indisputable. Concerning the first I have my doubts, and these are strengthened by the Old Resident's ominous comment on the interesting rites described: 'May the Lord have mercy upon us!'

Indeed, the comparative absence of direct British control over the internal administration of this State, while securing the Maharaja's freedom, also fosters some of those romantic attributes to which Oriental rule owes its peculiar charm. Here is an example: Until a few months ago Wazir Lachman stood high in the Maharaja's favour. Whether he ceased to deserve his master's confidence, or whether his master ceased to deserve his servant's services, I cannot say, but suddenly the favourite Lachman found himself a prisoner. No charge, so far as I know, was formally preferred against him, no trial took place, yet the fallen courtier remained in durance.

His friends whispered—nay, some even wrote quaintly-phrased and prudently pseudonymous letters to the Indian Press, accusing the Maharaja of having lent too ready an ear to Lachman's jealous rivals. What rendered the hapless Lachman an especial object of pity was the fact that, during his imprisonment, his old mother fell ill. Now, a good Dogra is bound by his creed to tend his parents piously and personally in sickness. If medical science fails and all hope of recovery is lost, it is his duty to help them to perform the customary religious rites in his presence, and at the last moment to support their drooping heads on his knees. 'Now, can a man who is in prison far away from his parents discharge these sacred duties to them?' asked his friends, and they answered, rather obviously, 'Certainly not.' Poor Lachman supplicated his master for permission to go to his mother, but it was not granted until a report came from the medical authorities at Jammu notifying that the old lady was officially sick. By that time the old lady had become more than officially sick, and it was then only that Wazir Lachman was allowed to see her. But even then he remained under police guard, and so, for all practical pur-

poses, absent. It was a painful case for both, and a source of profound perplexity to one of them.

'What must have been the thought of the old woman when she came to know that even at that critical moment her son was unable to attend on her?' asked my quaint native friend. 'Being in the private service of the Maharaja there could appear no reasons to her which justified the action in the case of her son. Is this not a hardship which alone is sufficient to bring tears to the heart of any Dogra?'

The Maharaja's conduct was all the more severely censured because, as everyone admits, he is well versed in the doctrines, customs, and usages of the Dogras, and could therefore not plead ignorance as an excuse for his enormities.

This is the story as it has been related to me. I repeat it because I consider it dimly enlightening. But I neither know which of the two—master or man—is the more to blame, nor have I any desire to blame either. In this business of tale-telling I rank myself with the humble chronicler, and believe that my sole affair is to record things as they happen. Let others, starting from fixed preconceived sympathies and animosities, reach definite condemnations. The dreamings and the schemings of the East interest me enough to prompt description, but not enough to inspire denunciation. I leave to others the genial task of lamenting the eternal depravity of Eastern despotism. To me these survivals of 'paternal rule' are chiefly interesting as illustrations of a theory of government all but extinct elsewhere. Eastern rule still means what all rule meant in the good old days of divine right and serfdom—namely, the greatest happiness of the smallest number. In Kashmir the smallest number is one. When the Maharaja travels, he kindly assumes that the rest of the universe wants to stand still. The entire transport of the country is, therefore, commandeered for days beforehand, and the ordinary would-be traveller, who has not the good fortune to be connected either with the Prince's or

with the British Resident's Court, is met at every turn by State myrmidons armed with prior claims and long sticks. But what of that? Let ordinary mortals stay at home.

I cannot quite agree with those who hold that the salvation of the world lies in British control. Here in Kashmir I find such control execrated bitterly by some and acclaimed as bitterly by others. Generally I find the Mahomedan thinks it a duty to his Prophet to support whatsoever the Hindu denounces, and to denounce whatever the Hindu applauds. One of the latter recently deplored in a native journal the presence of Europeans in the Maharaja's service. A follower of the Prophet thereupon undertook to defend that presence as follows:

'The question is one in which the interests of the rulers and the ruled are alike at stake, and upon its solution depends the welfare of a multitude of principalities teeming with millions of inhabitants. The intervention of the British Government has indeed much improved the condition of Native States, but the improvement, it may safely be asserted, has not kept pace with the progressive India directly under British rule, much less with the advancement of the times, and consequently, with a few honourable exceptions, the existing system of government in them is still far from satisfactory. An atmosphere of intrigue, striking at the very root of good administration; periodical predominance of parties; attainment to power and position by undeserving individuals; unwholesome influence exercised by the zenana and Court fools; and non-amenability of State officials to courts of justice, are some of the ugliest spots which still continue to disfigure the "Indian Protectorate." This unsatisfactory condition is not due to a lack of interest on the part of the British Government, but is mainly the result of the extreme precaution taken in adopting measures threatening to destroy any of the attributes of internal sovereignty.

'The services of lent European officers have always done a great deal towards ameliorating the condition of several Native States, without lowering the prestige of their

rulers. Even Kashmir would not have been what it is to-day, had it not taken advantage of the experience and administrative capacities of some of the best Englishmen who ever landed on Indian shores. In fact, nothing would give greater satisfaction to the British Government than the state of affairs making it possible for the Indian officials in the States to manage their own affairs in a trustworthy manner, and without creating that degree of misrule which may make it necessary for the paramount Power to interfere in their internal affairs; but the day is yet too far.'

There is a certain quantity of undeniable truism in this view. But the writer seems to start from the assumption that Native rule means inevitable misrule, and he ends whence he started. The late Lord Salisbury had a slightly different opinion on the subject:

'I may mention as an instance what was told me by Sir George Clerk, a distinguished member of the Council of India,' said he, 'respecting the province of Kathiawar, in which the English and Native Governments are very much intermixed. There are no broad lines of frontier there, and a man can easily leap over the hedge from the Native into the English jurisdiction. Sir George Clerk told me that the natives, having little to carry with them, were continually in the habit of migrating from the English into the Native jurisdiction, but that he never heard of an instance of a native leaving his own to go into the English jurisdiction.' This may be very bad taste on the part of the natives, he added, 'but you have to consider what promotes their happiness, suits their tastes, and tends to their moral development in their own way.' Indeed, Lord Salisbury considered it highly advantageous to maintain a system of Native States in India. 'I think that the existence of a well-governed Native State is a real benefit, not only to the stability of our rule, but because, more than anything, it raises the self-respect of the natives, and forms an ideal to which the popular feelings aspire. Whatever treaties or engagements may be entered into, I

hope that I shall not be looked upon by gentlemen of the Liberal party as very revolutionary if I say that the welfare of the people of India must override them all.'

To my inexperienced ear this sounds suspiciously like sense. But I do not wish to dogmatize. In the course of this tour I have come across native rulers, like the Maharaja of Kashmir, whom words fail when they try to express their gratitude to the British Governess for her attentions, and I have come across rulers who curtly said: 'It is high time we got out of our leading-strings.' The former class are called loyal by Anglo-Indian officials, and the latter are scowled at. The unofficial and candid Old Resident, however, calls the former servile and the latter self-respecting.

Furthermore, it is well, in listening to a Mahomedan critic, to bear in mind the fact—notable, universally admitted and attested, among others, by the English educational authorities all over India—that the Indian Mahomedan is immeasurably inferior to his Hindu neighbour in intelligence. This deficiency I cannot attribute to any detrimental influence of the creed of Islam upon its followers. Such a theory can only be supported by a comprehensive ignorance of the history of Islam, or by an equally comprehensive anxiety on the thinker's part to push a creed of his own. The statement, often heard, that Mahomedanism is inimical to progress is beneath refutation. It might be as plausibly argued that the Mosaic Law is responsible for the Semitic nose.

The root of the Indian Mahomedan's backwardness may more reasonably be sought in his past. The present community consists partly of the descendants of conquerors whose initiative has been blunted by the long enjoyment of irresponsible power, and partly by the descendants of natives who, like the renegades of the Near East, had too much to lose by adherence to their faith, or everything to gain by its desertion—selfish aristocrats on the one hand, and, on the other, social outcasts, the two classes that apostates are mostly made of. The descen-

FEEDING THE POOR AT JAMMU.

dants of men who choose the line of least resistance seldom shine in a personal struggle with the Fates. On the other hand, the Hindus are the children of men who have held steadfastly to their traditions through centuries of suffering. The result must, in a large measure, be the survival of the strongest or, at all events, of the shrewdest.

However, be the explanation what it may, the fact is that in the free competition for Government patronage now fashionable the Mahomedan fails, and then he strives to regain his self-respect by magnanimously despising what he cannot obtain, or tries to counterbalance his intellectual shortcomings by an excessive loyalty to the powers that are. And the powers that are, I fear, do not rise superior to the temptation of turning these conditions to account, for I have in vain looked for any evidence of that moral superiority of the Mahomedan which is alleged to compensate for his intellectual infirmity. The want of wit does no more imply an abundance of honesty than the possession of wealth implies the want of other virtues. Even more fruitless, if possible, has been my search for evidence of the Mahomedan's boasted abhorrence of 'the art of ingratiating himself with the official classes.' If, as one of them recently declared, 'preferment and honours rarely come his way,' it is not because he is too good for these things. While muscle was the criterion of fitness for power, he prevailed; now that mind is the favourite standard, he fails. Every dog has his day. Allah is great and just in a Dracontian, general kind of way.

To return to matters more picturesque than political squabbles. On the day preceding the Prince's arrival the Governor of Jammu announced by beat of drum throughout the city and suburbs that the poor should assemble next Sunday at noon on the parade-ground in front of the brick-kilns to be fed in state. The proclamation was the result of a desire expressed by the Prince of Wales that the edible portion of the *ziafat*, or customary present of fruit and sweetmeats, of the value of Rs. 5,000, offered by the Durbar to His Royal Highness and party, should be

converted into food and sweets to be distributed among the poor. At the appointed time the beggars gathered from far and near, on a spot surrounded by a cordon of regular troops and police, and divided into five separate blocks allotted to the following interesting classes of people in order of spiritual precedence: Hindus, Mahomedans, other castes, cripples, and sweepers. For the inhabitants of this land would rather starve in proud isolation than eat together.

At three o'clock in the afternoon began the feeding proceedings, and so earnest were they that a force of 250 military sepoys and police-constables had to be told off to keep the peace among the banqueters; but even these ministers of order had to be drawn from both the great castes, for a Hindu policeman could not interfere with a recalcitrant Mahomedan beggar in his dinner, nor would a Hindu beggar tolerate the contact of a Mahomedan constable. Thus they ate voraciously, and then washed the viands down with copious draughts from the Jogi Gate Canal, carried in skins by water-carriers of both sects. No fewer than 187 maunds of sweetmeats were that afternoon consumed in honour of the Prince of Wales.

The appetite of these subjects of His Highness the Maharaja produced a profound impression on my mind. But hunger is not the only affliction of the wretched people. Neither the physical grandeur of their country, nor the haunting holiness of the benevolent spirits, nor even the influence of the British Governess, can shield the State of Jammu and Kashmir from the common curse of India.

The plague, which in other parts of the peninsula is commonly and erroneously regarded as a visitor of recent arrival, here is known to be a guest of ancient standing. The Kashmir folk are fond of excommunicating one another with the expression *Piyoi tun!* (May the plague seize you!); and very often an old folk-saying embodies greater wisdom than a whole library of the bluest of Blue-books.

The Chief Medical Officer of the State gives a curious account of this latest appearance of the scourge three years ago. A single imported case had been discovered, but was successfully isolated. Eight days afterwards one of the guards of the segregation camp was attacked. The story told of him is that he had gone into the tent where the dead body of the first plague victim was laid out and secretly bitten off the dead man's finger-ring with his teeth, intending to steal it. Although his body, like that of the first man, was buried in quicklime, fresh cases occurred soon afterwards among his relatives. Dr. Mitra suggests that this was because the remains were afterwards exhumed by his friends and brought to his home for reburial. The subsequent history of the epidemic does not differ to any material extent from that of outbreaks elsewhere. Some 1,400 deaths are recorded in the report, and the disease still continues flourishing.

And so adieu to Jammu, its mountains and its Maharaja, its politics, its poor, and its plagues.

CHAPTER XI

A DAY IN AMRITSAR

A TEN hours' journey across another Punjab plain, but, Allah be praised, most unlike its predecessors: well watered by rivers, canals, and wells, and well wooded with forest and fruit-trees. It is only on the sandy uplands in the south-eastern parts that drought can be described as a standing danger. The rest of the land looks happy with a variety of vegetable abundance—wheat and barley, rice, mustard, cotton, sugar-cane, and tobacco.

And here is the capital of the district—Amritsar, which being interpreted means 'The Pool of Immortality.'

I plunge into the pool, and am overwhelmed by the unprecedented animation thereof. The tortuous streets, through which the royal procession is expected to pass, are a rapid succession of triumphal arches, crowned by quaint kiosks and carpeted with the complicated designs of Indian fabrics. The tall houses on either side are invisible behind similar carpets and shawls and gold-broidered rugs, while windows, balconies, and roofs are a solid mass of many-coloured veils and feminine ornaments glinting on dusky necks, ears, and noses.

On one of the mottoes stretched along the walls I read, 'Tell your parents that we are happy.' This from an Eastern people to a Royal Highness is most exhilaratingly straightforward language. What is more, it seems to be true. Amritsar is, indeed, the happiest pool that ever rippled under the hope of immortality, sustained by present prosperity. Second to Delhi alone among the

cities of the Punjab in hoarded wealth, Amritsar is counted superior to it in commercial activity, being the medium for the trans-Himalayan traffic, and first of all in religious fervour. Though the Mahomedans, as the number of their minarets attests, form the majority of the population, and the temple domes bear witness to an almost equal number of Hindus, the Sikh minority revere this city as the citadel of their own faith, whose centre is this Golden Temple—a small square shrine, with domes and marble walls clothed in sheets of copper gilt, rising out of the middle of a large square lake or tank—in fact, the very Pool of Immortality whence the city derives its name and its fevers. But let me not anticipate.

