

AFTER FIVE YEARS IN INDIA

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A Hindu Merchant's House

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OR

LIFE AND WORK IN A PUNJAUB DISTRICT

BY

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TO
MY MOTHER

PREFACE.

During five years' residence in India, in a secluded district of the Punjaub, of which my husband held charge as deputy-commissioner, magistrate, and collector, I had many opportunities of studying the life of the people and the methods of administration employed by the British government. On my return to England I found that comparatively speaking so little is known of that administration and of the work done in India, that I was tempted to believe I might be able to interest others in some aspects of native life and English government, which I myself had found intensely interesting. To these I have added a short account of our own personal experiences.

These Indian sketches do not presume to give a full account of the multifarious and complicated system of administration in India or of the intricacies of native problems, or any solution of the many difficult questions which confront the representatives of British rule. They only strive to convey in simple language the somewhat superficial knowledge of certain branches of these subjects, gained by an Englishwoman during her stay in one small corner of an empire vast as Europe.

I offer these impressions and experiences for what they are worth. They may possibly supply a want amongst readers who would shirk graver books of statistics. They

may stir memories and awaken associations for some whose life in India lies behind them. They may interest others whose friends and relations are placed in similar circumstances to ourselves. They may give those whose fortune it is to enjoy the comforts of home, some idea of the experiences of others whose lot has placed them in the far-off and mysterious East, and be a link, however small, in the chain that binds every Briton to the greater Britain beyond the seas.

I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Sir John Strachey's admirable work on *India* for several facts and quotations, made use of in the chapters on the system of government, to Mr Ibbetson's *Census Report of the Punjab*, to Mr. Thorburn's monograph on *Mussulmans and Money-lenders*, to my father, Dr. Norman MacLeod's *Peeps at the Far East*, and to my husband for his account of the Sirsa District, and for much of the information embodied in this book.

A number of the illustrations are from photographs by Messrs. Bourne and Shepherd, or by the Lahore School of Art, to whom my acknowledgments are also due.

ANNE C. WILSON.

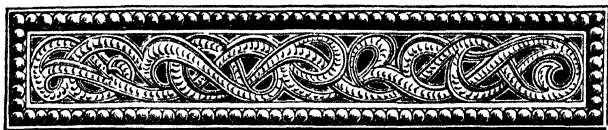
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AFTER FIVE YEARS IN INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

A DEPUTY-COMMISSIONER'S DAY—MORNING.

SLEEPY HOLLOW—that is the name which might be given by anybody transplanted from a busy town in England to the group of bungalows and public buildings which are called the head-quarters of our district. The acacia trees that line the dusty roads, and throw their shadows on the brown, parched land, are as still as if their life had been suspended. The country, which on one side is hemmed in by a long range of hills, and on all others stretches flat as moorland to the horizon, has the air of being entirely cut off from the outer world. The drone of the wheel as its wheel is turned by broad-backed bullocks, the coo of brooding pigeons in the wood, the regular thud of

the peasant's hatchet as he cuts through the trunk of a tall pipal tree, strike on the ear like the refrain of a tale of monotony that time cannot change, nor any stirring episode disturb.

And yet what an epitome of life is here. Not many of the seven stages of a man's existence have been left unwitnessed by that group of buildings. In the church, whose spire points upwards to the immutable sky, couples have been married and babies christened; in the high-walled English cemetery yonder lie one or two in solitary graves. The tragedy of love and death has been here played out.

Each building, half hidden by the trees, speaks of the cares, the troubles, the struggles for subsistence, the petty hopes and fears, the successes and the sins of half a million people. That is the doctor's bungalow, where the children are playing in the verandah; and the dispensary and hospital, like two long lines of barracks, lie a little distance off. In that bungalow sits the English engineer, poring over maps and making abstruse calculations for new canals. On the other side of the road, a native overseer, who is in charge of roads and buildings, is giving directions to a carpenter at his work.

There stands the sturdy Treasury, a bastion at each corner of its outer wall, a guard patrolling night and day within its ramparts, to protect its coffers, which contain the revenue of the district. Near it is the police office, eloquent of the efforts made to uphold the outward form of order. That is where the district superintendent of police works with his staff of native subordinates. And this high-walled building in the background is the jail. The building to the right contains the secret of half the prisoners who pass under the jail's barred gateways, for in it the maps and records are kept of every field in the district, too often a source of envy, hate, and murder. It is the kutcherry, where trials are also held, and heaped-up files of all the cases that have been tried in it for the last forty years could tell tales to those who cared to make the dry bones live, of love and hatred, jealousy, and all the petty squabbles and hereditary feuds of thousands. Petition-writers sit in an open building close at hand, and write down the hundred-and-one outpourings, requests, complaints, reports, and prayers that shouting peasants wish to make to 'Sarkar', the all-embracing name they have for the government.

