitting in the Bristol Cafe at the same table with Pte. Lynch, but also leaving the place with him immediately before these tragic happenings.

Meanwhile, news of these murders had reached the Governor, Sir Maurice Hallett, at Lucknow. In view of the circumstances attending them and their possible repercussions, he wanted the C.I.D. to take over the investigation and it was thus that my Deputy, Rai Bahadur Tika Ram, and I had to rush to Kanpur to do so.

So far, the case hinged merely on the apprehension of Pte. Lynch at Kataria Bagh. But he was no fool. The plea he put

forward was that close to this place, while he was on his way back from the Bristol Cafe he was attracted by some soldiers 'screaming and running about'. Curious to know what was going on he went nearer to have a look and was surprised to discover a man covered in blood. Naturally, he wanted to assist him and in trying to lift him, he got some blood stains on his own clothes. At this stage, the Police arrived and seized him under the mistaken notion that he had been concerned in the rioting.

Lance Corporals Church and Green, as well as, Pte. Rogers likewise vehemently pleaded their innocence. Thus the case against all the four accused under arrest was as good as lost, unless some corroborative evidence was forthcoming.

Our only hope lay in following up the clues provided by the green forage-cap, the two bicycles and the four paper festoons, found abandoned at Kataria Bagh. So far as the cap was concerned, its ownership, unfortunately, could not be established with any measure of certainty. The chances were that it belonged to Lynch, but in that case it took us no further than where we were.

The bicycle marked G.U. 1435, it was found, belonged to Corporal Price of the S.W.B. who had left it parked in the verandah of barrack No. 3 on the evening in question and had found it missing the next morning when he went to look for it. So here, again, we were up against a dead end, as there was ample evidence to prove that L/C Price had not stirred out of his room on the fateful night.

The other bicycle, marked H.V. 3161, had been allotted to L/C Church for Garrison Police duty. But he had a very plausible explanation to offer, his say being that he had found it missing on coming out of the Bristol Cafe and so had been compelled to ride home on the cross bar of Lance Corporal Green's bicycle. One thing he was unable to explain was why he had failed to report the loss, which he was expected to do normally.

At this stage, we turned our attention to the Bristol Cafe to see if any clue could be had there. A thing that attracted our notice was that a couple of paper festoons, still

hanging from the ceiling in the dance hall, were identical with the ones found at Kataria Bagh. Another very significant thing was that there were loose strings hanging at four places, whence the festoons appeared to have been removed. This left us with no doubt as to where the four festoons picked up at Kataria Bagh had come from. What was more, Mr. Everest, the Manager of the Bristol Cafe, confirmed that of the six festoons bought by him, four were missing.

Another valuable clue provided by Mr. Everest was that late in the evening in question, three soldiers, of whom one was a Sergeant, had knocked at his door to ask for supper. He had given them some sandwiches and after some time the Sergeant had returned to report the loss of his bicycle, upon which Mr. Everest had given him a '*chit*' by way of an assurance to make an enquiry into it. But the Sergeant had not turned up since.

Mr. Everest also produced two bottles of beer by Dyer Meakins identical with the one of which broken pieces had been found outside Lala Ratan Lal's shop.

Our next step was to examine a number of men belonging to the South Wales Borderers and the I.A.O.C. (Indian Army Ordnance Corps) who, it was thought, might be able to throw some light on the case. Interrogated by me, Privates Pullin and Tucker, who shared rooms with Lynch and Rogers, respectively, deposed that they had seen them 'breaking barrack' at about 10 p.m. on the night in question. Privates Dibben and Panny, in their turn, acknowledged having had some sandwiches along with Sgt. Phillips, before coming away from the Bristol. But it was from Sgt. Gardener of the I.A.O.C. that we received the most valuable piece of information. His statement ran thus :

'On the night in question I sat in the Bristol at a table, along with Sgt. Nagle of my Unit and four others of the S.W.B. including Lance Corporals Green and Church, with whom I had a nodding acquaintance. I saw Green and one of the two Privates take down a paper festoon hanging from the ceiling, by placing a chair on a table. In the course of removing a second festoon, the Private fell down and hurt his

wrist, possibly the right one. I also remember that Lance Corporal Green picked up a bottle of beer before leaving. Sgt. Nagle and I, on coming out, were closely followed by the four S.W.B. men mentioned by me, the time being approximately 1 a.m. All the four were on bicycles.'

'When Nagle and I reached the Railway level crossing, we got detached from the others who had come to a halt on the way. Further on, at the turning towards Barrack No. 4, as Nagle and I stopped to have a chat, Sgt. Phillips of the I.A.O.C. passed us on a bicycle and wished us good night.'

'I distinctly remember that during the course of conversation with me in the dance hall, the four S.W.B. men passed disparaging remarks against Indians generally and also complained of having been cheated by the Manager of the James Restaurant, on the ground that he had charged them nine annas for a 'peg' of rum, instead of six-and-a-half.'

Questioned as to where the four S.W.B. men had stopped on their way back, Sgt. Gardener pointed to a spot some fifteen to twenty yards from the James Restaurant.

Sgt. Phillips, mentioned by Dibben and Panny, corroborated the evidence given by Sgt. Gardener and Mr. Everest and also produced the 'chit' that the latter had given him in connection with the loss of his bicycle. This note ran: 'Cycle given to Chaukidar which will be given tomorrow—Sd. Everest, 2-1-42.'

He then went on to depose as follows:

'Having got the chit I hired an 'ekka' and pushed off. On the way, I passed four S.W.B. men, all on bicycles, one of which I recognised as mine from a brown label on the rear mudguard, pasted at the time of my booking it from Jabalpur. I immediately stopped the person riding it and took it away from him. Further on, I met Sergeants Gardener and Nagle and wished them good night.'

Sgt. Phillips' description of the four S.W.B. clearly pointed to the complicity of the very men under arrest. It was also clear from his statement that the spot where he had alighted from his 'ekka' to seize his bicycle was the same as the one where the three Kataria Bagh murders had taken place. Therefore, it could be safely inferred that it was the driver of this

A DRUNKEN ORGY AND ITS SEQUEL

very ekka, Raja Ram, who had been killed, along with Ram Das and Badloo.

Among other witnesses examined one was an Anglo-Indian lady named Mrs. Stathem who gave a clear picture of the disposition of all the men in the Bristol dance hall on the fateful night. She also pointed out the table at which Lance Corporals Green and Church, as well as, Privates Lynch and Rogers had been seated along with Sgt. Gardener and another Sergeant of I.A.O.C. (meaning Nagle).

Likewise, one Mrs. Devenport gave an account of how the soldiers had been seated in the dance hall, before they broke up for the night.

Bearer No. 20 mentioned by Mr. Everest, deposed to having served ten bottles of beer to the soldiers at the very table which, according to Mrs. Stathem, had been booked by Private Lynch and others.

The occurrence outside Lala Ratan Lal's shop was verified by Jit Bahadur Singh, watchman, in the following words :

‘On the night of the outrage, a little after one o’clock, four British soldiers arrived on their bicycles where I sat guarding the shops that stand in a row there, including the one that goes by the name of James Restaurant. On my challenging them, they struck me with fist and foot. I managed to escape into an adjoining compound from where I was able to witness all that happened subsequently.’

Jit Bahadur was corroborated by a number of others of the same locality. Another person who had something to say about this night's happenings was a truck driver named Mulaim Singh, who had been lying asleep in his vehicle outside a service garage and, while doing so, had been bitten in the hand by a soldier dressed in khaki.

Another link in this chain of events was provided by the statement of one Trilok Chand, proprietor of James Restaurant. He stated that on the evening of January 2, two soldiers in khaki came to his shop and asked for rum. When he told them that, under the local orders, he was prohibited from serving it to them, they lost their temper and threatened to smash up his shop. He then sent his bearer,



Bhagan Din, to fetch the Garrison Military Police. But before they could arrive, the soldiers had left his shop.

From the description given by Trilok Chand, it was evident that his reference was to Lynch and Rogers whom he was, moreover, able to point out correctly at an identification parade held subsequently. As for the slight discrepancy between Nigam's statement and the one given by Sgt. Gardener regarding the cause of the dispute, this may be put down to Nigam's anxiety to save himself from trouble for having at all sold any rum to the two soldiers.

Our enquiries further revealed that from the behaviour of the S.W.B. men generally, there had been frequent clashes in the recent past between them and some of the local citizens. The present case was therefore only in the nature of a sequel to the grudge a section of these S.W.B. men bore against the local population. But, without doubt, it was the incident at James Restaurant that provided the immediate cause for the orgy of bloodshed that followed.

To reconstruct the case, we have to go back for its starting point to the hour and date when Lynch and Rogers were seen 'breaking barrack', by their room-mates Pullin and Tucker. But before doing so, they quietly picked up L/C Price's bicycle parked in the verandah of Barrack No. 3, to push off on it to James Restaurant. There they had an altercation with its proprietor, Trilok Chand Jain, over the price charged by him for supply of some rum to them. Jain sent for the Garrison Military Police which made them take to their heels.

From James Restaurant Lynch and Rogers went over to the Bristol Cafe where they joined L/C Church and L/C Green and sat at the same table with them in the dance hall. The four there regaled themselves with generous quantities of drinks of all kinds, including some beer. It was here that they also hatched their plot to make a raid on James Restaurant later in the night.

All of a sudden, it occurred to Green and Rogers to take down some of the paper festoons hanging over their heads. Actually they rifled four of them, all of which were later found abandoned at Kataria Bagh.

A DRUNKEN ORGY AND ITS SEQUEL

On coming out of Bristol, the quartet coolly picked up Sgt. Phillips' bicycle. Thereafter, while on their way home they invaded James Restaurant with the idea of teaching Trilok Chand Jain a lesson. But the only persons to be found there were some casual labourers, lying fast asleep. Out of sheer mischief, they started pounding their heads with some flower pots that lay handy. They also made free use, as a weapon of offence or, maybe, defence, of a beer bottle they had with them. Having thus done their worst, they proceeded towards their barracks. Opposite Kataria Bagh, they were accosted by Sgt. Phillips who took no time to identify his bicycle and recover it from them, before going on his way. And now followed the orgy of bloodshed at this place, already related above.

In brief, the four accused of this case planned and later executed a raid on the premises of James Restaurant to start with. But by a strange irony of fate, a number of innocent persons came to be the victims. Once they had drawn blood, they became thoroughly brutalized and engaged in the second assault, purely in a spirit of abandon, the liquor they had imbibed having given an edge to their vicious spirit and heightened their lust for blood.

This case caused a sensation all over the country. It was illustrative, if not typical, of the way in which British soldiers were accustomed to treat Indians. Having completed my investigation, I put up a charge-sheet against L/C Church, L/C. Green, Pte. Lynch and Pte. Rogers, all of whom were found guilty under Section 304 I.P.C. by the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad, thus making up for the pains we had to undergo to bring the case to a successful conclusion. Of these, while the first three were sentenced to penal servitude for life, Rogers was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a term of five years.

MUSIC BEFORE A MOSQUE

As is well known, our country suffers from a plethora of fairs and festivals of varying importance. But the pride of place, so far as Hindus—at least of Northern India—are concerned, goes to Ram Lila, while for Muslims, Moharram is the most important. There is, however, one marked difference between the two in that, while Ram Lila marks a period of much fun and gaiety for the Hindus, Moharram marks a period of mourning for the Muslims. It is so, because Ram Lila commemorates the victory of Shri Ram Chandra over Ravana, while Moharram commemorates the martyrdom of Hazrat Ali. One common feature of both these festivals is that they are marked by a series of processions attended by music. But the drums that are played on the occasion of Moharram are by tradition of a distinct variety, having a deep resonant note that can be heard for miles. The Hindus, on the other hand, are bound by no traditions in the matter of the music that is played on the occasion of Ram Lila.

One morning about the middle of August 1924, in the course of my posting at Farrukhabad, while I was at home, there came a deputation of a number of local Muslims to wait on me. Among them, there were a number of men who were known to me. One was a local *durzee* (tailor) who occasionally did some work for me, another, a petty watch-maker, a third, an odd job man. They were ordinarily among the meekest of the meek, always ready to oblige me. But this day they looked important, with their serious faces and in their best garments, donned specially for the occasion. Having no idea at all of the object of their visit, I asked them to let me know what it was. Upon this the leader of the deputation, who happened to be none other than my occasional *durzee*, stepped out making a deep obeisance and delivered himself thus :

‘Hazoor, Jahanpanah, we have come to lay our grievance before you.’

I said, ‘Well, tell me what it is.’ He said, ‘Hazoor may

MUSIC BEFORE A MOSQUE

be aware that the local Hindus are daily taking out processions in celebration of Ram Lila.' 'Well', said I, 'How does that matter to you?' He said, 'But they are playing the same type of drums that are played by us during Moharram.' Not being quite able to follow what he was driving at, I said to him, 'But what of that? Let them play any drums they like. It is quite immaterial for you.' At this he drew a long face and putting his hand over his heart said, 'Do I have to tell your honour that the drums they are playing, being reminiscent of Moharram, cause much mental pain to us?'

This was indeed news to me and I found it difficult to keep myself from laughing. However, I somehow managed to maintain my composure and told the deputationists to go and sleep over the matter. This they did, with the consequence that I heard no more of it.

