mosques, and its temples very often present an unblushing stucco face, and pretentious gentility ogles at you from every side. Alas! you cannot have both Oriental magnificence and Occidental economy at the same time. But the reigning Maharaja, like other mortals, is earnestly anxious to reconcile the irreconcilable. In this he is only carrying on the traditions of his house. He is a descendant of the chiefs who acknowledged the supremacy of the Moghul Emperors without striking a blow. The Prince whom the invaders found ruling here was the craven Baharma, one of the twelve sons of the patriarchal Prithwi Raja. During his reign Rajputana experienced the advent of the Crescent, which inaugurated a long period of turmoil and turned the country into a battle-ground for rival ambitions.

Jaipur alone escaped the deluge. Raja Baharma, alarmed at the enemy's approach, hastened to purchase safety at the cost of dignity, thus managing to steer amid the storms which raged over the rest of the country, and to achieve immortality as the first Rajput Prince who bent the knee to the power of Islam. His son went even further, and earned security for himself and a lasting disgrace for his posterity by contracting a matrimonial alliance with the Mahomedan upstarts and thus defiling for ever the purity of his noble solar pedigree. Several generations later, a Raja of Jaipur joined Udaipur in an effort to shake off the foreign yoke, and tried to wipe out the taint of the infidel blood by marrying a princess of the latter kingdom and proclaiming her offspring heir to the throne in preference to elder children by his other wives. But this tardy experiment proved a failure, and the State before the end of the eighteenth century was torn by dissension, was bled by the Mahrattas, and became the theatre of a confusion which ended only by the recognition of the British suzerainty in 1818.

Since then Jaipur, though it has suffered sorely from domestic strifes about the succession, has been protected by the British against attack from abroad, and, forced to adopt administrative decency, it gradually recovered from

the wounds of ancient anarchy. In return, it proved of signal assistance in the time of the Mutiny. The then Maharaja was rewarded for his fidelity with the grant of the Pargana of Kot Kasim, with the privilege of adoption, and with a knighthood; while his energy and liberality during the great famine, ten years later, earned him two additional guns of salute, which, after the lapse of another decade, were raised to the magnificent total of twenty-one.

All these noisy and showy things are, I presume, the outcome of our unquestioning belief in the Oriental's capacity for mistaking the shadow for the substance. It is a deep-rooted belief, and, when indulged to excess, fruitful of many failures, both in olden times and at this present hour. The Oriental may in some ways be as simple as a child; he certainly is quite as shrewd. Those amongst my readers who have been children, and who retain some memory of that golden age, will agree with me that a profound reverence for the governess can easily coexist with a very keen perception of her weaknesses. There is no better school for satire than the schoolroom, unless it be an Oriental bazaar. But these are no holiday topics.

When the Prince died in 1880 without a direct heir, his honours and his loyalty were bequeathed to a youth whom he had adopted on his deathbed. This is the gray-bearded Maharaja whom I have just had the honour to meet. If I have been somewhat splenetic in my comments on his dominions, my severity may be partly due to the hotel dinner, a meal which I can only describe as an excellent alternative for starvation. Perhaps for a really 'successful' account of a country it is best to act on the advice of the innocent author of a work on India I have just been reading. Speaking of this very city, he says: 'If only a short visit is being made, it will be better to write a day or two beforehand.' I wish I had written my book a year or two before I saw the things which I am attempting to describe.

I will end with a brief summary of what we brilliant

journalists call interesting events: pig-sticking before breakfast, and after luncheon a tiger-hunt, which I will not describe, though I did not see it. The day ended with illuminations and a banquet at the palace which was unlike the hotel dinner. After the banquet was produced for our admiration the tiger which the Prince had shot in the afternoon. It was a brilliant entertainment, followed by an exhibition of native music and jugglery. But I cannot forget that the Maharaja, in proposing the toast of his royal guests, dwelt on the terrible distress of his subjects, and announced that he intends to commemorate the visit by a contribution of four lakhs of rupees to the Famine Fund. From the lady who sat next to me at the banquet I also gathered that thousands of wretched peasants have already migrated with their flocks and families to less threatening regions, having thus improved on the course which they adopted during the last famine. Then they took their flocks only with them, and when they returned home found their families dead.

'A most undinnerlike subject of conversation,' says my platitudinarian friend; and I answer with my natural meekness:

'Quite so—in fact, famine and dinner are mutually exclusive.'

And so farewell to poor Jaipur and its public-spirited Maharaja. May the rain-god have mercy upon them!

CHAPTER V

IN THE DESERT

We left Jaipur in the late afternoon, and moved towards the setting sun, across the desolate fields of Marwar—the Land of Death, a name most mournfully appropriate. A few goats, small deer, several peacocks—a bird as common in Rajputana as the goose is in England, but rather more highly respected—and a few brown children, roam despondently about, clothed in dust. A few mud hovels sprawl here and there, and at intervals a sentry shadow stands, turbaned and motionless, against the blood-red sky. It stands on thin bare legs, but wrapped up to the nose, in anticipation of the bitter night cold. Then the flames of the heavens are extinguished, and the darkness has hidden the hungry plain and its hungry, shivering children from view.

We had an excellent dinner in the train, and afterwards slept the dreamless sleep given to the well-fed, the warmly clad, and the unimaginative. When I opened my eyes again it was daylight, and the yellow, silent face of the desert stared at me on both sides of the road. Sand, sand, sand, and then all of a sudden a cluster of royal tombs, a few donkeys, a camel or two, and an occasional turban. We are drawing near Bikaneer, a flat city spreading in the midst of a flat plain, the very sight of which makes you feel instinctively for your water-flask.

It is the capital of a semi-independent feudal State whose area covers, to be precise, between 17,000 and 23,000 square miles—just enough to support, in a Lenten manner, a population of 300,000 souls—a melancholy

island of life in a great ocean of sand, with many a dull, storm-furrowed sandhill, growing in length year after year, and a few woebegone hamlets, shrinking year after year. They appear to have strayed into the desert long ago, and to have been doing penance for their error ever since.

Even the railroad, in midsummer, is buried under waves of sand, driven by the hot westerly wind. I hear, however, that one little spot in the north-east corner of the country may, at moments of optimistic exaggeration, be described as fertile, thanks to the proximity of the river Sotra, which, in years exceptionally prosperous, translates that favoured district into a malarious swamp. For the rest, the one stream that fringes Bikaneer's frontier seldom condescends to flow, and then only after a parsimonious fashion. It flows reluctantly for a brief while, and then disappears in the sand, leaving the plain more thirsty than ever. But here I see not even this ironical semblance of a flood. The tanks of the neighbourhood contain just as much water as is necessary for the support of a few fever-giving mosquitoes. The capital of Bikaneer is literally a city built in the desert, on soil hard and stony as a local money-lender's heart.

I ask the Old Resident concerning its origin and purpose. He knows nothing about its origin, and as to its purpose he can only tell me that in the good old days of picturesque unrule the merchants and usurers of Marwar used to retire to this city, and to enjoy their unholy fortunes in sand-secured peace and impunity. The descendants of those Marwari gentlemen still live here, migrating to Calcutta and other commercial centres for six months in the year, and spending the rest of their time in these palatial dwellings. From other springs of wisdom I draw the knowledge that the peasantry of Bikaneer consume their lives in a perennial wrestle with Nature. Now and again Nature wins, and the poor peasants have to quit their miserable hamlets and to set out, with their women, children, camels, and goats, in

search of fodder. Those who are so inclined are at liberty to appropriate as much of the cruel soil as they can till, on payment of a small tribute to the State, which, with the exception of the feudal sardars, is the one land-owner. Interesting to find the Socialist dream realized in the desert! Perhaps it could be realized nowhere else.

Hard soils produce hardy creatures, and hot climates conduce to long horns, says the Wise One. Here, as in Arabia and Barbary, the horses are wiry, the camels almost as fleet of foot as the horses, and more patient of fatigue. I will say nothing of the horned majesty of the bulls, sacred to Siva: they are things to worship in awesome silence. As to the men, their valour was amply proved during the Mutiny, when they helped us to subdue their brethren of other parts of Hindustan. But at this moment there is no occasion for the display of warlike qualities.

We have found the little railway-station in that festal ferment which I am beginning to dread—so brilliant it is, so monotonous in its organized variety, so unreal and theatrical. Flags up above, and below sardars, thakors, seths, sahukars, all in full Durbar magnificence. The roof of the station is in the possession of the High School boys—grave youths in turbans and flowing robes of red or orange, marshalled alternately, each armed with a little banner of corresponding colour, which they are drilled to wave at the word of command.

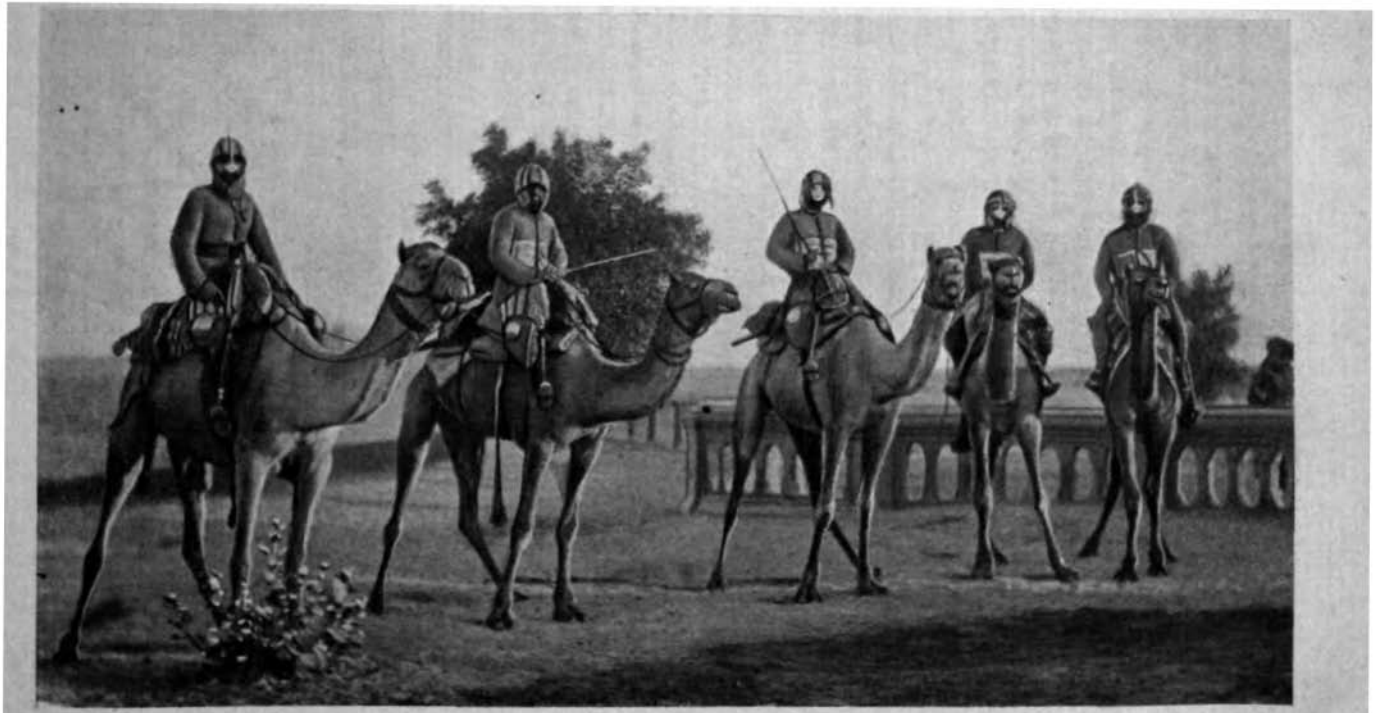
But the enclosure, on the other hand, is, as usual, not dull. On one side I see drawn up the Camel Corps—a body of lean, sturdy, curly-bearded Rajputs in red or green uniforms, each breast decorated with the medals of two campaigns, all erect on red-tasselled camels, whose faces proclaim intense contempt for the world and its banalities. On the other side stands a medley of bright-draped palanquins resting on the sand, of tongas drawn by bullocks all but hidden beneath silver-broidered cloth, and close by towers a triad of mountainous elephants,

bearing gold-pillared pavilions on their backs, and scooping up the sand with their trunks—scooping it up and scattering it over the brocade of gold which flaps down their flanks. I wonder how the elephant managed to fill with this clumsy implement of his the bath of Vishnu's wife what time he acted as Her Divinity's valet, as is narrated by those who profess to know. But the sight I never hoped to see on this planet is yonder carriage and pair of camels, soaring above humbler vehicles, grandly grotesque.

The Maharaja has arrived—a well-groomed young gentleman with a faultless English accent, an English vocabulary which never fails him, and a manner worthy of his noble blood. For, though he is saluted only by seventeen guns, he is the descendant of a long line of gallant Rajputs, never, he boasts, contaminated by intermarriage with the Mahomedan parvenu. One of His Highness's ancestors founded this dynasty in the fifteenth century, and another was rewarded for his loyalty in 1857 with a gift of forty-one villages—a welcome addition to his slender income of £10,000 a year, eked out by rare contributions from his nobles. It is the custom of the land that, in lieu of military service no longer required, the vassals pay to their lord paramount a gift on his accession to the throne. The gift consists of grain, jewellery, and the most useless horse that the loyal Rajput baron can find in his stables.

The silver and gold maces, the red and gold fans, peacock fly-flaps, and state umbrellas, have taken up their traditional positions; the Prince and Princess of Wales appear, are received, and are conducted to four-in-hand carriages. The procession moves off along the main road, past the old feudal fort, over whose walls peep the kiosks and pinnacles of the old palace.

We defile now between lines of green-clad, gray-bearded warriors, each armed with an ancient sword, all salaaming kindly, and now between long rows of cavaliers mounted on camels or horses, caparisoned in velvet and silver



CAMEL CORPS, BIKANEER.

trappings, behind whom press crowds of decorously chattering spectators, and the hollow sound of the tom-tom salutes us at intervals. But here is another thing I never expected to meet outside a museum or Torquato Tasso's epic. On either hand stands a row of camel cavaliers, stiff with mail coats and steel helmets, their faces covered with visors which flash in the sun. It is a troop of medieval Crusaders reborn as Rajputs.