I enter the enclosure, and am conducted to a place where my shoes are taken off and my feet encased in tasselled slippers of bright green. Thus protected against the possibility of polluting, I tread, not comfortably, along a passage peopled with bulls, calves, hens, broad-tailed sheep, and other pious worshippers, and ascend the marble causeway which connects one side of the tank with the temple. This path brings me to the marble terrace around the temple, lined by semi-naked saints, their brows hideous with immense sect marks; by beggars sitting behind small heaps of rice and grain given unto them by the worshippers; and by cripples, one of whom held out to me a pair of hands each consisting of one long thumb, and each growing almost direct from the shoulder.

A stream of men and women, heads and necks bright with wreaths of yellow marigold, is pouring in and out of the shrine, and from within comes a great din of cymbals and stringed instruments, mingled with the droning of prayer.

I enter to find on one side, sitting cross-legged on the polished floor, a band of musicians such as I had often met before in the 'Arabian Nights Entertainments.' A garlanded high-priest sits cross-legged behind a pile of silk cushions and carpets, upon which rests open a giant

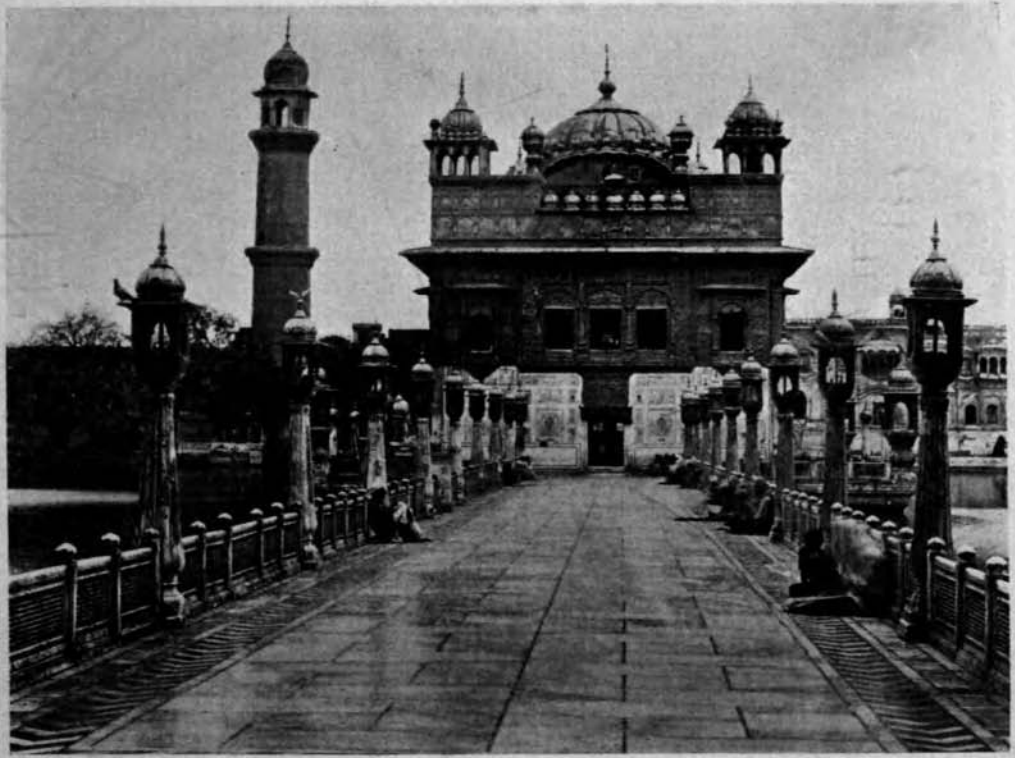
volume of many yellow leaves covered with mysterious characters. He drones on, while worshippers come in and out, leaving in the middle of the floor their offerings of rice, grain, shells, and coins.

As I moved through the crowd, an object of as lively and friendly interest to them as they were to me, a minister of the temple offered me one of the festal wreaths of marigold. I began to feel no longer a stranger, but almost a lineal descendant of Nanak Shah, the founder of the Sikh sect, who more than four centuries ago arose in the Punjab to preach that there is no Hindu or Mahomedan, but one God the Father of all. I felt a spiritual kinship with his followers around me, and some gratitude towards Ram Dass, the fourth Guru, who built this temple in 1574.

The Old Resident, omniscient and omnipresent, informs me that the original copy of the Sikh Bible—the *Granth*, —begun by the first Guru, continued by his fifth successor, Arjun, and completed by the twelfth and last Guru, Govind Singh—is still preserved in this temple. Perhaps it is the very volume now open under the nose of yon venerable high-priest.

The hum of human voices and the cooing of doves is now heard through the din of the band and the droning of prayers, and, lifting my eyes up, I see some of those birds flitting to and fro from one gilt cornice to another, while pairs of men are visible between the gilt pillars of a gallery aloft, now exchanging a few whispered remarks, now gazing on to the performance below, like so many occupants of the boxes in a theatre.

The absence of formalism from Sikh worship is remarkable. This temple—almost the only one possessed by this warlike and disciplined sect—is rather a Quakers' meeting-house than a home of Eastern ritual. So far as I can make out, the chanting recitation from the *Granth* is the main part of the service—if service that can be called which is so full of freedom. The only approach to symbolism I can detect is a sacred cake of which the congregation partakes before dispersing. The Old Resident



THE GOLDEN TEMPLE, AMRITSAR.

now tells me that, had I stayed a little longer, I should have been offered a share of this *Karah prasad;* but I had no time to spare even for a hallowed breakfast.

As I walked out again in my unfamiliar slippers, I very nearly stumbled into the arms of a curious person whose breast was covered with a steel plate, whose arms were encased in steel, whose head was a pyramid of steel rings, and whose waistband contained at least half a dozen swords. It was an apparition bristling with hair and daggers; but he smiled reassuringly—nay, even propitiatingly. I ventured to insult him with an offering equal in value to twopence sterling. He took the insult in a most cordial manner.

Once more outside in the crowded streets, I was assailed with gifts of other than sacred character. These were nothing else than printed pamphlets and price-lists informing me that Mr. Lachman Dass Bharany sold the best silks on earth; that, if I wanted carpets, I could not do better than pay a visit to the stores of Messrs. Shumbhoo Nath and Rugonath Dass; and that no self-respecting traveller ever went through the Pool of Immortality without encumbering himself with a great load of shawls from the shop of Mr. Badha Kishen Bharany, shawl and Indian curiosity merchant. Indeed, if holy fervour is one of the dominant notes of the city, the other is made up of the crash and creak of innumerable looms. In this sanctuary of a militant sect it seems possible for commerce and creed to flourish together. The Sikh, like other dissenters nearer to me, if not dearer, is supremely capable of walking with his head in the clouds and his feet firmly planted upon solid earth. The daily contemplation of eternal interests does not disqualify him for the successful pursuit of very temporal ends. Spiritual at once and practical, he sees in worldly prosperity a tangible proof of Divine approbation; and, while striving for his own comfort, he has no doubt that he is promoting the kingdom of God.

'Tell your parents that we are happy!' I begin to

feel the full force of the motto as I wander through the well-stocked bazaars, looking into shops brimming with wealth and into faces smiling with the knowledge that it is all well both in this life and in the next.

'Two great religious fairs are annually held in Amritsar, and the annual value of its imports and exports exceeds £4,000,000,' says the Old Resident, happily unaware that he is adding point to one of the shrewdest psychological studies that have ever been penned by gifted journalist.

In other directions, also, my keen eye sees evidence of a successful reconciliation between the two worlds—efforts at reform conceived in the modern practical fashion and carried out by methods quite modern, even comical in this environment. And, what pleases me most, in these movements I find the Hindu vying with the Sikh. I will mention three examples. First, the Khalsa College for Sikh youths, founded in 1890 by the munificence of the Sikh Princes of the Punjab, conspicuous among its patrons being the ancient Maharaja of Nabha—the most abnormally progressive patriarch that ever suffered from asthma—and the fourteen-year-old Maharaja of Patiala—the most precocious and magnificent highness that ever wore pearled turban. Both these chiefs and some others were present this morning under the *shamiana* in which were received the Prince and Princess of Wales. On entering the tent the royal guests were greeted by the Sikh salutatation, *Wahi-Guru-ji-ka-Khalsa-Sri-Wahi-Guru-ji-ki-Fateh*—perhaps the longest greeting ever uttered by human throat at a single breath. I will not translate it, partly because it looks more impressive in its native obscurity, and partly because I do not understand it. The same limitation I must reluctantly confess with regard to the cheers with which the saffron-turbaned scholars sped the parting guests. They vociferated *Sat-Sri-Akal*,* which may mean anything that is good. Even more mysterious was the prayer in which a sonorous Sikh lifted up his voice when

* The Old Resident tells me that it means 'The Eternal alone is Real.' What of the price-lists?

the Prince and Princess thought themselves on the verge of deliverance. He prayed loud and long, the only words intelligible to me being *mubarak—Raja—Rani*, that is, 'prosperous,' 'King,' 'Queen.' I think I may hazard the conjecture that the performance was a prayer for the prosperity of the royal family.

The second proof of real progress to which I have alluded is also due to the initiative of the white-bearded Maharaja of Nabha, and concerns the re-marriage of Hindu widows—by far the most pitiable class of women that never grumbled. All sections of the Hindu community at Nabha are said to be at one with their Sikh Prince, who a few months ago deputed an official to collect the opinion of the leading Hindus in the larger cities of the Punjab.

The third good omen was an open-air meeting held at Patiala lately under the presidency of the Commander-in-Chief of the State forces—a stalwart Sikh with black beard most bravely curled upwards. The meeting was largely attended by officers and soldiers and members of the local Singh Sabha. Mahant Gyan Singh quoted the Sikh scriptures that the use of intoxicants was highly objectionable and injurious, and should in no case be indulged in by Sikhs. Colonel Sundar Singh proposed that a Temperance Society be started in the army and the selling of rum by the military authorities stopped, and, further, that co-operative army stores and army banks be introduced, the latter to lend money at very low interest. These resolutions were unanimously adopted. A number of officers and soldiers pledged themselves to abstain from intoxicants, and a register was opened for further names.

Thus Amritsar lives and thrives, praying and trafficking. It trafficks with Bokhara, Tibet, and Afghanistan on the north, with Bombay and Calcutta on the south, and on the west with Persia and—Manchester; buying grain, pulses, sugar, salt, oil, cotton, glass, or English stuffs, re-selling the same, together with its own rich fabrics

of wool and silk and those shawls of many patterns which, woven on the loom from the fine fleeces of Tibetan goats, form, next to the Golden Temple, the chief boast of local industry. There are thousands of such looms here, worked by deft fingers of Kashmir extraction—quite a little colony, already a century old.

If you want to realize the inner meaning of this ceaseless creaking and crashing (at this moment to be heard only in the deserted back streets of whose existence the princely procession wots not, and which care little for such processions), you have only to walk into that shop at the corner just beyond where that pariah dog yawns in the sun. You enter and ask of the fat and smiling Mr. Shumbhoo-Nath-Rugonath-Dass for the price of a first-class shawl. You must be an ataractic Stoic, hardened beyond the possibility of emotion, indeed, or a born buyer of shawls, if you can avoid a thrill on hearing that you can have a full-sized article of the best quality for only £50.

In addition to its shawls and silks, Amritsar is famous as the favourite playing-ground of all the diseases that morbid doctor ever invented: fevers of all kinds, dysentery and diarrhœa, small-pox and plague, are all to be had here for nothing, in this respect differing from the shawls.

'What else can you expect?' asks the cynical Old Resident, 'from a city built in a hollow between two pestiferous rivers, with a medieval apostle for a founder?'

'Nothing,' I answer simply, for I am convinced that to the holy Guru the proximity of this holy and unwholesome pool was the main architectural attraction. He acted according to his lights, even as did the pious monks who founded the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford on the two unhealthiest spots which they were able to find in England.

The site was granted to the apostle of the Sikhs in the middle of the sixteenth century by the artful Emperor Akbar, presumably in the hope that its miasmatic influence would effectually dispose of the pestilent heresy. But the

gods willed it otherwise. Soon a great city grew round the Pool of Immortality. It grew and, despite Ahmad Shah's comprehensive blowing up of the temple and spoliation of the town in 1761, it continued to grow. The shrine, polluted by the unspeakable Shah with the blood of bullocks, was, immediately on his departure, purified, the pool resumed its placid immortality, and a few years later, when Ranjit Singh seized the holy city, the great sanctuary of the Sikhs was embellished and covered with the thin plates of gold which still glitter in the sunlight up above and in the deep bosom of the lake below. Since then Amritsar has gone on growing in holiness, wealth, and unhealth. But its demonstrative children declare, 'Tell your parents that we are happy,' and they assuredly know full well what is good for them.

CHAPTER XII

DELHI

'WHAT a host of romantic memories the mere sound of the name awakens!' Thus my platitudinarian friend, as we gazed at the crenellated walls of Delhi, here and there crumbling, as though under the weight of self-conscious uselessness, yet, on the whole, carrying their years and their battlements with the dignity of all that is stolid. They still encircle the city on three sides, proud and massive, as they did when Shah Jahan built them, what time our good King Charles II. toyed with his dogs and his duchesses in England. And they are still pierced by ten gates, lofty and wide, one leading northward to Kashmir, two to remote Kabul, another to Lahore of dismal personal memories, and so forth.

Delhi is a city very much at the centre of things, mounting guard at the point where the central hills of the Punjab drop upon the right bank of the Jumna—just now a river in exceedingly embarrassed circumstances. And for a dozen miles around this trafficking, shouting town of to-day spread the silent ruins of a succession of imperial capitals, comprehensively designated by the intelligent tourist as 'Old Delhi,' but each marking the birth and death of a distinct dynasty, once powerful, now of interest to the archæologist, the artist, and the jackal.

It is a town with a past. From the very first appearance of the Aryan race in the Indian peninsula this spot seems to have been occupied by a great city, beginning with Indraprastha, whose date is by the ingenious fixed fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ. A detailed

account of this earliest-known capital and of the demigods who built it is given in the formidable epic of the 'Mahabharata'—the oceanic 'Iliad' of Hindustan—wherein those who have nothing else to do may read how five heroes, at the head of a mighty horde of Aryans, descended upon the quiet banks of the Ganges, and, having rooted out the children of the soil and its forests, planted the kingdom of Indraprastha, and how, having subdued the alien races, they turned their swords against one another and performed many valorous deeds of brotherly throat-cutting. For thirty generations, exactly, the posterity of these mythical heroes misruled the realm gloriously, and those who finally ousted it from the throne reigned for a thousand years more, until they, in turn, were supplanted by a new royal line of fifteen generations. All this is set forth by the conscientious chronicler with calm, mathematical symmetry, according to the rules of the game which all early logographers have played ever since Prometheus taught mankind the 'marvellous combinations of letters.'