This reminds me of another episode later in my career on the occasion of the 'Krishna Lila' at Deoband (a town in Western Uttar Pradesh) which formed the subject-matter of a litigation lasting for several years.

The genesis of the case is as follows: In common with many other places in India, it had been the custom in this town also, to celebrate the birthday of Lord Krishna with much enthusiasm. The celebrations began on the 1st of Bhadon (corresponding to September) and ended on 11th. One special feature with them was that on the 10th of this month, the idol was taken out in a procession through the town on a golden chariot, to the sound of music and accompanied by elephants, horses, bullocks etc. A number of *Akharas* (groups of athletes) also formed part of this procession which followed a specific route and lasted from early forenoon to about ten at night.

In the year 1935, the Muslims of the town put forward a claim that the procession must not be conducted with music at any time of the day or night along the streets past Masjid Sabangaran and Masjid Dini and, further, that when it passed by the other mosques in the town, it must stop playing music at the time of congregational prayers.

In that year, the officer incharge of the Police Station, a



Muslim, had planted flags outside Sabangaran and Dini mosques to indicate the points between which no music was to be played. This annoyed the Hindus who objected to these flags on the ground that they had been wrongly planted. However, the Hindus were persuaded, at long last, to take out the procession. But the following year, they refused to do the same, being dissatisfied with the notice served on them fixing more accurately the limits within which no music was permissible. This was the beginning of a stalemate that continued till 1939 when they filed a suit in Court.

The proceedings that ensued were a long drawn affair. The Hindus claimed that they had been free in the past to take out the procession without any restrictions. The Muslims, on the other hand, contended that it had never been so and, in support of their case, they filed a copy of an entry dated 1917 in the Village Crime Note Book of Police Station Deoband. It ran as follows :

'In the year 1917, the Hindus of Deoband constructed a fresh Rath (chariot) at a cost of about Rs. 5,000 and proposed to take out the idol of Lord Krishna on this Rath in place of the old one. Some Muslims objected to this on which the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Thakur Hukum Singh, made an enquiry into the case and having collected the Hindus and the Muslims arranged a compromise to which he obtained their endorsements. The term of the settlement was that music should be stopped before Sabangaran and Dini Mosques at all times of the day and night, while regard should be had for prayer times at all the other mosques *en route*.'

One of the points made by the Muslims was that this agreement merely reduced to writing the prevailing custom and that the restrictions sought to be imposed were by no means an innovation.

It was finally held by a bench of the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad, presided over by Mr. Justice Allsop and Mr. Justice Yorke, that, although this entry in the Village Crime Note Book was valid in evidence, the contention that the alleged agreement of 1917 had been satisfactorily proved

or that it had been so ratified as to acquire any binding force or that it had matured into a custom, could not be accepted. For, there was nothing to show who the persons were who had come to a settlement and what authority, if any, they had to give any undertaking on behalf of the communities they purported to represent. In the result the High Court disposed of the suit before them by granting to the Hindus a declaration in the following terms :

‘It be declared that the Hindu residents of Deoband have a right to take out the Krishna Lila procession along the public streets in Deoband accompanied with music, with religious symbols, vehicles, or animals and with displays and ceremonies, provided that they do not interfere unduly with the convenience of others who may use the public streets or may occupy or use houses or buildings in the neighbourhood and provided also that the right is subject to such orders of prevention and control as may be lawfully issued by any Magistrate, Police Officer or other authority, under the Code of Criminal Procedure, the General Police Act 1861 or any other law which may be for the time being in force.’

By this declaration of the High Court dated the 18th March 1944, the Hindus thought they had scored a victory. But actually, the position remained the same as before, since the final decision, as to whether or not to impose any restrictions, still lay with the Executive, who could not possibly allow the Hindus to have it all their own way, if trouble was to be averted.

Soon after this declaration, the Hindu Sahayak Sabha of Deoband applied for permission to take out the procession along the old route and without any restrictions. But they had to be told that the old restrictions would continue, unless they came to an agreement with the Muslims. Then followed a period of feverish behind-the-scene activity, to find a solution of the problem that might be acceptable to both the parties. Ultimately, on a proposal made by the leader of the Muslim party, an amended route, altogether avoiding Sabangan and Dini mosques, was worked out and the terms of compromise between the parties were recorded on a stamped paper.



On the day of the procession, that is, on the 21st August 1944, elaborate Police arrangements were made by me to guard against any possible mishap. The timings were so arranged as not to clash with those fixed for prayers in the mosques that fell on the way. Towards the end, the procession had to be rushed, as the time lag between the *Magrib* and *Isha* prayers was short and did not allow sufficient time for it to cover the last leg of its journey with ease.

At one point of the route, opposite Masjid Naddafan, the Muslims objected to the stoppage of the *Rath* for the distribution of *Prasad*. On the side of the Hindus, the *Akharas* were inclined to be intractable. But in spite of all these alarums and excursions, we managed to see the procession through without any untoward incident of a major type. For the Hindus, its revival after a lapse of nine years was a matter of great joy and they gave expression to it without any restraint. On the other hand, this episode rankled very much in the hearts of the Muslims who felt badly let down. The outlook, therefore, for the Krishna Lila procession of the following year at Deoband was not at all favourable. Actually, it ended in a fiasco and this is how it came about.

Word had gone round that the Muslims might interfere with the procession. This was like a challenge to the Hindus who assembled in large numbers to participate in it and to put up a stiff fight, if necessary. The procession, as it wended on its way, looked like a sea of heads and like the sea when it is angry, it caused a roar that was deafening. With an unruly and threatening crowd like this, bent on giving offence, we had to go all-out to keep control over it. The Muslims on their part looked on with suppressed rage and any impartial observer could see that there was no love lost between the two opposite factions.

By the time the procession had covered half the distance it was 5 p.m. It was now heading for Devi Kund and in doing so, it passed a bifurcation from where another road took off towards the outskirts. One of the *Akharas* broke away here to go home. But a group of Muslims, who stood watching the procession at this place most unreasonably

barred its passage, saying that it must not leave the prescribed route. This was too much for the Akhara men, each of whom was armed with a *lathi*. So they lashed out at their opponents, causing some lacerations to at least one of them. This was a stray incident not seen by many people. Yet, the news of it spread through the town like wild fire and infuriated the Muslims still more.

At some distance from Devi Kund the procession had to pass through a narrow lane in a thick Muslim locality on its way to Thakurdwara where it was due to terminate. But when it arrived at the head of this lane, it was about 9 p.m. I posted myself immediately in front of the *Rath* while, of the rest of the Police party, part moved with the procession and part stood lining the lane. The night was dark and the lights we had with us did not improve matters. In fact, we found ourselves in a very unenviable position. For it was like our having to go through a narrow pass with the enemy ranged on both sides of us, ready to fire.

On the procession entering this lane, it was noticed that batches of Muslims bent on mischief had collected at odd corners of it to wreak vengeance on the processionists. They were chased away time and again, but every time this was done they managed to reassemble promptly. And now followed a rain of brickbats that went on intermittently, causing much confusion. The advantage lay all on the side of the enemy and they repeatedly returned to the charge.

At this stage, a brick hit my mare. She became restless. Consequently, I had to give her up to move with the procession on foot. With bricks falling all around us in occasional bursts, the situation was becoming increasingly tense. The extreme narrowness of the lane we had to cross, the darkness that prevailed all around, the great length of the procession, and, above all, the angry mood of the processionists, which had by now got worked up to fever heat, combined to strain our resources to the utmost, to prevent a serious clash.

The procession now arrived at a spot opposite Palledaran Mosque which had been the scene of some excitement the previous year. Again, a party of Muslims turned up in a side



lane to harass the processionists by their hit-and-run tactics. Upon this, an armed picket posted there fired into them killing one man on the spot. This had the effect of putting friend and foe—Hindus and Muslims alike—into headlong flight, thus leaving the Police in sole charge of the *Ruth* which they saw safely back home. Following this incident a curfew was clamped on the town, thereby helping to bring the situation back to the normal.

Today, an episode of this kind may appear to be extra-ordinary. But there was a time when, arising from political rivalry, communal differences had come to be accentuated to such an extent that each community was constantly on the lookout to cause unnecessary harassment to the other on the slightest pretext and mostly on the ground of its so-called religious susceptibilities. In the case of the Hindus, for instance, the slaughter of cows or, for that matter, any quadruped resembling a cow, was like a red rag. Likewise, in the case of the Muslims, music before a mosque was something that could never be tolerated.

The trouble really stemmed from want of a spirit of accommodation that then marked the conduct of both the Hindus and Muslims in their dealings with the opposite community. Happily for us, those days are now gone and both the Hindus and the Muslims are able to celebrate their festivals without coming to a clash. Also, disputes over such petty matters as 'Music before a mosque' have become a thing of the past.



THE PASSING AWAY OF SAROJINI NAIDU

EARLY in the morning of March 3, 1949, before the break of day, news came through from Raj Bhavan, that Sarojini Naidu, the first Indian Governor of Uttar Pradesh after independence, had passed away. Although she had been ailing of heart trouble for some time, no one had ever thought that the end was so near. Therefore, the news came as a shock to all of us. Her entire household staff—men, women and children—were the first to turn out, and as they sat grief-stricken and silent in the central lobby of the Government House, they bore testimony to the genuine feeling of affection that had bound them to her.

It was at the time still obscure, if not dark, with only a faint suspicion of light in the eastern sky when messages came pouring in, one after another in quick succession, about the impending arrival by air, of many an important personage, who felt desirous of paying the last homage to the departed soul.

Prime Minister Nehru was among the first to come from outside Lucknow and so was Miss Padmaja Naidu who accompanied him. Next came the Governor General, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, followed by Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad and Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant, all of whom had been attending a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at Allahabad. Another important person to arrive was Lady Mountbatten, who happened to be out in India at the time on a brief visit.

Meanwhile, the Government House gates had been closed to prevent a rush of the general public who had assembled outside its walls in large numbers. They were like a besieging army waiting for the barricades to give in and, such was their luck that the moment the Prime Minister caught sight of them, he ordered the gates to be thrown open to let them in. And no sooner was this done than almost the entire population of the town like a river in spate, poured into the Government House grounds, in one tumultuous, seething mass of humanity,

sweeping away everything before it. Never before in its long history had its sacred precincts been so trampled upon by the common people, now pushing one another in an attempt to press forward.

By way of a sequel to this sudden onslaught, first the lovely flower beds and next, the flower pots all around, lay ruined or broken. But this was only the beginning of the trouble. The more intrepid of the invaders now led an assault on the main building itself by climbing on its sides, so as to gain access into the high verandahs surrounding it. For a short while, unmindful of the occasion that had brought them there, they got busy making a systematic survey of the building and its appointments by peering into its rooms through their glass doors and windows.

In face of this sudden development, the problem was how with the help of a mere handful of policemen available, to plug the numerous approaches that gave easy access into the building. Fortunately, we had the assistance at this juncture of Mridula Sarabhai, a veteran social worker who seemed to appear from nowhere. A woman of slight build, she does not exactly look like the type suited for dealing with a crowd. But hooking me by the arm she took me in and out of the dense mass of humanity with a dexterity that left me gaping. She also managed to raise for us on the spot a band of volunteers to do our bidding. But such was the press of the crowd that, try as we might, we found it almost impossible to keep it in check. Time and again our arrangements in this behalf broke down which seemed greatly to annoy the Prime Minister who sought repeatedly, if without much success, to take charge of the situation himself.

In the meantime, the body of Sarojini Naidu, decked in a glorious mass of flowers, lay in state on the verandah facing the east. Even in her death she looked regal. By the side of the body sat her daughter, Padmaja Naidu, and next to her sat Mrs. Siddanta and a few other ladies, singing devotional songs in a subdued tone. Among the mourners who filed past in hushed silence, there was scarcely anyone who was not visibly moved.

In his anxiety to keep the crowd on the move, the Prime Minister was at one time seen standing up on a high chair in front of the porch to the north of the building and directing it down the passage leading to the spot where lay the body of Sarojini Naidu. But this only made matters worse, for instead of freely passing on, as it would otherwise have done, the crowd had now a marked tendency to bunch up where he stood so as to have a good look at him or to touch his feet, a thing that he disliked intensely.

At another time, close to the spot where the Prime Minister stood directing the crowd from his high pedestal, Lady Mountbatten who had come up to assist him, was seen so tightly hemmed in that she ran the imminent risk of being suffocated. Seeing this, I promptly planted myself in front of her with my arms outstretched in an endeavour to help her out. But she seemed to be perfectly happy where she was and in no mood to leave per post. On the contrary, she preferred to stick to it to the last, like the brave woman that she was.

It was about midday by the time Police reinforcements had arrived and some order had been evolved with their aid in the day's proceedings. The programme was that the body would be taken out at 4 o'clock in the afternoon in a procession headed by the Governor General in his car and escorted by a combined party of the Army and the Police, in the shape of a mobile cordon. According to plan, therefore, the cortege set out at the appointed time on its way to the cremation ground, which had been specially marked off on the bank of the Gomti, opposite the Chuttar Manzil. Its route lay along the Mall which had been cleared of all traffic. Facing the road on both sides and lining it from one end to the other, stood the rank and file of the III Battalion PAC with their rifles on the reverse. Behind them stood the local population in rows six to seven deep, while thousands of others were to be seen standing in the tall buildings, packed to capacity on both sides of the road.