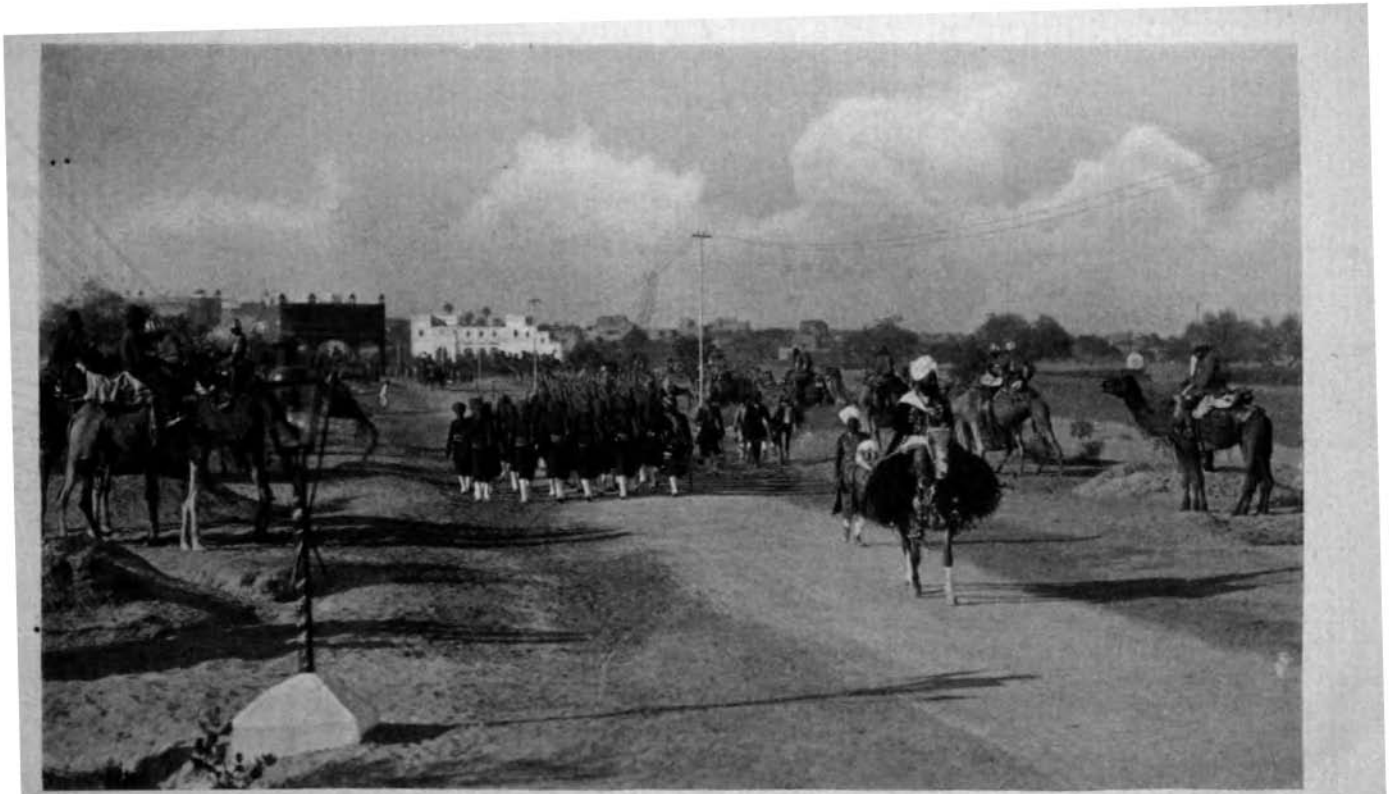
Behind us the procession has broken up, and the plain is enveloped in clouds of yellow sand, through which gleam a thousand turbans and the barrels of matchlocks. We drive past a cluster of low, flat-roofed houses of crude brick—such as Tasso's Crusaders must have seen in Palestine and hastened to make desolate for the love of God. In front spread the new Lallgarh Palace gardens, containing a few young trees which do not appear disposed ever to grow old, and at last here is the palace itself, a great pile of red sandstone, many-arched, many-domed, minutely carved, its small windows secret with stone lattices, its kiosks full of tame doves, fluttering in and out and cooing in the shade. It rises calm and cool out of the yellow desert, in the centre of that white canvas city which is to be our home for the next three days. We shall be comparatively safe here, for I am informed that among the many instructions issued to the subpowers that be is a strict command that 'All stray dogs should be cleared out of the garden before Their Royal Highnesses' arrival, and men posted at each gate to prevent wild pigs, jackals, and other noxious animals from straying in.' This order must have been very conscientiously carried out, for on arrival I found in my tent not one wild pig, jackal, stray camel, or mad elephant.

In the afternoon I set out for the walled capital yonder. In a few minutes I reached the princely fort and palace, whose balconies overlook the battlements, skirted a tank—large, deep, and dry—and found myself immediately transferred from the solitude and purity of the desert into the subtle smells and noises of an Eastern city, containing

within its loopholed ramparts 40,000 human bipeds and an unrecorded multitude of quadrupeds. But all my preconceived fears, derived from other cities of India, were instantly dispelled. The smells are not offensive in Bikaneer, and the people, while more lively than the somnambulists of the plains, are strangely quiet. I drove through the bazaar, where black-bearded men bought grain, and masculine, almost breastless, women sifted it, where dogs drowsed and children played in the dust, where much-ringed lasses searched their lovers' matted hair—not for pearls—and wrinkled hags swept the mud benches outside their low mud dwellings; but in all this activity there was little odour and no disorder.

Then I wandered into the net of narrow, crooked lanes of clay cottages, crouching under the latticed balconies of red-stone mansions, lofty and richly sculptured—lanes so narrow and so crooked as to give the impression that the visitor is not supposed ever to turn back, but to go always on, like the man of God in the Bible. I went on, avoiding the teeth of grunting camels on one hand and the tails of dreaming curs on the other, rubbing shoulders now with an ash-sprinkled saint, and now with someone who was only naked, and falling deeply in love with this strange world. I loved the wide-eyed little boys who stayed their games to gaze and smile shyly at me, and I loved, if I may confess it without scandal, the bashful maids who gazed down from the small windows upon me: they lower their eyes as they meet mine, they lift them quickly and lower them again, their lips expand into a coy smile, and, I like to think, their cheeks are suffused with the local equivalent for a blush. I loved even the gray-bearded, caste-marked elders who, as the afternoon waned, began to gather on the mud benches which their wives had swept so clean, to smoke their evening hooka and to discuss the Prince of Wales. I am sure they are going to do that, for a more shrewd and sociable mob, or a more human one, I have never seen in any part of the globe.

They are sociable in the midst of the desert, these



PROCESSION ON ARRIVAL AT BIKANEER.

bizarre Bikaneer folk, clean in the midst of poverty, and, despite the drought, they look contented. It is not the content of apathy—that I know, though whence it comes is a riddle to me. It cannot come from a superfluity of silver, and as for gold, besides that which is firmly attached on the clothes of the nobles, I have only seen it in their hands. It amounted exactly to 110 mohurs. Out of this sum 101 belonged to the Maharaja himself, and the rest to the nine sardars who were presented to the Prince. The Maharaja and the sardars carried their respective *nazr*, or tribute, to His Royal Highness, and His Royal Highness touched it and remitted it to the owners. Of course, it is possible that there may be some more money in the State of Bikaneer; but, I suspect, it must be locked up in the coffers of the Marwari merchants who live in these red-stone mansions.

Worldly prosperity, for the bulk of the inhabitants, then, being out of the question, how can these brave, self-reliant, hospitable people manage to cultivate their varied amiability? The Old Resident is inclined to attribute their cheerfulness to opium. 'Every Rajput,' he tells me, 'takes opium from his infancy to the age of seven. Then he is weaned of it, and does not resume the habit until the age of fifty.' He went on to extol opium as the lone man's friend, the hungry man's food, the sick man's cordial, concluding his panegyric with a denunciation of the prejudiced ignorance which confounds this most invigorating and exhilarating promoter of happiness and social virtue with the narcotic and stupefying drug of Turkey known by the same name. The theory possesses at least the stimulating merit of novelty.

Still, opium is not everything. How can these people exist to enjoy the delicious cordial without water? This question flashed across my mind as, dust-cloaked and dry-lipped, I crept through the meshes of the town. All of a sudden the answer came in the form of two great bullocks pulling laboriously at something heavy down an incline. I approached, and, the good people making way for me, I

found that the something was an immense skin bucket. I peered into the giddy depths of the well, and, several hundred feet beneath me, I saw rippling a dark pool. Having solved the problem, I drove once more past the old palace, with its stately balconies above and, beneath, the stables in which are tethered the Maharaja's steeds and elephants, adding new smells to the air and new terrors to sleep. As I passed under the walls of the fort again, the gray pigeons were retiring for the night into the loopholes in the ramparts, while the crows lining the battlements above cawed their good-night to the sun as he sank into the desert.

Next day I bade one of the beasts of the Camel Corps to kneel down for me. It obeyed with the promptitude of a thoroughbred Asiatic. I mounted on its saddled hump, took into my hands the lines which are fastened to either end of the spike that runs through its nose, and steered across the vast expanse of sand, bound for Devikund, or God's Pond, so called for the same reason for which our own graveyards are called God's acres. We shuffled noiselessly along, our shadows gliding over the goat-shaved tufts of grass, the anthills, the few black-beetles and the many pale green moths that haunt the stunted weeds of the desert. On and on we shuffled, my mount breathing audibly, and I breathing gladly the air of the wilderness, so crisp and clean, and enjoying that perfection of freedom which is only to be found where sky meets the sand and man is alone with his own soul. There must be a Bedawin or a St. Basil strain in my blood.

After a while, over the undulating sky-line peeped the white and red domes of the city of my destination. They rose, many of them, on delicate pillars of red sandstone or marble, round a great tank which from the days of old has received the ashes of the lords of Bikaneer. It gapes, now green and dry, in the midst of twelve sepulchral pavilions, each adorned with a carved procession depicting the supposed tenant of the tomb mounted on his charger.

He rides to the funeral pyre with his doomed wives before him, ranged in order of lethal precedence, while behind him march the ladies who were his wives in all but name. The latest to follow her lord to his last bed was the Princess Dip Kunwar, consort of Raja Surat Singh's son, who died in 1825.

I rode slowly round this weird home of death, so still and so peaceful, its solitude intensified by one or two crested peacocks that wandered aimlessly over the scarred slopes of the rocks, and by the intermittent, subdued twitter of a lonely bird hidden in the foliage of a rare tree.

Suddenly upon the great silence burst the clangour of many sacred gongs. I could not tell whence the sound came, or whither it went. It died away as suddenly as it came, and the subsequent stillness was oppressive. I steered towards the point of the horizon where, judging by the pallor of the sky, the camp must be—for the sowar who rode behind me proved almost as deficient in ideas as the camel, both being surprisingly at sea in the land which they have navigated a thousand times. To conceal his own limitations the sowar, man-like, abused the camel in a hybrid dialect made up of Marwari and blasphemy. His eloquence proved most effective, when accompanied by the strap. And thus we bobbed up and down the broken gravel rocks and along the pathless sandy main till the twinkle of the camp lights inspired the camel with renewed zeal, and presently our ears were saluted by the music of bugles borne across the desert on the evening breeze. The strain meant rest and dinner for man, beast, and sowar.

This day was succeeded by two more, equally delightful. His Royal Highness had fortunately gone to Gujner to destroy grouse, and there was nothing for me to do but to feel happy. And I did it thoroughly, except for one night when, after a long camel ride, I retired to my bed sure of a long night's sleep. What I actually enjoyed is faithfully recorded in the following page from my diary:

About 12 o'clock: Shut eyes.
12.15: Dozed.
12.25: Opened eyes, suddenly.
12.25 to 12.40: Investigation into origin of noises.
12.40: Discovery—Rajput sentries bivouacking and chattering round a red fire, like so many turbaned fiends.
12.45: Pyjama'd sahib swearing at ditto, effectively.
1: Back to bed again.
1.30: More noises. Sahib swearing to himself, ineffectually.
2: Dozed again.
3.5: Stampede in the corridor of tent, just behind right ear.
3.7: Up, furiously. Investigation—wild beast carrying off servant's provisions. Whether dog, boar, camel, elephant, or vulgar jackal, I cannot say precisely.
3.10 to ?. Repetition of above episodes at short intervals—monotonous and mightily irritating.

But, nocturnal episodes notwithstanding, I count this brief sojourn in the desert of Bikaneer among the red-letter days in my life's calendar. It was pleasant to roam between the peaked tents, pipe in mouth, looking idly at the flags floating against the desert sky, so fresh before noon and during the rest of the day so broiling. It was more pleasant still, when the sun became unbearable, to retire under your canvas roof and to gaze from its comparative coolness out upon the sparkling sand, at the low-caste hawks hovering against the blue heavens, and at the camels treading the plain wearily; to listen to the distant bugles, to the dull tramp of horses, and to be lulled to unconsciousness by the confused murmur of unknown tongues. Or at night, when the voices of the camp were hushed, to sally forth alone towards the city fast asleep behind its walls, and to wander under the countless twinkle of the stars, meditating at great length on nothing worth mentioning.

But now all is over. My kit is lying about on the floor of the tent strapped. From the glaring sunshine outside come the voices of the servants shouting one to another, the call of bugles, and the muffled thud of hoofs galloping on the soft sand. Close by stands a tree of the future, its young elderly foliage, in the pauses of all other sounds,

almost contriving to rustle feebly, and the air is throbbing with the mid-day heat. Across the path in the distance tread heavily three camels loaded with flabby waterskins; the bunting up above flaps a drowsy, official farewell to us, and high in the vault of my tent flit two or three loquacious sparrows, come, I suppose, to chirp good-bye.

Now the camel carts are rumbling round, collecting the luggage, followed by carts to which are harnessed pairs of elephants, forehead, cheeks, and trunks gay with symmetrical designs of blue and yellow, tusks blunted and bound with brass rings, and aloft, god-like, sits the red-turbaned mahout astride on a ridge of wrinkled black skin, his knees hidden behind the broad fans which the elephant is pleased to call ears, his off hand armed with an iron grapple, the efficacy of which is manifest in the ragged condition of the sadly fringed fans of callous flesh.

It is evening, and the night lies black on the desert. On my way to the station I am brought to a standstill by a great red glare, with the necks and heads of two camels silhouetted against it. Round the wood-fire sits a chorus of Rajput priests, swaying to and fro and chanting an eerie melody, accompanied by the click-clack of brass castanets. They are ghostly, almost demoniacal, but they mean well. It is their way of bidding the royal visitors godspeed.