It is a game as simple as bridge and almost as inspiring. All that the player needs is a starting-point, a piece of paper, some patience, and no sense of humour. Beginning from the present and the known, he walks backward into the past and surmise. When he has reached the end of his dates, he takes up his tape and divides all that lies beyond by as many generations as he can invent.

It is only about the Christian era that the mists begin to cohere into comparative probability, and then for the first time we hear the name of Delhi, which to my friend is fraught with such a load of romantic memories. The earliest light thrown on the origin of the city and its name emanates from the famous column of solid iron erected by Raja Dhava in the fourth century, and by the small angular Sanskrit inscription carved deeply into it. This weighty document declares that its author was also the author of Delhi. But the living tradition, in defiance of the written word, attributes both the column and the

city and its name to Anang Pal, founder of the Tuar dynasty in the eighth century of our era. According to the folk historian, a holy Brahman informed the King that the column was so deeply sunk into the earth that its invisible end touched the sacred head of the serpent-god Vasuki, who bears upon him the burden of this wicked world. Therefore, so long as the column stood erect and immobile, the King and his posterity would be firm on their throne. The King, being poor in faith, caused the column to be unearthed, and, as the iron shaft was torn out, its root was found dripping with the immortal blood of the serpent-god. In face of this terrible demonstration, Anang Pal professed a great contrition for his infidelity, and commanded that the column should be planted again in its old position. But the angered god rendered the operation impossible. The column refused to take root again. Henceforth the city was known as Delhi (*dhila*)—that is, 'loose.' The only truth in this tradition is that Anang Pal rebuilt the city, which had fallen into decay, and raised it from a heap of rubbish to the dignity of a capital for his race.

Henceforth we have the usual cycle of Indian history, conqueror following upon the heels of conqueror, thrones raised upon the ruins of thrones, dynasties rising and dynasties crumbling to dust—Hindus, Pathans, Afghans, Moghuls, Mahrattas, down to the British conquest in 1803.

This is the tale illustrated by the extant stones. On this side of the city, close to the river-bank, stands the imperial palace of the Moghuls, within its lofty pink walls, its stubby round towers and arched gateway, now partly converted into English barracks. Across the river frown the ruins of the Salimgarh or Salim Fort, erected in the sixteenth century by Salim Shah. And between these two monuments of the past stretches the iron bridge over which the East Indian Railway enters the city, crosses it, and disappears roaring through the north-western wall.

Strength and solidity are the two words that a superficial view of Delhi suggests. These characteristics are also seen in some of its brick buildings, no less than in its fortifications. Three thoroughfares intersect it, filling the unsophisticated visitor with surprise at their breadth and unscented airiness, as he strolls under the rows of neem and peepul trees which spread their thick foliage overhead. But the surprise does not endure. In the vast expanse of the city beyond these few streets you are confronted with the usual chaos of ague-stricken dwellings, bazaars, gaudy or simply dirty, crowds busy or at least noisy, creaking bullock-carts, barking dogs, stray goats, erring bulls and cows, which the native cicerone describes as sacred and the Old Resident as 'a damned nuisance.'

I am rather disposed to agree with the latter, as, deafened and choked with dust, I just contrive to avoid a cage of ragged red cloth suspended from a pole which sways between two brown bearers. It is a palanquin concealing a high-born Mahomedan lady. And, as soon as I have successfully avoided this peril, I am very nearly wedged between two other cages revolving on wheels, drawn by skeleton ponies. They are two of those things which men call ekkas—vehicles ingeniously designed to combine the minimum of space and speed with the utmost of unhappiness to both man and beast. I said man for short, but, in fact, each of these microscopic vehicles contains half a dozen men, women, and children, clinging to the rickety posts at the four corners for dear life and limb.

Eager to escape from the disillusion of the actual, you try to imagine these thoroughfares, now alive with the hum and the hookas and smells of two hundred thousand human beings, mostly in holiday mood, as they were once and again in days not far removed—scenes of savage clamour and carnage: you hear the execrations of the combatants, the deep groans of the dying, the shrieks of women, and then comes the grim silence of death. Ah, those were days worth dying in—or, at all events, it is

the proper thing to think so; for are not those scenes the stuff that heroic 'Iliads,' guide-books, and romantic memories are made on?

The last event that looms large and grim in this chapter of horrors is the Mutiny. On the very morning after the outbreak at Meerut the rebels appeared under the walls of Delhi. The British officials retired to the Lahore Gate, where they were cut to pieces. This was the signal for a general massacre of the Europeans in the town. For a few brief weeks Delhi became once more the capital of free Moghul anarchy. But the British, after a long and stormy siege, recaptured the city and its ephemeral Emperor, who, banished to Burma, died in Rangoon in 1862—a curiously quiet death. But his two sons, who had fled to the great tomb of Humayun, about four miles distant, were discovered and shot by Hodson. Delhi was temporarily cleared of its native population, which, however, was readmitted soon afterwards, on the understanding that it would refrain from the murder of Europeans. A few months after the surrender, Delhi, like a true Oriental, settled down to commerce and worship. If any bitterness still lingered, it was assuaged by the conviction that Allah is great and his decrees inscrutable. In 1877 Delhi was the scene of the proclamation which made the Sovereign of the United Kingdom Emperor of India.

At the present hour the city which has so often been the scene of carnage is the centre of seven railway lines, and the only smoke that rises to disfigure the blue heavens is that of its factory chimneys. 'Delhi City has all the advantages which peace, civilization, and railway enterprise can bring about; and for these advantages and blessings we render true gratitude to His Majesty, the King-Emperor, and his benign rule.' So ran the address of much-adjectived welcome presented to the Prince of Wales by the city Fathers the other morning in a pavilion erected amid the palms and the pines and the weeping willows of the Town Hall garden. Among these muni-

Silver Street, Delhi.

cipal worthies there were a few silk-hatted and frock-coated Europeans, but the rest represented all the races and creeds of the land, each arrayed in his peculiar shade of silk, each turbaned after the fashion of his tribe, each bowing and retreating with special awkwardness, yet all avowing a common anxiety to give expression to a feeling of 'profound loyalty and devotion to the person of the King-Emperor.'

On the following day these manifestations of civic devotion were repeated under a different form and under another pavilion in the Circuit House—in the broad cantonments outside the city walls, where live the men from the West—by the petty chiefs of the district, under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Delhi. There were among them the Raja of Sirmur, the Sardar of Kalsia, and the Nawabs of Patandi Loharu, and Dirjana, accompanied by the British political officers attached to each, and there was held the normally dull Durbar, each chief, as he was presented, offering his *nazr* of one gold mohur, which, as usual, was touched and remitted. They all looked as though they had been vassals of the British Raj since the day of Indraprastha.

Lastly, the visit has been commemorated by a learned pundit in a Sanskrit poem distributed broadcast. After a quantity of benedictions, the poet continues in the following characteristic strain: 'This sacred land called Hariana, the bestower of all sorts of comforts and blessings, the capital of powerful princes of ancient India, and beautiful as Amaravatipuri, the residence of the immortal gods, has regained its beauty and splendour by the benign influence of the footprints of your Royal Highnesses. Our delight and ecstasy to-day at the great privilege of having a sight of your Royal Highnesses resemble those derived by the *chakor* at the sight of the moon, by the flowers and the birds of the jungle at the advent of the spring, by the lotuses at the rising of the sun, by the bees on seeing a collection of water-lilies, and by peacocks at the sound of thunder. Thy rule, O Raja Maharaja, the bestower of

so many blessings, may it last for ever, may it continue to the end of the world!'

Such is 'New Delhi.'

I made another heroic effort to escape from the dulness of the actual by a retrospective expedition to the melancholy remnants of 'Old Delhi.' I left the city by the Ajmer Gate—broad and tall and studded with sharp spikes of no friendly intent—and soon found myself on a road lined with trees, up and down whose trunks the squirrels disported themselves merrily. Some of those trees were pines—paler than the pines of Europe and full of stranger secrets, yet, beyond cavil, pines. Other trees looked like acacias, but were not. Some were peepul-trees, and a few—I must really abandon the attempt. What I do know concerning these things is not worth knowing. A new-comer to India is often advised by the wise Old Resident 'to get up the trees of the country.' But he usually profits by the advice as much as if it were meant literally.

For my part, I have succeeded in getting up two of the uncommon trees which are so common in this country—the banyan and the peepul. For the rest, to me a tree is a tree—a thing of green leaves and flowers whose shade and fragrance I appreciate gratefully, when I can get them, but whose name, character, and domestic habits I want to know no more than those of the casual fellow-traveller who thinks himself in duty bound to inform me that it is a fine day, or that God is great. But this is not the way in which the native of India looks upon his trees. His soul is a curious compound of crass utilitarianism and gross symbolism, even animism. Accordingly, he values his trees partly for the food and timber with which they supply him, and partly for the gods which they shelter; but for their kindly shade or their beauty he has no regard. Of the two trees that I know intimately, the banyan is the hugest and the peepul the holiest. The waist of the banyan is a thing to be estimated by the yard, and its offspring by the million. It grows and grows, in a greedy,

desultory, imperialistic manner, until the main trunk with its surrounding progeny forms a many-arched cathedral, much frequented by the elephants and peasants, who relish its leaves and its fruit respectively. From the midst of this maze of columns sometimes you see springing a stately palm. Your first impression is that it has grown out of the banyan, but the Old Resident informs you that the banyan has grown round it, and is now sucking its life-sap out of it.

The peepul is also apt to multiply in an erratic fashion, but its innocent vagaries do not take root in the soil, nor do they prey on their neighbours. They run riot, prodigal yet self-supporting, twisting and turning themselves like snakes in and out of the crevices of dead walls, beautifying what they destroy. It is one of the five sacred trees of Hindustan. Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva all live within it, accompanied by their families. And when the wind plays among the leaves of the peepul, swaying the long pendant stalks gently to and fro, in their innumerable whispering the devout Hindu hears the secret voices of his gods, even as the unwashed priests of Zeus heard the voices of theirs in the rustling of the oaks of Dodona. The Old Resident informs me that 'a pious Hindu will often take off his shoes when he comes to a peepul, and walk five times round it, from left to right, repeating as he does so a verse which says: "The roots are Brahma, the bark Vishnu, the branches the Mahadeos. In the bark lives the Ganges, the leaves are the minor deities. Hail to thee, King of trees!"'

Now, this is a dialect which I understand far better than the bastard Latin of botany. I therefore beg the Old Resident not to call the sacred tree *Ficus religiosa*, but to call it peepul, and to give me some more unscientific and interesting information. He tells me that 'if a man takes a peepul leaf in his hand and, crushing it, expresses a wish that the gods may so crush him if he is not telling the truth, the oath is regarded as of the utmost sanctity.' This is a thing worth remembering, and of more than symbolical interest.

Thus we travel along, passing, and being passed by, rattling little ekkas, big lurching buffaloes, peasants mounted on bullocks, others mounted on donkeys, and yet others mounted on their long lean legs, a stick on the shoulder, from which swing the poor fellow's worldly possessions tied up in a patched rug, and behind him walks his wife: if Mahomedan, in breeches, if Hindu, in long skirts, beginning at the hips and leaving the middle of the body up to the breasts conventionally bare. In either case, barefooted, bejewelled, dust-covered, and serene.

From either side of the road stretch fields, in vain praying for water, except here and there where the patient bullock draws it from deep wells. On those spots the land is green; beyond, all is as bare and brown as yon peasant lady's middle. And now from the dry fields begin to rise the ruins of ancient tombs: domes, some whole, others cracked, all gray with lichen and dry moss. Halfway we pass a great mausoleum in perfect preservation, and surrounded by hovels whose walls are thick with dung-cakes. 'Have you ever seen past magnificence and present misery in a more melancholy juxtaposition?' asks the Old Resident reflectively.

Most magnificent among these monuments and most melancholy is the Kutab Minar, just come into view. It soars out of the green trees into the blue heavens—a great sugar-loaf of pink sandstone and pale marble, girdled by four galleries which divide it into five stories, each story a little narrower than the one below it. We alight and wander towards it through the dust of the Hindu city Lalkot, destroyed by the ruthless Crescent. For this tower, begun by Kutab-ud-din towards the end of the twelfth century and finished by his successor some thirty years later, is a monument of Islam triumphant and intolerant. It rises out of the dust of its victims, strong and stern, looking haughtily down upon the ruins of the vanquished and upon the trees which droop over them like a pall spread by pious hands over the dead, and upon the forlorn cows which roam under the trees in search of

fodder, and upon the white vultures which mount guard on the corners of many a roofless wall and pillar supporting nothing. It rises story over story, alternately encased in convex and rectangular flutings—a giant sheaf of stone, bound at intervals by balconies and belts bearing sacred texts from the Koran. It is not devoid of grace, but it is the heavy grace of a somewhat corpulent, painted, and elaborately ornamented beauty of the East. In its mechanical succession of stories and in its monotonous alternation of round curve and sharp angle it presents a magnificent example of the genius of Asia —so fond of detail, so contemptuous of the large, masterly simplicity of what we call Art; in one word, so childish.

We wander in and out of some of the other tombs—ruined gateways leading into emptiness, and roofless walls of red sandstone minutely sculptured with arabesque designs and sacred texts, full of a great silence, deepened by the cooing of the wild-doves aloft and the echoless fall of our footsteps on the marble floor beneath. We cast a glance at Raja Dhava's iron column and its Sanskrit hieroglyphics; also at the inscriptions carved into its smooth face, age after age, by Hindu and Mahomedan dagger, some accompanied with mysterious sketches of fishes, flowers, elephants, and what not. Even in its *cacoethes scribendi* the East takes itself more seriously than the West. What knicker-bockered tourist would have had the patience to carve his name into solid iron and to illuminate it? See on the opposite wall his mark: Smith, Jones, Brown, and the rest of the romantic cognomens, scrawled with perishable lead-pencil.