The body lay on a military vehicle, wrapped in the National Flag and covered by a heap of floral wreaths. By its side sat like a statue, Padmaja Naidu, the chief mourner on

this occasion and with her sat the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel and Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant. Others attending the funeral followed on foot immediately behind. Among these, there were scores of V.I.P.s and numerous officials, apart from the general public who in their thousands brought up the rear. Thus the cortege when it came to Hazratganj was more than a mile long and, as it slowly moved on its way to its destination, the air was filled with the strains of Mahatma Gandhi's favourite song '*Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram, Patit Pawan Sita Ram*', sung in a full-throated voice by one and all, while from the buildings on both sides of the road, there was a rain of flowers on the vehicle carrying the body.

At the cremation ground the body was reverently laid by the Governor's personal staff, on a pyre made up of sandal wood and, thereafter, more floral wreaths were placed on it on behalf of numerous institutions. A contingent of the Police fired a number of volleys into the air as a mark of respect to the deceased before the pyre was lit up.

The funeral oration was made by the Governor General, Sri C. Rajagopalachari. His was a moving speech, feelingly made, which began with the words: 'What was mortal of Sarojini Naidu stands consigned to the flames. It is her spirit that still remains with us.' Poor Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant felt so overwhelmed with grief that he broke down in the middle of his speech and abruptly resumed his seat. He was followed by a few others who made speeches suited to the occasion before the proceedings came to a close with the sounding of the Last Post and the assemblage dispersed with a heavy heart.

Viewed in retrospect, the obsequies held in the honour of Sarojini Naidu were unique in that they were not simply in the nature of a formality, but more like an act of worship evoked by the universal esteem in which she had been held. Indeed, it could be truly said of her that while she had triumphed in her life, she had triumphed in her death also.

With the passing away of this great lady, her memories kept crowding in. In the short time given to her to play the

PASSING AWAY OF SAROJINI NAIDU

role of presiding deity over the Government House at Lucknow, she had changed its entire character and turned into a centre of attraction for the high and the low alike. Moreover, by her magnetic personality combined with a rare charm, she had carved out a special place for herself in the hearts of all around her. Whenever in company she was the very embodiment of graciousness. Her 'At Home's were a treat. On such occasions she used to serve tea or coffee with her own hands to her guests, apart from keeping them entertained by her inexhaustible fund of wit and humour. At one such party, I remember how, tea cup in hand, she walked up to the spot where the Chief Secretary, Shri B. N. Jha, and I were chatting and after handing it to Mr. Jha said in a voice of mock seriousness, accompanied by an appropriate gesture, 'Others I command. But the Chief Secretary, I must propitiate.'

She had indeed a remarkable gift of making people laugh on occasions when they were prone to sit stiff. I can recall one such instance at Allahabad when a welcome address to her was being read out at a meeting of the Women's Association. It began with the appellation of *Bahinji* for her and the moment this word was pronounced, she lustily interrupted the proceedings to say, *Nani kaho—Nani* (call me grannie) which made the assembly roar with laughter and instantly put them at their ease.

She could even joke at her own expense, as will be seen from the ensuing episode. The occasion was a Special Convocation of the Lucknow University when in celebration of its Silver Jubilee, a number of distinguished men of the country were to be awarded Honorary Doctorates by her as Chancellor. One of the recipients happened to be a Governor of another State and as he stood in front of her, she remarked, 'Now what shall I say to you? You are a joker and I am a joker. So it is a case of one joker addressing another.' In this way she had something original to say in her own way to everyone of the eighteen men selected for the awards.

It is indeed many years since Sarojini Naidu passed away. But so deep is the impression she has left on the sands of time, that even today her memory remains as fresh as ever.



PILGRIMS TO ETERNITY

NEVER before in the history of Varanasi, had there been such a furore in the Press and among the public of that place as there was, following discovery at about 8 of the morning of March 20, 1951, of as many as seven dead bodies—tied each to each with a rope—floating in the Ganga opposite Tulsighat.

The sight of a solitary dead body drifting with the current in the Ganga, is nothing very unusual. But of seven of them tied together, took the incident out of the realm of the ordinary. Was it an instance of family vendatta or of a diabolical crime committed in the dark alleys of Varanasi or of some obscure ritual hitherto unknown?

The Police were soon on the scene and had the bodies taken out of the water. This done, they had them laid in a row on the river bank, when it was found that the dead included one grown up man, three grown up women, two boys and one girl.

From their looks and dress, the deceased appeared to be *Yatris* (pilgrims) who had been fairly well-to-do and had come on a pilgrimage from some distant place. A tin box, a tiffin carrier, an aluminium jug, a brass jug, a brass pot and a brass bucket—some of them filled with sand—were found tied to the bodies, to serve as weights. But there were no marks of injury to be seen on any of them.

It was now left to the Police to determine who these unfortunate people were and where they had come from. If only it could be known where they had been lately staying, then, it was felt, much of the mystery surround their death would be solved.

In order, therefore, to ascertain this information, enquiries were made of the *Pandas* of the place, one of whom was able to tell that the deceased had been staying at House No. D-3/100 Mirghat with one, Uma Shankar Pande.

But Uma Shankar was nowhere to be seen. In his absence, therefore, his house had to be broken open which

was actually done in the presence of a Magistrate, Mr. B. D. Jayal, on the 21st March. And now followed a search of the house, resulting in the recovery, among other things, of a number of handwritten notes, allegedly written by one Bhalchand. Two of the notes, translated into English, read :

Our regards to all. Let no one harass any one on our account. This is to inform you that we have left for an destination in quest of my daughter Pushpa who is no more.

Sd. Bhalchand Bapu Rao Patel

17. 3. 51

Saturday—17. 3. 51—Kashi, dated 17. 3. 51—This is to inform all and sundry of Kashi, this Saturday, the 17th March 1951, that having decided to go on pilgrimage to an unknown land for the good of the soul of my beloved daughter Pushpa who departed this life on 15. 3. 51, here in holy Kashi, we have today actually set out on our journey. Let no one interfere with our project. This is our own affair. No one else has anything to do with it. Uma Shankar is not aware of our decision. Do not harass him. All the stuff in our room here is hereby gifted to Pandit Barkhandi Maharaj.

17. 3. 51.

The letters, it will be seen, were quite simple in their content. But there was no guarantee that they were not faked and had not been planted. By this time, popular feeling had been whipped up to such an extent that no one was prepared to take them at their face value. On the contrary, the stories that gained currency did credit to the imagination. One such story was that Bhalchand had brought seven lacs of rupees with him from home, wishing to build a temple at Varanasi, but that Uma Shankar Pande and the local Police had got him murdered along with the rest of his family and had shared the money between them.

Luckily, Bhalchand's papers, recovered from his lodging at Varanasi, gave a clue to his home address, which was Nursery Garden, P.O. Ubali, Nagpur. They also gave a clue to the identity of all the seven persons found dead, namely (1) Bhalchand Bapu Rao Patel aged 45, the head of the family, (2) Sita Bai aged 34, wife, (3) Ganga Bai aged 20, daughter,

- (4) Suman Bai aged 18, daughter, (5) Uda Ram aged 13, son, (6) Reoti aged 11, daughter, (7) Sripal aged 7, son.

Enquiries at Varanasi disclosed that the youngest child of the family, Pushpa, a girl aged 2, had died on the 15th March. Following this event, Bhalchand had bought for his wife and three surviving daughters four sarees for Rs. 305 and four blouses for Rs. 80. Subsequently, on the 17th clad in their new clothes, they had left the house of Uma Shankar saying that they were off to Vindhyachal for three or four days. Then they had hired the boat of Baddu Mallah at Mirghat.

What Bhalchand and his family did after this must, unfortunately, for ever remain mostly a matter of conjecture. But the fact that they had taken with them their Puja accessories, which were later found scattered on the boat, would go to show that they presumably spent a considerable part of their time over it.

Here is the statement of Baddu Mallah, in his own words :

At about 3 in the afternoon of the 17th March, the seven Yatris boarded my *bajra* (big boat) at Mirghat. They had with them one small tin box, one bucket, one tiffin carrier and one *lota*, among other things. When the *bajra* reached Tulsighat, the leader of the party asked me to anchor it in midstream. There they built an image of Mahadeo in sand, intending to do its worship and asked me to go back to Tulsighat and wait there till I was called. I left in a dingy and later at 7-30 or 8 p.m., when no one called me from the *bajra*, I went over to see what the matter was. Great indeed was my surprise to find all the Yatris lying dead. I precipitately left the *bajra* where it was and returned to my house in Mirghat. I then went to Uma Shanker Pande to consult him. Thereafter, under his advice, I took his servant, Bhola, and another man, Moti Ahir, back with me to the *bajra*. We then rowed it towards Ramanagar, on the opposite side of the river. A little removed from Ramanagar Fort, where it was quite lonely, we took out the bodies of all the seven pilgrims from inside the *bajra* and placed them on the wooden platform in front. We then tied their waists, each to each, with a rope and having done this, we filled the tin box and the utensils with sand before tying them to the bodies, to serve as weights.

Finally, we threw all of them overboard, along with their clothes and other belongings. I acted in this way, for fear I might otherwise be in for trouble and possibly be charged with murder.

The big question now was, whether Baddu was telling the truth or not.

Let us now switch over to Nagpur, the home town of Bhalchand where some interesting documents left behind by him were seized by the Police. These, coupled with the result of enquiries made into his early life, threw a flood of light on the working of his mind and explained much of what would otherwise have still remained a mystery.

Bhalchand, it came to be known, was left an orphan at a tender age. He was brought up by a grand aunt and after her death inherited her property. He spent a year at Ujjain and another at Varanasi in an endeavour to get through the School Final Examination, but without any success. One of the subjects he offered for this examination was Freehand and Model Drawing. While at Ujjain and again at Varanasi he developed a keen interest in religion. This allegedly took an increasingly strong hold on him as he grew older, for he was known to devote most of his time to the study of religious books. He was even heard talking of higher regions and the world beyond. By and by, he lost all interest in life or in the people around him, excepting his wife and children to whom he was much devoted. In the year 1945, he married off his two elder daughters, Ganga Bai and Suman Bai.

Being a firm believer in Ahimsa (non-violence), Bhalchand had a profound regard for Mahatma Gandhi. As a result, therefore, of the Mahatma's assassination in January 1948, he was said to have lost his mental balance for some time and behaved like a mad man. For instance, on the occasion of the symbolical cremation ceremony of Mahatma Gandhi organised by Bhalchand's village people on the bank of the Chandra Bhadra, he insisted on burning a photograph of the Mahatma and was prevented from doing so with much difficulty. At this time, his brother-in-law, finding something wrong with his mental condition, took him to a medical man,

Dr. Patwardhan who, besides prescribing a medicine for him, advised a change of air. But after this, even though he became apparently all right, a wall of misunderstanding grew up between him and the rest of his village folk, compelling him completely to withdraw into himself.

Gradually Bhalchand's financial position got from bad to worse, with the result that he was compelled to live on his capital.

Towards the end of 1950, he developed a strong desire to go on a pilgrimage along with his entire family. He gave an indication of this to his brothers-in-law, Narain Rai and Dhanna Lal, but kept the exact date of departure a secret from them. Not having sufficient money with him to defray the expenses of his projected journey, he let out some of his land on lease and thus managed to scrape together a sum of Rs. 2015/- before his departure.

Before setting out Bhalchand also fetched his two married daughters, Ganga Bai and Suman Bai, from their respective dwelling places.

The party, that is, Bhalchand, his wife and children left Nagpur on the 4th March and arrived the next day at Allahabad, where they spent from 5 to 6 hundred rupees on Puja and on feeding some 50 to 60 Brahmins. Next, they moved to Varanasi where the condition of Pushpa, the youngest daughter of the family, who had been ailing for some time, became critical, finally culminating in her death on the 15th. All that took place after this is already known to us.

The post mortem report in this case proved death by drowning, while the Chemical Examiner's report on the viscera of the deceased, testified to the presence of some irritant poison in them. Therefore, the only inference possible which, incidentally, confirmed the statement of Baddu Mallah—was that while the deceased had been still under the influence of some poison, their bodies were thrown into the river in the belief that they were dead. But one would ask, 'How did these persons come to be under the influence of some poison? Did they take it of their free will, or was it administered to them?'

That it was not a case of murder for gain was established from the fact that all the belongings of the deceased, including the trinkets worn by the female members of the family, were found intact. Likewise, there was nothing to show that they had been put to death on account of some other motive. Obviously, therefore, one of the two things happened, namely, either that all the deceased took the poison of their own accord or that it was administered by one of them.

But it was inconceivable that either of the two married daughters of Bhalchand, one of whom, besides, happened to be in the family way, or any of the three minor children or, for that matter, his wife, Sita Bai, would give up their lives for nothing or be party to an act that was nothing short of murder.

And now, we come to certain documents belonging to Bhalchand which were recovered from a tin box left behind by him at Nagpur in the charge of his brother-in-law, Ramnand, and which clinched the issues in this case, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Among the contents of the box was a coloured drawing by Bhalchand on a big sheet of paper showing all the seven members of his family immersed in the Ganga at the bottom and having a cord in the form of a circle linking them with the Supreme Being, at the top. A number of jottings over his signature, recording his decisions were to be seen all round this picture. In another drawing the entire family was shown standing by Manikarnikaghat in Varanasi, while in a third, which was dated 30. 1. 51, there was a marginal note saying in English, 'Most Urgent require to act in Ganga, if 'God' agree, within Holi.'