CHAPTER VI

THE PUNJAB AND ITS PEOPLE

AT four o'clock this morning we crossed the Punjab frontier in the dark, and three hours later we had our first breakfast of Punjabi dust—gritty and pungent like no other dust that has ever set my teeth on edge. This happened at Bhatinda, a spot the component charms of which the brilliant Babu has admirably summed up as sand and wind. He might have added a few camels, which supply a touch of animation to the boundless dreariness of a plain out of which springs the Gobindi Fort—a mound of angular masonry, at this early hour wreathed in mist, domineering over an expanse of dwellings and shanties and railway workshops as pointless and spiritless as an academic prize epigram.

Here we transhipped into the North-Western train, and the royal party, having overtaken us, transhipped into theirs. I closed all the windows of my compartment hermetically, in an endeavour, futile enough, to exclude the all-pervading sand; but I failed to earn the sympathy of the Old Resident, who, with his usual air of callous superiority, pretended not to see the affliction.

'This is nothing,' he said, laughing. 'Had you been here twenty years ago you would have known what Punjabi dust meant. As you rode out you would suddenly see an immense cloud, red or black, according to the position of the sun, rolling towards you, and wiping the landscape out of existence. You could not even see the head of your horse before you. The only way to escape was to dismount and take shelter behind some wall or hedge and

wait there for hours and hours with your eyes carefully shut until the air cleared again.'

I assured him that I considered myself most fortunate in not being here twenty years ago, and that I should have been even more grateful to the Fates had they never brought me here at all. Then he fell asleep.

We dash past the Hindu temples, European clock-towers, and green gardens of Faridkot, and directly after we are in the typical cheerlessness of the pastoral region of the Five Rivers, wherein the Aryan shepherds tended their flocks in the days of the Vedas. The five rivers are the Sutlej, the Ravi, the Chenab, the Jhelum, and their common sovereign Indus, dividing the country into parallel valleys. Between the Sutlej, which we crossed at Ferozepore, and the Ravi, which flows a little to the north of Lahore, rises an upland district famous as the cradle of the Sikh heresy. It is a broad upland, moderately populous and prosperous in the parts which we traverse, contracted and parched towards the south, ending in a steppe dotted with pale bushes which the frugal camels relish, and, when the heavens are propitious, fringed with long grass grateful to more luxurious cattle. Otherwise this plateau is the home of a great solitude, accentuated by the ruins of villages, dry wells, and water-wheels rotting in the sun, sad tokens of humanity long dissolved into clay and dark oblivion. Sorrow and weedy desolation brood over the land, save along the banks of the streams and the artificial canals, which, the Old Resident maintains, have abolished the dust of the Punjab. Save in these moist spots and along the railway line, trees are few, and their names unpronounceable. But where there is water, there rustles the dark-green mulberry, the stately palm spreads its shadeless umbrella aloft, and the pale Indian pines whisper their secrets softly to one another.

For the rest, the country so forbidding to man possesses considerable attractions for wolves, leopards, wild hogs, and the long-nosed crocodiles which swarm in the yellow

streams or bask on their banks, in sunny and slimy bliss. The Old Resident, now once more awake, informs me that the annual official returns for the whole of India show about 3,000 human deaths caused by wild animals and over 20,000 caused by snake-bites, while the number of cattle which yearly succumb to both perils amounts to about 100,000. During the last year, he said, the Punjab witnessed an increase in both kinds of death. He further assures me that even those figures pale before 'what used to be in the old days,' the decline being due to the rewards offered by the Government for the destruction of wild animals. He has the numbers destroyed last year at his fingers' ends, and they are as follows:

Tigers	1,285
Leopards	4,370
Bears	2,000
Wolves	2,086
Hyenas	716

He anticipates a further diminution in the number of victims from the Indian Arms Act, which allows certain peasants to carry firearms for the protection of their lives, beasts, and crops. 'Such detached shikaris,' he says, 'ought to thin the ranks of the enemy, if they don't fall asleep, as they often do.' And he proceeds to fall asleep.

In addition to these terrors, the Punjabi peasant has recently been suffering from the plague. A good and ghastly specimen of the extent of the havoc is given in the last Provincial Education Report, which states that in one school, out of forty-five girls, ten died in little more than two months.

As though this distress were not sufficient, this year the hapless province has also had to mourn the victims of a great earthquake. In many places the shock was so sudden that few, if any, had time to escape into the open air, and thousands were buried beneath the ruins of their homes. In the twinkling of an eye whole townships were wiped off the face of the earth, and the cries of the

wounded and dying were heard everywhere. In Kangra every building collapsed, and many people—men, women, and children, including missionaries—were buried alive, only 500 out of a population of 5,000 having managed to flee distracted, leaving their families buried. A few persons in that town were dug out alive after having been under the ruins for four or five days. In Jowala Mukhi a score of natives and 200 pilgrims perished while worshipping in the temple. But the survivors, characteristically enough, instead of helping in the work of rescue, continued holiday-making as if nothing had happened. The town of Mandi became a maidan, everything having been razed to the ground, palaces, temples, and private houses alike. But, as often happens in other than physical catastrophes, the upheaval which has turned the marble palaces of princes and gods into heaps of rubbish has, in many cases, spared the humble dwellings of the poor.

This calamity was due to the normal action of the main boundary fault which runs along the foot of the Himalayas from the extreme north-west to the extreme south-east of the chain, being at either end intersected by a transverse fault. The term 'fault' is applied to a number of fissures which divide the tertiary rocks from the older rocks at the base of the mountain ridge. These fissures, all of which run parallel to one another in the direction indicated, are subject to continual agitation, which at any time may result in another great convulsion like that of last April. The Himalayas are never at rest, but are still undergoing a process of development fatal to man yet perfectly natural.

The same calamity wrought sad havoc among the dead as well as among the living. Local archæologists are mourning the damage inflicted on many ancient monuments, especially on the historic Fort Mandi at Kangra and its numerous grotesque temples. But the Indian provincial governments will not fail to make these losses good. They always contribute generously to the work of excavation, restoration, and preservation of obsolete relics of the past all over the Indian Empire, so much so that

the learned young men who form the Indian priesthood of archæology occasionally breathe the prophecy that a day will dawn when not a stone or a scrap of Sanskrit hieroglyph will remain buried under the soil. This is a consummation devoutly to be prayed for by all who realize the inestimable value of the archæological cult to mankind in general and to the starving Indian peasant in particular.

But I do not wish to be unfair. Thanks to that same Government, better days seem to be in store for the much-plagued Punjab. Lord Curzon has claimed that 'the growth of prosperity and population' that has followed the irrigation and colonization schemes recently inaugurated 'has no parallel in the history of modern India.' The sober fact is that the Chenab and Jhelum schemes have done much to provide a refuge and a living to thousands of people who otherwise were doomed to perish of hunger, and tend to promote the welfare of the country generally and of the army in particular. Much of the land let out to private cultivators is upon conditions which require it to be used for the raising of horses or camels for remount or transport purposes, chiefly needed in the Punjab.

The improvement of the peasant's lot is the best justification of British rule in India. Were every other vestige of that rule to disappear, there would still be good reason for the Anglo-Saxon to congratulate himself, with a clear conscience, upon the two million acres of scrub and waste land in the Punjab which have been converted, permanently, into fertile fields by the Chenab and Jhelum Canals. The combined area of the two colonies is close upon half that of the irrigated portion of the Egypt of a few years ago. When complete development has taken place, a great source of wealth will have been added to India. As it is, the value of the cotton and wheat exported from the Chenab Canal Colony last year, after the cultivators had taken all they required for themselves, was over 400 lakhs of rupees, or 2¾ million sterling. The Wazirabad-Khanewal Railway, built to

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tap the colony, paid 14 per cent. upon its capital cost, and the Government collected a large land revenue over and above the canal dues, which themselves afforded a profit after covering interest charges upon the capital outlay.

The Jhelum Canal Colony is in an earlier stage of development, and had a terribly trying experience last year with plague. The disease broke out in the heart of the colony with such virulence that men died in their fields, as well as in their houses, and a general flight for life took place at the most critical period of the season. Hardly anyone remained to apply the canal water, which coursed in streams through fields of withering crops. Offers of half the yield failed to attract labour at a later stage to reap what survived the earlier neglect. The *rabi* harvest, in fact, was almost completely lost. The English colonization officer and his native assistant, who helped with their own hands to remove the dead in the villages, both contracted plague, the native succumbing, while Mr. Hailey eventually recovered. The colony, however, thanks to liberal remissions of revenue, is now rapidly returning to prosperity.

Lord Curzon a few weeks ago claimed in Lahore that his term of office coincided with a period of progress for the whole province of the Punjab which not even the allied forces of plague and the earthquake have succeeded in impairing. He maintained that this progress was chiefly, if not entirely, due to his own severance of a portion of the district and the creation of a new frontier province. 'I believe,' he said, 'that a better service was never wrought to the province than when the tantalizing and anxious burden of frontier management was taken from its shoulders, and it was left to pursue its own agricultural, commercial, and industrial development unhampered.' This is a point on which opinions differ very widely. Sir Mackworth Young, the late Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, considered the service in question as an unmitigated blunder.

Another disputable boon was the Land Alienation Act. Lord Curzon affirmed that this measure, 'which I assisted to pass in the early part of my administration, has already done a good deal, and will do more, to keep upon the soil the hereditary owners.' Sir Mackworth Young refuses to see any good in this measure. He hopes that it may prove a success, but he is not a convert to it. In fact, he fears that in the long-run it will work to the disadvantage of the peasantry whom it is intended to protect.

Where such high authorities differ in so irreconcilable a manner the humble student may well hesitate to decide. So far as I can gather from official reports, the provisions of the Act, on the whole, work satisfactorily, and attempted evasions are not numerous. It is said that the Act is popular with zemindars, or land-owners, and agriculturists alike. Money-lenders still complain, and it would seem that the business of pleaders has been injuriously affected. These are good signs. Nor are signs wanting that capital is being drawn into worthier channels of enterprise. The Act has, no doubt, produced some contraction of credit, but this effect was foreseen, and the question is whether the contraction has operated to help or to hamper the zemindar. The Financial Commissioner believes that such contraction of credit as has occurred is beneficial to the zemindar, because it curtails extravagance without depriving thrifty men of the means of obtaining reasonable loans. All this is highly satisfactory, and must be received with the praise due to a successful effort made on behalf of the material and moral interests of a very numerous and valuable class of the community, though it may be less numerous and less valuable than the peasantry. But I am not one of those who hold that the possession of wealth is a necessary proof of the want of other virtues.

On the other hand, the abolition of village self-government has produced, among other things, a result which is especially well calculated to bring home to the Administration the unwisdom of the change. It has weakened the idea of joint village responsibility for the payment of

taxes, and has immeasurably increased the Government's difficulties in collecting the revenue. A case in point is cited by the Deputy Commissioner of Ferozepore in the latest report on the Land Revenue Administration of the Punjab which I have been able to consult. In that district it is the habit of many persons to delay payments to the last possible moment, very frequently with a view simply to harassing the village headman who is responsible to the Government for payment, but, under modern conditions, cannot ask for a writ against the defaulting individual until the demand is actually due. A well-to-do headman has no difficulty in paying the instalment in full by due date without waiting for all the taxpayers to make up the sum required. But a headman who is unable to command the necessary amount of ready cash, and whom the village money-lender has ceased to assist since the passing of the Land Alienation Act, finds himself in a very awkward position, no matter how good the harvest has been. The Financial Commissioner recognises that the evil is due to the enfeeblement of the sense of village responsibility, and expresses the opinion that it may ultimately be necessary to amend Section 97 of the Land Revenue Act in order to obviate this particular form of obstruction, if it becomes more general. As it is, things are in a very deplorable condition. In the report before me I see that during the year under review the total number of processes of all kinds amounted to 26,746, and this is considered satisfactory when compared with that of the previous year, which was no less than 39,314.

The unparalleled prosperity of which the late Viceroy sang may come in time. Meanwhile the ordinary Punjabi village is a mere cluster of mud-huts, lightless and airless, and separated from each other by malodorous lanes. The clay of which they are built is dug out of the tank which stagnates outside the village. To this tank repair the peasant's cattle to assuage their thirst, and his wife to wash his clothes. Beside this square of green

infection stands a small white mosque, and over it droops a many-stemmed peepul-tree, sheltering the turbaned elders assembled in smoking conclave of an evening. There, also, the hungry and wayworn traveller, whatever his creed or colour may be, finds a cool resting-place for his bones and food for his stomach. There is no village or hamlet in this barbarous land without its *boitakhana*—a humble little shrine of direct human Charity—that meek goddess who has been banished from the civilized West by philanthropy; so lavish is the Punjab peasant of the things which he himself seems to need so sorely. Yonder he trudges—an ascetic dark face with the eyes and the beak of a hawk, his head a mountain of many white, tight-twisted coils, from under which straggle his raven ringlets; his body much wrapped up in blankets, though his feet are bare, hardened both to the stones of the road and to the stings of the cold. He trudges along, coughing, with a rope in his hand, at which tugs a black goat as ascetic-looking as her master, dangling her long, empty udder below. He cannot afford even the luxury of rice, but lives on coarse Indian corn kneaded into flat cakes which would defy any but a Punjabi tooth, on salt, and on the curds which he owes to that lean goat.

The Old Resident informs me that the Rajput section of the population live in the enjoyment of perpetual bankruptcy and sempiternal slavery to the money-lender. Even the craftsmen and tradesmen in the towns can hardly make both ends meet, while their *confrères* in the villages are glad to be paid, if at all, in grain. For, despite the recent irrigation schemes, the Punjab and its inhabitants, be they land-owners, be they helots, still depend for their bread partly on brigandage and partly on Allah; and the ways of Allah are passing uncertain.

And yet the Punjab is a noble mother of heroes, from among whom is drawn the cream of the Indian Army. In its ranks find employment, honourable, profitable, and congenial, all the masculine sons of this land who are not patient enough to till the soil or unprincipled enough to

subsist on those who do so. Nor does the lighter side of Punjabi nature appear to suffer from the poverty and various plagues of the country. When the Mahomedans celebrate their *Shab Barat* the whole world is aware of the fact. Rough horse-play, reckless extravagance, and incendiarism, are the order of the night, which, according to the tenets of Islam, is a night in which the good and evil deeds done during the past year are weighed in the scales of heaven—a night to be spent in trembling and prayer by every true follower of the Prophet. The Punjabis prefer to spend it in a more heroic manner. Every year is heard a long tale of lives lost, eyes burnt out, hands scorched, beards singed, heads broken, and houses converted to ashes. So lively are these festivities, and so popular, that a Hindu proverb describes the man who enjoys ideal happiness as one passing his days as *Id* and his nights as *Shab Barat*.