And so back to Shahjahanbad, the city of Shah Jahan —modern, living, dirty Delhi. It is evening. The glowing purple of the sky has faded into rose, rose has paled into primrose, and presently, behold, the moon of the East is afloat on an ocean of blue, as dark and deep as any other Eastern mystery.

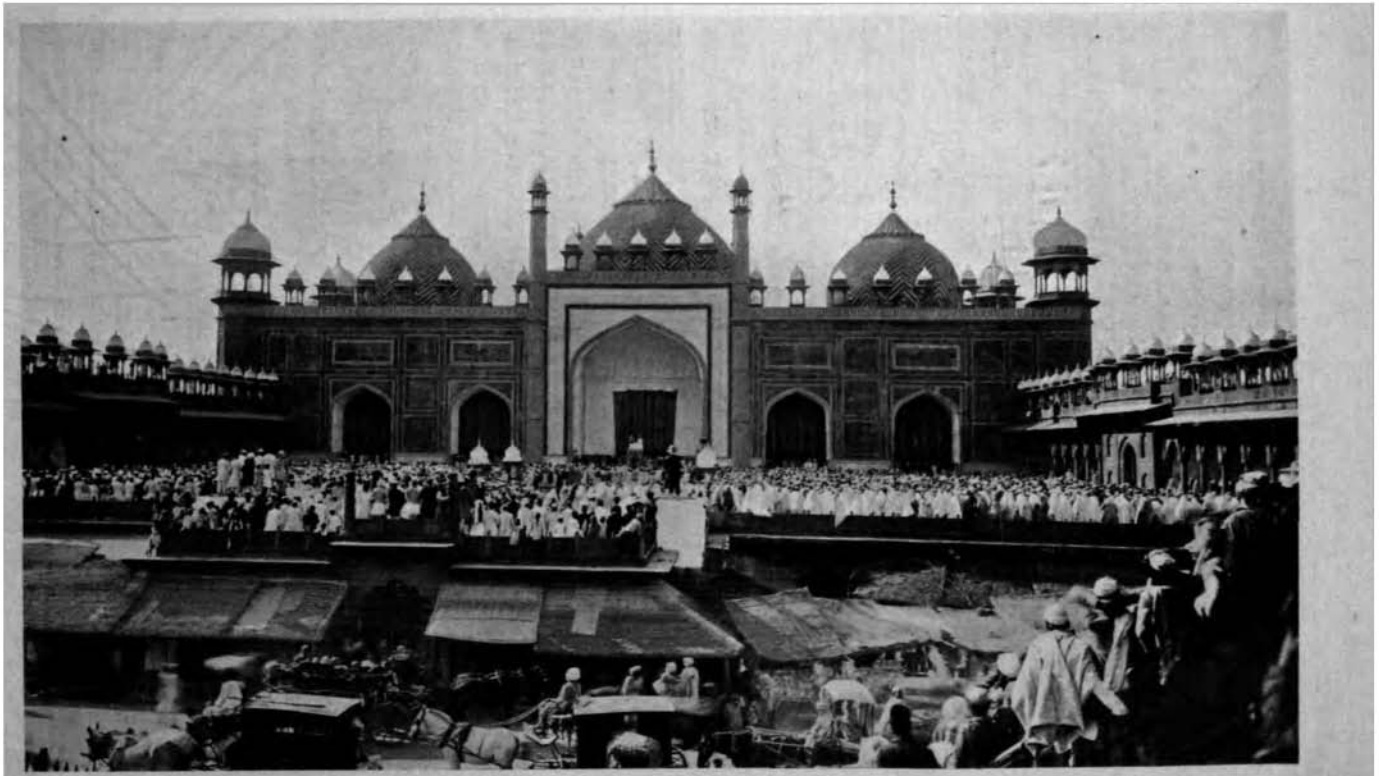
The Old Resident joins me on the veranda, and we

sit, side by side, gazing into the moonlit compound—he smoking, and I conjuring up ghosts from the past. The picture of the bazaar yonder returns before my mind's eye. Out of this carnival of unmentionable shabbiness rises the great Jama Masjid, with its immense white cupolas and pink minarets. But even these lack the one thing that lends to the mosque of the Near East its sublime meaning. 'In ancient times,' had said my native cicerone, 'the muezzins used to call the people to prayer from those balconies, but now they do so only from a low platform inside the mosque.'

I dream of many a divine evening in Old Cairo, or, better still, in Constantinople. The sun has sunk, and the turbaned muezzins emerge, one by one, on the circular balconies of the minarets—hundreds of which taper, slim and white, from amidst the roofs, domes, and tree-tops—and the evening chant floats over the city: 'God the Most High! There is no god but God, and Mahomed is the apostle of God. Great is God! I bear witness that there is no god but God.' Thus runs the message from above, each sentence repeated twice, as the muezzin walks slowly round and round the circular gallery, with his right hand lifted up to his right cheek, chanting to the four quarters of the earth. At the call, the faithful, wherever they may chance to be, prostrate themselves to their Creator, and even the faithless feels the thrill of a novel emotion within him—an emotion which is due perhaps as much to the soft starlight as to the hymn.

Suddenly the muezzin's voice has died away, but its echoes haunt the night air. How strange his message was! how solemn and how sacred! How remote and yet how intimate! How much more human and holy than the clash and the clangour of yon church bell! How——'Have a peg before turning in?' It is the Old Resident's voice. Oh the bathos of things! We order pegs, and the spell is broken.

'Now that you have seen both Delhis, what do you think of them?' asks my companion.



THE JAMA MASJID, DELHI—CELEBRATING *ID*.

'I think the old is very properly dead, and the only fault I can find with the new is that it is not.'

'Oh, but it will soon be,' he assures me genially.

'Plague?' demanded I.

'No; at least, not yet—drought.'

'I have already said more than could be safely said on the subject,' answered I. 'The English-reading public does not love painful pictures. It damns them as inartistic.'

'The English-reading public is a cow,' said he concisely.

A period of tangible silence followed this momentous pronouncement; for the Old Resident spoke with conviction, and I felt unable to contradict him.

'As to the plague,' he resumed after a while, 'last year it was pretty lively, and there was some hope that the villainous traders and their touts would clear out of Delhi in a panic. However, it did not come off. This year the disease has not yet paid us its annual visit, but it will be here in another month or so.'

'What precautions does your miscellaneous municipality take?'

'Oh, there is, or was, a Vigilance Plague Committee, which has already managed to eradicate——'

'The disease?'

'Oh Lord, no—a few thousand rats!'

'What else did it do?'

'It published a memorandum advising the people to wash occasionally their clothes and their persons, and not to give the bedding of the deceased to the sweepers, as the custom is.'

I no longer wondered at the success of the epidemic, but I began to wonder at the multitude of survivors.

'So you are not impressed by the romance of Delhi?' he asked presently.

'Well, the native city may be romantic, but the European cantonments are clean, and man cannot live on romance alone,' said I aphorismatically.

He shook his head in assent, and then added in a lowered voice:

'Between ourselves, I think there would be less written about the romance of India if writers had the ability to see with their own eyes or the courage to describe what they saw. As it is, they just follow one another as the blind beggars do, each afraid lest he should be left behind —be called Philistine. My own opinion is that the romance of India is a monstrously overrated thing.'

CHAPTER XIII

AGRA

We arrived under the lofty, massive, and shaky red walls of the Fort of Agra on the 16th of the month—a day auspicious in Hindustan. The Hindu calendar, as every schoolmaster knows, or ought to know, overlaps ours, and the middle day of a Roman month coincides with the Hindu *Sankranti*, or day of transition: a mystic milestone on life's road, or a *dak* bungalow at which the pilgrim rests for a moment to look backward and forward, to count up the fulfilments of prayers that are past, and to prepare himself for fresh disappointments. Happy the man who, having eased his heart of memories and hopes, pursues his way looking neither backward nor forward, but with his eyes serenely fixed on the path before his feet.

I enter the great Fort, passing between gates copper-plated, flat-nailed, and adorned with many a mysterious hexagram, a mighty shield against the Spirits of Evil. I traverse court after court, and, climbing up the stone galleries, I reach the ramparts, whence I look down upon the city of Agra. Here, as in every other part of this ancient land, past and present meet—or rather fail to meet; for between the hypothetical Agra of the 'Mahabharata' and the Agra of the Moghul Emperors creeps the broad river Jumna, yellow, tepid, and torpid, its banks seamed with bathing-steps which lead down to acres of arid sand.

On the east, or left, bank of the river spread the relics of the ancient city—few and faint records of men and

women whose earthly career is all but lost in the shifting sands of legend. For before the advent of the Moghuls Agra was the capital of the Lodi Kings, all traces of whose splendour lie buried in yon domed, mouldy, and ruined tombs. On the west, or right, bank stands the modern city, founded in the middle of the sixteenth century by Akbar, and called after him Akbarabad; and close to it gleam the white and gray houses of the European cantonment, embedded in their trees. And the land around the dead and the living and the native and the exotic alike is scarred with ravines, while clouds of dull earth, borne aloft by the easterly wind, roll over the flat roofs of the city beneath my feet.

Even so did they when the Padishah Babar, having slain the last of the Lodi Kings in the Battle of Panipat, near Delhi, occupied their capital in 1526. Babar's was a breezy, cheerful, almost childish soul, and no lover of the dry and the dismal in things. Thus he describes his flight after a crushing defeat: 'We reached a village, where we found nice fat flesh, well-baked bread of fine flour, sweet melons and delicious grapes in great plenty. I never tasted the joys of life more keenly or felt so deeply the pleasures of peace and abundance.' A man who could eat thus on the day after he had lost a kingdom was capable of anything. He could endure defeat with a good grace and enjoy good fortune with moderation. But there were three things he could not endure.

Babar's first concern after his triumph was, like that of Adam, to plant a garden. With that object in view he crossed the Jumna; but, alas! as he himself says, 'the whole country was so ugly and loathsome that I recrossed the river, filled with unutterable disgust.' However, since Allah had not seen fit to create a better world, the philosophic Padishah resolved to make the best of this, and forthwith covered the detestable district with gardens redolent of roses and resplendent with narcissus flowers, 'planted regularly in beds geometrically corresponding one with another.' Even these efforts, however, failed to

confer a blessing upon a land essentially and fundamentally damned.

Three things especially disturbed poor Babar's equanimity: 'One was the heat of Hindustan, another the strong winds, and the third its dust.' Here in the good Padishah I recognise a brother, and his woes somewhat alleviate mine. However, the resourceful one proved again equal to the calamity. 'Baths,' he tells us with practical simplicity, 'were the means of removing all three inconveniences.' Here also I gladly confirm Babar's judgment from personal experience.

Leaving my tent, relatively refreshed, I begin to look about for the delectable paradise geometrically planted by my brother-in-sorrow. I consult the excellent Mr. Havell's excellent 'Handbook to Agra,' and I only find that 'the Ram Bagh is one of the gardens laid out either by himself or by one of his nobles, and the Zohra Bagh near it contains the remains of a garden-house, which is said to have belonged to one of Babar's daughters.' This is not satisfactory. Babar is as dead as Pan, and the perfume of his beloved roses only lives in his genial memoirs.

The same funereal reflection applies to the palaces which Babar built, and to the tanks and wells which he sank. They have all melted into darkness; but the east wind continues blowing and clothing the earth in a coat of drought. The last crop was almost ruined for want of rain, and, unless the heavens relent at this eleventh hour, the dumb millions of yonder plain will have cause to lament the water now poured upon these roads to lay the dust for the Prince and Princess of Wales.

With Babar, Agra's glory departed, to return with his grandson Akbar, who brought the Moghul Court back from Delhi, whither it had been driven under his father Humayun by Sher Shah, built this modern city on the right bank of the river, and here spent his declining years in peace.

This was not his first essay in city-building. A twenty-two miles' drive along Akbar's highroad, past many a ruin

of his reign, brings you to his deserted capital Fatehpur Sikri—a square frame of crenellated walls enclosing a multitude of temples, tombs, and palaces, now all sound asleep, as though under a wicked magician's spell.

I have seen cities that died of old age and cities that met with sudden destruction. Fatehpur Sikri appears to have been still-born. It arose out of the jungle at Akbar's bidding, and at his bidding it was abandoned as soon as finished. And now it is the favourite resort of the leopard, the owl, and the tourist.

As you roam over the empty streets, now halting before a mosque, now entering the courtyards of a palace, and again exploring the apartments wherein Eastern princesses once luxuriated in voluptuous idleness, the question haunts you, Why was this great capital built, and, above all, why was it, in the prime of its magnificence, given up to desolation? Here is a kind of answer, romantic enough to satisfy the rich in faith.

Three hundred and fifty years ago, says the popular historian, there lived a holy man called Sheikh Selim Chisti, who came to this wilderness and made a home unto himself in yonder cave amidst the wild beasts of the jungle, tamed by his sanctity. The hermit's fame for holiness spread by degrees over the land, and reached the ears of the Emperor Akbar, who at that time mourned the death of all his children and the want of an heir to his power. On hearing of the Sheikh, Akbar brought his Empress to this place, in the hope that, perchance, a son might be born unto him by the holy man's intercession. The Sheikh interceded, and in the fulness of time the Empress Mariam gave birth to a son in the hermit's own cave. In the plenitude of his gratitude the pious Akbar founded this city, and invested it with all the strength and splendour of a great capital. This is how Fatehpur Sikri came into being.

Its desertion was also due, says the legend, to the same holy man, who, vexed by the noise of men, said that either he or the Emperor would have to go. The Emperor

went, and Fatehpur relapsed into silence. But, though its splendour was short-lived, the sanctity of the place still endures. Men and women who scarce remember the power of Akbar continue to repair to the hermit's tomb on the summit of the hill to pray for his intercession with Heaven, leaving behind them pious bribes of many kinds and colours. Here you see the marble fretwork of the saint's tomb adorned with threads tied by women longing for offspring, and elsewhere a horseshoe nailed to the wall by the owner of an ailing beast, and you quit these uncanny courts marvelling at the greatness of the credulity which brought them into existence, at the catholicity of taste which embellished them, and at the godlike capriciousness which doomed them to desolation. Truly Akbar was a great man, and the tokens of his splendid audacity are many in Agra.