The trend of Bhalchand's mind was also apparent from several other sketches, depicting himself as a restless soul in quest of peace. In one of them, there was a picture of a man on the run who was supposed to be saying '*Prabhu keon daurate hoe?*' '*Prabhu milne me keon der?*' '*Eh kya apka Nyaya hai?*' (O Lord why do you make me run? O Lord, why this delay in our meeting? Is this your justice?)

Similarly Bhalchand's diary, of which he had devoted several pages to the record of his 'Will' bequeathing his entire

property to Ram Mandir and expressing his decision to quit the world along with his wife and children, provided further proof, if proof were needed, of the working of his mind.

In short, Bhalchand's past history, the letters left behind by him in his lodging at Varanasi (which were verified by his brother-in-law Dhanna Lal as being in Bhalchand's handwriting), the numerous entries recorded in his diary, specially the one purporting to be his last testament and, above all, the tell-tale sketches drawn by him, left no room for doubt that the tragedy enacted at Varanasi, was merely the consummation of an idea he had been working out in a cold, calculated manner over a long period of time, in the innermost recesses of his mind. Unobserved by the others, he must have mixed some poison with the sweets he had bought and when the *puja* was over, taken some himself and distributed the rest as *prasad* among his wife and children who ate them quite unsuspectingly. A circumstance that lent further support to this conclusion was that Bhalchand was known to dabble in Ayurvedic medicine and was found to have several phials of poison stored in a box at Nagpur.

But all things considered, the most remarkable feature of the whole affair was how Baddu Mallah and his two companions by throwing into the river the seven seemingly dead bodies, unwittingly carried out to the last letter the very idea that had become an obsession with Bhalchand.

So far, therefore, as the Police were concerned, the mystery of the seven corpses of Varanasi had been fully cleared. But human prejudice, once it is embedded in the mind, is hard to dislodge. Consequently, the man-in-the-street there continued to entertain a strong belief that a third party—most likely the Panda who had played the host to the deceased—had a hand in this affair. He even wrongly accused the Police of being hand-in-glove with the latter. I did my best to remove this false notion from the public mind. With this end in view, I also held a Press Conference at Varanasi attended by most of the local Press representatives. Even so, I must own, the common man there still talks of this case with much mental reservation.



A CLEVER IMPOSTER

ONE morning, while I was on a visit to Kanpur, my Orderly announced a visitor who, he said, wanted to see me on some business. Judging from his looks, his dress and demeanour, I knew the moment I saw the man that he was hunting for a job in the Police. For his part, he simply handed me without a word, an envelope headed 'Government of India' and addressed to me by name.

Inside the envelope, there was a typed note with a letter-head marked Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi and bearing the signature of the then Home Secretary Mr. X at the bottom. It read like this :

'Dear Mr. Lahiri,

The bearer of this letter, Mr. Dixit, is known to me. He seeks his admission to your Police Training School with a view to his appointment as Sub-Inspector of Police. He is a deserving youth, with a good background. I shall be much obliged if you can take him. His application is pending with you.

Sd./—'

Having gone through this letter, I had a few words with its bearer before dismissing him. He informed me that he had approached Mr. X through another highly placed officer who knew Mr. X very well.

It struck me as rather odd that Mr. X should write to me like this, when admissions were made on the basis of a competitive examination. I had, therefore, a lurking suspicion in my mind that the letter I had before me, might be a faked one. All the same, I could not discard it as being forged, particularly in face of the Government of India stationery used in the case and of the signature on it of Mr. X that seemed to tally with the ones I had seen.

For a while, I did not quite know what to do. Then it occurred to me that I should write to Mr. X acknowledging his letter and explaining my difficulty. This, I said to myself,



would serve a dual purpose. For, it would clear my position in case the letter I had with me was genuine and, otherwise, fetch a denial from him, which would only confirm the doubt I had in my mind.

Sure enough, I soon received a reply from Mr. X saying that he did not remember having at all written to me to recommend the person I had mentioned and would like to see the letter in question. Later, when he saw this letter, he declared it to be forged and wanted the man who had brought it to be prosecuted for forgery.

But this, I found, was not going to prove as simple as one would have thought, primarily because I had no idea as to where the man had come from. All I knew was that his surname was Dixit. So the first thing to do was to fix his identity.

Having done some deep thinking in the case, I asked my Assistant, Mr. Sen, to go through all the applications received for admission to the Police Training College and sort out the ones signed by one or other of the numerous Dixits who had applied. But considering that there were some two thousand applications to examine, the task I had set proved to be a stupendous one. At any rate, Mr. Sen was able after some time to pick out as many as twenty eight such applications.

Of those applicants some, it was found, had spelt their surname as Dixit, others as Dikshit and some, again, as Dicksit, the initials, of course, varying in each case. I made a close study of these applications to see if, from any details noted in them, I could spot the man I was after. But try as I might, I was unable to do so. *H*

Any hasty step on my part, I knew, would lead to certain failure. For, the moment the culprit came to know that his bluff had been called, he would take good care to keep himself hidden. And even if he was traced, he was sure to take the plea of never having come to see me, in which event the entire case for the prosecution would depend upon my sole testimony, based upon a brief interview with him, several months previously.

I then had a brain wave. I asked my Assistant to send a

letter to each of the aforesaid twenty-eight candidates, desiring him to report to me for interview with reference to his application. This was a bait impossible for any of them to resist. And, as I had anticipated, before a few days had passed, I had a succession of these candidates, come to see me almost daily.

The situation was not without its humour. Opposite me, there sat the man I had summoned, bursting with a desire to create a favourable impression upon me, while I, for my part, kept busy scanning his face closely merely to determine whether or not he was the man who had come to see me at Kanpur ! //

Most of those that came in response to my summons excited my pity. Nevertheless, I had to send them away with the advice to try their luck again. But what worried me was that there were no signs of the man, I was anxious to rope in.

Meanwhile, some three or four months or more had gone by and I had almost lost all hope of rounding up my quarry when a man, whom I could at once identify as the one I had been looking out for, called on me. It was a case of his walking into my 'parlour'. He said he had come in response to the summons from me, delivered several weeks previously at his home address in his absence. He blamed his mother, an old and illiterate woman, for having failed to redirect it to him at Delhi where, he said, he was working as a clerk in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

It was not difficult to see now, how this man had taken advantage of his position to forge a letter from the Home Secretary to me. Yet, in order not to frighten him, I put him a few polite questions. Thereafter, I asked him to write out an application in his own hand which he did with alacrity, little realizing that my only idea behind this request was to obtain a fresh specimen of his handwriting for comparison with his original application. Thus having secured this further piece of material evidence against him, I declared that he was an imposter and hence I was under the painful necessity of having to arrest him. On his part, he swore blue that the letter he had brought was not forged. His denial, however,



Leaves from A Policeman's Diary **CSL**

proved to be of no avail to him and he was ultimately sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for six months, a punishment that was by no means excessive for the type of offence he had committed.



ALL FOR LOVE

THOSE who were accustomed to take a morning walk in Hamirpur, a small town in Uttar Pradesh, had the shock of their lives when one day they discovered five corpses, three of boys and two of girls, lying unattended on the bank of the Jamuna that flows past this town. News of this most unusual find spread through the town like wild fire and the townsfolk, young and old, flocked to the scene in their hundreds. Soon enough, the bodies were identified as those of Kumari Sarda, Kumari Swatantrata, Prakash Chandra Dixit, Ram Narain Gupta and Sri Prakash, all the five being residents of Hamirpur.

A remarkable thing about the bodies was that they lay arranged more or less in the form of a Swastika, their relative position being roughly like this: Kumari Sarda lay to the right of Prakash Chandra with her head resting on his shoulder, Ram Narain lay at the feet of Prakash Chandra with Kumari Swatantrata's head resting on his thigh, while Sri Prakash lay with his head resting on the feet of Kumari Swatantrata.

The deceased, it was noticed, were well dressed, the girls with their hair neatly parted and done to perfection, their sarees drawn right down to their ankles and having no creases at all. Lying near the bodies were torn pieces of a letter written in Hindi, a glass tube with some white powder in it, a cork, a tin cover, a handkerchief, some sweetmeats, three small bundles and a picture of Lord Krishna. In addition, some vomited matter lay near the bodies of Sarda, Swatantrata, Prakash Chandra and Sri Prakash. A few footprints, apparently from the shoes of the two girls, were also to be seen there. There were, on the other hand, no marks of injury on the person of any of the deceased nor were there signs of any struggle on the ground.

The mystery that confronted the Police was whether it was a case of murder or of suicide. The first reaction in the minds of the local public was that the father of the two girls, being

anxious to save himself from disgrace arising from their amours, had the murders committed in a cold and calculated manner. Some went even to the extent of saying that he had gone to fetch some strong poison and had returned with a phial of potassium cyanide to be administered to the deceased.

At one time as a result of this popular resentment against him, the father of the girls came to be the most maligned man of Hamirpur. Apart from a regular campaign of vilification launched against him in the local yellow press, numerous petitions were addressed to Government for a thorough enquiry being instituted into the case by the C.I.D. A thing that helped to fan the fire of this agitation was bad blood against him due to certain recent elections in which he had taken an active part on one side.

Unfortunately, the Police had no direct evidence to go upon. But, there was no denying that this case presented some features that were tell tale. In the first place, the total absence of any signs of struggle on the spot where the bodies were found, was a strong indication of the fact that there had been no foul play. There was also reason to believe that all the five used at one time to go to the same school where Sarda developed a liking for Prakash Chandra and Swatantrata for Ram Narain. As time passed, this friendship ripened into love in which they were helped by a boy named Prem, who was obliging enough to act as a go-between. The father of the girls got wind of this and set out to find a match for each of them. This apparently made the lovers all the more desperate and enter into a solemn pact to put an end to their lives in case their friendship was threatened in any way. Sri Prakash, who happened to be deeply attached to them was believed to have joined this pact, of his free will, having come to the conclusion that he would much rather die along with the rest of them, than live to mourn their loss. About this time, while the father of the girls was away, one of his trusted men chanced to see them moving about freely in the bazaar in company with their boy friends. Upon this, besides scolding them for their misconduct, he threatened to report them to their father on his return. This only aggravated the situation and con-

sequently, when the latter returned home with the tidings that he had fixed up the marriage of both the girls, they made up their mind to put into practice the decision they had already taken. It was thus that, by previous arrangement, the two girls and the three boys, fore-gathered on the bank of the Jamuna at the dead of night and sacrificed their lives at the altar of love.

A letter addressed by Prakash Chandra to Sarda whose pet name was Banno further elucidated the mystery in this case. This is how it ran :

Bannoji,

This morning I met the Punjabi photographer on my way back from Kanyakubj College. He told me that I should first obtain permission from the Deputy Commissioner. But I propose to go to his house again in the evening and try to bring him round. This may do the trick and he may give me the stuff.

—Prakash Chandra

The photographer mentioned in this letter proved to be one Hira Lal Talwar of Kanpur. He gave out that Prakash Chandra had been his regular customer and had lately been asking him for some potassium cyanide, which he had refused to supply. How far Hira Lal's statement about his refusal to oblige Prakash Chandra is to be believed is anybody's guess. But, as for the rest of his statement, there could be no reason to disbelieve it. The Chemical Examiner's report also established death by cyanide poisoning of all the five unfortunate victims in this case.

Thus, there was no room left for doubt that this was a case of suicide, pure and simple. But all said and done, the fact remains that its sad memory still haunts the minds of the people residing in the small, out-of-the-way town of Hamirpur.

...

...

...

To turn to another like tragedy that is still remembered somewhat quizzically, this is how it came to pass.

'The Rani is dying. Come at once.' Such was the

message conveyed over the phone one evening from Rudrapur to Dr. Martin, the local Civil Surgeon. He dashed off immediately in his car to the Rani's place only to find her sinking fast, so that in spite of all his ministrations, she passed away soon after.

The Rani's death, sudden as it was, cast a gloom over the entire town of Rudrapur, for she had been a pious lady who, ever since the death of her husband, had been in the habit of distributing her benefactions with a free hand. She had also collected round herself numerous hangers-on who had particular reason to grieve over her death. The foremost among them was an old Munim in whom she reposed the utmost trust and who enjoyed a privileged position in her household.

The tragedy of it was that the Rani had died an unnatural death. She had been undergoing treatment for some ailment and her doctor had prescribed two mixtures for her, one pink and the other pale yellow. These were to be given alternately, at intervals of four hours. On the evening in question, she was due to take the pink mixture at about eight. As it was poured into her mouth by a nephew of hers, she let out a piercing cry and complained of a burning sensation all inside her. An examination of the phial containing this mixture revealed that she had swallowed a strong liniment—intended for external application—which her Munim had that very morning obtained for himself from the Medical Officer there. But the Munim swore that he had kept it in a shelf in the Rani's room, quite removed from the one in which the two phials containing her medicines were kept. This was also quite believable. But it was difficult to comprehend how this phial came to be substituted for the one containing the pink mixture and how the pink mixture phial came to be placed in the shelf where the liniment should have been.