Another point in the Punjabi character which indicates vivacity is the love for litigation—a point which is by some regarded as the result of substituting the rule of the law for the rule of the sword in a country unprepared for the change. The new rule, however, has not altered the Punjabi's old temper: it has only directed it into a new channel. The Punjabi still loves a feud dearly; but, instead of slaying his enemy, now he sues him. Says the Old Resident: 'A favourite device in the Punjab for overreaching an enemy seems to be to bring a charge for some petty offence under the Penal Code, and then, having given the victim as much worry as possible, quietly to withdraw the complaint at the last moment, or, better still, fail to put in an appearance on the day of trial. What do you think of that?'

I think it shows the Punjabi's remarkable susceptibility to the lessons of civilization.

CHAPTER VII

LAHORE

A LABYRINTH of tortuous alleys, dusky and dusty, creeping warily between tall, tottering houses which often shake hands overhead or even kiss each other across the street. Gloom and silence sleep together in these crooked lanes, you say to yourself, until a sharp corner brings you into the bazaar and its multifarious pandemonium. The long fast of the Ramazan, or, as it is here called, Roza, is just over, and the Faithful appear determined to make up for the lethargy of the last month. I cannot even attempt to draw a coherent description of a thing the very essence of which is delirious incoherency. But here are some of the component parts of the picture which unfolds itself to my eye as I cautiously worm my way through the dust: silversmiths and blacksmiths, book-shops and cook-shops, cobblers, tailors, smells, sweet or savoury, and smoke rising from under simmering pots. Women squat outside the shops calmly, with trays of sugar-cane pieces, or fruit, or paper flowers, or trinkets before them. A cow is feeding on the yellow floral decorations of a triumphal arch, which, to my mind, shows as plentiful a want of taste on the cow's part as the arch shows in the man who built it.

Turbaned and ringleted men jostle one another, buffaloes and bicycles are butting one another, and the liquid tinkling of tonga bells is heard amid the chanting of the street vendors and the sing-song benedictions of strings of fat beggars. Ladies press timidly against the sides of the street, and in their anxiety to escape the crush allow

their gold-broidered veils to reveal a portion of a baby face, not unpretty but for its freight of nose-rings. Up above, through the small windows of grimy, rickety, heavily-carved wooden balconies, peer keen black eyes of pale men, apparently only just recovering from the effects of fever or of the post-Ramazan feast, and here and there on a window-sill sits one of those females whose occupation is proclaimed partly by her superfluity of finery, partly by the white cloth which hangs outside the window.

Beneath these houses goes on the demoniacal dance of the bazaar, and amidst the noise, the dust, and the smoke, suddenly rises a marble or gold-domed mosque gleaming through the mid-day twilight, its aspiring minarets piercing their way up to freedom and the light of the sun to proclaim the might and unity of Allah. Not far off gapes the door of a Hindu temple, crowned with the picture of Kali in her necklace of human skulls. She is the wife of Siva—the All-Destroyer—patron of soldiers and ascetics. She is represented with four arms, one of which brandishes a sword and another a dripping head: a truly terrible goddess in blue, with bloody hands and lips and a belt of cut-off hands, trampling underfoot her husband and lord—by a mistake which, when she found it out, made her gnash her teeth and pull her tongue out, as she is depicted over yon gate. This amiable deity once claimed human sacrifices and obtained them; now, thanks to an unsympathetic infidel Government, she has to be content with kids.

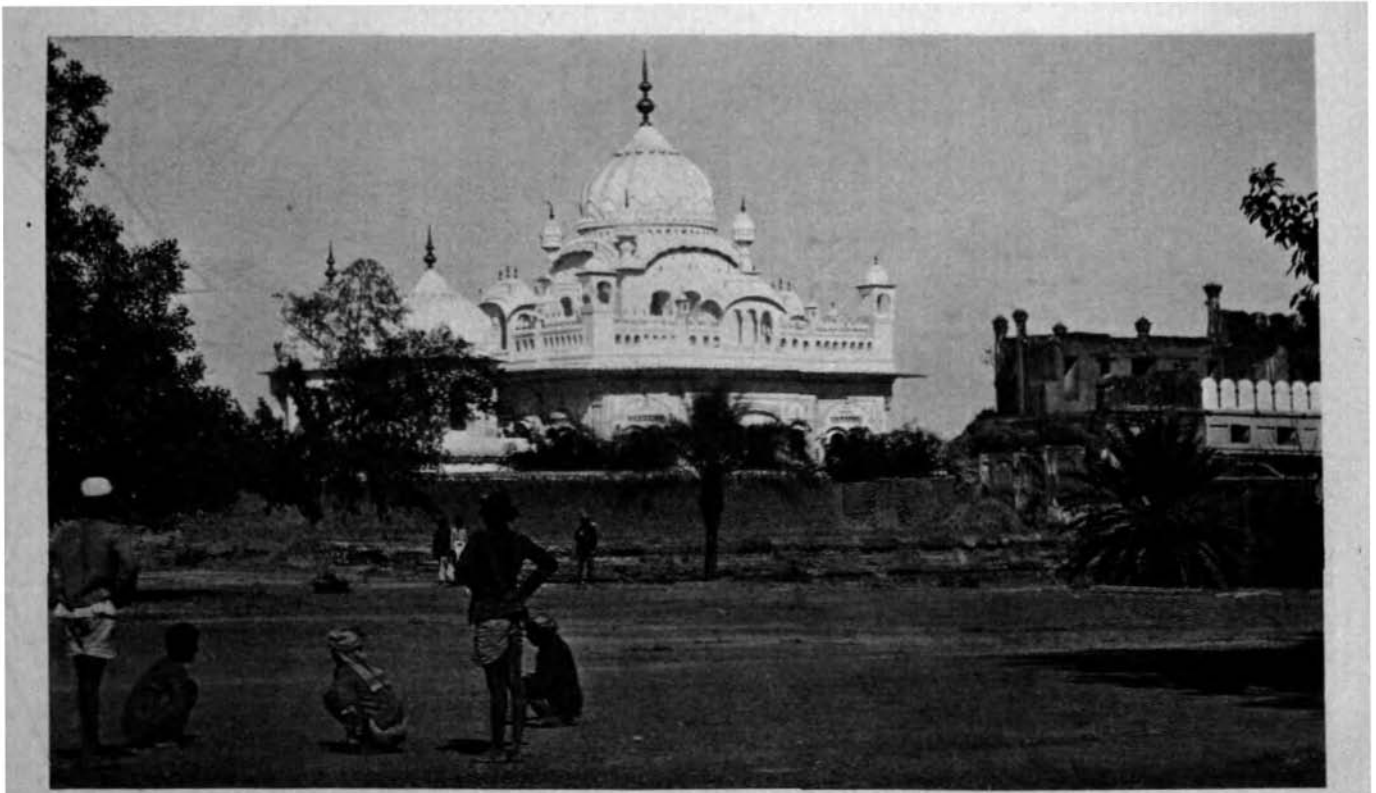
There are many of these and other shrines, all bearing on their faces the marks of many vicissitudes. For Lahore stands on the highroad from Afghanistan, and since Alexander the Great's day few invaders of India have omitted to pay an unfriendly call at the city. In the seventh century of our era the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim found Lahore, much to his bitterness, a citadel of the rival faith. A few years later the Crescent came from the North, and found Lahore the centre of a confederation prepared to defend the worship of Brahma—the four-

faced deification of prayer—of Vishnu, and of Siva, and their innumerable progeny, against the young creed of Mahomed.

For three centuries the native Rajas resisted the tide of Islam, but in the end the Sultan of Ghazni overcame Jai Pal of Lahore, who sought to forget his defeat in self-cremation. The Ghazni rulers were succeeded by the Moghul power. Under her new masters Lahore grew in size and splendour. Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, have all left behind them monuments commemorating their reigns and their architectural taste or lack of it. The great Akbar's fame especially survives in the fragments of the fortifications which still surround the old city in part, and in the heavy gateways under which I have passed, wondering at the curious mixture of Hindu and Saracenic styles.

The Moghuls had in their turn to give the city up to the even younger enthusiasm of the Hindu dissenters, Sikhs, under the leadership of Baba Nanak, whose memory was celebrated in these streets a fortnight ago with much ritual and beating of drums. With this sect came a period of remorseless spoliation and depopulation, of slaughter and general abomination, to end only with the establishment of Ranjit Singh's rule at the beginning of the nineteenth century—the rule of the Lion of the Punjab, whose tomb rears its domes yonder from amidst the green palms. In its centre stands a raised stone platform, on which is a large lotus-flower surrounded by eleven smaller ones. The central flower covers the ashes of the great monarch, and the others those of the four wives and seven slave girls who generously immolated themselves on his funeral pyre.

Thus I reach the Fort. I enter by a great gate, portions of the walls of which are still covered with brilliantly enamelled tiles. On the left stands the Pearl Mosque, built by Jahangir in 1598, now a block of empty whitewash. Further on I come to a small Sikh temple, then to the remnants of Akbar's palace and the Shish-



RANJIT SINGH'S TOMB, LAHORE.

mahal, or Hall of Mirrors, a deserted and dilapidated cloister, its walls adorned with enamels of blue flowers and goddesses of gold, whose lustre has long faded, its ceiling partly ruined by the recent earthquake and partly propped up by beams, and everywhere, on ceiling and walls alike, amongst the floral decorations, glint dimly the small mirrors to which the palace owes its name. I roam for a while over the empty halls, and see ragged camp-followers of the British garrison drowsing where prince and princess once lounged. I will not weary the reader with the melancholy ruins of the Sleeping Palace, whose pathos Sikh and Briton have vied in turning to ridicule. The visitor sees here a kiosk in which the Moghul Emperors once enjoyed the music and the breeze of the Ravi turned into a blatant mess-room, and there the cool cloisters in which romantic princes of yore dreamed dreams of idleness and joys Elysian now accommodating the cockney soldiers of the West. To a similar treatment has been subjected the famous mausoleum of Jahangir, now surmounted by an English skylight.

Another imperial tomb—the sleeping-hall of Shah Jahan—has been transformed into an English church, its Saracenic dome replaced by a spurious Gothic spire. Even more adventurous has been the history of the mosque of Dayanga. Converted first by Ranjit Singh from a house of prayer into a powder-magazine, it ended by becoming the office of the Railway Traffic Superintendent. Lord Curzon has done his utmost to make amends to these buildings for the humiliation inflicted upon them. But it is too late. The dainty edifices in which sleep Nur-Jahan, 'The Light of the World,' the wife of the Emperor's bosom, and her brother, Asaf Khan, denuded of their marble facings and multi-coloured enamels by the hands of Sikh robbers, are habitations of desolation and desecration, the former being now used as a cattle-pen. The Moti Masjid of Jehangir, however, till lately buried in the brick ineptitudes of the Government Treasury, has, thanks to Lord Curzon, once more

risen from the dead—a superb structure of spotless marble. Right and left, up and down, over palace, temple, and tomb, turn whithersoever you may, you see the hand of vandalism and decay. Fortune seems to have written over the city of Lahore in great black letters the mournful moral: *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

As I leave this home of unclean and unvenerable senility, my ears continue to ring with the dolorous strains of the beggars. In other countries beggars are made. In Hindustan many are born beggars, even as many others are born priests, poets, or lepers. They constitute a great caste, honoured and prosperous; also a prolific one, and their numerous progeny deserve all the sympathy which their parents have forfeited. Those who have taken the trouble to enter into the intimate life of Indian mendicity draw a pitiful picture of these little beggars, who, or which, exist somehow, as do the stray dogs and cats of the land, in verminous independence, nakedness, and semi-starvation, growing up into highly useless members of society, suspicious and suspected of all honest folk, uncared for and careless of the world and its canons of decency.

However, even Indian mendicity is not invariably a hereditary trade. Like other forms of disease, it is capable of transmission. The sight of one flourishing beggar begets a score. Nor is infection always fortuitous. The mendicants of India are a missionary sect, and, like other persons in possession of a satisfactory gospel, they like to disseminate it. Many of them carry on a systematic propaganda, inducing by precept as well as by example enthusiastic youths to follow them *in statu pupillari* and to beg for them. After a few years' apprenticeship, the novice sets up in practice on his own account. The results of the mission are most encouraging. According to the census of 1901, there are no fewer than 5,200,000 fully-qualified beggars in India—*i.e.*, in this happy land one man out of every fifty is supported in life-long laziness by the labour of the rest. This normal multitude grows indefinitely in times of agricultural distress. The faintest

sign of approaching famine, or even scarcity, sends beggary up. For this periodical multiplication of the pest the credit is due partly to native benevolence and partly to the native conception of a good investment.

The duty of almsgiving has ever been a prominent tenet of Eastern morality, and, where morality means revealed religion, it is a tenet hallowed by the authority of inspired lawgivers. It figures very largely in the Laws of Manu, of Moses, and of Mahomed. In later Hebrew the very word for 'righteousness' came to mean 'charity.' As the wise man has well said, 'Since to keep the commandments is the best insurance for life, the giving of alms is an obvious measure of enlightened self-interest.'

> 'Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee
> Repaid a thousandfold will be;
> Then gladly will we give to Thee.'

The sentiment is altogether in the spirit of Indian beneficence, save that an Indian might think the 'thousandfold' expectation unduly sanguine.

The Indian beggar knows his Laws of Manu, or, at all events, his countrymen. Besides, thanks to his training of centuries, he has developed a faculty for finding out the charitably disposed which almost amounts to second sight. Like vultures which have scented a carcass, or flies suddenly aware of a broken jam-pot, the beggars swarm with their wives and their children and fall upon the pies and rice and grain which the pious, anxious to propitiate the goddess of Good Luck, are distributing with a business-like care that certain outlay shall not exceed problematical returns.

In Lahore there are legions of beggars, varying in age from a hundred years to one week. The city is divided by them into sections, just as Constantinople is divided by the pariah curs and London by the Metropolitan Police. But, unlike Turkish curs and English constables, these Punjabi beggars do not limit themselves to their respective beats. The division is only a proof of their power of organization, enabling them to fleece the whole town

methodically. Each section is regularly invaded on a particular day by the whole troop. You see them, a mighty phalanx of foul raggedness, bowl in one hand and in the other a long staff held as a king holds his sceptre, as Mercury held his caduceus and Circe her wand: it is an emblem of authority, or an implement of extortion, as strong as it is simple, and as simple as it is dirty. They need it not for support; for, old as most of them look, they are all living types of health and good-humour. And how fastidious they are! From a 'stranger' they will accept nothing but innocent coin, food being forbidden by their religious scruples. But with their own coreligionists they take all the liberties that are sanctioned by community of past transmigrations and of hopes for similar adventures in the future, assisted by the democratic socialism of the East. It not rarely happens that a beggar belongs to a caste superior to that of the wealthy person whom he afflicts with his importunity. In that case there are no limits to his capacity for patronizing his benefactor.