His successor, Jahangir, followed in his forerunner's footsteps, and added to the architectural treasures of the city many tombs, temples, and palaces; but most of the works which render Agra the museum of India are due to Shah Jahan—such as the Pearl Mosque, the Great Mosque, and other mosques, all of which were completed by his magnificent extravagance.

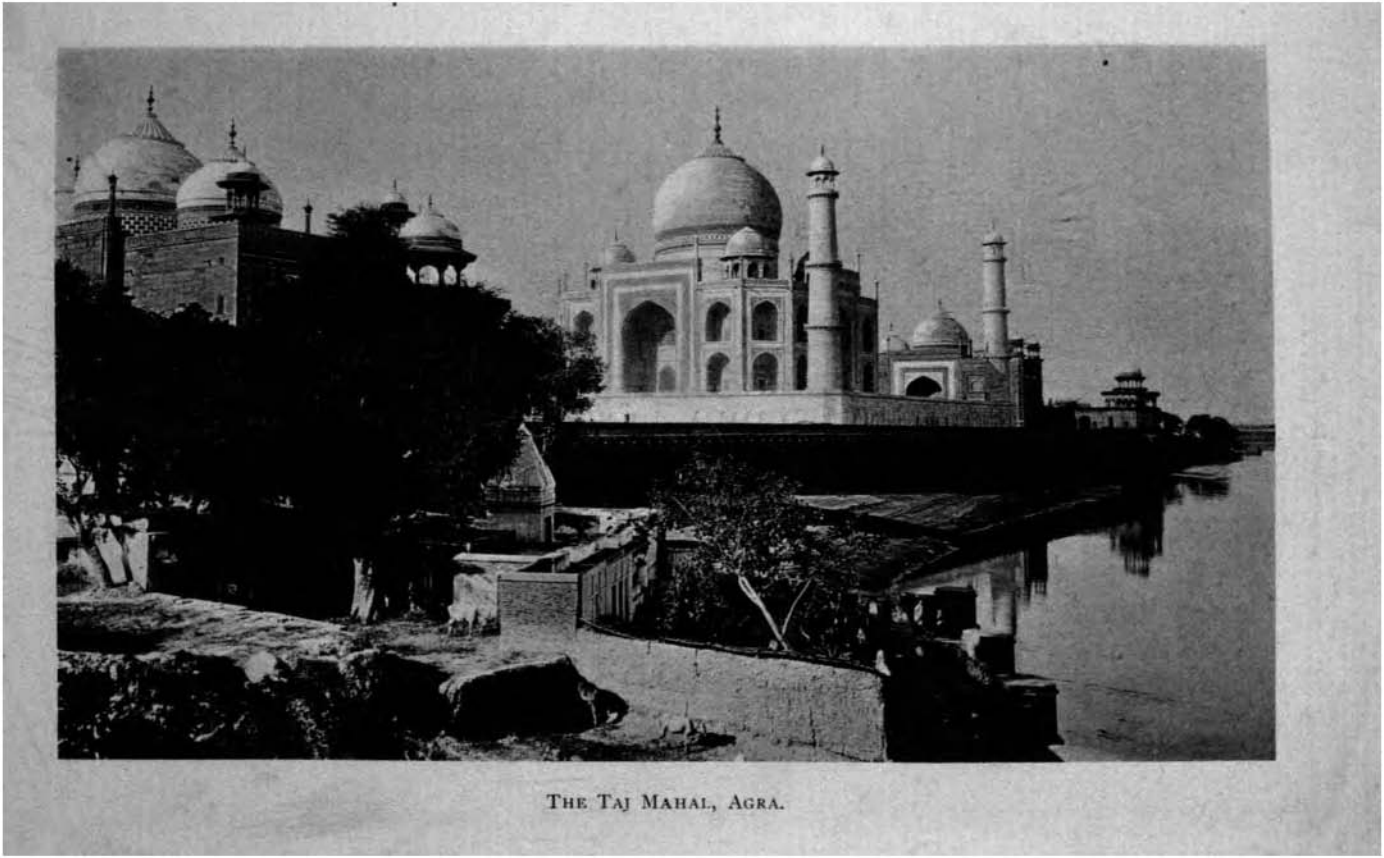
Some little time ago I had the pleasure of meeting this interesting Emperor in an Oriental History compiled for another imperial favourite of mine—Ranjit Singh. On the opening page of the manuscript I saw an illuminated picture representing the interview between Shah Jahan and the French traveller François Bernier, who was sent to India by Colbert in the middle of the seventeenth century for purposes of diplomatic intrigue long dead and forgotten, and wrote a book still remembered and even read. In that book the author tells us how he found his Moghul Majesty in the middle of his gorgeous nobles, seated upon a throne of gold and rubies and emeralds and diamonds, clothed in white satin and gold and precious stones, of whose value, however, the cautious diplomat could only form a remote estimate, 'because it is not per-

mitted to come near enough to count them or to judge of their purity'—perhaps a wise prohibition; for the use of distance as a preventive of disenchantment is nowhere better understood or more constantly needed than in the East.

However, Shah Jahan could easily afford to be genuinely, even tastefully, magnificent. He was a patron of the beautiful by right of birth. His Court had for generations been the comfortable resort of artists from Asia and Europe, and in him a whole age of artistic expenditure reached its colophon; a whole age of æsthetic aspiration found its highest expression in that mausoleum of marble which admires its own grace in the waters of the Jumna, when in flood, and which at this moment glares fiercely under the sun of the Agra heavens. It is the monument of Shah Jahan's grief for the loss of his favourite wife Arjumand Banu, 'the Crown of the Palace.' It still stands in all the pride of beauty: its smooth domes and chaste minarets without glancing white through the green tracery of the trees, its marble screens within surrounding the two empty tombs, the crypt below shielding the graves of the Emperor and Empress, still wreathed with blossoms by pious hands, and the vaults above resounding with the voices of many visitors: the native gliding over the marble floors bare-footed, the foreigner gazing at the delicately flowered walls bare-headed—each, after his fashion, paying a tribute of respect to the memory of a lady once beloved and to the exquisite taste of a loyal prince. It is a work perfect of its kind, but it is of a kind which fails to arouse my enthusiasm. It makes me think of Euclid or of a toy-shop. The Taj seems to me to need a glass case.

'Oh, you ought to see it by moonlight!' says my platitudinarian friend. 'Then the harshness of its symmetry is softened and the white domes and walls do not glare as they do now.'

'My dear good fellow, have you ever seen anything, from a factory chimney to a dunghill, that did not look



THE TAJ MAHAL, AGRA.

mysteriously beautiful by moonlight?' I answer, laughing, and he goes away, fuming.

But he is right. The Taj, like everything else that is Eastern, requires for its full appreciation the hazy, sublimating light of the moon—emotional, not to say hysterical, semi-darkness. It cannot bear the merciless scrutiny of mid-day reason—or, at least, this is my opinion. 'If anyone says otherwise—the road is broad.'

This masterpiece of human love and vanity once stood in the middle of a grove of stately palm and solemn cypress—calculated to set off the curves of the domes, the slim minarets, and the sorrow of the grave. It now stands in the middle of an instructive exhibition of European ineptitude. A tardy attempt appears, however, to have been made to restore some of the original harmony by the plantation of an avenue of cypress-trees—still too young to shed over the mausoleum that suggestion of dignified melancholy which the cypress sheds even over the humblest of graveyards throughout the Mahomedan world. The gardener who planted this garden had never roamed over the turbaned tombstones of a Mahomedan city of the dead, and his work, with its tardy recantation, is a flourishing example of that attitude of mind which holds that it is our mission to educate Asia first and to understand her afterwards.

As we walked across the garden on our way out, my friend drew my attention to two small green parrots, chattering as they pecked into the red sandstone of the gateway, crowned by eleven small white domes ranged in a row like so many cheeses on a counter. The parrots, which are as common as sparrows in this country, are supposed to be endowed with dreadfully long memories, and, as this pair chattered aloft, it seemed to tell me of the thousands of men and women who for seventeen long years laboured in the construction of this monument of Shah Jahan's sensibility, sustained by a daily dole of corn carefully reduced to the minimum compatible with life—or even beyond, for, if the parrots chatter truly, the

mortality among the Emperor's labouring subjects could not have been more terrible had they been deliberately offered as a funeral sacrifice to the spirit of his beautiful wife.

But enough of the dead, princes and peasants alike; they have all gone the way of Babar's roses and melons. Here is the city of the living. It appears to be in course of construction or of demolition. But it is neither the one nor the other. It is simply, like every other city of the East, topsy-turvy. I wander through its streets fearing at every step lest the rickety balconies should fall down upon my head. The inhabitants seem to share my sense of insecurity, though their fears arise from totally different sources. I observe over many a small door—fastened to the lintel by a heavy chain and padlock—either a red hand with fingers outstretched painted on the whitewashed wall, or an image of the elephant-god Ganesh, three-eyed, snake-necklaced, altogether interesting. The red hand is a powerful talisman against the Evil Eye, and the god, of course, an even more powerful protector against all witchery and a bringer of prosperity; and both are characteristic of Hindustan. For, though the crescent of Islam glitters on all the great monuments of Agra, the Mahomedan population is as a drop in the ocean of Hinduism. But the latter boasts no conspicuous temples. On the other hand, every house contains within its enclosure a chorus of images, and the richer among them even shrines of considerable size and splendour.

There is, for example, the wealthy banker Mr. Something-Something-Something Lal. He dwells in a great mansion, whither he loves to invite the European traveller. And when the European traveller accepts the invitation, he is ushered into a spacious room, furnished with chairs on which he fears to sit, and is offered fruit and refreshments which he is unable to eat. But the host means exceedingly well, and, if his taste in upholstery is execrable, his family chapel is gorgeous. In it are enshrined his private gods—in number one hundred and sixty.

But, as usual, this affluence is limited to the few. The two hundred thousand souls that swarm in the streets and bazaars appear to find life a thing that is to be borne with fortitude and to be relinquished without regret. There are among them women in blue petticoats and red or yellow cloaks, all ragged, carrying on their heads baskets of dung or pitchers of water. Small children, dressed in a waistband and a string of amulets, sprawl in the dust, some carrying even smaller children in their arms, others drinking from the gutter. Here and there, outside the miserable dwellings, old men, nearly naked, lie on rope bedsteads, trying to warm their shrivelled bodies in the sun. Here and there fowls are picking up what food they can find in the sand. As you wander towards the bazaar all things grow in density and variety, and the place is perilous with importunate touts, with men riding on bullocks, with beggars, cripples, camels, cows, geese, and tourists. On the counters of the shops sit the traders, their brows anointed with marks of holiness, their eyes keen with greed. Amidst these is an establishment which bears the inscription, 'GODHELP & Co.'—apparently, God help the clients. From the awnings of many of the shops hangs a cage, and in it is an ancient green parrot, winking knowingly at trader and customer impartially. He seems to say:

> 'Some for the Glories of This World, and some
> Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
> Ah, take the Cash and let the Credit go,
> Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!'

And on many a wall I read advertisements of typewriters, phonographs, dentists, pleaders, 'ophthalmic opticians,' and, as I begin to imagine that the Middle Age is dead, I come in sight of the establishment of an astrologer. He is, of course, a Brahman in caste, and in appearance an amiable, slimy creature, overfed and, I hear, slightly overmarried. He sits behind a table, wrapt in Manchester calico and Eastern courtesy, with many a

glossy elf-lock cork-screwing down his round shoulders. He is a character to be studied and even envied.

The astrologer still is in India what he was in medieval Europe—an indispensable member of the body social. He is far better paid than the physician, far more highly esteemed than the priest, and far more earnestly feared than the policeman. When an Indian child is born into this transmigration, the parents are more anxious to have its earthly career predicted by a horoscope than Christian parents are to have the heavenly future of theirs assured by baptism. When an Indian wants a wife—and when does he not?—he looks as carefully into her nativity as into her dowry. When he has lost his cash-box he runs, not to the detective, but to the astrologer. When he has lost his cow, he does not try to recover her by the vulgar offer of a reward, but he goes to the astrologer. When he has lost his wife and may wish to recover her he likewise goes to the astrologer.

My friend's shop is like an ancient Greek oracle—a spring of counsel, abundant and discreet, for all mortals in doubt and in distress. To him come all who are anxious that suffering friends may recover, absent relatives return home in safety, or the barren rejoice in offspring. To him also come, as to a celestial solicitor, all who wish to embark upon a new enterprise under favourable auspices. When his prophecies have been falsified by the event, his incantations have proved futile, his herbs and his prayers abortive—as sometimes happens—neither is his self-confidence abashed nor his client's faith shaken. He consoles the disappointed with the all-sufficient reflection: 'Thou seest, my friend, how true it is that we live in the iron age; even the rites of a Brahman have lost the efficacy which they possessed in the golden age.' And the client goes away and comes back again. No wonder my friend is so sleek, so smiling, so knowing, so prosperous! I must advise him to inscribe over his premises *Sunt commercia cæli*. The inscription will be unintelligible to his clients, and, consequently, all the

more impressive and attractive. Not that he needs any auxiliary attraction. He informs me that even European ladies and gentlemen of all ranks disdain not his services and prophecies. His purse, could it be investigated by profane eyes, would supply a curious link between East and West. In its depths the Hindu's humble copper would be found in friendly converse with the haughty Sahib's silver. Thus one touch of credulity reveals the whole world kin, and those who are severed in prejudice are proved brethren in stupidity.