Did the nephew deliberately give her the wrong medicine? But this was not possible when the Rani's death meant utter ruin for him. For similar reasons any complicity on the part of the Munim was also ruled out.

Who then could be the person responsible for this substitution? Numerous stories were bandied about, laying the

blame at the door of this person or that. But the one that gained the most publicity and some credence also, was that the substitution had been done at the instance of the one and only person who stood to gain by the Rani's premature death.

The Rani had no direct descendants. After her death the estate was due to pass on to a person in whom she was not the least interested. In fact, there was no love lost between the two and they not only lived separately, but also saw little of each other.

The question was how could it be at all possible for some one ill-disposed towards her, to walk into the Rani's apartments, guarded as she always remained by people of her own choice? But supposing some one in secret alliance with the other party did have free access into the Rani's apartments, yet he could not possibly have known beforehand that the Munim was going to obtain a liniment for his use on the fateful day.

That someone was responsible for substitution of the bottle containing the liniment, for the bottle containing the red mixture, could not admit of any doubt in the circumstances of the case. But who it was remains a mystery to this day and so does the question as to whether he did it accidentally or deliberately. One thing about which there can be no two opinions is that in case this substitution was done deliberately, then the person who did it deserves to be credited with a master mind without a parallel.



DEPARTED GLORIES

WITH its towers and its turrets, its spires and its pinnacles, the little old world township of Datia (now in Rajasthan) cannot fail to attract the notice of all those who may have occasion to pass through it by rail. This was true, at least in my case, resulting in a strong desire being planted in my mind long ago to pay it a visit at the first opportunity. Fortunately for me, I had this opportunity towards the end of February 1949, when I was to go by road from Jhansi to Agra and my route lay through this place. Those were the days when Datia was still ruled by an Indian Prince, although its integration with Rajasthan was in the offing.

Mine was intended to be a purely informal visit and so I had no plan to meet the Maharajah. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when on the eve of my departure from Jhansi, I received an invitation from His Highness to lunch with him. This was handed to me by one of his A.D.C.s who had come for the purpose, all the way from Datia on a motor bike. Typed on a crackling handmade note paper, almost a quarter of an inch thick, with the Maharajah's personal crest at the top and placed inside a large-sized cover to match, the epistle seemed to proclaim the very distinguished position held by its sender.

Like many a city of ancient India, Datia has a massive stone wall encircling it, with stupendous gateways at all points of entry into it; gateways that are reminiscent of the Middle Ages when they had to be made sufficiently strong to withstand an attack. Like all the others, the one by which I entered the city had its massive panels studded with large-sized iron studs, designed to provide an effective foil against battering elephants of the olden days. On the other side of this gateway stood a batch of policemen, drawn up by the side of the road for my inspection. Dressed in their indifferent raiments and carrying arms that were pre-historic they looked rather comic to me. Nevertheless, I played my part as best I could.

and, having done so, proceeded in the direction of the Maharajah's garden house where he was residing at the time. The Maharajah, I was told, preferred to stay there in solitary glory, separately from his two Maharanis, the senior one and the junior one, who flourished, each in exclusive possession of a castle on a hill-top.

As my car sped on its way, it seemed to me as though I had been transplanted to quite another part of the world. There were hills on both sides of the road, some big, some small, some far, some near. But the one thing that was common to them all was that they were, almost without exception, crowned by some edifice or other—whether in the shape of a fortress or of a temple—that looked like a diadem and heightened their beauty. In between, lay open country, for the most part rocky and stretching as far as the eye could see. A tree here and a tree there stood like a lonely sentinel, thus giving a pictorial effect to the entire landscape. And as if to add to this effect, herds of cattle were to be seen dotted all over and browsing lazily on whatever little vegetation grew there. Even the population looked different, the men in their large turbans of variegated colours tied in the Rajasthani style and the women in their gay skirts with bits of glass stuck in them by way of decoration. Above all, the whole place seemed to have a carefree air hard to find elsewhere in these days of hurry and bustle.

My arrival at the Maharajah's garden house was heralded by a bugle call. Then came the command, 'Guard Turn Out', upon which His Highness' personal guard turned out to 'Present Arms' to me. This, I thought, was a rare compliment paid to a visiting Policeman from across the border. But I could see that not only were the local officials anxious to accord me a right royal welcome but that the entire population felt likewise. This was evidenced by the men, women and children in their colourful dresses, lining the street leading to the Maharajah's garden house. Having inspected the Guard, I went over to the spot where His Highness the Maharajah, along with a few of his top Sardars, stood to receive me. Attired in their formal garments, they looked very impressive

indeed, if somewhat stiff. But the most impressive figure among them all was that of the Maharajah himself, who, in spite of his old age and his infirmity, looked every inch a Prince.

Introductions over, the Maharajah conducted me to his parlour—a room of enormous proportions—and made me sit by his side on a settee, facing the rest of the party. My notice was at once attracted by the numerous paintings that adorned the walls all round, a majority of them depicting various scenes with H. H. as the central figure. Among them there was one of a Dussehra procession that struck me as the most colourful of all, with the Maharajah seated on a gaily caparisoned elephant at the head of the procession and looking resplendent in his durbar dress.

My conversation with the Maharajah was a purely formal affair, neither of us having anything particular to discuss. But from certain remarks addressed to his courtiers by him, I could discern that his somewhat exaggerated notion of and high regard for me stemmed from the fact that I was a senior officer hailing from a territory that he insisted on calling 'British', although its governance had long since passed over to the 'natives' of the country. This only went to show that the Maharajah still lived in the past, which was indeed pathetic.

Of the buildings I visited, one was the old Fort that looked magnificent from a distance, astride a hill top. It was here that the senior Maharani lived in solitary glory with her retinue. Inside the Fort there was an Armoury, stacked with an impressive collection of weapons of attack and defence, mostly obsolete. Among them were to be seen broadswords, cutlasses, scimitars, battle axes, matchlocks, blunderbusses, muzzleloaders, as well as steel helmets, shields, gauntlets, halberds, vizors, breast-plates, etc.

Another show place here was the Durbar hall. On its walls there were heads of bison and other big game shot by the Maharajah in his younger days, while hung on a stand, immediately behind the throne, there was a yellow silk scroll nine to ten feet long, betokening award of the title of G.C.S.I. to him by Her Imperial Majesty, Queen Victoria, of hallowed

memory.

I was very much impressed by all the things I saw in this hall. But one and all—the silk scroll with its letters of gold, the empty throne with a canopy over it, the massive cut glass chandelier hanging from the ceiling, the trophies on the walls, even the costly furniture, covered as they were with a thin layer of dust—seemed to proclaim the glory that was now gone!

By the time I returned to the Maharajah's garden house after my sight-seeing it was time for lunch. This was served in the Indian style, the vessels used being of shining silver. Lunch over, we adjourned to the parlour, where the Maharajah ceremoniously offered me *pan*. I accepted it with a bow and then, as I was preparing to take leave, a man came and said something to him in a whisper. What the man meant to convey was that all was now set for a group photograph being taken. This, again, appeared to form part of a ritual that had to be gone through every time the Maharajah had a guest. As was customary on an occasion like this, the Maharajah sat in the centre of the group, while I sat on his right. In front of us, there was a lotus pond looking its best. Thereafter, when everybody else had been seated properly, each according to his status, click went the shutter of the camera and this brought the proceedings to a close.

...

...

...

From Datia, I drove to Dholpur, another Princely State, where I had arranged to make a brief halt on my way to Agra. My meeting with the Maharajah was fixed for the next morning at 11. So I spent the night in the State Guest House. The Maharajah, incidentally, did not live in the old Palace in the city, but in another one, built some ten miles away in the heart of a forest. This, I was told, was because he was fond of watching wild game in their natural habitat.

Early next morning, I decided to go for a drive through the State forest, having nothing better to do till 11. This was most enjoyable, with lovely trees of different hues lining the road on both sides of me and a gentle breeze that carried with

it all the aroma of the forest blowing in my face. Indeed, there are few delights to equal a jaunt through a forest in spring time when it is at its best.

Interested as the Maharajah was in jungle lore, he had, every few miles inside the jungle, a rest house that served as a grand stand to watch wild game from. Each of them had outside its fencing a water hole and a salt lick by way of a standing invitation to the fauna of the forest to come and have a drink or a lick.

Deep in the forest is a magnificent edifice, known as Khas Talab, built of red sandstone and dating from the time of Emperor Jehangir. This was where the Emperor went for rest whenever he felt inclined to do so. Being situated within close range of Agra it suited him admirably. On my way to this place, I passed a Buick car, driven by the Maharajah himself who, I was told, made it a practice every morning to drive singly to some select spot in the jungle, to say his prayers in seclusion. This done, he would sound the hooter of his car which acted as a signal for the wild game all around, tigers and leopards excepted, to come trotting, to feed off the palm of his hand. What a lovely thing to contemplate. A staunch believer in non-violence, the Maharajah had prohibited shooting in his jungles and this was why they felt encouraged to come to him unhesitatingly.

The Khas Talab looked like a dream come true. Flanked by forests on all sides and overlooking an artificial tank of enormous proportions, it was, on the face of it, the product of a master mind. Its very size, its architectural style, its proportions and its workmanship spoke of an opulence for which the Moghal Emperors were famous the world over. With only a solitary caretaker to look after this palatial building situated in a wilderness, it looked haunted, though it brought to one's mind a vivid picture of the days when it had been in the height of its glory, when its halls and its passages had echoed to the strains of music, the peals of laughter and the sound of human footsteps.

Coming to our own times, it was in one of the rooms of this building that H. R. H. Prince Edward had stayed during

DEPARTED GLORIES

the course of a shikar trip in 1922, while out on a visit to India. The room is still there, kept intact for anyone to see.

In another room are to be seen markings from gun shot fired at close range. The story goes that once upon a time a tigress had taken shelter under a staircase in this room to drop her cubs there. The caretaker had unwittingly come upon her, whereupon she had given vent to her feelings by a loud growl. He had then fetched his gun to fire at her. But instead of hitting the tigress, he had hit the wall. Fortunately for him, this had made the tigress take to her heels.

My appointment with the Maharajah being fixed for 11 in the morning, I hurried to his Palace-in-the-forest to meet him on time. In its sylvan surroundings, with a high iron palisade encircling it, by way of a protection against the intrusion of wild animals, it struck me as unique in its conception. Imagine waking up in the morning to the chirping of birds and going to sleep at night to the sound of other denizens of the forest calling to one another. This is what the Maharajah loved to do and one may be sure he was able to indulge his fancy to the full.

On my arrival, the Maharajah's Private Secretary ushered me into the room where the Maharajah was seated. At the entrance to this room, a dwarf, barely three feet in height, stood guarding it. In his turn-out of green picked out with yellow, he looked like a clown. I could not make out what he was there for, unless it was His Highness' idea to excite the mirth of his visitors.

The room in which I found myself was a spacious one with a marble floor and very well appointed. In front of the Maharajah lay an occasional table on which there was a chess board with pieces made of solid gold. Dressed simply in a *dhoti* and *kurta*, he had a quiet dignity about him that distinguished him from most others of his fraternity. I had been told that the Maharajah was an erudite scholar of Sanskrit, one who had made a special study of the *Geeta* and I could see that he was not only a master of Sanskrit but also of English, which he spoke beautifully.

Our conversation turned on Freddie Young of the Indian



Police whom the Maharajah knew very well and treated as his friend. From Freddie he passed on to Bramley, another officer of the Indian Police who used to be Superintendent of Police, Varanasi, at one time. The Maharajah related how Bramley had been specially selected to act as an equerry to King George when the latter visited India in 1911. It was, in fact, interesting to listen to the Maharajah's account of what had passed at Varanasi when the King had gone there. According to the Maharajah, Bramley told the King to come with him quietly at night, if he wished to see real India. So, one evening King George went out on the quiet with Bramley who took him through the alleys of Varanasi to where Swami Bhaskaranand, a renowned Yogi of the time, was to be found. The Yogi, a wizened-looking old man who sat there without a shred of cloth on his person, on seeing the two, said to Bramley, whom he knew very well, '*Beta, yeh tu kisko laya hai*' (Son, whom have you brought with you?) Bramley said in reply, '*Baba, yah Shahanshah Badshah hain*' (Father, this is the King Emperor). Upon this the Yogi recited a sloka (verse) in Sanskrit in praise of God Almighty and laid himself flat at the feet of King George, whereby he meant to convey that he saw the Supreme Being in the person before him. King George, it is believed, was much impressed by the piety of this Yogi and went away quietly after a while.

The Maharajah also related a conversation between Lord Curzon and Swami Premanand and how the latter was able to convince Lord Curzon of the futility of things material.

I had an hour's very interesting talk with the Maharajah and before I left he extended an invitation to me to come again and stay with him when, he said, he would show me round his jungles and give me an ocular demonstration of how some of the wild game living therein, such as Sambhar and Cheetal, were accustomed to respond to his call and feed off the palm of his hand.

I regret very much that I was not able to avail myself of the invitation extended by the Maharajah, in spite of a keen desire to do so. And now that he is no more and his State



DEPARTED GLORIES

CSL

has merged in Rajasthan, I have lost my chance for ever. Like the Maharajah of Dholpur, the Maharajah of Datia also has passed away. Each, in his own way, represented a type and the pity of it is that one is not likely to come across the like of them any more.