I comment to my platitudinarian friend on these things, and he enlarges on the benefits of the British rule. I do not quarrel with him, partly because it is not worth my while to quarrel with anyone, and partly because I am the last person in the world to deny those benefits, such as they are. But perhaps the best gift which the British rule has hitherto conferred on the people of the Punjab—a gift the value of which cannot be appraised in rupees or pounds, and one which is likely to prove prolific of more kinds than corn, cotton, horses, and camels—is the freedom to think as they choose and to say what they think. This was illustrated here in Lahore a few weeks ago when a meeting of the natives was held, under the auspices of the Indian Association, to protest against the proposal of the Municipality to present a farewell address and a costly casket to Lord Curzon.

The meeting was attended by fifteen hundred persons. Rai Sahib Sukh Dial occupied the chair, and, in almost the only English speech of the evening, said that the

people of Lahore had no hesitation in honouring Lord Curzon as the representative of the King-Emperor, but there was a strong feeling against honouring Lord Curzon in his individual capacity. There had been some Viceroys, impervious and reactionary—for example, Lords Lytton and Dufferin—but no one, except Lord Curzon, had ever thought of insulting or offending the susceptibilities of the people by calling them liars, hypocrites, and the like. He had gone to the extent of saying even that their religious books did not teach unadulterated truths. To honour such an individual must be antagonistic to the feelings of the people, yet the city fathers thought it advisable to vote the presentation of an address enclosed in a casket which was to cost no less than Rs. 2,000. Their duty as ratepayers was to protest against such a proposal. Resolutions in the sense of the above were proposed and carried with acclamation.

After this, who can accuse the Indians of servility, or of want of practical common-sense? What becomes of my platitudinarian friend's belief in the Eastern mind's adoration of persons? The objection in this case was to the late Viceroy's personality, not to the Government which he represented. The latter, in the abstract, is highly popular in Lahore, and the other day, when the Sikhs observed the anniversary of their founder's birth, among the prayers, sermons, and praises of the great Guru Nanak there was a special thanksgiving for the British Raj. But loyalty to the semi-awakened citizens of Lahore no longer means idolatry. The Indians are slowly beginning to know their own minds. At this moment the city is full of rumours of impending strikes on the part of meat-sellers, dealers in *atta* and *ghee*, and other mortals who love the luxury of grievances. It is even whispered that the trading community meditates a general *harta* with a view to drawing the Prince of Wales's attention to their wrongs; and, meanwhile, there is a scarcity of vegetables, owing to the greengrocers' keen sense of what is due to themselves. Verily, India is growing shockingly civilized.

This morning I visited the camp where the chiefs of the Punjab are assembled to honour the Prince. The camp is really a city of canvas, each tent a palace of silk, brocade of gold, and silver; and the inmates are as magnificent as their tents, each followed by a troop of gorgeous retainers, elephants in jewel-embroidered coverings and canopies, camels and horses. The fourteen-year-old Maharaja of Patiala, still a pupil in the Aitchison College, outshines them all by splendour of apparel and multitude of following. His cavalry forms an ornament to the Imperial Service troops, and their gallop past the Prince of Wales was a thing only less memorable than the trot of the camel corps. The other princes are also doing their best to shine. I had already seen them and scores of nobles of lower rank the other evening at the reception. Many of them overpowered me by their super-human bulk, as well as by their ropes of pearls and strings of diamonds. Some literally waddled up to the Prince's daïs, clumsy with superabundance of flesh, and others tottered under the weight of gold. A few limped, but whether through gout or some peculiar notion of dignity I cannot say.

A dismal howl is borne to my ears on the cold night air. Beggars again!

Yes, I must say a few more words on this fascinating subject at the risk of driving one half of my readers to despair and the other half to sleep. In the evening the Mahomedan tribe succeeds to the Hindu, and the staff is exchanged for a lantern. Before setting forth on his nocturnal tour of depredation, each sturdy vagabond makes up his mind how much money he means to earn, and he registers a solemn vow that, by Allah and his Prophet, he will not taste sleep, or let anyone else do so, until the appointed sum is collected. Thus fortified with a good resolution, he sallies forth, and, as the night progresses, he tests the true believer's charity and endurance by crying out at the top of his voice the balance still due. The later it grows,

THE MAHARAJA OF BAHAWALPUR'S CAMEL CORPS, LAHORE

the stronger his chances of success, for who, true believer or other, would not pay any sum to stop the infernal howl?

Who, save my gifted Sister Lucretia? She will tell you in her charming manner that 'there is something solemn in waking from sleep to hear the name of Allah cried beneath the stars in a kind of perpetual adoration.' Such is the divine gift of idealization. But, alas! we are not all gifted, or divine, or even feminine. To my Sister the Indian beggar is an itinerant apostle, 'carrying the highest culture far and wide.' To me he is a pestiferous peripatetic, disseminating disease and discontent far and wide. To her his whinings are sacred hymns, 'quaint and simple, full of what we in Europe call the Celtic spirit.' To me they are abominable interruptions of hard-earned rest. She reveres the Indian beggar, 'even in his lowest aspect,' as 'the conserver of the folk-poetry of his country.' I, fond of folk-poetry though I be, detest him as the conserver of the superstition and sloth of his country. To her he is one who leaves behind him 'strange memories.' To me he is one who leaves behind him strange smells and thoughts homicidal.

She contemplates one of these 'religious teachers' with angelic rapture: 'his whole face spoke knowledge, standing at the door one noon and asking alms.' In the native old woman's regard for the sacred rascal my Sister sees 'a trace of the feeling that paints the Great God as a beggar.' It is very pretty, very pathetic, and so forth, but it won't do. I prefer a more respectable god, and the most intelligent of the very people whose sentiments the good Sister believes herself to be interpreting share my prosaic predilection. Every Indian above the intellectual level of an old woman is now alive both to the private vexation and to the public burden, as well as to the sanitary peril, which these hordes of holy idlers constitute. May Allah have mercy upon them, for there is none in my soul, embittered by the loss of a good night's oblivion!

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

As we sped on from Lahore and its myriad discomforts in the spacious carriages of the North-Western train, it was sweet to think of the sore-foot pilgrims who in the good old days journeyed the same way under conditions so picturesque and so painful. For this is the road of the great Moghul Emperors, planned by the genial Padishah Babar, from Agra, through Lahore, on to distant Kabul. A seventeenth-century Englishman, who accompanied King James I.'s embassy to Jahangir's Court, describes this highway of the past as an avenue 400 miles long, of shade and coolness; but, unless the climate of the Punjab has in the meantime undergone a radical reformation, I refuse to believe my illustrious predecessor. Perhaps he wrote his account some time before he set out on his journey, or a long time afterwards.

Be that as it may, I cannot resist the temptation of trying to conjure up some dim picture of things as they were, for at this moment I have nothing better to do. Some help to the imagination is afforded by the few faint patches of this once magnificent work still discernible here and there. But the best stimulus is the Padishah's own statement. 'On Thursday, the 4th of *Rebia thani*,' says Babar in his 'Memoirs,' 'I commanded Tchikmak Bey to measure the distance from Agra to Kabul; at every nine *kos* to raise a tower, twelve *gez* in height, and on the top of each to construct a kiosk; at every ten *kos* to build a *dak-chauki*, or post-house, for six horses; to fix a certain provision for the post-house-keepers; couriers

and grooms, and horses.' How surprised poor Babar and his post-house-keepers would be could they see us thundering past their superannuated milestones!

Those were brave days, indeed; yet not wholly unwise also was the preacher who preached that 'better is the sight of the eyes than the walking of the soul.' And my soul at this moment is quite content to let my eyes walk alone over the parched fields of the Punjab, and the large tracts which do not even pretend to be fields, but turn their honest, salt-encrusted faces frankly to the sun.

And so we reach Peshawar, the utmost limit of the British railway and rule. It is a mud-walled city, comparatively young and beyond comparison decrepit. Its main thoroughfares are broad, and the buildings which line them inconceivably ignoble. Sun-baked brick and reed, plastered over with mud, succeed to and are succeeded by wooden casements, hoary with the dust of decay. Where the plaster has fallen off, the gap is filled by the unkempt heads of women and children. The streets below swarm with the turbans of many countries—Afghanistan, Turkestan, Persia, and India. Most numerous among them are the Afghan traders—great white men with thin lips and keen noses, in baggy trousers of coarse cotton cloth, sheepskins, or loose cloaks in plentiful need of dye, and black beards died abundantly red. They are only less shaggy than their own pack-horses, which defile through the streets loaded with the silks and the spices of Kabul, bound southward. The women you meet in the open air are few but uninteresting, a dirty cotton sack covering them from top to toe, with only two latticed holes somewhere about the place where the eyes, or eye, may be situated—thus effectively saving the wearer from free respiration and the spectator from æsthetic disillusion. The young girls go about in their baggy trousers, bare-faced, bare-footed, and unwashed. One of them looked at me out of one gray eye, and I wondered how she came by it, for gray eyes do not grow on the Afghan frontier.

I stroll through the bazaar, seeing here fruit-shops

resplendent with apples and pears, dates, pomegranates, and the golden glory of melons, while outside sherbet-sellers promise rosy refreshment to every thirsty soul for the humblest of considerations. Further on coppersmiths are hammering at red pots and urns, while cutlers are sharpening the blades which contribute so much to the turbulence of the district, and bakers are imprinting the finishing finger-holes into those flat cakes of unleavened bread which in Turkey are called Ramazan-pies. I pass cupboards gaily draped in bright-coloured kerchiefs and carpets, gold-broidered skull-caps and slippers, and pause in awe before a row of money-changers, each cross-legged under a thatch of green palm boughs, with a mound of silver and copper coins heaped ostentatiously in front of him. There sits the venerable *saraf*, gravely awaiting whom he may cheat.

I proceed on my walk between clean-fleeced sheep, tethered to plane-trees whose foliage is touched with the yellow, cold fingers of winter, and queer Pathans astride on clumsy buffaloes, a rope through the beast's nostrils serving as rein and a bottle of water hanging from what I may, for convention's sake, designate as saddle-bow. Here and there I am jostled by a man bending under a load of firewood, or a donkey brushes me, carrying upon its patient back two jars of sour, curdled milk, which reminds me of the *yaoot* of Turkey, while close by simmers a tea-urn that reminds me of the *samovar* of Russia. And here, again, is a row of butchers' shops with the carcasses of newly-slain sheep and goats suspended outside, blood-stained and fly-blown. In one place I hear the merits of a pair of woollen socks extolled in the flowery language of a Persian poet, and in another the genuineness of a silver coin attested by a direct appeal to Allah and his Prophet. But, though there are many rascals in Peshawar, I can see no beggars. These noble Pathans do not waste their time on begging. They take what they want.

But they are true believers for all that. Here a little boy sits immersed in a big book of sacred lore, and there

a group of big boys are quarrelling over a game at cards; and on the rush-thatch over their heads roost many fat, contented-looking hens, and a Mahomedan cock struts amongst his harem, lifting his shrill throat over the vulgar noises of the bazaar. I pass shops in which deft brown fingers plait mats or baskets, and shops in which white jasmine blossoms are strung into sweet-scented wreaths. I see here idlers puffing solemnly at long-tubed narghilés, there tradesmen studying their long ledgers, and muftis on the flat roofs of the mosques reciting the *suras* of the Koran.

There is little of India here. Everything—the salaams of the men and the veils of the women, the trees, the sheep, the shops and the sherbet, the sounds, the smells, the faces and the food of the people—wafts me back to the cities of the Near East.

Suddenly something hard touches my elbow, and, on turning round, I behold a small basket let down by a long rope from a small window by an invisible lady, and beneath stands a fruit-seller. It is the Peshawar fashion of conducting commercial transactions.

Roused to the present, I observe before me a white edifice with minarets and pinnacles and texts in Persian characters. I take it for a mosque, until a gilt cross flashing from the top of a dome, where the crescent should be, induces the suspicion that it is only a church diplomatically disguised. I enter, and am told that it is in very truth All Saints', belonging to the Church Missionary Society. I ask if there is an English clergyman, and am conducted to him—a gray-bearded Afghan in turban, baggy breeches, and no socks.

'Are you the English clergyman?' I ask gravely.

'Yes, one of them,' he answers, not less gravely.

He courteously shows me over the building, and my eyes travel over the Creed in Persian, prayers in Pashtu, and hymn-books and Bibles in both languages. In one of the former I read:

'Kya-hi ajib aur be-giyas!' etc.,

which being interpreted is:

'It is a thing most wonderful!' etc.

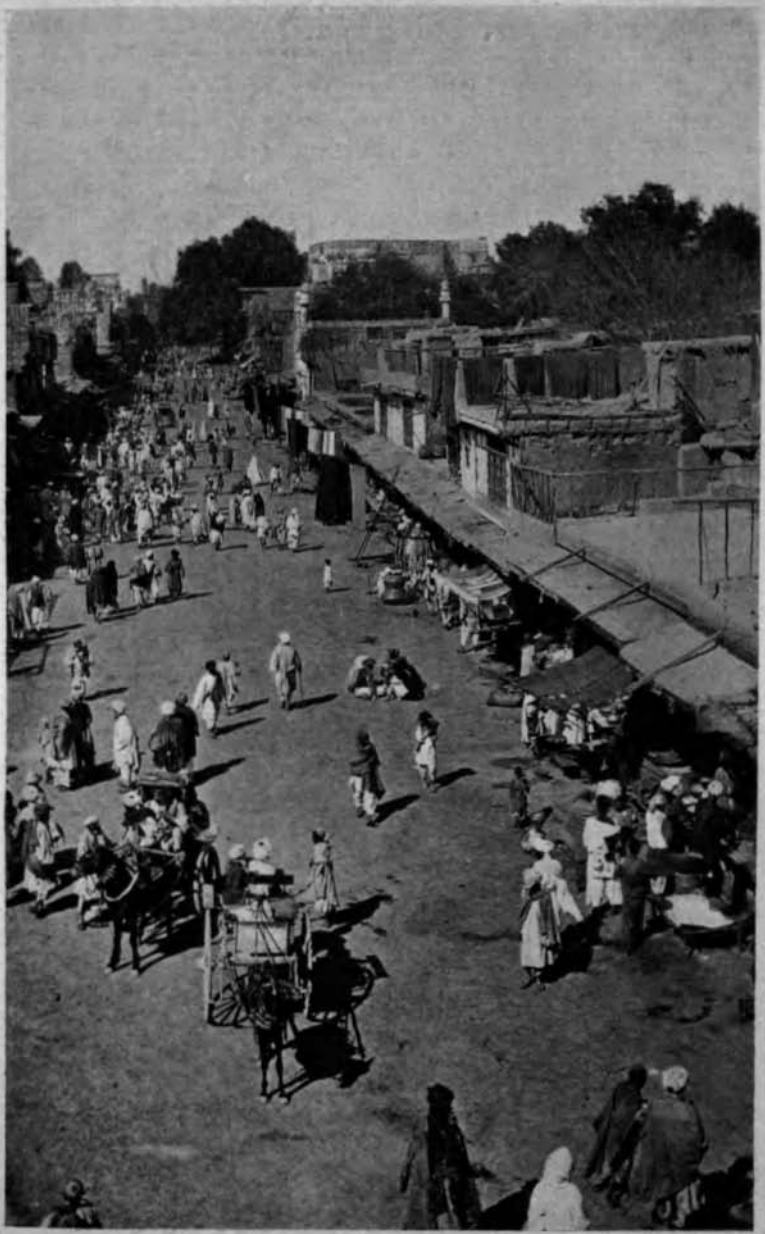
Verily it is.