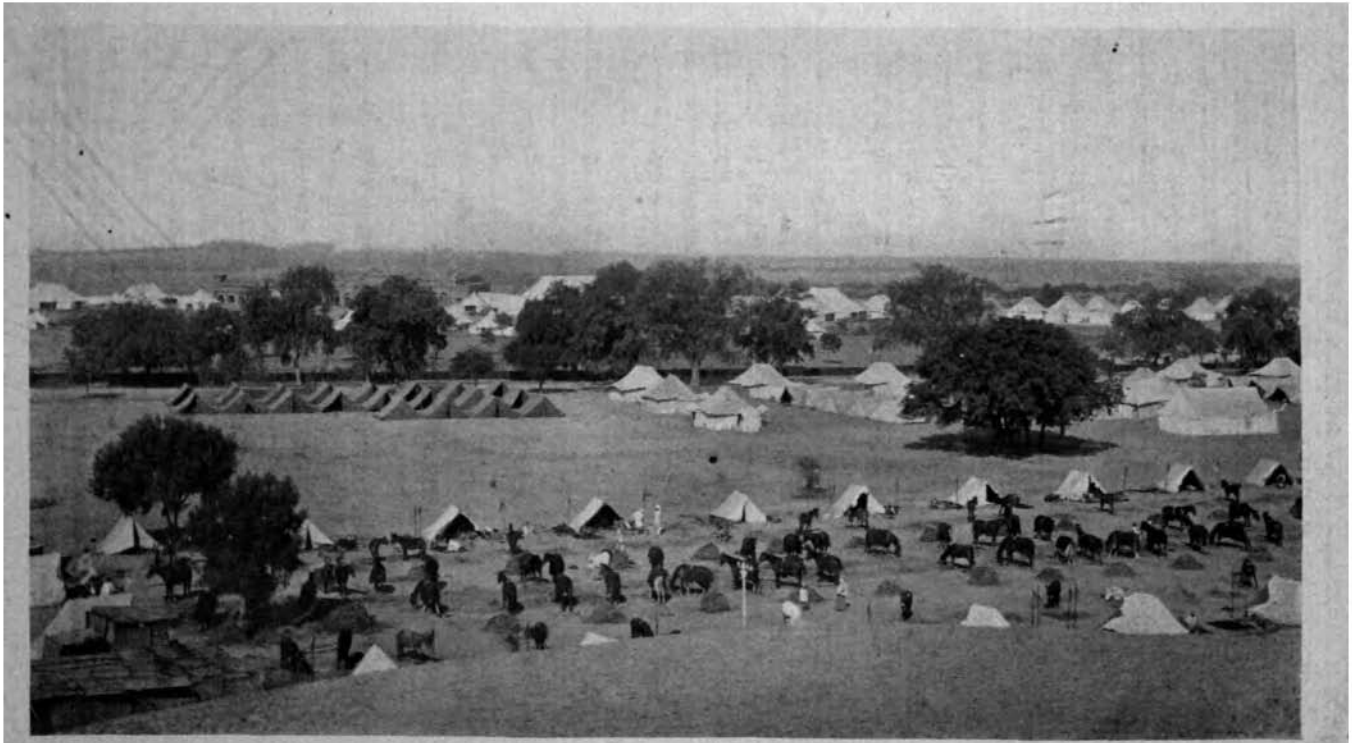
But I forgot the astrologer's most important public function. There are seasons in the Hindu year when the village streets resound with the dull thunder of the tom-tom, and the air, from dawn till dark and after, is full of the dolorous strains of the reed-flute. Behind this terrible band marches a procession of bronze-skinned females in bright white draperies edged with red, their limbs laden with silver and brass, while above the veiled heads rises the scarlet and gold canopy under which may be seen the bridegroom borne aloft on the shoulders of rhythmically groaning palki-wallas. He is a precocious youth of some eleven summers, clad in scarlet and gold, with a conical cap on his head and decently bedaubed brow, sitting cross-legged with all the nonchalance of one to whom getting married is an everyday experience. The bride also, despite an impotent Act to the contrary, is a young lady of perhaps nine or ten years. But she, alas! shall never know more than one wedding-day.

You feel in a nuptial atmosphere. One half of the population seems grimly determined to wed the other half, and hundreds of men and maidens are daily cut off in the prime of youth by matrimony. The peasant, it is true, will rush where the prince is afraid to tread. That is his nature the world over. But this is an exhibition of matrimonial ardour unparalleled in the visitor's experience. On inquiry it turns out that the astrologers have pronounced the stars at the present moment especially propitious to the propagation of the species. Furthermore,

the same oracles have predicted that no stellar combination favourable to wedlock will occur for fourteen long months, and in India fourteen months is a period pregnant with disastrous possibilities. Therefore 'now or never' is the word. 'Let us marry and be merry, for to-morrow we may be swept off by plague or famine.' And the astrologer smiles upon his work, secretly thanking the Giver of all blessings for having peopled the heavens with stars and the earth with fools.

Surfeited with wisdom and dust, I try to find my way out into the clear air, and, in so doing, I pass many a curious building—here a Roman Catholic Church, there a Protestant missionary school, a hospital, an orphanage, a college, a gaol, and a lunatic asylum—all appearing to say to the crumbling tombs of the Moghuls yonder: 'You have had your day; it is now our turn.' I do not mean to imply that the influence of the West over Agra is a new thing, though its supremacy is. In the old cemeteries you find the tombs wherein sleeps the dust of many a European adventurer of the Moghul period. Some of these strangers were traders, and others artists or apostles; some were famous in their day and others infamous. It was the golden age of adventure in India: that period when the Moghul Empire was dying and a multitude of carrion-crows—Mahomedan, Mahratta, Sikh, and Frank—were fighting for a bite at the prostrate body. To cavaliers of fortune the prospect was tempting, and they came in great flights.

Among these was M. Walter Reinhardt, better known by the picturesque appellation of Samru, which this adventurous Frenchman assumed along with the turban of Islam. He was a native of Treves, a butcher by trade as well as by temperament, and otherwise an unlimited miscreant. Wearied of the slaughter of brutes, he joined the French army, and on arriving in India deserted his colours, enlisted under those of the East India Company, where he attained the rank of sergeant, deserted them, and entered the service of the Moghul Nawab of Bengal,



THE CITY, COUNTRY AND PRINCE'S CAMP, AGRA.

the Company's ruthless enemy. From that date Walter Reinhardt vanishes and reappears as Samru, which is supposed to be the Indian version of his descriptive nickname Sombre, or, more probably, of the English surname Summers, which the versatile knight of the slaughter-house had adopted on occasion.

The Nawab found the gloomy Samru useful in the capture of the British factory of Patna in 1763, and in the ensuing massacre of the inmates. It is said that, the native officers having refused to carry out the inhuman order, Samru volunteered to do the work for the love of it. Tradition adds the touch that he despatched on that day with his own hand some hundred and fifty fellow-European men, women, and children. Next year he played a leading part in a similar performance at Agra.

Samru was already a great man and the husband of a great woman—the Mahomedan lady known to fame as the Begum *par excellence*, on whose behalf Samru had abandoned another Mahomedan wife. The Begum accompanied her partner in all his missions of terror until his death, which occurred here in Agra in 1778.

In that year Walter Reinhardt, *alias* Summers, Sombre, or Samru, died full of years, riches, and honours, and was succeeded in the Begum's ancient affection by another French knight-errant, Le Vaisseau, who married her properly after her conversion to the Roman Catholic faith. But, strange to say, baptism failed to change the Begum's character. Le Vaisseau was too good a gentleman to be popular among his consort's military ruffians. Things reached such a pass that the pair resolved to flee from their own loyal forces, and carried their resolve out, after having bound each other by a romantic pledge to die rather than fall into their enemies' hands.

They fled on a dark night towards the nearest British camp, the knight on horseback, the lady in a palanquin. Their deserted troops got wind of the matter and gave chase. Nearer and nearer they drew. Suddenly through the darkness the knight heard the Begum's maid cry out

that her ladyship had killed herself. Leaping down from his horse, the poor Le Vaisseau peeped into the palanquin, and there, sure enough, beheld his dear old wife lying in a pool of blood which issued from her breast. Whereupon, like the true and loyal gentleman that he was, he whipped out his pistol and shot himself.

The Begum, however, soon recovered from the scratch she had given herself, returned to her throne, and sought consolation for the loss of her husband in a careful management of her other worldly possessions. In this she succeeded wonderfully well, thanks to an alliance with the East India Company, under whose fostering wings she grew in wealth and holiness, founded and endowed many Catholic churches, encouraged Christian missions, both Catholic and Protestant, with impartial liberality, entertained at her table Governors, Generals, Governor-Generals, and other great ones of the earth, and, having accomplished a century, died in 1836, leaving behind her the reputation of a pious and charitable lady with a head screwed shrewdly on her shoulders.

But the days of doughty deeds, of fortunes rapid and sordid, and of fatal intrigues with pious and versatile Begums, are over. India no longer is an oyster to be opened by the knight-errant's sword. Moreover, the pearls with which the oyster was once credited have, like other Eastern myths, long since been reduced to their real dimensions. There may be wealth in the tourist's 'gorgeous East,' but it is locked up in the coffers of the few. The children of India, as I have seen them day after day for many a weary week past, are lamentably poor, and it must have been a very poor set of knights indeed who ever found it worth their while to rob them. The oyster lies open before my eyes, and, behold, it is full of emptiness. But, for my part, I regret not the romantic days of old. I even prefer the picture of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh which I find in the official reports of the present. It is a picture undistinguished by startling adventure or serious calamity,

except such as are due to the cruelty of the heavens. Sometimes the monsoon, on which the life of the peasant depends, is small, or the rainfall is unevenly distributed. Then there is sale of brass utensils, and hunger. But all that man can do is done to prevent or to alleviate the horrors of famine. The depredations of bipeds of prey are also restricted within such limits as are possible in a land only just awakening to the discovery that the spoliation of the weak by the strong is not an inevitable law of society.

The vicinity of the Native States—those high-schools of smugglers, coiners, and other artists in lawlessness—renders the task of maintaining order even more difficult. Thus one night a few weeks ago the village of Jagner, not very far from Agra, was invaded by a band of one hundred brigands, who, after having attacked the police-station, were finally routed by the combined forces of the Government and the villagers, and fled across the border, leaving behind them one prisoner. In the city of Agra itself the other night there was a similar conflict on a smaller scale, and when I heard of it the small size of the doors and their chains and padlocks assumed new significance in my eyes. But what are these incidents compared with the good old times to which they have succeeded?

Yes, this is the new era. The bureaucratic machine works on, from year's end to year's end, grinding comparative order out of unmitigated chaos, comparative prosperity out of starvation, twilight out of utter darkness, and yet failing to earn the love of the people on whose behalf it works. Why? I suppose for the same reason for which the Briton fails to earn the love of anyone the world over. It is a cumbrous kind of machine, almost Turkishly stupid and slow and self-complacent. Yet, in the main, an honest and, if unamiable, a beneficent old machine.

But what of the wheels? Most of them, no doubt, rumble on smoothly enough, happy in doing the day's

work for the day's wages, unhaunted by memories, unharassed by anticipations other than the anticipation of a Commissionership, a provincial Lieutenant-Governorship, a star, or, at the worst, a comfortable pension of £1,000 a year. Duty is their favourite word, doubt their abhorrence, self-admiration their most amusing quality. They are happy in feeling what they are—infinitesimal wheels in one infinitely big machine.

It is a very bucolic existence, that of the ordinary British Civilian in India—an Elysium of sunlight and strenuous officiousness, with an occasional shade which does not obscure the sunlight, but brings it into relief. It is only when a man of genius strays into the Indian Government jungle that the tragedy arises. Fortunately, men of genius are not very common in India.

CHAPTER XIV

CHRISTMAS IN GWALIOR

My platitudinarian friend's hyperboles have at last acquired some meaning. Here, indeed, in this great Mahratta State of the Sindhias I catch a glimpse of 'Oriental magnificence,' and here is the bulk and the brilliance of the moving mountains which men call elephants. Thirty-six of these imperial beasts tower in a row outside the station under the fort-crowned cliffs of Gwalior, their trunks and foreheads gorgeous with floral and geometrical patterns in blue, red, yellow, and white, their bodies all but hidden beneath their priceless trappings. The first two bear on their trunks the Prince of Wales's plumes and motto painted in blue and white, and their superior splendour indicates that they are intended for the royal guests. They are clothed in red velvet *jhools* richly embroidered with gold. Their necks are encircled in immense necklaces of gold. From their ears dangle gigantic tassels of gold, and mats of gold chain glitter over their foreheads. Two golden *howdahs* are fastened to their backs, and across each neck sits a richly-dressed *mahout*, a fly-whisk of peacock feathers in one hand and a prod of gold in the other.

The ceremonies of reception and presentation over, the elephants advance, the bells suspended from their flanks ringing solemnly. They kneel down, a gangway is fixed from the platform to the *howdahs*, and the Prince of Wales steps up to one of them, accompanied by the Maharaja; on the other ascends the Princess, accompanied by the Agent to the Governor-General. Behind

each sits an attendant in scarlet and gold, holding over the riders' heads an open umbrella of like material and colour. This pair is followed by ten more elephants, carrying their Royal Highnesses' suite. They are all caparisoned as the first, with the exception that gold is here replaced by silver. The remaining twenty-four carry the noblemen of the Gwalior State, arrayed in all the merry tints of a garden in spring.

The procession moves off; at the head rides the Inspector-General of Police, followed by a native band of drums and reed-flutes. Then come five elephants carrying the emblems of the State, and one clothed in gold is led empty. To these ensue a great number of led horses, richly caparisoned and plumed. Then come two varieties of palanquins—*palkis* and *nalkis*—empty, but sparkling with velvet and gold, followed by a number of mounted staff officers. Next to them comes a cavalry band, one battery of the Gwalior Horse Artillery, one squadron of cavalry, one troop of cavalry, then a second native band, followed by spearmen on foot, under the command of feudal cavaliers, beside each of whom trots a pedestrian holding aloft an open umbrella. These bodies are repeated, forming the advance-guard, and behind them sways heavily the line of elephants already described, the procession closing in a rear-guard constituted of modern cavalry and artillery and medieval infantry, and above them all floats the yellow banner of the Sindhias, with its coil of hissing cobras.

The roads through which we pass are lined partly by Imperial Service troops and partly by the Maharaja's quaint sowars and sardars armed with spears and shields, a retainer holding over the head of each mounted nobleman an umbrella attached to a long stick. The same mixture of the old and the new is heard in the combination of tom-toms and reed-flutes with the cavalry bands, and is also seen in the great palace where the procession has just arrived, the older portions being in the Saracenic, the more recent additions in Dorico-Italian style, all

flashing spotlessly white in the sunlight, amidst a park of rich green and under a sky of limpid blue. But, strangely enough, in this case incongruity does not beget discord. His Highness of Gwalior has discovered the secret of being grand without being gaudy; in his magnificence Western taste is wonderfully reconciled with Asiatic pomp, and, as my platitudinarian friend would have said, 'words fail me,' etc.