NAINITAL BANK DACOITY

SQU-A-A-AD Halt ! R-r-r-i-ght Turn ! Take posts ! These were the words of command, as a party of men, numbering eleven—all, except one, dressed in olive green uniform and holding their rifles at the slope—drew up in regular formation, in front of an unimpressive looking building in the heart of Ramnagar, a Sub-divisional town in Nainital District, at 7-30 or so, on the evening of June 11, 1951. Most of the inhabitants of the township had by then gone indoors. Others who still moved about, mistook these men for the Police or for members of an enforcement staff come to make a raid of some kind. So they went their way, leaving the coast clear for the men who had just arrived.

Nestling in the foothills of the Himalayas, Ramnagar is a town of no small importance, being a trading centre for goods passing into the vast hilly regions beyond, as also for goods passing out of this region, to be absorbed in the plains below. Connected by road with Ranikhet on one side and Kashipur on the other, it has a Tahsil building, a Police Station and a Post Office. But the thing that gives it some distinction is a branch of the Nainital Bank, housed in the very building outside which the squad in military uniform came to an abrupt halt.

Visitors to Ramnagar would be struck by its scenic beauty. With the wooded hills in their pastel shades for a back drop, and the blue crystal-clear water of the Kosi flowing on the other side of it, it makes an ideal spot for a visit at any time of the year, excepting the rains.

Immediately after coming to a halt, the party of men in question, split into two sections. The man in plain clothes and four others went up to the first floor of the building where the Bank was situated, leaving the rest to take up position, two on each side of the building and two at the foot of the staircase leading to the Bank. The Manager of the Bank, Lila Dhar Joshi, was doing *puja* at the time in his *puja* room.

This was also in the first floor, separated from the Bank Manager's Office room by a '*dalan*'. His two sons, Mohan Chandra and Jeewan Chandra, were in the living room on the second floor along with the Bank Chaprasi Tripurari Dutt, while his boy servant, Bhurdev, was busy in the kitchen on the first floor.

As for the subsequent happenings, this is what Lila Dhar Joshi had to say about them :

On 11. 6. 61 at about 7-30 p.m. I was sitting in my *puja* room. From the staircase some one called out, 'Manager Saheb ! Manager Saheb !' Then I saw coming up to the *dalan* in front of the *puja* room, five men whom I took for ordinary visitors. Meanwhile, my Chaprasi, Tripurari Dutt, came down from the second floor, to receive them. One of those men promptly pushed him into the kitchen and shut him up in it, along with my boy servant Bhurdev. The other four came into the *puja* room and caught hold of me. Of these, one flashed a torch into my eyes, another pressed a bayonet end against my chest, while each of the other two pointed a revolver at my head. The man with the bayonet said, 'Bring the keys of the Bank.' I begged to be allowed to finish my *puja*. To this they turned a deaf ear. They next felt my pockets and took out my bunch of keys. After this, they dragged me into my office room in which there was a wall almirah. This they told me to open which I did out of fear. In it were the keys of the iron safes. One man took them out and then they dragged me into the strong room and made me open the safes. Two of the raiders took out from them all the cash and valuables and put them into two kit bags. Finally, they brought me into the *dalan*, before pushing me into the kitchen and locking me up, along with Tripurari Dutt and Bhurdev. After they had left, Tripurari Dutt broke the expanded metal netting of the kitchen door to let Bhurdev out. Next he himself scrambled out through the same opening.

Bhurdev and my sons Mohan Chandra and Jeewan Chandra thereafter raised an alarm which drew a crowd. I remained locked in the kitchen, because some people said I must continue to stay there till the Magistrate arrived and saw all that had passed. He came at about 1-30 and got me



out.

Next day when I prepared an inventory of the looted property, I found that the loss amounted to Rs. 1,06,000/- in cash and Rs. 2,60,625/- in valuables pledged with the Bank against cash loans.

After commission of the dacoity, for this is what it was, the five men came down to the ground floor. One of them flashed a green light upon which the rest of the party, who had been on guard below, joined them to march off, again in military formation, to a spot outside the local Higher Secondary School where they had parked a bullock cart. Just then, one, Leela Dhar, happened to arrive there. He saw one of the men setting fire to the cart and on his protesting against this wanton act of incendiarism, they gave him a blow, thus knocking him down. He then rushed off to the Police Station to make a report of the incident, while the dacoits marched off towards the bank of the Kosi and thence to a Command car they had left parked on the Ramnagar-Kashipur road.

Meanwhile, news of the Bank having been looted had spread through the town and had reached the Police Station. The Station Officer, Sub-Inspector Kali Prasad, lost no time in first visiting the Bank and then organising a chase after the culprits. He also went to the local Post Office to send a telephonic message to Kashipur, in order to have them intercepted on the way. Luck was against him, for he found the telephone and telegraph lines to Kashipur out of order, the time being around 8-30 in the evening. So he hurriedly set out for this place by a truck, arriving there at about 10. The first thing he did after this, was to send telegraphic messages all round, for a sharp lookout being kept for the culprits. His next step was to inform the Sub-Divisional Officer, Kashipur, of the occurrence and to fetch him to Ramnagar, where they arrived at about 1-30 in the morning.

The S.D.O., Sri Uma Shankar Rawat, found the Bank Manager, Lila Dhar Joshi, still locked up in his kitchen and had him taken out. The latter told him of all that had passed and took him to the strong room where he found the safes

MAINITAL BANK DACOITY

ajar and rifled of their contents. Then he went to the spot where there was a partly burnt bullock cart still standing on the roadside.

This bullock cart, it soon came to be known, was owned by Bagga Singh and Raja Ram Tewari of Village Umedpur close to Ramnagar, who jointly ran a farm there. A number of residents of the locality had no difficulty in identifying it. Nor had they any difficulty in identifying its two bullocks, one white and the other brown, who had run home from Ramnagar, at the first opportunity. Certain employees of the farm even gave out that some Punjabis had been staying with Bagga Singh and Raja Ram till the afternoon of the 11th June when they had all left along with this bullock cart, having first placed in it a number of guns and some military uniforms under a heap of straw. They further stated that of the two bullocks the white one being a vicious animal, those Punjabis had lopped off his horns before yoking him.

All attention was now focussed on Umedpur. But there was no trace to be had of Bagga Singh or Raja Ram Tewari, who had taken to flight, directly after commission of the dacoity. One Dalip Singh, a young man of village Karampur in Ramnagar, who had been recruited to the Lal Communist Party by Teja Singh Swatantra, disclosed having seen, before the occurrence, a number of party members at Umedpur, hobnobbing with Bagga Singh and Raja Ram Tewari. Inspector Jasodh Singh carried out a search of their house and took into possession among other things, a few iron nails 4" long, one hack saw, two pieces of horns, one bamboo pole of 8 knots and another of 5½ cubits.

In the meantime, it came to be known that the Government and the Railway telegraph wires at pole 45/13 had been cut and left hanging. But this was not all; for, on arrival at the spot on the afternoon of June 12, Lineman Hirday Narain found, resting on the pole, a bamboo ladder that had obviously been used for scaling it. He took it into his possession and brought it to Kashipur where he handed it over to the Police who, in their turn, had it sent to Ramnagar on the 13th evening.

One cross bar of this ladder, it was seen, had been cut with a saw and when this cut end was compared with the cut end of the bamboo recovered from the house of Bagga Singh at Umedpur, the two were found to match, proving thereby that both the pieces had formed part of one and the same bamboo. This was further corroborated by the statement of Shyam Narain Sharma, an officer of the Forensic Section of the C.I.D. who deposed as follows :

When the two cut pieces of the bamboo were put together, I found that they matched each other, also that their cross-sections corresponded to and coincided with each other. Another thing I noticed was that there was a continuous mark on both where the original bamboo surface had been damaged by white ants. Photos marked p 529 and p 530 show the continuity of these marks, while photos marked p 531 and p 532 show that the arrangement of internal fibres of the two cut ends is similar.

Sri Shyam Narain also compared the iron nails taken into possession from Bagga Singh's house, with six other nails pulled out of the ladder found resting on the telegraph pole at Mile 45/13 and his observations in that connection are as follows :

On an examination under the microscope, I found similar marks on their heads, necks and bodies. Every nail-manufacturing factory has its own identifying marks on every nail manufactured by it. Exhibits p 527 and p 528 are photos of these nails. They show some of the points of similarity. The similarity of the markings on the heads of the nails is visible to the naked eye also.

Another valuable clue to this case was supplied by a yellow Command car which had been seen moving to and fro between Kashipur, Umedpur and Ramnagar during the period between the 4th and the 11th June and had now disappeared mysteriously. It was known to have undergone certain petty repairs at the hands of a tractor mechanic at Kashipur, named Kripal Singh and, what was more, a person named Charu Dutt of Village Kania had even mentally noted its registration number as DLB 7353.

By now two things were clearly established. One was

NAINITAL BANK DACOITY

that Bagga Singh and Raja Ram of village Umedpur, which stood only some four miles away from Ramnagar, had been deeply involved in this case and the other that the yellow Command car, DLB 7353, had a good deal to do with it. At this stage, in view of the serious nature of the case, it was decided, following a conference held by me at Nainital on 19.8.51, that the C.I.D. should take over its investigation which they did.

...

...

...

Now, over to Delhi: Enquiries in the Transport Office there revealed that the Command car in question had been registered in May 1951 in the name of one Sardha Singh who had given his address as Friends Building, Roshanara Road, Delhi. This brings us to certain interesting disclosures made by one Satyanand Tandon, a dealer in spare motor parts who had his shop in this building. He said :

I came to know Sardar Kartar Singh, a worker of the Red Communist Party, about the middle of 1948. Early in 1949 he introduced me to Chajju Ram with whom I became very friendly in course of time. He was then working as leader of the party in Delhi. Both he and Kartar Singh supplied me with literature of this Party. They also made me subscribe to the Party funds which, I was told, were intended to aid a peasant revolution. In the middle of May 1951, Chajju Ram brought one Sardha Singh (a worker of the Red Communist Party), saying that the latter wanted to buy a second hand car and I should help him procure one. I gave them information of a car that was selling for Rs. 10,000. But they said they wanted a cheaper one. A few days later, Sardha Singh brought along a car which he said was selling for Rs. 4,000. At his request I had it examined by a mechanic, named Swarn Das. Then he bought it for this sum and had it registered in his name. I last saw the car with Sardha Singh on 31.5.51 when I noticed that it had been given registration number DLB 7353. Sardha Singh said he had got it for transport of milk, mostly on kuccha roads.

It was, again, through Tandon that the entire network of

the Red Communist Party in India with which he had been closely associated came to be known.

On 6. 9. 51 officers of the C.I.D., U.P., raided the secret office of the Party at Timarpur (Delhi) and arrested one Gurbachan Singh Sansara, a leader of the party, wanted from the Punjab. They also recovered from his possession, apart from a large number of secret military pamphlets, a colossal number of Survey maps, some of them printed in Russia, covering most of the bordering tracts in the North West Frontier Province, Kashmir, undivided Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam. Again, on 17. 9. 51 they arrested Surain Singh Khela, another active member of the Party. Both Gurbachan Singh Sansara and Joginder Singh Bedi—still another member of the Party—made a free and full confession throwing a flood of light on the entire range of its activities from its inception.

According to these two men, a meeting of the Communist Party of India was held at Nakodar in Jullundur on the 20th February 1948 at which it was decided to set up a separate party, entitled Red Communist Party Hind Union, to be run on Marxist lines under the leadership of Teja Singh Swatantra. As a sequel to this split, the official Communist Party in the States of Punjab and Pepsu was henceforth called the White Communist Party.

The Red Communist Party had for its object, principally the collection of arms and ammunition, as well as funds for an armed revolution. It had several fronts such as the Kisan front, the Labour front, the Student front, the Press Unit and the Technical Unit. A guerilla squad of trained men, formed under the designation of Central Technical Unit, collected funds by armed action in Gurdaspur district between 1949 and 1951, in pursuance of the Party programme. In January 1951, one of the members of this organisation disclosed its activities to the Punjab Police. Therefore, apprehending trouble, the rest of the members then moved to Delhi. Among the party houses in Delhi one was the Friends' Building in Subzi Mandi, Delhi.

Here let us take up the story, told by Jogendra Singh

Bedi, in his own words :

In the first week of May 1951, there was an extended meeting of the Central Committee. The party required money for the maintenance of whole time workers and for contesting the elections. So, a decision was taken in favour of a big 'money-action' being carried out at Ramnagar. Surain Singh Khela, Teja Singh Swatantra and Sardha Singh bought a Command car for Rs. 4000/-. Sardha Singh also obtained petrol coupons on the pretext of having to go on business to Moradabad, Pilibhit, Khatima and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh where petrol was rationed. Chajju Ram detailed me to fetch Pritha Singh and Kehar Singh from the Punjab. On 8. 6. 51 I met Surain Singh and we two left on Surain Singh's motor bike DLB 3830 for Ramnagar. On the way, beyond Khatauli in Muzaffarnagar, we stopped for the night with a boy named Hari, before crossing the river at Ganga Ghat, the next morning. From there we went to Dhampur, where I put up at a dharamshala with the motor bike, while my companion Surain Singh left for Ramnagar by rail, the same evening.