The mission, I am informed, is to the Afghans, who believe themselves to be the lost tribes of Israel. People in this part of the world will believe anything provided it is sufficiently improbable. But the missionaries, who for servants of the spirit exhibit wonderful *savoir faire*, have turned this harmless belief to good account. Inside the church I see a tablet dedicated to the memory of one Rev. Isidore Lowenthal—as his name indicates, a Christian apostle of Semitic antecedents. The Old Resident confirms my philological deduction. He also tells me that this Christian Jewish messenger to the lost tribes of his race was shot by his watchman in 1864, adding that his original epitaph ran as follows:

'To the memory of Isidore Lowenthal. He was shot by his watchman. Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'

Just opposite this mosque-church I see a real Mahomedan shrine. A blind preacher is sitting in the cloister, with a dozen pious beards in front of him. He chants a hymn, swaying forwards and backwards, and the dozen beards sway in chorus. And the muezzin's voice comes from a neighbouring minâret proclaiming to the four quarters of the globe that, though there be many prophets, there is but one God.

In the East the step from theology to politics is short. I therefore make no apology—not even that feeble apology for an apology conveyed by what printers call a 'white line.' Peshawar is the capital of the newly-created and much-discussed North-West Frontier Province—a region interesting in a variety of ways, divorced from the Punjab by Lord Curzon. The late Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab regarded the separation with strong disapproval. He thought that, owing partly to the difficulty of recruiting and maintaining a service on so small a scale as that required for the new jurisdiction, and partly to the pre-



STREET IN PESHAWAR.

ponderating attention which the head of the province is obliged to give to the political department, the internal administration of the district would suffer. In short, he pronounced the divorce the most brilliant blunder of the past decade.

I am not in a position to express an opinion as to how far His Honour's pessimistic predictions have been fulfilled. Yet it is patent to anyone that the province, whether for the reasons mentioned or through its geographical situation, or on both accounts, is anything but a paradise of order.

Here are a few samples of the *Pax Britannica* as it is understood in this part of the British Empire.

For some time past the residents of Matni, a village on the Kohat road, fourteen miles distant from Peshawar, have been having a bad time at the hands of dacoits. The brigands consist of Afridis and fugitives from British territory, and go about armed with rifles and swords. Towards the end of last month seven men from Matni had occasion to go into the adjoining foreign territory. They were armed, but this did not save them from being attacked by a gang of Afridi freebooters. The brigands killed one man and carried away three rifles and a number of cartridges. On hearing of the occurrence, the Thanadar at the village in question set out in pursuit of the dacoits in company with several armed men. A band of the Border Military Police also started out on the same quest, but the culprits are still 'wanted.' Only the other night a party of some fifty tribesmen made a determined attack upon one of the outposts of Fort Lockhart, on the Samana range to the west of Kohat. The post was strongly held by a guard of the Punjabi regiment in garrison upon the ridge, and the raiders were driven off after five hours' firing. Four of the defenders, however, were wounded.

But even in the city itself there is no lack of local colour. An officer has just been telling me that only last night, having received information of a gang of brigands intending to hold their rendezvous in a neighbouring garden,

he went to the place with a force of sixty to waylay the gentlemen. They, however, apparently as well informed of the movements of the authorities as the latter are of theirs, failed to keep the appointment.

Such little affairs with Pathan brigands are too trivial and too common even to supply a decent topic of conversation, and my friend immediately plunged into the more interesting subject of hounds. Nor could I blame him for his frivolity. He is too familiar with the Pathan people and their ways. The Pathan generally regards the revenue demand as an inconvenient obligation, to be evaded as long as possible. In this, however, he is not singular. Nor, considering the social conditions of his country, is it to be wondered at that he entertains a lofty contempt for any system of economic cultivation. Like most primitive peasants, he prefers to rely as much as possible on Providence—a beautiful resignation to the divine will which possesses the advantage of rendering exertion superfluous. But the ways of Providence are proverbially inscrutable, and when the natural supply of water fails the pious Pathan finds himself in an awkward position. Thus last year, even in the trans-border tracts, where cultivation is dependent less on the actual rainfall and more on the springs and snow-fed hill-streams, a diminution of the volume of the latter has had an immediate and fatal effect on the peasant's life, so much so that it has compelled the importation of grain from the settled districts. Where agriculture languishes brigandage must flourish.

At this moment Peshawar is full of Pathan beards from all parts of Afghanistan, anxious to work on the railway line by day and, perchance, in another way by night. For to all his other virtues the Pathan adds a keen scent for profit. Even the far-away Ghazni and Kandahar have sent legions of gold-braided contractors, eager with their offers of coolies. They look peaceful enough, for my genial military friend tells me, with a wink, that the police have taken good care to lock up all persons suspected of excessive vivacity: 'We cannot afford to run any risks now the

Prince is here.' For the same reason the streets are lined by the Black Watch, the Gordon Highlanders, and native troops. Ah, Peshawar is a place brimming with vitality.

Another rich fountain of disorder in the province is the chronic unrest which prevails across the border. Lawlessness is infectious. When a tribe is in an unsatisfactory state, or a gang of outlaws is committing depredations in British territory, not only do the raids by these help to swell the list of crime, but in many cases advantage is taken by local bad characters to commit outrages, in the hope, very often fulfilled, that their offences will be credited to the offending tribesmen or to the outlaws. However, in dealing with the prevalence of crime in India it is never quite safe to go entirely by official statistics. One must bear constantly in mind another feature of the people's character. A large proportion of complaints is always either false or frivolous. Nor, it must be added, does conviction invariably prove guilt. The authorities are, of course, doing their utmost to mete out justice and nothing but justice; but even their vigilance cannot always cope successfully with the malice and mendacity of interested parties.

Nor is the number of prisoners an infallible criterion of indigenous criminality. Thus the overcrowding in some of the gaols here is largely due to punitive measures. The pressure brought to bear on the tribes results in the surrender of a large number of outlaws and persons accused of various breaches of the Ten Commandments. These punitive expeditions generally have a salutary, if temporary, effect. Last March, for example, the raid made by Major Roos-Keppel, Political Officer in the Khyber, upon the village of Kaddam, near Jamrud, impressed the outlaws who haunt the strip of 'no-man's-land' on the Peshawar border. This was the first time for many years that a surprise had been sprung upon the villages beyond the administrative frontier, and the success which attended it alarmed the lawless bands that deemed themselves safe from molestation. Attacks upon villages

or police posts in British territory suddenly ceased. The Afridis also evinced an inclination to surrender men who were 'wanted' for murder or theft; and, where the offender escaped into Afghanistan, he was warned not to return by the simple expedient of burning his house to the ground.

Rough-and-ready measures are still the order of the day in the Borderland, but they are understood by the tribesmen, and this is their best justification. But the wholesome effect is only momentary. The peril of raids from across the frontier only disappears at the approach of winter. The snows succeed where the police has failed. In November the Afridis, the most interesting and most distressing member of the turbulent frontier family, begin to bring their flocks and herds down to winter in the grazing-grounds. Even the most discontented sections will not run risks at this time of the year, knowing that the lower valleys will be open to counter-attack.

More serious sources of trouble are the mutual jealousies of the tribes and puny Native States along the frontier. But here also the political situation is largely a matter of temperature. The winter of 1904 was one of the severest throughout Upper and Central India. In the United Provinces, Central Provinces, the Punjab, Rajputana, and Bombay Presidency, the frost destroyed the crops of *arhar*, in some districts partially, in others entirely. The tobacco crop, the opium crop, the cotton crop, and all standing crops, suffered severely. The only people who profited were the tribes in the hinterland beyond the administrative border in Northern India. Waziristan and Kurram were frost-bound; Tirah was covered by 6 feet of snow. The tribesmen's fighting ardour was quelled beneath the cold sheet of snow and frost, and Nature brought a truce to the interminable clan feuds. Shiah and Sunni, in the Orakzai and Afridi districts, for once were bound to keep the peace, while in Bajor hostilities between Nawagai and Dir ceased. The tribes looked forward to a plentiful harvest, for the deep snow in the spring thaws

into plentiful water. God is good and impartial. And both the snows and the promises of good crops came opportunely.

But the cold is transient, whereas the passions of the frontier clans are permanent. Internally each tribe is governed on extremely democratic principles. There always is a party in power and a party in opposition. The latter, in the more primitive districts, when defeated, have to go into exile. There they intrigue, and, when sufficiently strong, invade their country and turn the Government out. Among the more advanced tribes there is no bloodshed attending the change of Government. The contest is sensibly decided by the mere exhibition of the rival forces, and the defeated party does not leave the country, but simply regards itself as being in exile, until it manages to regain the confidence of the majority. In many of these tribes, I am assured by those who know, the gray-beards gathered in parliament could, by their decorum and eloquence, give many lessons to our House of Commons politicians. The ideal man among them is, just as he was among the Homeric Greeks, one who excels as *rerum actor et orator verborum*—by his valour in the field and eloquence in council. But the warfare between tribe and tribe knows no decency.

Nor is decency a prominent characteristic of the feuds between the frontier kinglets. One of them was a short time ago troubled with doubts as to the succession. He therefore invited all the possible claimants to a banquet and, leaving them on some pretext or other, set fire to the room. All the guests were burnt to death, and thus the question was solved satisfactorily. This believer in thoroughness is at the present moment here salaaming to the Prince. He is one of many statesmen of the same school.

I saw a number of them the other day in the Fort, where they had assembled to pay homage to the Prince. They were all duly turbaned, bearded, and baggy-breeched; some stood in patent boots, others in gold-broidered slippers with long points turned saucily upwards, and

others candidly bare-footed. Among them I noted with peculiar interest the Nawab of Dir, the Mehter of Chitral, and the Khan of Nawagai—a triad of mutual abhorrence who appear to have agreed to differ for the moment. The Nawab of Dir deserves special mention, both for his own sake and also because his kingdom has recently achieved a great eminence in turpitude. He is a young man—deaf and almost dumb. But, as the Old Resident prettily remarked to me, 'it does not really matter, for he is sure to be murdered in a couple of months or so.'

'Murdered!' said I, casting a look of increased curiosity at His Highness; 'by whom?'

'His younger brother. According to the custom of the country, the boys are not brought up by their own parents, but are sent out to foster-fathers. The foster-father entrusted with the education of the younger prince has brought him up carefully to thirst for his brother's blood and throne.'

In brief the story is as follows: The old Nawab of Dir, after a long and not uneventful career, died last year—strangely enough, from natural causes. He was a great friend of ours, and gave valuable assistance to Sir Robert Low's expedition when it forced its way over the Malakand Pass to relieve Chitral in 1895. He again proved his stanchness in the dark days of 1897, when the Mullah, whom we were pleased to consider mad as long as his reasoning differed from ours, raised the whole of the inhabitants of the Swat Valley to attack the British, and when the Malakand camp and the little Chakdarra fort were, as everybody remembers—or, rather, does not—closely besieged for the better part of a week. He was rewarded for these services with lands and titles; and the kingdom of Dir to-day is a very different place from the little khanate which was all that had escaped the greedy claws of Sher Afzal and the Mehter of Chitral in 1895, the difference consisting chiefly in increased size.

The old Nawab's death, though, as I have ventured to assert, quite natural, was well-timed. Had it occurred a

few weeks earlier, when his two sons were fighting over the claim to succeed him, and the State's hereditary enemy, the Khan of Nawagai, was raiding on the border, things might have gone badly with the little kingdom. As it was, the younger son was in exile, the Khan of Nawagai had been repulsed, and the eldest son remained in possession, in accordance, it is said, with the wishes of the old Nawab. The Government of India gladly acquiesced in the arrangement, hoping that the new Nawab may follow in the friendly footsteps of his father. It is very important that he should do so, for the direct road from India to Chitral runs, for the greater portion of its length, through Dir territory. But he is a man of many infirmities, and, what with the newness of his accession, his extensive imbecility, and his brother, he does not appear to promise either a long life to himself or lasting peace to us. Besides, there are the Mehter of Chitral and the Khan of Nawagai to be reckoned with, and they both are known to be inspired by the most lively jealousy of the Nawab of Dir.

The Khan of Nawagai especially is a person whose moods from day to day it is as hazardous to forecast as are those of the weather, and his activity is as far-reaching and elusive. Not long ago he was warned by the political authorities that he must abstain from mischief in Bajor. To compensate himself for this limitation of freedom, he attacked forts in Jandoul belonging to the Nawab of Dir, and there was much intertribal fighting, that caused unrest throughout the country west of the Chakdarra-Chitral Road. What makes things more precarious still, the Jandoulis themselves have little affection for either suitor to their allegiance, and they would certainly welcome back their old chief, Umra Khan, could he escape from Kabul. They were forced to accept absorption into the Dir State in 1895, but they have never been contented with their new lot, and it is supposed that the Khan of Nawagai has some secret adherents among them. Hence his success in his last adventure, when he all but

managed to invade poor distracted Dir, whose imbecile Nawab endures our moral support. Merely moral, for at present it is not the Indian Government's wish to embark on adventures.