Not far off is the bazaar, alive with babbling gossip. School-boys in the board school are reading aloud their English history in a high-pitched sing-song; and a child, as innocent of clothes as Nature made it, sits playing in the dust.

The outward framework is for an Englishman certainly most unlike that of a busy town at home. Much that is dear to him is entirely absent from it. There is no stir of politics to rouse the fighting instincts in him. There are no pictures to delight his eye, and there is little music to enchant his ear. Literature, with its wide horizon and possibilities of communion with the thoughts of past and present ages, is the luxury of days of comparative leisure which seldom fall to his lot. Social distractions in an isolated district are certainly somewhat limited. And yet he has his compensations. A man who may never hope to make a figure on a public platform may yet be satisfied with a certain eloquence in action. His sense of beauty may be starved, but there is something to touch the imagination in the hope of himself making one corner of the earth more beautiful and of seeing a desert growing green, and dry and scorching places cool and shady. It

appeals at least to his sense of power to be given a tract of country to administer as large in area as one-third of Holland. For a man who has a place for east as well as west in his conceptions of the world and life, there is some pleasure in an opportunity to shape the destinies for good of half a million people. The drudgery of routine-work may veil 'the visionary gleam', he may sink into an official groove and talk of transfer and promotion and red-tape. But there is an alternative, and it is an aim not left deserted in the hearts of many who do not treasure it the less because they do not care to wear it written on their sleeves.

Throughout British India the district is the unit of administration. When one remembers that in the eight large provinces there are but a thousand civilians to carry out the orders of government, and that altogether the ruling race numbers only about ten to a million of the people they govern, one is tempted to ask by what magic are these millions held in check? Why should not they raze the prisons to the ground, rob the treasuries, massacre the handful of Englishmen who impose their laws upon them? Is it the fear of British forces standing

armed to support the law that gives a weight to each command? Is it the unconscious instinct of obedience to authority that is inborn in them? Is it the conscious recognition of the benefits of peace and order? Is it the prestige of the British name? Whatever the cause, the result is undoubted, that not more certainly would a flock of sheep obey the bark of the shepherd's collic, than that the most distinguished notable would obey the orders of the village watchman if he brought them from head-quarters.

An old man once met walking on a property in Scotland, was asked by a stranger if the estate was his. 'No,' he answered, 'but the view is mine.' The reply may be taken as an illustration of the enthusiasm with which an Englishman regards his work in India. It is not as a person, but as a patriot that he is proud of its importance. It is the outlook he enjoys. Let him enjoy it while he may. He is a patriot in a far-off corner of the Empire. Who knows his name beyond the confines of his province? The property is not his; he will leave it soon to younger men. When he returns in middle age to his own country, he visits his old haunts to find the place thereof already knows him no more.

Perhaps, like a gallant soldier whose life was written lately, the largest interest of his latter days will be to watch his children playing cricket and to read to his old nurse. Meantime no sentiment need be grudged him as a counterpoise to the drudgery of his crowded days. Here is a description of a magistrate, collector, or deputy-commissioner, as he is called in different parts of India, given by Sir William Hunter, which may serve to define some of his multifarious duties.

‘The Indian collector is a strongly individualized worker in every department of rural well-being, with a large measure of local independence and of individual initiative. As the name of collector-magistrate implies, his main functions are twofold. He is a fiscal officer, charged with the collection of the revenue from the land and other sources: he is also a revenue and criminal judge, both of first instance and in appeal. Police, jails, education, municipalities, imperial revenues of his district, are to him matters of daily concern. He is expected to make himself acquainted with every phase of the social life of the natives, and with each natural aspect of the country. He should be a lawyer, an

accountant, a financier, and a ready writer of state papers. He ought also to possess no mean knowledge of agriculture, political economy, and engineering.

‘Nothing can pass in the district of which it is not his duty to keep himself informed, and to watch the operation. The vicissitudes of trade, the state of the currency, the administration of civil justice, the progress of public works, must all affect most materially the interest of the classes of whom he is the constituted guardian. Officious interference in matters beyond his immediate control must be avoided; but temperate and intelligent remonstrance against anything which he sees to be wrong is one of his most important duties.’

It is hardly necessary to say that the administration is not carried out in detail by the deputy-commissioner himself. He has a large staff of officers, of magistrates, overseers, and supervisors, numbering several hundreds, by whom the work is carried out. Of these, the most important are the assistant commissioner, as he is called in the Punjaub, who is generally a European, and the extra assistants, who are generally native like all the rest of the staff.