On 12. 6. 51 after return of Surain Singh to Dhampur, I left for Saharanpur by rail while Kehar Singh, Pritha Singh, Inder Singh Murari and Ranjit (all of whom had come along with Surain Singh Khela to Dhampur after the party action at Ramnagar) left for different stations in the Punjab by rail. Kehar Singh had a bicycle with him which he got booked for Sunam in the Punjab. This bicycle was one of a pair bought at Delhi on 5. 5. 51 from Chopra Cycle Works and despatched to Ramnagar the same day. Surain Singh left for Delhi on his motor bike from Dhampur, while the rest of the party travelled back to Delhi by the Command car, along with the looted property.

The confessing accused Jogendra Singh Bedi, gave out that before setting out for Ramnagar, they had bought a quantity of old horse-shoe rivets with the idea of spreading them on the road to avoid pursuit by another motor vehicle. Another interesting disclosure made by him was that they had a secret printing establishment at Delhi, called the Himalaya Press, to do all the printing for them.

Now to take up the trail of the Command car : It was found to have been booked on the 1st June 1951 ex-Garhmukteshwar to Gajraula across the Ganga on its outward journey to Ramnagar. On the 4th, it was seen undergoing some repairs at Kashipur and on the 8th going, first to Ramnagar and then to Kashipur. Again on the 9th and 10th, it was seen at Kashipur.

There was also evidence to show that it took petrol on the 8th at Ramnagar and again on the 10th at Kashipur in exchange for coupons obtained at Delhi.

Subsequent to commission of the dacoity at Ramnagar on the evening of the 11th, it was noticed on its way back to Delhi, successively at Kashipur, the Raolighat crossing over the Ganga in Bijnore, the Barat bridge over the Krishna in Muzaffarnagar (where it paid a toll of twelve annas), the Kakora Ghat on the Jamuna (where it got stuck in the sand and had to be pulled out with the aid of a pair of bullocks), the Ramlila ground at Meerut where it made a halt and, finally, the petrol pump at Modinagar, where it took some petrol.

On the 16th this car was seen at the stone quarry of Sohan Singh Jogi at Dhaula Kuwan in Delhi where it was painted black to make it unidentifiable. Subsequently, at about 2-30 a.m. on the 21st, a marriage party noticed this car burning on the roadside some 18 miles from Delhi, on the Najafgarh Road. They passed on this information to the local police who had it removed to the Police Station at Najafgarh on the 28th.

...

...

...

Investigation into this case proved to be a long and complicated affair lasting for some eighteen months. At the end of this period the Investigating Officer, Kamla Kant Srivastava, submitted a charge sheet under Sections 395/397/399/120-B IPC read with Section 25 of the Telegraphs Act, against as many as 17 persons. Out of these, 4 including the leader of the Party, Teja Singh Swatantra, were treated as absconders, while Jogendra Singh Bedi was treated as a confessing accused.



Of the balance of 12 available for trial, 10 were sentenced to imprisonment, while Chajju Ram and Hari Singh were acquitted, having been given the benefit of doubt.

In this way, the back of the Lal Communist Party in India was broken and another feather was added to the cap of the C.I.D., U.P.

BASHIR THE BANDIT

DESCENDED from the Rohillas—a warlike race that flourished in and around Rampur after the break-up of the Moghal Empire—the Pathans of Shahjahanpur are a handsome lot. But if they are good looking, they are also inclined to be temperamental and lawless—a trait they appear to have inherited from their forbears. This was, at least, true of Bashir, a bandit of the worst type whose meteoric career gave cause for much anxiety to the U.P. Police, not many years ago. Born in an ordinary Pathan family of this district, he had the misfortune of losing his father at a very early age. Thereafter, his mother being unable to control him, he soon earned for himself a name as a bully and thus cast a spell of terror around him. As time passed, he found an outlet for his energies by organising burglaries and, next, by staging a series of hold-ups, all within a few miles of his residence. Money was no problem with him now and this was the cause of his further downfall in that henceforth he began to live a reckless life, taking much pleasure in dissipations of all kinds.

In 1949, Bashir met a village girl names Sabira, daughter of Jalloo Khan Pathan of his own district and at once decided to marry her. But he had not been married long before he was convicted and sentenced to a term of seven years rigorous imprisonment in a case of dacoity at a Canal Inspection House in the forest area of Shahjahanpur. The person who took the most interest in bringing this case to a successful conclusion in Court, was the Canal Overseer Lakshmi Narayan. Lodged in the Shahjahanpur District Jail, Bashir fretted and fumed till, aided by the Jail Warder whom he had bribed heavily, he managed to contrive his escape. This took place on the 11th of October 1950 and marks the beginning of his career as an outlaw of the first rank who focussed all attention on him for the rest of his days.

The first thing Bashir did after his escape from jail was to rush to the house of his father-in-law Jalloo Khan and demand

the return of Sabira. Jalloo Khan, having meanwhile settled her marriage with another Pathan, named Chotey Shah, did not at all welcome this demand and therefore started to hum and haw. This made Bashir lose his temper and aim his gun at him. Thus overawed by Bashir, Jalloo Khan was compelled to do as he was told and then fade away. On her part, Sabira, being devoted to Bashir, was only too anxious to go back to him and henceforth the two—husband and wife—lived as constant companions till the last day of their lives. Bashir's next move was to go and punish Chotey Shah for his audacity in offering to marry Sabira. Taking a circuitous route, he quietly arrived at this man's village and posted himself outside it to bide his time till he had an opportunity to shoot him dead and thus be even with him !

Placed as he now was, Bashir's only safety lay in taking refuge in the forests that stood immediately to the north of Shahjahanpur and covered a large tract, stretching over a distance of more than two hundred miles. Otherwise, known as the Terai forests, they are all inter-connected and have provided an excellent hide-out for many an Indian Robin Hood, the top place among them in recent times going to Sultana, whose very name struck terror in the hearts of people living in and around these forests. Thick as they are with flora and fauna of all kinds and criss-crossed by streams bearing crystal clear water from sources lost in the mountains above them, they can be fascinating at all times of the day and night. First comes the dawn and with its advent, there is a general awakening marked by the chatter of birds and the voices of other animals. Noontide brings with it a lull, betokening a period of rest for all living things till such time as the sun has passed the meridian, when they are astir once again. Finally, with the arrival of the evening, an atmosphere of peace and quiet settles over the entire region, broken only by an occasional call of a sambhar or a cheetal to indicate the presence nearby of the king of the forest. In this way, every day brings in its train a series of wonderful experiences for those who are there to enjoy them.

Bashir knew of the natural advantages possessed by these

forests and of the cover afforded by them to several men of his profession before him. Instinctively, therefore, along with his spouse, he set his course for them and lived there happily till his death. One feature of these forests is that they are interspersed with large open spaces where a number of agricultural farms have come up; another, that immediately to the south of them there are a number of prosperous villages, all of which provide a happy hunting ground for such as may be disposed to prey upon them. These forests also join the forest area of Nepal to the north of them, the river Sarda marking the boundary line between Nepal and Uttar Pradesh for some distance to the north of Pilibhit and then flowing south-east, leaving large tracts of grassland in between. During the period between October and May, herds of cattle come from far and near, concentrate on these tracts for grazing, thus giving birth to numerous straw huts of small size, put up by the herdsmen in charge of these cattle, as protection against the wind and weather. It was here that Bashir and Sabira found shelter along with some of their henchmen, the staunchest among them being one Rohan Ahir who never left their side. The herdsmen were frightened of Bashir and his gang even more than of the beasts of prey that inhabited these forests. News of the gang's movements was, therefore, hard to get, for the herdsmen knew fully well that they would have to pay heavily for giving it out.

Reports came pouring in at Police Headquarters of the exploits of Bashir in and around the jungles of Kheri, Shahjahanpur, Pilibhit and Nainital. This was indeed very disturbing and arrangement had, therefore, to be made for large scale combing operations being carried out in the affected areas by the State Police. But in the hunt that ensued the advantage lay all on his side, for with his band of merely half a dozen or so picked men, dressed as ordinary villagers, he was free to move from place to place without detection. By day the forest trees gave him and his party welcome shade, while by night they slept either under the open sky in a forest clearing or under some thatch made of leaves. As for food, they were quite well off, for they always carried with them some provi-

BASHIR THE BANDIT

sions which they cooked with the help of fire-wood picked up locally.

Once he found himself reasonably safe from the arms of the law, Bashir's first impulse was to try and avenge himself on Lakshmi Narayan who had shown much interest in his incarceration. His information was that Lakshmi Narain was posted at Village Deoria. So he raided this place only to find that the man had got himself transferred elsewhere. All he got for his pains was a bicycle, a few clothes and some food-stuffs. Next, he met some railway gangmen working on the track in the forest area, who mistook him and his wife for ordinary wayfarers and passed uncomplimentary remarks on them. Not being able to suppress his anger, Bashir at once took out his gun concealed in a blanket and demanded the surrender on pain of death of all the cash they had with them. Thus he managed coolly to collect some Rs. 350/- before clearing off.

This life of adventure combined with romance seemed to suit Sabira very well who by reason of her keen intellect and power of observation proved to be an invaluable ally to her husband. She even took an active part in all his planning and on many an occasion, her unerring instinct came to the rescue of the two. Bashir often carried her on his bicycle and on other occasions she travelled on a pony. But whether she travelled on foot or on a bicycle or on a pony, she was always very cheerful and did not at all seem to mind the rigours of her nomadic life.

Uttar Pradesh has seen many a male bandit of marked notoriety. But Sabira was a woman bandit, the like of whom had rarely been seen. Indeed, many were the stories woven round her during those days and the surprising thing is that they were generally believed to be true. According to some, she was a giant of a woman who went about dressed as a man and did most of the shooting. Others made her out as a modern girl who had been seen driving a sports car in the streets of Lucknow and even shopping in Hazratganj dressed up in jeans, her hair done up in the latest style!

Now followed a sensational incident affecting an influential

zamindar named Bharat Singh of Madho Tanda in Pilibhit District. On the evening of February 9, 1951, he was returning home from his farm in the forest area when suddenly he was accosted by Bashir and two others, who promptly relieved him of his gun and then marched him and his companion off to a spot inside the forest where they had their camp. Here they made him write a letter to his father asking for a sum of Rs. 3000/- being sent as ransom. This letter was carried by Bharat Singh's companion who came back after some hours with the money to secure his master's release. On his return home, Bharat Singh related with some excitement how his captors had been very friendly in their treatment of him and how like a good hostess Sabira had even entertained him to tea and to some songs as well !

This incident, sensational as it was, led to a redoubling of efforts on the part of the Police to track down the gang, with the result that on March 2, a dacoity guard, one of several now detailed under my orders for carrying out a hunt against the offenders, came up against them in a village in Kheri district. Bashir was at the time bathing in a village pond. The guardsmen became suspicious and wanted him to tell them who he was and where he had come from. Sensing danger Bashir and his two companions including Sabira, at once made a bee-line for a nearby sugarcane field. The guardsmen, in their turn, spread themselves out in an attempt to throw a cordon round the field and one of them, a dashing young man, rushed into it to intercept the suspects in their mad flight. Upon this, Sabira snatched away the gun held by her husband and fired, thus killing the young man on the spot. This thoroughly demoralised the guard who withdrew to a safe distance, thus allowing the three to make good their escape.

On another occasion soon after, that is on the 5th April, a Constable on plain clothes duty brought news of the gang hiding in a bush by the side of a rivulet. An attempt was then made to carry out a pincer movement against it. But before one of the two pincers could close in properly, the gang managed to get away, hidden under a heap of freshly cut crop

in a passing bullock cart.

On June 23, Bashir and his gang reached Village Hazara where he first regaled himself with some drink at a liquor shop. After this he enquired who the rich people of the locality were and on being given the name of a certain woman, popularly known as the 'Mahtan' (wife of the headman), sent for her. But as she refused to come, he walked over to her place and asked Rohan Ahir to subject her to torture. 'Mahatan' being an old lady commanding some respect locally, Rohan showed his reluctance to carry out this order, whereupon the party left the village, but not before Bashir had set fire to the Mahatan's house, thus setting off a conflagration that engulfed the entire village. Significantly enough, Rohan was never seen after this occurrence and it was generally believed that he had been shot dead by Bashir for failing to carry out his orders.

On the 10th November next, the gang having been located at a spot on the border of Nepal, a raid was carried out against it in the early hours of the morning. But somehow it got wind of the attack mounted against it and this led to an exchange of fire without any damage to either side. One good thing that came out of this encounter was that the gang left behind it a good deal of booty, including a pony hitherto in the service of Sabira, a SBBL gun, four bundles of looted property, as well as most of its personal effects.

Four days later, the gang made its appearance at the Sultanpur Canal Inspection House, evidently with the idea of replenishing its stock. The only persons present in the premises were the Overseer's wife and his child. On being informed that the Overseer's name was Lakshmi Narayan, Bashir flew into a rage and started ranting and raving with the avowed object of killing the child to avenge himself on the overseer who he said was his sworn enemy. He actually aimed his gun at the boy to carry out his fell purpose. For a brief while, the boy's mother looked on petrified. Then with a mother's love she rushed to save him by clasping him round the body. At this, Sabira intervened and pleaded successfully with Bashir to desist, thus saving mother and son from a cruel end at the hands of her husband.