In October, 1904, the regular troops beyond the administrative border were withdrawn, and the responsibility of keeping the peace was left to the militia, who have hitherto proved equal to the task. The Old Resident, however, warns me that 'it is never safe to make predictions as to the behaviour of this or that lawless tribe, and more particularly of the clans which inhabit Waziristan; but the principle that has been adopted is sound enough in itself, and it is now being given a fair trial. From the military point of view the concentration of strength is admirable; it remains to be seen whether political control can be maintained with only militia immediately at hand to check disorder and prevent raiding parties from adventuring into our settled districts on the Borderland.'

Meanwhile, when the relief of the garrisons takes place at the beginning of winter, no little anxiety is felt whether they will ever reach their destination. Thus, last month it was announced, as an unexpectedly lucky accident, that the Chitral relieving troops reached Drosh Fort all well, and the British garrison, which had held that distant post during the preceding twelvemonth, started safely on its return to India. No danger was experienced on its homeward march, as Dir is for the moment quiet, and the turbulent Swat tribesmen were too busy with their crops to seek other kind of harvest.

Of course, things will improve when the system of strategic railways has attained a higher development. But this development has been uncommonly slow since the completion of the broad-gauge line to New Chaman in the direction of Kandahar. Lord Curzon, in his 'Russia in Central Asia,' published in 1889, wrote: 'It was proposed after the second Afghan War to continue the rails from Peshawar up the Khyber Pass to Landi

Kotal. This project has since been abandoned, and a limited extension, only ten miles in length, within British territory from Peshawar to Jamrud at the mouth of the pass, has been authorized.' The short line to Jamrud, authorized before 1889, was not opened for traffic until 1901, while the Shilman extension was only begun the other day. But, according to those who approve of this policy, better late than never. The new railway will, in the opinion of experts, be of the highest strategic importance. The Old Resident even hopes that the Amir of Afghanistan may be induced to permit of an extension of the line through his territory. At present, however, he, like his father, displays towards roads and railways an antipathy which may, for all I know to the contrary, be as wholesome as any other instinctive aversion.

Meanwhile the Shilman line progresses satisfactorily. The Afridis have so far expressed no objection, and their headmen appear disposed not to interfere with an enterprise which does not concern them directly. It would have been different if the line had been projected up the Khyber Pass straight to Landi Kotal. As it is, I heard the evening before our visit to the pass that an enterprising Afridi had, during the previous night, built a wall across the pass as a protest against the Prince's visit. This story, however, did not deter those charged with the organization of the expedition to the defile which, according to certain prophets, is to be the gate of the ever-predicted and ever-deferred invasion of India.

We left Peshawar Station at 8.30 in the morning, a royal train plus a carriageful of Press correspondents. Soon we left behind the proud British cantonments, with their solid houses, well-trimmed lawns, and rose-trees, and the crumpling mud walls of the native town. Nor did we regret either. The sun just glided over the blue mountains, suffusing the clouds with silver. The dome of a temple loomed dull and dark against the gray heavens from amidst the woods, every twig of which stood out distinct in the clear winter air. Below, the valley spread

its carpet of green and gold, and on the white road numbers of black buffaloes could be seen sweeping the dust with their loads of long sugar-cane, led by peasants in gray blankets and coarse white cloaks, shivering townwards.

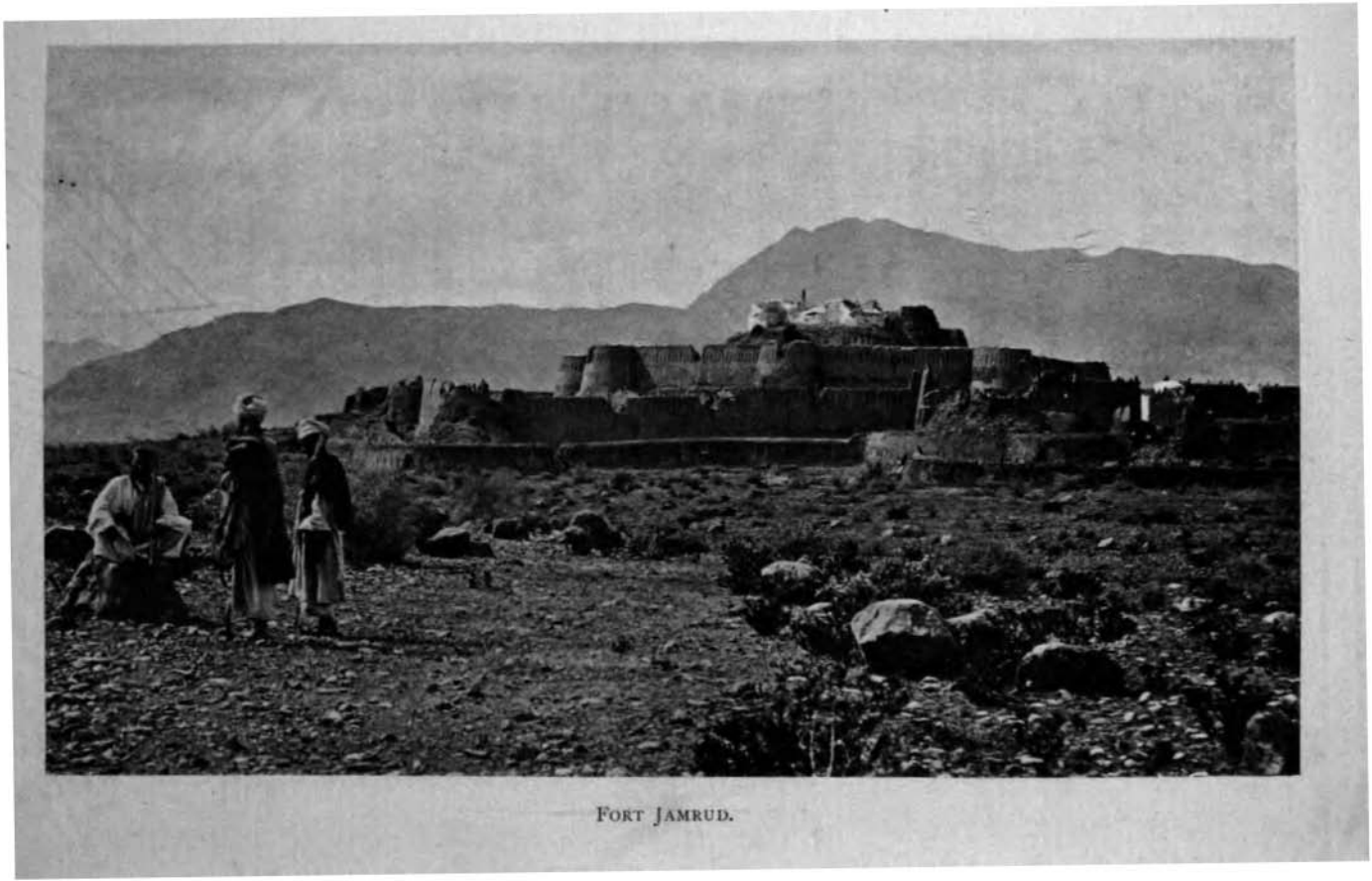
But even these signs of semi-civilization rapidly disappeared. As we went on, the walls of the valley drew closer and closer to each other: that on the east a solemn procession of sunlit peaks and shady ravines; the western ridge a jagged mass of rock dimly seen through the dazzling sun and the dust. The plain between suddenly changed into a desert strewn with stones, like the dried-up bed of a broad river long dead, and dotted here and there by a gipsy-like encampment of Afghan or Afridi men, women, children, buffaloes, dogs, donkeys, and dirt.

In three-quarters of an hour we covered the ten miles which separate Peshawar from Jamrud, and alighted close to the fort, an oblong brown pile spreading on the plain at the foot of the bare hills. As one of my colleagues aptly remarked, it looks like a battleship—a battleship stranded in the desert, its masts gone, and its towers and funnels turned into stone.

At the station was drawn up an escort of the stalwart Khyber Rifle horsemen, and, Their Royal Highnesses having stepped into their carriage, the rest of the party accommodated themselves into some thirty tongas drawn by loosely-harnessed transport ponies.

Thus we entered the pass, and tore along the military road which winds through it, in and out, up and down, between the spurs of the rocks often converging to within a few yards of each other. It was a progress through a perfect wilderness of dead mountains studded with scrub, the nearer hills brown, the overtopping crests purple, all resting against a sky of translucent blue. The clatter of our tongas was the only noise to be heard, the mountains looking down upon us stolidly, as though they had long forgotten the sounds of humanity.

Suddenly we heard the roar of water rushing out of the



FORT JAMRUD.

rocks, and a turn of the road revealed a dip of pale green grass and a tent upon it. It was Ali Masjid, where we changed ponies.

A few months later the procession resumed its jolting career over the mountains, the drawn swords of the escort glinting in the sun up above, the tail of tongas behind defiling through clouds of Afridi dust.

Everything became more interesting henceforward; we drove close past many an Afridi village, a square, loop-holed enclosure of mud, with a mud tower rising from one corner, not unlike in shape to an English windmill. On the slope beneath some of these villages yawned the smoke-begrimed mouths of the caves in which dwell those of the inhabitants who overflow the fortified enclosure. Under the walls of each village spreads a thirst-stricken field, in which the wretched villagers grow their food, and the cemetery in which they are buried. From amidst the heaps of loose stones and the slanting headstones of the rude graves rises the more pretentious tomb of a saint, bristling with red and white flags suspended from long reeds.

The villages are just now at peace with one another, or, to be more precise, they have graciously concluded a forty-eight hours' truce for the sake of the Prince and the Princess. But, the Old Resident informs me, normally the men spend their days sitting behind the loopholes of these primitive walls, while their wives dig in the stony fields beneath. At the present moment there are in the hospital at Peshawar three of the inhabitants laid up with the effects of a recent feud. But we are safe, for every village on either side of our path is commanded by British block-houses, and every hill-top is guarded by the Khyber Rifles.

These things render our persons sacred. Besides, all these interesting rascals are subsidized by the British Government on condition that, in the transaction of their blood-feuds, they respect the road, which thus forms neutral and inviolable territory. A short time ago the situation was explained to the headmen in the follow-

ing terms: 'On this road you shall not shoot each other, but fifty yards on either side you may shoot.' The headmen undertook to see that these limitations to their enterprising activity were duly observed, and they were—with one solitary omission. A certain Afridi forgot himself and killed his enemy on the British road. Thereupon the British authorities fined the village to which the man belonged £100—that is, deducted that amount from the subsidy. And the village acquiesced, recognising that the man had violated the agreement. There is a sense of honesty even among these Afridi murderers.

At noon we emerged from the narrow pass into the round level ground of Landi Kotal—our destination. It is a high valley set in a ring of sombre rocks. In the middle stands the fort, an unpicturesque but highly efficient looking square enclosure of solid masonry, carefully loopholed and within divided into many narrow courts, the partitions as strong and as carefully loopholed as the outer walls. At the entrance was drawn up another guard, and behind it crouched a crowd of Afridis in their rags, disappointingly, I might almost say depressingly, quiet. It is a tribe of men that looks at its best when at its worst.

Perhaps the escort and the block-houses on the surrounding heights had something to do with this distressing quietude.

After lunch at Landi Kotal we returned to Ali Masjid, where Their Royal Highnesses alighted at the *shamiana* and received the homage of about a dozen maliks or tribal chieftains, clad in sheepskins, each of whom had come with tributes of hospitality, consisting of a pot of honey and a big Afghan sheep.

We reached Jamrud again a little after 4.30, completely clothed and stuffed with Afghan dust, an experience which compels me to withdraw the palm from the Punjab. Thence we resumed our seats in the train, reaching Peshawar soon after five. It was not without gratitude that I re-entered my tent, but I did not recognise my everyday self until after a most comprehensive ablution.

TRIBESMEN OF THE KHYBER PASS.

CHAPTER IX

IN LORD KITCHENER'S CAMPS

It is morning, and the train creeps distressingly across a vast plain broken at every step by those sudden, steep, sultry watercourses—called *nullahs*—which give to this part of the earth the look of a carcass in an advanced stage of decomposition. On one side stretches a range of blue hills above whose shoulders sparkle the snows of the Himalayas; on the other, far away along the sky-line, marches a great caravan of camels, looming through the haze supernaturally large and vague, like a procession seen in a dream. They march rhythmically on, hundreds and hundreds of lofty humps, long necks, and uncouth heads swaying in silent chorus, with their legs lost amid the rolling waves of dust. They are, like ourselves, bound for Lord Kitchener's camp at Kala Sarai, where the Commander-in-Chief is holding his great military Saturnalia.

Delhi, the proposed scene of the manœuvres, had to be abandoned for the same melancholy reason for which was abandoned the visit to Ajmer. Fodder is this year so scarce in the drought-stricken district of Delhi that the sheep subsist on the leaves of the trees, and the standing crops, raised for the benefit of man, are now used as food for the cattle. The Old Resident tells me that it is not want of grain that constitutes a modern Indian famine so much as the want of fodder. 'Grain,' he says, 'thanks to the railways, is now easily poured into a famishing district; but there is no means of fighting the scarcity of fodder, except by turning the cattle into

the cornfields.' It is a strange form of economy, or would be in any other part of the globe; in India, however, nothing is strange except the normal.

We reached the camp at Kala Sarai on December 5, and for two days there was nothing but charge and counter-charge—55,000 troops in khaki of all arms and complexions being engaged in the mock campaign —much rattle of musketry, rumble of wheels, and roar of cannon. And of an evening, when the hurly-burly was over and the battle lost and won, the plain was covered for miles and miles around with masses of men and horses moving to their bivouacs like phantom armies, through a mist of dull yellow earth which wiped the purple mountains out of sight. When the clouds had subsided, it was possible to see in the distance a string of camels stepping slowly across the great red face of the setting sun.

The general idea of the campaign was that a hostile army invaded the country from the north-west by crossing the Indus, while the mobilization of the defending forces was still incomplete. A concentration was in progress at Rawalpindi—an important arsenal—but inferior in strength to the enemy already in the field, while large reinforcements which were ultimately to be available from Jhelum and Lahore could not arrive for some days. The object of the enemy, naturally, was to capture Rawalpindi before the arrival of these reinforcements. Both invaders and defenders struggled gallantly day and night to possess themselves of the Margalla Passes, and finally the world was interested to hear that the southern army had succeeded in being driven in, and that India was conquered. Nothing else was possible. The ultimate object was to concentrate all the forces, northern as well as southern, at Rawalpindi for the Review, and Rawalpindi happens to lie to the south of the Margalla Ridge.