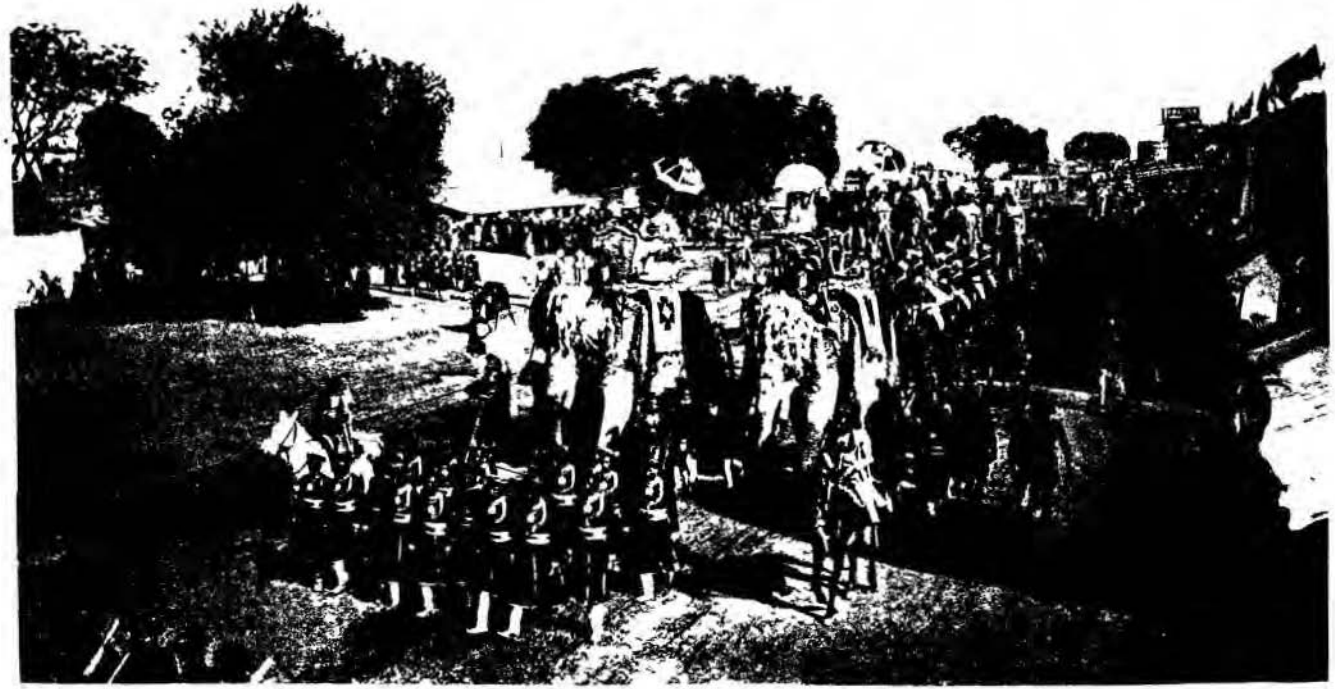
It is all the more amazing when I consider that the ruler of this State is a comparatively new man. He is the descendant of a certain Ranoji Sindhia, the son of a village headman, who began life in the eighteenth century as slipper-bearer to Belaji Peshwa and ended by founding this Mahratta dynasty, which still reigns over a kingdom larger and richer than Scotland. A glorious hero was Sindhia, for his success forbids me to call him an adventurer. But greater even than the slipper-bearer Ranoji was his son and successor Mahadaji, who was amongst the last to quit the fatal field of Panipat, and who, taught by disasters and the lessons of French and English soldiers of fortune, took Agra and Koil and Delhi, and her Emperor and many other things, before he took Gwalior.

The posterity of one of those European tutors of the Sindhias still lives here—a clan of Italian extraction, preserving their national features and the favour of the princes of Gwalior unaltered. I saw the head of the family, Colonel Sir Michael Filose, K.S.S., Chief Secretary, a venerable Italian gentleman in white beard and black frock-coat, among the twelve gorgeous sardars of the State, tendering his tribute of submission to the Prince of Wales in the durbar. Later on I met other members of the family, all high State officials, and one of them obliged me with a history of his house. The founder arrived in Calcutta about 1770, and made the acquaintance of a Frenchman named La Fontaine, who filled a high office under Ali Gohm, the titular Emperor of Delhi, and held out to his Italian acquaintance high hopes of military

and other distinction if he followed him. Michael Filose accepted the offer, and found employment under the Nawab of Oudh. About that time the Maharaja Sindhia was recruiting a force, trained after the European manner under another Italian officer, and Michael Filose joined this force. He was given the command of a regiment, which he gradually raised into a brigade, followed the Maharaja through his adventurous career, and shared his final success. Since then the descendants of the Italian and the Mahratta have jointly ruled Gwalior for more than a century, and have both combined to render the Prince's visit a brilliant success.

To be perfectly frank, my enthusiasm, I suspect, is not quite disinterested—whose ever is? When, after the durbars and banquets, I began to collect my own feelings calmly and to sort them out according to the strictest methods of the morbid self-dissecting pedantry called psychological analysis, I found that a fair proportion of my æsthetic satisfaction sprang from no nobler source than personal comfort. The Maharaja has provided his guests with everything that could be demanded by the most exacting Sardanapalus. In my tent I find all I need—from a bath and eau de Cologne to a pin; and outside the tent all that I may need—from an Indian elephant to a European hair-dresser.

I took an early opportunity of mounting the first. I had heard from my lady friends that riding on an elephant meant dignified exaltation, tempered by the sobering effects of sea-sickness. A male friend had described the *howdah* as a tolerable imitation of a dentist's chair. I cannot adopt either formula for my own sensations. Having alighted from my carriage at the foot of the Fort, I was met by an elderly gentlemen in red, who, pointing to a ridge of fifteen elephants ranged against one side of the courtyard, gave me to understand that I was at liberty to choose my own mountain. For a while I gazed at the range of gaily-dressed flesh, endeavouring to conceal my embarrassment. Suddenly one of the brutes extended



PROCESSION FROM THE STATION TO THE PALACE, GWALIOR.

his trunk towards me. I took it to be a friendly hint, such as a certain enchanted animal once gave to a certain prince in a certain fairy story, the name of which I forget. In that case the hint saved the prince's neck; in the present instance it very nearly broke mine.

The animal knelt down, a ladder was planted against its side, I mounted and took my seat on the *howdah*, and, in due course, we were under way. We passed beneath one lofty gateway, and jogged slowly up the road which leads to the rocky plateau of the fortress. We presently passed beneath a second gateway, and proceeded higher up the road, when the elephant thought the time had come to prove that he was not utterly devoid of a kind of humour. He suddenly stood still and then staggered round. The *mahout* began to coax him with the words —if words they be—'*Tay, tay,*' '*Ow, ow.*' But the elephant remained obdurate. The *mahout* raised his voice in blasphemy, and began to play with his iron grapples on the brute's ears and neck. Then the elephant lifted up his trunk in anger, rumbling, roaring, and shaking like a volcano in travail. This earthquake had lasted for some five minutes, when I thought I might be more comfortable on foot, and, getting the elephant alongside of the ramparts, I dismounted and walked up to the summit of the Fort.

It is a great oblong platform of sandstone rock, yellow by nature, but gray with age, dropping almost perpendicular on every side, and, where Nature left her work incomplete, the face of the cliff is artificially scarped, the whole being surrounded by thick battlemented walls. Everything speaks of impregnable strength, and the numerous peepul and neem trees which grow from the crevices reveal the presence of wells and tanks. But even more impressive than these resources of the place are its religious ornaments. Both within and without, the face of the cliff is honeycombed with caves patiently cut out of the living rock, some of them large enough to have once accommodated many frugal anchorites, others mere niches intended

for the accommodation of even more easily satisfied images. According to the inscriptions, the whole of this weird colony of deserted cells was excavated wholesale in thirty-three years towards the end of the fifteenth century. One of them contains a monstrous statue 57 feet in height, and they all appear to owe their origin to a sudden epidemic of Jain otherworldliness. Curiously enough, the Mahomedan conqueror here seems to have spared the faces of the vanquished gods—quite undeservedly, for the sculptures, to my eye, are remarkable only for their colossal size, but otherwise their authors appear to have taken for their models dolls made of wood. Most of them are pious parodies of Adinath, the first Jain pontiff, and here and there the walls and pillars of the caves are covered with rows upon rows of small cross-legged Buddhas, ranged stiffly like so many toy figures on the shelves of a shop.

Less startling are the ruined palaces and temples of which this ancient capital is full. One of the former shoots up from the very edge of the cliff, its pallid face consisting of a number of low stories intersected by semicircular towers, whose open domes are joined by fretted screens and adorned with friezes of bright blue tiles with yellow elephants inlaid in them. One of these blue belts bears a number of yellow ducks stepping comically in procession. I enter this palace of the past and wander over two ruined courtyards, surrounded by low doors leading into small rooms, whose walls and pillars and ceilings are all of the pale sandstone of the cliff, and which seem to have been recently used as stables. The history of this rocky capital bears out the suggestion of strength conveyed by its position. It has sustained many a siege, and it has known again and again the sorrows of storm and starvation.

Built more than twelve hundred years ago by a raja of the neighbourhood, the fortress proved strong enough to resist, two and a half centuries later, the attacks of Mahmud of Ghazni, though it succumbed in 1196 to another Mahmud. Here began the long tale of blood which these grim rocks could tell. Fifteen years afterwards

the Mahomedans lost Gwalior, but recovered it in 1231, after a blockade of twelve months, conducted by Shams-ud-din (the 'Sun of the Faith'), Sultan of Delhi. Then in 1398 came the fierce Tamerlane, like a mountain stream from the north, and in the ensuing cataclysm Narsin Rai, a Hindu chieftain, succeeded in seizing Gwalior and saving it for Hinduism until 1519, when the Mahomedans, under Ibrahim Lodi, the Pathan King of Delhi, once more gained possession, to lose it six years later to the superior cunning of the Emperor Babar, whom I left eating melons and quaffing the various joys of life in the gardens of Agra. But even Babar's inventive genius could not arrest the whirling wheel to which this Fort seems to have been fastened by a merry demon. His son Humayun was in 1543 expelled by Sher Shah. But when in 1555, by falling from a staircase in his palace at Delhi, Humayun brought his luckless reign to an end, his great son and successor Akbar promptly recovered Gwalior and turned it into a prison, where captives of rank were permitted to pine in luxury.

When the Delhi Empire was dismembered, the Gwalior limb was seized, first by Jat Rana of Gohad, then by Sindhia, from whose grasp it was wrested by the East India Company in 1780, and transferred to its former owner, to be wrested back again by Sindhia in 1784, from whose successor it was once more wrested by the British in 1803, and restored again in 1805. After Sindhia's death, in 1827, the Fort was ruled by his widow till 1833, when her adopted son Janakji assumed the reins of government, and ten years later died heirless, thus affording an opportunity to his uncle and an adopted relative of his widow to fight for this everlasting bone of contention—a struggle interrupted by the British forces, which met and routed the Mahratta troops a few miles off on December 29, 1843, and, having taken possession of the Fort, reduced the Gwalior army to harmless dimensions, and exacted an indemnity and an annual provision of £180,000 for the maintenance of a garrison. Fourteen years later

the bone was very nearly wrested from the claws of the British lion by the Mutiny, in which the Gwalior troops saw an opportunity for reasserting themselves, though the young Maharaja courageously preferred his loyalty to the foreign rulers. This compelled him to flee to Agra, whence he was brought back in triumph a few months after by Sir Hugh Rose.

This, so far, is the last adventure of the bone. The young Maharaja, reinstated by the British Government, was rewarded for his fidelity with the right of adoption, with additional lands, yielding £30,000 a year, was made a General in the British Army, a Knight Grand Cross of the Bath, and a Knight Grand Commander of the Star of India. And when the present King visited India, thirty years ago, he found no warmer reception than in Gwalior. The Maharaja parted from his guest with words which are often quoted: 'It has been much to see your face,' he said; 'I can hardly hope to see you again, but sometimes in England turn a kind thought on me. All I have is yours.' His successor has inherited all these good things and sentiments. He is, perhaps, the most energetic Native Prince that ever enjoyed a twenty-one gun salute. Furthermore, he is a good soldier, and rendered some service in the Peking Expedition, when he, an Oriental, assisted in the sack of an Oriental city by the barbarians of the West.

I could not help reflecting on these matters as I leaned over the ramparts of the lofty fortress, gazing down upon the old town—a mass of stone houses roofed with flat slates, once the home of the Jain cult, which is now represented by the crumbling ruins of a solitary temple known as San Bahu. The sun was setting, and the shadow of the cliff lay upon the town below as I looked into its streets, listening to the voices of the children, the bleating of the goats, and the sing-song of the sweet-sellers, all subdued into harmony by distance. Beyond stretches the dry plain, and over it circle the kites, squealing shrilly. Ever and anon one of them swoops

down, picks up his filth, and then soars up again on pinions strong, swift, sure, and noiseless. Further off twinkle the first lights of the palace, and the white tents in the park gleam between the trees through the gloaming. I walk to the first gateway, and there I find another elephant waiting for me. Unwilling to disappoint the elderly gentleman in red, I consent to be jogged down the steep road to the bottom courtyard, where I exchange my dentist's chair for the less exalted and infinitely more comfortable carriage.

Among the many amusements provided by the Maharaja for the entertainment of his royal guests during the Christmas week spent with him were a review of his forces and three tiger-shoots. In the review took part all the troops and guns which had graced the triumphal entry, and, whatever may be thought of their efficiency on a serious field of action, they looked very brave on the parade-ground, as they marched, trotted, and galloped past the Prince: cavalry, infantry, horse artillery, and four elephant batteries. The Maharaja is prodigiously proud of his army, and has often expressed the wish that an opportunity might be given him of proving the mettle of the Mahratta soldier under modern conditions in the service of the Empire. For my part I am too conscious of my limitations to hazard a prayer either that His Highness's wish may be speedily fulfilled or that the opportunity for which he longs may be indefinitely postponed.