Leaves from A Policeman's Diary

For some reasons, the gang kept low after this incident till the 29th January next, when it raided a moneylender's house at village Barwa in Police circle Bhira late in the night. This was a double-storeyed house and strongly built, with only one entrance which the money-lender carefully bolted from inside before retiring for the night. When he heard the voice of some one calling out his name he felt suspicious. Bashir assured him that he was from the Police. The money-lender then opened the door but the moment he did so he was overpowered, his DBBL gun was taken away and his house ransacked. From among the villagers who had turned up to offer resistance, two were shot dead.

A few days later, that is, on the 3rd of February, Bashir and his gang appeared outside the house of Mrs. Alexander, an Indian Christian who owned a farm inside the forest in the Pilibhit District. She had, staying with her at the time, her son who was a Major in the Army and a Barrister friend of the family, both of whom had come for a shoot. The gang first woke up their servant who had been asleep in the kitchen and got him to give it some foodstuffs. Then Bashir asked him to wake up Mrs. Alexander. But when she woke up, she refused to let Bashir in. He protested that he had come to seek professional advice from the Barrister. By this time the Army Major and the Barrister had both got up to assemble, gun-in-hand, in the central hall of the house. Bashir coolly stepped forward quite unarmed and said he was prepared to pay the Barrister handsomely if he would agree to defend him in Court. This made the latter come out and no sooner had he done so than Sabira and the rest of the desperadoes, who had been hiding near at hand, pounced upon him and dragged him away. Mrs. Alexander and her son were then compelled to throw open the house, if only to save their guest. And this proved to be an invitation to the gang to clear away with all valuable property in the house, including a number of fire-arms.

This occurrence naturally created a state of panic in the affected area and it was felt that there was a case for an all-out effort being made to remove the cause of it for ever. I,

BASHIR THE BANDIT

therefore, had a conference with the Range Deputy Inspector General of Police, Sri S. C. Misra, and Deputy Inspector General of the Armed Constabulary, Sri Shanti Prasad, at which it was decided that a combing operation designated 'Operation *Aag*' should be carried out under the personal command of Sri Misra. It was so named, because it was intended to develop with the speed of a forest fire. This operation had gone on without any success for some fifteen days when news was received of the gang's presence at a spot in the trans-Sarda area of Pilibhit District. Immediately a raid was launched involving a trek by night for some ten miles across extremely difficult country, covered by a thick jungle for the most part. But for all its pains, all that the raiding party was rewarded with, on its arrival at the spot, was merely the sight of a hut on fire and of freshly cooked food left behind untasted by the gang !

Knowing that the police were hot on his trail, Bashir crossed over to Nepal and there committed a very serious dacoity in broad daylight at the house of a rich Zamindar, who had a large number of servants as well as fire-arms to protect him. From a close study of the movements of these people, Bashir had carefully noted that they were accustomed to put away their guns and disperse at daybreak. So he cleverly timed his attack for this hour when the coast was clear and was thus able to walk off with a tremendous amount of booty, apart from some fire-arms. This incident raised Bashir's stock still higher and meant a further set back to the prestige of the Police.

...

Finally, on the 18th March information was received by Inspector Azahar Hussain of the presence of Bashir and his gang at a hut in a remote corner of Pilibhit district on the other side of the river Sarda. Instead of waiting for reinforcements, he immediately set out for this spot along with a handful of picked men whom he was able to collect in a hurry and arrived there early in the morning after a couple of days' strenuous march through the jungle. He then led a bold attack



on the hide-out where Bashir lay concealed, and in the encounter that followed both Bashir and his trusted lieutenant, Dulare, were shot dead, while Sabira and two other members of the gang managed to escape with their lives.

Fortunately for the Police, Sabira came to be arrested soon after while trying to get into touch with her relations at her village. She made a clean breast of her doings, resulting in her conviction and imposition on her of a sentence of 7 years rigorous imprisonment. Incidentally, she was found to be an ordinary village girl without pretensions of any kind !

The elimination of Bashir and of his consort Sabira was acclaimed as a crowning achievement of the year for the Police of Uttar Pradesh. It was also universally acknowledged that those who were directly responsible for this signal success, had not only enhanced the prestige of the Force in the eyes of the public, but had also earned for themselves the gratitude of thousands of souls who had been living under a constant threat to their lives and property.



A LADY WITH A MISSION

'DEAR Inspector General—Welcome to Dharchula. I am sending you a small home-made cake and a bottle of cherries in syrup which, I hope, you will do me the honour to accept. With kind regards. Yours faithfully —Sd/-.'

Such was the note that was delivered to me, along with the cake and the cherries soon after my arrival at Dharchula one afternoon in the month of April 1952.

A present of this kind, coming from a total stranger and, that too, at a place that appeared to lie beyond the pale of civilization, was something I could have never anticipated. But great as was my surprise at its receipt, it became greater still when I learnt that the person who had sent it, was a lady belonging to a foreign mission, who lived, all by herself, in a hut in the local bazar. Anyway, I accepted the present and sent her a letter of thanks. At the same time, I decided to pay her a courtesy call the next morning by way of my appreciation of her kind gesture towards me.

For me a visit to Dharchula was like going to the other end of the world. Lying some eighty miles north of Almorah, and very close to the Tibet border, it was accessible in those days by a foot track that had been literally carved out of the rock at places. This meant that in order to get there, one had first to detrain at Kathgodam, the nearest rail head from it, then go to Almorah over a distance of some eighty miles by bus or some other conveyance and from there go trekking for another eighty miles.

Even this journey from Kathgodam to Almorah could be a bone-shaking experience, assuming that one had to do it in a bus. As for the rest of the journey, not only did it take eight to ten days to cover it, but in doing so one had to go uphill and downdale, over country that was generally bleak and barren and therefore most uninviting. The importance of this track, however, lay in the fact that it provided a link with Mansarovar and Mount Kailash—two very sacred places of

pilgrimage for the Hindus from times immemorial. I am reminded of one particular section that made a veritable death trap, being no better than a narrow shelf overhanging a yawning chasm, several hundred feet deep. As I passed along this section, I was told, much to my horror, of a most diabolical kind of murder some years previously, of a village headman who had been enticed by his enemy into going there and then pushed down into the khud below to lie there for ever.

Distances in the mountains, I found, could be very deceptive, so that there was nothing one could do but go tramp, tramp, tramp, on and on, with only the echoes from one's footfalls to keep one company; except, of course, for the occasions when one came across a string of goats or sheep carrying their small loads of merchandise, beautifully balanced on their back and tripping along merrily, with their bells sounding ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling.

Strangely enough, I have seen that the note from those bells, hung round the neck of all such pack animals, is always the same. I have heard it in the early hours of the morning, from inside my tent, cosily tucked up in my bed, while out camping in the jungles of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh and, again, while out on a trek through Sikkim. And it has always brought me a feeling of peace and well being.

What a pity, we do not fully realize our debt to these dumb animals that have for countless centuries, provided our one and only means of transport between places not connected by rail or by road. Most of them even seem destined to lay down their lives by the road-side in the service of humanity, as is borne out by the numerous carcasses that may be seen strewn at almost every twist and turn of the track across the Himalayas. But who knows but that, with the onward march of civilization, a time may soon come when on the old routes that seemed reserved for them, these innocent animals may be altogether supplanted by great big honking motor vehicles trundling along at break-neck speed and when we shall hear their jingling bells no more?

To go back to my account of Dharchula, soon after I had refreshed myself, I decided to go round and see what it was

like. Flanked on both sides by high mountain walls, for the most part bare of vegetation, and traversed in the middle by a hill stream, of which the water had gone down very low, it had all the appearance of a valley, if somewhat uninteresting. Such of the fields as were there had been shorn of their crops, leaving only their stubble behind, while quadrupeds of all varieties were to be seen dotted all over the place and grazing the bare fields with the avidity of starved animals. Add to this, varieties of poultry strutting about to pick up their fare, and the picture is complete.

The entire population of the place, young and old, had turned out in a body to see what was on. For them my Camp was a novelty and so was I, for this was the first time in recorded history that an Inspector General of Police had cared to visit the place! Understandably enough, they watched the proceedings with a curiosity that was at times embarrassing. But they were all very friendly, with an openness of look characteristic of all men living in the mountain regions, away from the corroding influence of the plains.

Whatever little time I had before the sun went down, I spent wandering about the place in an effort to make a study of it. But the thing that struck me most was the squalor and the filth—evidently a consequence of the prevailing poverty and ignorance—noticeable almost everywhere. In marked contrast with this, the American Mission, only a few furlongs away, presented a pretty picture with an orchard, a vegetable garden, a dairy and a poultry of its own. In fact, it was refreshing to see how the American couple living there had made a beautiful home for themselves and one wondered why our Indian Missionaries could not likewise set up their establishments in these remote regions where there was a good deal of work for them to do.

Early next morning, I woke up quite refreshed. These Himalayan regions, I discovered, had a tonic effect hard to beat, for howsoever tired one might feel after a long day's march, one was sure to regain one's strength after a night's rest. They have also a soothing effect on the nerves that no medicine can induce. This may possibly be traced to the

awe inspiring silence that seems to descend on them at night from above—a silence that is speaking and helps to bring one a sense of oneness with the Universe.

My first task in the morning was to pay a visit to the lady of the foreign mission who had been so kind to me. I found she lived in a small wooden hut in the nature of a log cabin, built specially to suit her requirements. It was supported on beams and stood several feet higher than the ground level. One had, therefore, to climb a wooden ladder to enter it. A couple of book cases neatly arranged against the walls; a few coloured prints of Jesus Christ and of scenes from the Bible, hung from pegs in them; a writing table at one corner; two or three chairs disposed carelessly about; a few kick-knacks placed here and there; and a rug spread on the floor; made up the entire composition of this cabin. But though simple and unostentatious, it had all the appearance of taste and provided a fit setting for its owner who, to my utter surprise, turned out to be a mere girl, fresh as a lily, and not more than 25 years of age at the outside.

Not being able to suppress my curiosity about her I asked her where she had come from and what had brought her to Dharchula of all places! From what she told me, I gathered that she belonged to Montreal in Canada. Early in her life she had felt a call and had, therefore, joined the Canadian Mission. One day she was examining a map of the world showing all the centres of this Mission when she discovered that the area around Dharchula had no such centre. At this she at once made up her mind to come and work here. Her family, she said, consisted of her parents, who were still alive, and a brother, all of whom had concurred in this idea of hers.

Simple as this statement was, it caused me a surprise beyond measure, for I thought that for a young woman to come from quite another part of the world and work in surroundings quite foreign to her—and, that too, all by herself—required a rare kind of courage, for which it would be hard to find a parallel. The fact that she knew little Hindi, did not seem to deter her in the least. Nor did she mind the distance that separated her, not only from her home, several thousand



miles away, but also from the nearest rail head at Kathgodam situated at a distance of something like 160 miles from Dharchula. But much as I admired her for her courage, the thing that raised her still more in my estimation was the type of service she was engaged in. Her main occupation, she told me, was to render first aid to the numerous pilgrims to Kailash who stood in need of it. For such of them as were found to suffer from sore foot, she did the washing and the bandaging with her own hands.

My visit to Dharchula was connected with the establishment of a number of Police Check Posts on our border with Tibet and it is now a long time since I went there. But whenever I think of this place, I am reminded of this lone young woman from far off Canada, dedicating herself in the name of Christ—to the service of humanity and my head bows to her in salute !





CSL

Pakistan : Birth and Early Days

Sri Prakasa

'Few men long in public life in India have been so respected and beloved as Sri Prakasa, and his charming little book goes far to explain why this should be...it is impossible to read Sri Prakasa's frank and artless account of his experiences in the unfamiliar role of high official without forming an affection for the author... Perhaps his leading characteristics are his complete honesty and his courage ; he never hesitates to speak his mind, or indeed, to conceal the fact that in his opinion Pakistanis are likely to be offended by his unflattering picture of men who shaped the early days of their country.....he is equally frank and devastating on the faults which he found on the Indian side.....'

—*The Times Literary Supplement*

MEENAKSHI FOR BOOKS OF MERIT



CSL

Government from Inside

N. V. Gadgil

Dr. Gadgil was a prominent member of the first Central Cabinet of Independent India. He was also the Secretary of the Congress Legislature Party at that time. In this book he comes out to discuss the working of the mind of our central leadership. The highlights of the book are: the disclosure of the basic differences between Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel—the attitude of Maulana Azad on the problems facing the Government of the day—the process of the national integration—and the principle of joint responsibility at work. The author feels that some of the problems that the country is facing to-day are of our own making—being the outcome of our own indecisiveness or weak handling. He also feels that the foundations of prosperity were also laid in this period. He admits the failure of the Government on the front of corruption. The reminiscences are not only revealing but also instructive.



CSL

War, Netaji and Europe

Girija K. Mookerji

Dr. Mookerji's is probably the only Indian account of Europe during the Second World War. As a young Indian journalist, he has covered the background of the War and tells very charmingly the story of the explosion of Europe. The author saw the fall of Paris, was in concentration camp in France, joined Netaji Subhas Bose in Berlin and became the official speaker of Azad Hind Radio.

The Chapters include :

Flight from Prague, How Europe Exploded, First Bombardment of Paris, France under German Occupation, Exodus of Millions, Germany at War, Subhas Bose—an anti-Fascist Resistance Leader, Free India Centre Berlin, German Defeat, Peace at Last.



MEENAKSHI FOR BOOKS OF MERIT