The district is divided into three or more subdivisions called tahsils, over each of which is a species of magistrate whose duties are almost as various as those of the deputy-commissioner. The municipal committees again do for the towns what the district board does for the country. They partly elect their own members, they partly collect their own revenue, they partly administer their own funds, they partly undertake the management of roads, dispensaries, schools, and other local matters within their boundaries. But all are subject to rules and orders within the district as well as from outside. The deputy-commissioner, who is also guided by these rules and orders, and subject to a similar supervision from his superior officers, is responsible for all that happens in his district. Let us take a page from the unwritten journal of his day's work to show how these responsibilities affect him.

A new week has begun, and the jail has to be inspected. The day then begins with a visit to its precincts. A guard of policemen dressed in a uniform of yellow trousers, blue coat, and red-and-blue turban present arms at the entrance. The enclosure

has rows of narrow houses not unlike the outhouses of an English farm, with the distinction that they are built of mud, and have flat roofs. The prisoners live, like the rest of their countrymen, in the open air for most of the day. The barracks in which they sleep have beds like detached boxes built of clay, on each of which a grass-mat lies. Government supplies the prisoner's clothing, a close-fitting flannel cap is exchanged for his turban, and a warm flannel coat is worn instead of the winding-sheet usually twisted round his person.

Hardships, no doubt, exist in prison life; but one is inclined to think they are not often as great as those that belong to a native's ordinary life. The prisoners have to work, and to a native all involuntary occupation is irksome. Pottery and paper are manufactured, carpets woven; official papers are printed, the clothing of the prisoners is made, their food prepared by some of themselves. These men being mostly Mahomedans, no caste prejudice is offended by a different occupation being assigned to them from that to which they are accustomed. A man who has been a farmer does not, however, take kindly to the work of cook, to baking the scones,



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"The prisoners must squat when they are making their complaints."

—which with vegetables and pulses form the daily meal,—to tearing up paper, or to teasing wool. The want of the usual two hours' sleep in the middle of the day is felt as a privation, the absence of the hookah is as great a trial as the loss of his pipe would be to an Englishman. The solitary confinement, which is a part of some punishments, and the quarantine, which is imposed on all new-comers until the doctor is satisfied that they have no infectious illness, are severely felt. Yet, strange to say, the part of prison discipline which is most disliked by the prisoners is having their hair cut short. A Mahomedan apparently glories in its length, and it is a proof of their sorrow for its loss that on three occasions when our doctor invited a man condemned to be hanged to express his last wish, it was a request that this part of the punishment should be remitted to his fellow-prisoners.

That it is not altogether a congenial life is indicated by the fact that the prisoners must squat when they are making their complaints, to prevent their making this an opportunity for attacking the officer on his rounds. For the rest, the triviality of the requests made to the deputy-commissioner as he

goes on his round of inspection—one man praying he may have more spice in his food, another pointing to the blisters raised on his hand by the friction of the handle he has to work, a third begging that a lawsuit hanging over him should be deferred till he can be present—shows that prison life is by no means unendurable, and lends some colour to the assertion that the bread-winner of the family has sometimes little difficulty in finding a younger or older member of the clan who is willing to plead guilty and suffer in his place. Perhaps the comparative easiness of the life, and the alleged willingness of the innocent to substitute themselves for the guilty, may account for the fact that the prisoners are very much like everybody else outside of the prison walls. It is difficult, indeed, to say whether those outside or in, look most guilty. Half-a-dozen within the prison look imbecile, two are mad. A murderer in a condemned cell is the picture of good-natured, plump content. So much for the mysteries of fate and fortune, and one might add, of native physiognomy.

And now, the jail inspected, the treasury visited, the cash counted and compared with the treasurer's accounts, the deputy-commissioner turns his face

towards home. A verandah in the bungalow is full of black figures, dressed in their best of spotless cotton. They have come to 'pay their respects', and rise like a covey of birds, while one of the orderlies, dressed in scarlet, kneels to dust his master's shoes. These orderlies are government factotums, who fetch and carry, and play a part which is a mixture of message-boy and doorkeeper. In the eyes of the natives they are endowed with imaginary powers: it is believed that in their hands lie the chance of interviews and hopes of favour, and rumour says they thrive accordingly on propitiatory gifts. No interview can be granted just at present, for breakfast must be first discussed.

Several bundles of papers are lying on the table. They have been returned from the office, and are the files of previous correspondence with authorities outside the district, which have been added by the clerks in the office to the communications received the previous day on these subjects by the deputy-commissioner. Here are some specimens of the contents. They must be attended to, after the visitors in the verandah have been dismissed.

I. The first file begins with a letter from the

director of agriculture. 'I should be obliged if you would furnish me as early as possible with a careful estimate of the amount of wheat which has been exported from your district, and the amount which has been purchased in advance for export.'