My military adviser tells me that it is absurd to judge of the efficiency of the troops of the Native States, altogether amounting to some ninety thousand, by the standard of European armies. He admits that, measured by such a standard, they may be perfectly useless for all purposes except that of display. But, on the other hand, he asks, how could they be better? The Government of India has bound the Native States to limit their troops to the number needed for the maintenance of the dignity of the chief, for the enforcement of internal order, and for the

fulfilment of the special obligations entered into with the paramount Power, which, on its part, undertakes to defend the Native States against foreign aggression. That being so, if the armies of the Native States are called upon to fight at all, they will have to fight against opponents in no way superior to them in military training.

Besides, the limitations imposed upon the Indian princes in the matter of military reform are mainly responsible for the inefficiency of their troops. No State is allowed to enlist in its army any resident of foreign territory, and it can only recruit troops from its own population. The Native States cannot communicate with one another or compare notes in military matters. They are not to equip, or use for military purposes, or even repair, forts and fortifications within their territory. They are not permitted to manufacture arms or ammunition, or to traffic in them. They cannot introduce improvements into their armies by means of foreign expert assistance or advice.

Allowances, also, should be made for the temperament and special circumstances of individual princes. The Maharaja Sindhia, for example, is spoiling for a fight. But other princes whom I have met did not seem to me to suffer from the same complaint. Even the most blatant of imperialists has recently admitted that 'some do not take any direct interest in military matters, and have honest and deep-rooted objections to reformed troops and a traditional love for the old-fashioned retainers, whom we regard as an expensive and detrimental mob.' 'Why should they not?' asks my friend again.

I regret I cannot speak more enthusiastically of the tiger-shooting either. The Prince of Wales is acknowledged to be a good shot. But the manner in which these royal sports are organized precludes any opportunity for the exercise of those qualities which, in my judgment, form the only excuse for sportful bloodshed. The tigers were for weeks past watched in the thinly-covered waste which, in this part of Gwalior, passes for jungle, and

were carefully fed. So the first requisite of real sport—seeking for your own game—was eliminated. Equal care was taken to eliminate the second—danger. Towers were erected on the spots where the shooting was to take place, and were furnished like drawing-rooms. The kill was tied in the immediate neighbourhood of those towers; all possibilities of disturbing the poor brute, thus lured to its doom, were carefully avoided by the use of noiseless slippers and subdued colours, and all the Prince had to do was to wait in his drawing-room, rifle in hand. When the tiger, driven in by the beaters, came within seventy yards of the rifle, the rifle went off and the tiger went down. Whatever that may be, I cannot call it heroic. Nor can I call it amusing.

Besides, there is no earthly reason why the tigers should be destroyed. They never attack human beings so long as they can obtain a respectable animal. It is only when wounded by man that a tiger condescends to attack him; and it is only when famishing that it forgets itself so far as to feed on his flesh.

But the Maharaja in his zeal does not even pretend to be actuated by consideration for his subjects' safety. When the first day's expedition proved less successful than he had hoped, he swore a mighty oath that, if the beaters did not do better on the second day, he would have them hanged. Nor did his tone encourage the suspicion that he was jesting. Again, the man who patronizes hospitals, colleges, and railways, is also now importing from Mombasa lions, which he means to turn loose upon his dominions, so as to enhance their sporting reputation. This is, I suppose, what he means by developing the resources of the country.

As for its other resources, he has an unconquerable antipathy to steam-pumps. The result is that, as soon as the Prince's visit is over, he will have to cast about for the means of rescuing his taxpayers from the fangs of the famine which threatens them. As I moved from one place of amusement to another, I could not but see that

all the rivers and tanks, both in the country around and in the park of the palace itself, were as dry as if they had never contained any moisture. The few wells here and there are the only sources of the water so lavishly poured upon the roads in order to make them passable for the royal visitors and their motor-cars. When I commented to His Highness on these matters delicately, he smilingly told me that 'famine is an everyday occurrence, while the Prince's visit is an event unique of its kind.' *Ergo*, the money which might be spent in sinking new wells and saving the lives of the peasantry is squandered on the amusement of the princes. The Maharaja of Jaipur, whom our host seems to be bent on outshining, was sensible enough to curtail the pageantry and to devote a portion of the funds to the alleviation of his subjects' misery. And, I believe, no one appreciated the wisdom of this act more highly than the Prince of Wales himself. But tastes differ.

In spite of personal gratitude, my duty as an impersonal chronicler compels me reluctantly to express the suspicion that, in the case of the Maharaja Sindhia, the ideas of Western civilization have not really penetrated far below the surface. His State also, in spite of its Dorico-Italian palace, its electric light, and its college, is essentially uncivilized. The northern parts, covering some six thousand square miles, form a plain of unbroken unpicturesqueness. The southern parts, three times as large, rise 1,500 feet above the sea-level, and are dotted with hills which attain the pretentious height of 2,000 feet. These rugged highlands are clothed with teak forests, in which dwell many curious and caconymous aboriginal tribes—Minas, Sharias, Bhils, Bhilalas, Ghonds, Korkus—men who know not the use of the plough or the colour of money, but obtain the necessaries of life from the produce of the jungle and its primitive luxuries, by bartering that produce to the less barbarous peasants of the lowlands. When the fit for culture seizes them, then these rude sons of the forest take up their axes,

fell a number of trees, burn the stumps out, and on the patch thus cleared they raise one or, at most, two crops. If by that time their agricultural zeal has not burnt itself out, they abandon these rude fields for new ones, similarly prepared by the simple method known as *jhuming*.

India still is in a large measure a land where every man is free to destroy. This privilege is, of course, extended to the cattle which roam over the countryside, picking up what has escaped the wasteful hand of man. Thanks to this freedom, the Old Resident confidently anticipates that in a few years all marketable timber will disappear from the Gwalior State, as it has disappeared from so many other Native States. As it is, the eye is at every turn met by crooked, maimed, and stunted trunks—the wretched remnants and reminders of once noble forests. And this sight, coupled with the parched look of the fields, detracts considerably from my enthusiasm.

The Maharaja told us the other evening that his simple-minded subjects firmly believe that the presence of the royal guests will propitiate the powers of rain. I fervently hope that it may be so. But my hopes would derive a certain encouragement from the sight of more wells and trees. There is no harm in making assurance doubly sure, as said the priest who, after having vigorously exorcised the rats off a certain ship, advised the captain to supply it with a few cats.

CHAPTER XV

OUDH AND ITS CAPITAL

A SLOW journey, enlivened by some discomfort, has brought us from Gwalior to Oudh—from a kingdom that is to one that was. The country is as flat as a billiard-table, and in happier years, the Old Resident assures me, almost as green, for the soil, as the numerous trees testify, is not sterile. But at this hour the fields are baked into barrenness, the canals are caked into clay, and the leaves of the trees are gray with the dust. A few groups of peasants and a few herds of dilapidated cattle can be seen moving over the haggard face of the land, and a rare hay-stack or corn-rick stands here and there, a melancholy witness of the might-have-been.

The saddest spots in this exhibition of sadness are, strange to say, in the proximity of the rivers which flow lazily across broad tracts of sand known as *churs*. Now and again the eye rests on a hamlet, whose dishevelled gray thatches supply a commentary on these features of the country, and some insight into the economic condition of its inhabitants. The bulk of them are tenants to the great talukdars, or landlords, and deeply in debt to them. Others are freehold yeomen, and deeply in debt to the money-lenders. 'The rate of interest often amounts to 100 per cent.,' says the Old Resident. It is natural that it should be so in a country where capital is scarce, where the borrowers are many and needy, the lenders few and greedy, and the two classes are impelled to deal with each other by the strongest of human motives—self-preservation and the hope of speedy enrichment.

'Yes,' admits my friend, 'it is quite natural—so is every disease.'

He proceeds to inform me that the provincial Government has recently made an effort to cure the Oudh farmers of their chronic embarrassments by means of two legislative recipes—the Encumbered Estates Act and the Land Alienation Act. Under the former the Government undertakes to lend money for the payments of old debts, while the other is intended to restrict the incurrence of fresh liabilities. It is a well-meant effort, but the Old Resident is somewhat sceptical as to its success. He points out that the first result has hitherto been a contraction of credit.

'The money-lenders,' he says, 'no longer able to secure themselves by mortgage, now insist on the deposit of the women's silver ornaments, or, if such ornaments are not forthcoming, they demand that the collection of rents should be left in their own hands.' So the farmer who is no longer allowed to pawn his farm has to pawn either his wife's jewellery or his crop.'

This does not seem to me a very great step towards the millennium.

The Old Resident, however, who is an open-minded person, and at this moment in a somewhat optimistic mood, maintains that the curtailment of the farmer's freedom to ruin himself is not a bad thing in itself, provided it does not prevent him from obtaining seed for his fields and food for himself and family while the crops are in the ground.

It is instructive to compare the lot of the rural population in Native States with that of British India. In the former loans are hard to obtain, and indebtedness is consequently a rare luxury. In British territory the cultivators are eternally in the money-lenders' books and in litigation with them. This means, I suppose, that in the Native States the peasant starves instantaneously, in British India gradually.

Whether the two recipes tried by the local Government

will mend matters still remains to be seen. Meanwhile, they have produced an unforeseen effect upon the social life of the patients. The difficulty of obtaining loans has pruned weddings and other ceremonies of that ruinous extravagance which is prescribed by Indian tradition and denounced by Indian reformers. It has also induced the peasantry to postpone the marriage of their children until the advanced age of six or even seven.

This is a change which, if persisted in, will solve one of the biggest knots in the tangle of Indian life, for, apart from other interesting evils which flow from the marriage of infants and the consequent plethora of baby widows, the mere expenditure entailed by a Hindu match is sufficiently appalling to frighten any ordinary human being into a vow of everlasting celibacy.

'No greater calamity can befall a Hindu father than the marriage of a daughter within the period enjoined by custom,' says my friend emphatically. 'If he is in a position to afford a large dowry, well and good; if not, he may well wish that either his daughter or himself had never been born. But whether he can afford it or not, he must ruin himself in this world before his daughter passes the marriageable age, or else he loses caste and is made to believe that he is doomed to eternal perdition in the next.'

It is obviously a case in which it is far more blessed to receive than to give away.

The wonder to me is that the ordinary agricultural labourer of this province can afford the luxury of financial suicide. His earnings, I hear, amount to less than twopence a day in coin, or a corresponding quantity of grain. Skilled artisans may, if the gods chance to be in a very good humour, earn as much as fourpence a day by working in their own villages, or even sixpence if called away from home. This means for both classes perennial abstinence of a somewhat severe character, diversified by periodical famines. Of these there are nine or ten recorded during the last 150 years, all caused, of course, by failure of

the rains, for Oudh, like the rest of India, still labours under the humiliation of depending for its food almost entirely on the goodwill of the gods.

Another cause of distress is the patrician temperament of the people. Last year there was as great a scarcity of labour in the province as this year of water. An official inquiry instituted into the matter found that one of its causes was temporary affluence. The labourers, having pocketed their wages, preferred to go to sleep or to the nearest bazaar, and enthusiastic officials hastened to draw glowing contrasts between the past and the present. One of them wrote:

'Ten years ago there was much real distress among the labourers when the winter rains put a stop to irrigation; last winter I found the men enjoying a holiday in their villages, or off to a neighbouring town to see a friend, but they were all contented, had plenty of food, and showed no anxiety for the future.'

'No anxiety for the future' is a blessing of unquestionable value, provided it is based on something more convincing than improvidence.

Another cause of the scarcity of labour was the plague, for Oudh is as favourite a resort of the epidemic as any other part of India. In addition, it counts among its characteristic attractions fevers both quotidian and quartan, skin diseases of various kinds, bowel complaints, and small-pox. This last visitor usually appears in March, reaching the height of its activity in May, when it begins to decline, and then departs just in time to make room for another.

However, these curses and the depredations of panthers and other wild beasts notwithstanding, the province of Oudh contains over three millions of people, mostly Hindus, of various castes—Banias or traders, Kasyasths or clerks, twenty subdivisions of Sudras, not to mention the old aboriginal tribe of Pasis. More than one-tenth of this Hindu population consists of Brahmans, who flourish abundantly on the faith of their social inferiors.

Piety to the ordinary Hindu means the accurate recita-

tion of the countless *mantras*, or formulas of propitiation, appropriate to every one of the million spirits who preside over every human deed, misdeed, fortune, and misfortune. The Brahmans are the professional exponents of these formulas. They are the intermediaries between earth and heaven, and the only competent guides in that labyrinth of legend and ritual in which the gods themselves are lost. Says the popular proverb: 'The gods are our masters, the *mantras* are the masters of the gods, the Brahmans are the masters of the *mantras;* therefore, the Brahmans are the masters of the world.'

Of course, the propitiation of the Unseen is not sufficiently profitable to satisfy all Brahmans. Some of the more ambitious among them are to be found at the Bar and on the Bench, others in various departments of the public service, and a few are now beginning to feel their way into the medical profession—a movement which is regarded by advanced Hindus as a pleasing sign of social progress, and a proof of a salutary revolution in the hide-bound sacerdotal caste. There are even reformers who go to the length of seriously advising the Brahmans to cast off their abhorrence of manual labour, and to try tanning and bootmaking. They argue that, since these holy men, while still resenting the approach of a pariah, have condescended to pursue a profession in which they are obliged not only to touch the living pariah patient, but also to dissect his body after death, they can no longer consistently object to the ceremonially less unclean occupations of tanning and boot-making. It will be some time, however, before these keepers of the venerable prejudices of their country can be induced to exchange their proud poverty for the humble shoemaker's last.

Such is the country of Oudh, and here is its capital, Lucknow—a great city beside the river Gumti. Like most Oriental towns, it inspires at first sight hopes of fantastic splendour, which are not fulfilled by sober experience. It is the prerogative of the semi-civilized to appear fair as a statue from without, and within to be foul