The play over, we proceeded to the State Camp at Rawalpindi, where we witnessed the Review held in

honour of the Prince and Princess. The contending forces had poured into the adjacent countryside, and, now knit in disciplined amity, marched and galloped and rumbled past their Royal Highnesses, wave after wave of bright colour and glinting steel, led by Lord Kitchener. There were among them infantry, cavalry, and artillery, Hussars and Lancers, Sikhs and Dogras, Punjabis and Pathans, Baluchis and Madrassis, Rajputs and Gurkhas, Englishmen and Irishmen, likewise Seaforth Highlanders and Gordon Highlanders in their kilts and khaki helmets, and, in one word, all the peacock gaiety of Mars in time of peace. Between two regiments of Lancers might also be seen, marching past the Prince, a stray mule: he marched with all the gravity of one long accustomed to the glories of war. I wonder what he thought of the pageant. My own knowledge of matters military is such as becomes a respectable civilian. Yet this grand display of India's fighting machine—or rather of the Northern Command, the flower of the Indian Army—did not fail to impress me, though only in a lukewarm and academic kind of way. The cavalry gallop past especially proved, as my platitudinarian friend expressed it, with his usual originality, 'one of the most striking spectacles witnessed by Their Royal Highnesses during the whole tour.'

Personally, I was even more deeply impressed by the kindness and courtesy of Lord Kitchener's officers who entertained us. It befell me while still in the manœuvre camp to catch a nasty cold, accompanied by ills not easily described, and their solicitude for my welfare could only be compared to that of a sympathetic woman or of a hen looking after an errant chicken. As I lay awake on my pallet, bleak and forlorn under a mountain of blankets and waterproofs in one of the Commander-in-Chief's Spartan tents, I almost became a convert to the science of murder, which people try to disguise under so many a euphemism and brilliant uniform. To me it is one of the queerest enigmas in life that soldiers and sailors—the men who are taught to glory in the most inhuman of

occupations—should, as a rule, surpass all their fellow-creatures in humanity. I tried to picture to myself Colonel X, Major Y, Captain *Z*, and all the rest of these good fellows, as politicians, University dons, undertakers, or journalists. It was ridiculous, almost tragic.

To return to the State Camp. It is a great quadrangle of spacious tents, separated by patches of consumptive-looking verdure which on closer inspection turns out to be mustard and cress. Close by the camp spread the military cantonments, grown in importance since the last Afghan War, and now harbouring a formidable number of British and native troops, besides being the headquarters of the Northern Command. I have observed in this remote corner of the Empire a curious tendency to sift the European as well as the native soldiers according to nationalities. The separation is said to increase the spirit of emulation between the English, Irish, and Scotch regiments. On the other hand, the Old Resident, who here happens to be an unmistakable Irish veteran, assures me that two Irish regiments hate each other even more whole-heartedly than either of them detests the Scotch. The mutual attitude of these three components of the nation, which some sardonic humorist has designated Anglo-Saxon, is, I think, pretty lucidly summed up in the common saying: 'The Irish have won India, the English administer it, and the Scotch exploit it.'

Beyond the cantonments spreads the triangular city of Rawalpindi, with its back against the Murree Hills—an offshoot of the Himalayas, bristling with wild wood and teeming with wolves, leopards, hyenas, jackals, and all the other interesting inhabitants of an Indian jungle. The city is of yesterday, but the soil on which it stands now and again yields Greek and other old coins and bricks which mark the site on which once flourished the capital of the Bhatti tribe, humbled to the dust during one of the Moghul raids of the fourteenth century. Some remnants of this tribe of the past and of other obscure

races survive in the maze of dark lanes which constitute the oldest part of the city. As for the modern part, to say that it is a Punjabi town is to say that among its 50,000 inhabitants it includes the usual salad of creeds—Mahomedans, Hindus, Sikhs, and missionaries.

Between this city and the cantonments endeavours to flow the little river Leh, on whose banks blooms, to the best of its ability, the Park. Its lily ponds are now wreathed by tall pampas grass; but later on, the Old Resident affirms, they will be covered by numerous wild-duck, floating on the still, sleepy waters with perfect impunity, for shooting in the Park is mercifully prohibited. I strove to imagine this parochial paradise thronged by the inhabitants of the cantonments. I pictured them to myself, ladies and gentlemen, all blinded by the sun and dust of the day, deafened by the blare of bugle and the beat of drum, by the clatter of hoofs, the tramp of martial boots, the rumble of heavy artillery wheels and the rattle and thunder of guns, anxiously waiting for the setting of the sun, and then repairing hither to breathe the cool air of the evening and to bless the municipal worthies who planted this Elysian grove for them. I even ventured to imagine myself in the ranks of the blessed, cheroot in mouth, hands in trouser pockets, ruminating over the events of the day and revolving mighty descriptive phrases, inspired thereto by the fragrance of flower and shrub and the gentle murmur of green leaves. As a matter of fact—oh, that terrible matter of fact!—the trees and the shrubs weep, shrivelled with thirst, and the cruelty of the after-dark cold can only be pardoned because it promises to kill at last the municipal mosquitoes which have so gallantly defied all the efforts of the mosquito brigade.

On the whole, I was not sorry to see the last of Lord Kitchener's mustard and cress and camels.

CHAPTER X

AT THE HIMALAYAS

EARLY on the morning of December 9 our train drew up at the station of Satwari, which delighted me, for I was under the impression that we were going to Jammu, and I love a surprise. Nor is there, to my taste, any more delicious variety of that emotion—so rare in these sad, *nil admirari* days—than that of suddenly finding one's self in a place other than that indicated by one's ticket. However, my delight was nipped in the bud by the discovery that Satwari is to Jammu only what Paddington is to London. Facing north, I can see the gilt pinnacles of the capital gleaming over the curves of the hills which crawl at the hem of the Himalayas. And from behind the town tower the broad, snow-crowned heads of the mighty giants themselves, resting calmly against the bosom of the Kashmir sky, so soft, so clear, so gratefully unlike the dusty heavens which I have just left behind me; and the face of the plain which spreads its green skirt southward is full of a tranquil smile, inexpressibly sweet after the turmoil of the Rawalpindi camps.

Across this plain meanders the river Tavi, washing the feet of the capital of this twin State, so immense in size, so scanty in population. It meanders timidly and thinly between large stretches of white, round boulders which, when the snows melt in the mountains, are hidden deep beneath volumes of turbid water; but at this moment they turn their bleached brows up to the walls of the fort which frowns down upon them on one side and upon the town on the other, threatening what it cannot protect;

for in time of peril this fort will be at the mercy of the man who holds the overtopping heights. But, *dis gratia*, we live in times of peace, free to wander over the slopes, breathing the air of the Himalayas, prying into the ruins of the past—mute witnesses to glories that are dead—and holding converse with the present.

In 1586 the great Moghul Emperor Akbar conquered Kashmir; in 1752 the Afghans devastated it. Then the Rajput rulers of Jammu extended their sway over yon plain. But their pride was humbled by the Sikhs of the Punjab in 1819, and Jammu was swallowed up in the dominions of Ranjit Singh till the Sikh War of 1845. These are only a few episodes in a drama which begins in the mists of the pre-Buddhist period, gropes its way through the labyrinth of events, or myths, which constitute the Buddhist triumph and discomfiture, the restoration of Hinduism, the ascendancy of Islam, the rise and fall of the Sikh power, ending, as every other act of the Indian drama ends, in the establishment of British rule. It is a tragedy sufficiently remote to please, so I forgive the gods for having robbed me of my surprise.

And the land seems created to supply a fitting setting for the phantom scenes of my imagination. Grandeur and grace, the majestic and the mildly beautiful, never were combined with happier audacity. Hitherto I had been inclined to think that mountains, like fools, are pretty much alike all over the world; that there is little variety or individuality in these inarticulate monsters of stone which stretch their myriad limbs over the earth. But the sight of the Himalayas has saved me from this terrible heresy. Yes, they are wonderful, though tourists do praise them. To me such praise savours of impertinence, and I will try to spare the reader those ornamental adjectives which convey nothing, except, perhaps, a faint notion of the speaker's inanity.

The impression wrought by these silent Titans upon me is that of immense power, aloofness, and dignity. I can no better express my meaning than by describing

them as divine. In so doing I am supported by the authority of one greater than any writer that ever wrote. The native peasant mind, more primitive—that is, saner—than the tourist substitute for mind, does not praise these mountains, nor does it patronize their Maker: it worships them reverently and silently, deeply conscious of their greatness and of its own littleness. With the true perception of a sincere worshipper, the Kashmir peasant discerns in this assembly of the eternal what must always escape the profane vulgar. Each lofty peak is consecrated by a special legend, and there is no rock without its name. And, when gathered together round their evening fires, the long-haired hill-folk tell many a long tale which tediously and satisfactorily accounts for the shape and the mood of every hill, personified. I say hill, for in India no one ever speaks of mountains. To the hoary inhabitant of this hoary land a Briarean height of 24,000 feet is a hill, even as a man of seventy is a boy to his father of ninety. One of these 'hills'—the immeasurable Pir—owes its name to a *pir*, or holy hermit, who in the days of old blessed the northward-bound pilgrim, and whose benevolent spirit still presides over its ancient haunts, hallowing the whole range with its presence.

But Jamınu itself knows little of the divine or of the majestic. It climbs up the wooded hillsides, the very walls of its fort shorn of battlements, and the candle-extinguisher domes of its temples utterly devoid of point. It is true, they end in a gilt pinnacle, but it is not sharp, and in some cases the builder has proceeded to prove his imbecility by adorning the sides of the dome with similar pinnacles. As you enter the city, you are oppressed at every step by the same characteristic: the shops and dwellings crawl up the slope, slow, low, and level-roofed, as though crushed into flatness by the weight of the overlooking mountains.

Here the influence of physical environment over the works of man can be discerned chiefly in its absence.

The very palace of the Maharaja—what of the old building has escaped the hands of the modern architect—is a huge caravanserai, its square courtyard surrounded by one story of small balconies squinting at the heavy cloisters below, which squat along the four sides—unswept, unwashed, and swarming with attendants to match. The same traits depress your soul and offend your nose everywhere. The shops which line the main street up to the Maharaja's palace might be cowsheds, but for their superior filth, and the majority of the private dwellings are mere mud-hovels, their walls adorned with dung-cakes. Squalor scowls on both sides, deepened by the feeble experiments in whitewash, imperfectly carried out, in anticipation of the royal visit, and the people are walking and shouting embodiments of their detestable environment.

I have seldom seen a more loathsome set of turbaned men and breeched women. They stare at me out of eyes full of impudence and greed, and the little girls are begging shamelessly for *bakshish*. I am unable to discover in this crowd one face that I could trust for two minutes with my purse, or even with my life. And yet the people of Jammu are not civilized. Their rascality owes nothing to Western culture. It is thoroughly indigenous and spontaneous. An exception is offered by the donkeys. These are as harmless and human as the donkeys one meets at home.

The finger-mark of Europe can, however, be seen here and there, faint and superficial, yet unmistakably fatuous. In obedience to orders from above, many a wooden *chaja*, or cornice, which had long forgotten, if it ever knew, the caress of the brush, is now disguised in painted loyalty, while the picturesque and shabby sunshades, which normally fulfil the double purpose of excluding the light and concealing the extortions of the shopkeepers, have been removed as improper. In their stead float flags and bunting of unimpeachable banality, and the walls are covered with 'welcome placards.' It all reminds me, somehow, of the Prime Minister of another

Native State who, after having pompously stumbled through an English address of welcome to His Royal Highness, asked me what I thought of its 'phraseology of sentiment.' Being a courteous man at heart, I evaded the question.

Yet there is one feature even in this picture of conventional unloveliness which has moved me to a smile of simple pleasure. All the *vidyarthies*, or religious students, clad in their native rainbows, were assembled on the gate-roof of the many-domed Rugnath temple, and, as the royal guests drove past on their way to the Palace, burst forth into many a Sanskrit hymn, incomprehensible and, consequently, deeply interesting. A little further on, the boys of the modern High School stood by the roadside, each class distinguished by a specially-coloured turban, white, pink, or saffron. Their school is of brick, like a London County Council School, and their curriculum apparently includes English cheering—a branch of study in which they seem to have made creditable progress.

All these things and the rest of the preparations and entertainments—most perfect in their way—were organized by General Raja Sir Amar Singh, K.C.S.I., Chief Minister of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, brother to the same, and father to the ten-year-old heir-presumptive—for the reigning highness is not blessed with offspring.

It is a short, stout highness, made stouter by its short, fur-lined cloaks, and it culminates in a prodigious round tower of white calico, beetling over two black eyes drowsy with opium. But that tower also is flat rather than lofty. His Highness shares loyally the strange dulness of his dominions.

And yet he is a *novus homo*—the immediate descendant of Ghulab Singh, who, having risen in the service of Ranjit Singh from the rank of a private trooper to the dignity of feudatory ruler of Jammu, repaid these gifts by deserting his Sikh masters in 1845. At that critical date, by a separate treaty with the English at Amritsar, he secured his own independence, and, on payment of £750,000,

extended his power over Kashmir. In virtue of that highly business-like arrangement, our Maharaja is bound to recognise the supremacy of the British Government, to refer all disputes with neighbouring States to its arbitration, to furnish military assistance when required, and to employ no foreign official without the British Government's consent—obligations which were literally carried out through the Mutiny of 1857, when the ruling Prince's forces co-operated with the British in the Siege of Delhi. Within these limits the Maharaja is a sovereign prince, maintaining a large military establishment, enjoying the usual number of guns and other high-sounding honours, the only tangible token of his vassalage to the British Raj being an annual tribute of one horse, twenty-five pounds of wool, and three pairs of shawls. I have often wondered what the British Raj does with that yearly accumulating crop of Kashmir shawls.

The other day this practically-minded Prince received at the hands of the departing Viceroy a gift of powers which he never really lacked. It was exhilarating to see the Prime Minister, Sir Amar Singh, in the uniform of a British General and the turban of a Kashmir Raja, leading the procession as it marched slowly and solemnly, to the muffled strains of the band and the booming of the guns, through the courtyard of the Palace to the Durbar Hall. The Durbar having been declared open, the Viceroy, at the conclusion of his address to the Maharaja, presented him with a sword, saying:

'I hand to your Highness this sword as a symbol of the enhanced powers of administration with which I now declare you to be duly invested.'

The Maharaja then rose and candidly confessed:

'Language fails me to give adequate expression to the feeling of profoundest gratitude which is at the present moment in my heart.'

The gift was a reward for the Maharaja's 'faithful devotion to the interests of his people, and his loyal attachment to the paramount Power.' The latter claim is