II. The under-secretary of the government of the Punjab forwards for information a copy of a report by an English specialist, regarding his recent enquiries into dairy industries in India.

III. The third file contains the details of travelling allowance demanded by the hospital-assistant of a remote dispensary who had been summoned to give evidence at head-quarters in a criminal case. The assistant-commissioner who acted as magistrate certifies that the journey was taken.

IV. The next is a correspondence following on a letter addressed by the deputy-commissioner to the executive engineer of the public works department which begins, 'Kindly give me a rough sketch for a local funds office, a separate building with rooms as follows: (1) English office for three clerks; (2) vernacular office for three clerks; (3) education office for two clerks; (4) record office. Also an estimate of its cost.'

V. The next is addressed to the superintendent of ways and works on the North-western Railway, and runs as follows: 'An inquiry into the cause of death of a woman who was run over by an engine between M. and H. shows that the accident was not due to any fault of the engine-driver, but was in consequence of the fact that three small railway-bridges at that place are often made use of by travellers as the only means of crossing the currents which pass under those bridges in the flood season. I have the honour to enquire whether you will not, for the convenience of travellers, construct foot-bridges at these places, independent of those necessary for the conveyance of trains.' The discussion following is as usual tied up with the request.

VI. The Commissioner asks for the deputy-commissioner's opinion regarding the proposed extension of the Dera Canal in his district, and especially regarding the financial prospects of this scheme.

VII. The Commissioner forwards, for the deputy-commissioner's opinion, a bill now before the Legislative Council for the better control of habitual criminals.

VIII. An executive engineer submits a scheme for the drainage of the town of Bhatpur and its neighbourhood, to be carried out at the cost of the municipal committee.

IX. Is a petition from a native to have his license to distil liquor renewed, and to be allowed to use a still within the enclosure of the government distillery. The writer is a man about whom a correspondence has been going on, as his liquor has been proved to be adulterated. This man's license will therefore not be renewed.

X. A long correspondence with the inspector of schools for the circle, on the subject of school prizes awarded by the liberality of native gentlemen, the list of which had not been published with the general one.

XI. 'Dear Sir, I beg to state that I served the government for thirty-eight years. During my long services, when I saw the high officials of the department, they always gave me a chair to sit on. You were always pleased to give me a seat on a chair when you saw me last. But some of your subordinate officials did not show me the same courtesy, while modesty prevents me from making a repre-

sentation to them. I therefore hope that you will be good enough to confer on me the permanent right to sit on a chair.'

The rest of the packet consists of requests for leave and of documents to be signed, as everything must pass through the deputy-commissioner's hands on its way to the head of its special department. These files glanced at, and breakfast disposed of, an invitation is sent to the occupants of the verandah in order of precedence, and in they come in turn.

CHAPTER II.

A DEPUTY-COMMISSIONER'S DAY—IN OFFICE.

THE day has hardly yet begun in earnest. The reception of these good people who are waiting in the verandah is but an *entre acte*, so to speak, thrown in between the serious parts of the performance. The first to enter is Malik Futteh Mahomed. He is an old soldier, who did good service, both in the Sikh War, which won us the Punjaub, and in the Mutiny. His scarlet uniform has been donned in honour of the memory, and one

or two medals pinned on his breast. Out of the folds of his sash he brings a bundle of old tattered letters, with the signatures of heroes—John Lawrence, Edwardes, Neville Chamberlain, Nicholson—upon some of them. These are the testimonials every native loves to collect from every Englishman with whom he has any dealings. They all speak of the old man as a loyal friend of government, and a gallant soldier. On the strength of this he advances a request to be allowed to buy 1000 acres of government land at a low rate. It cannot be done in the meantime. A fourth of the land of the district belongs to government, but it cannot be sold at a moment's notice to every bidder who thinks his services have not yet been fully requited. The land has to be valued, a fair rent has to be fixed, the just claims of government have to be considered as well as those of the old soldier, and as well as those of the thousand-and-one jealous people who also want and cannot get land. Malik Futteh Mahomed must wait to take his turn with the rest. So the bundle of letters is returned to the folds of the waistband, and Malik Futteh Mahomed leaves the room, a wiser but not a sadder man. This is

only the first of a score of visits he will pay to the place, and always upon the same errand.

Next enters a scapegrace of twenty-six. He has a good-looking but weak face. He wears a light brown, tightly-fitting, and closely-buttoned surtout, baggy dark-blue cotton knickerbockers, and high Hessian boots, a blue-and-gold silk turban giving the finishing touch to his modish costume. He has run through a fortune in a few years by gambling, horse-racing, and other forms of excitement and excess. Now he wants government to advance him money, and help him to pay his debts, and save him from parting with his land. He will turn over a new leaf if he gets a new start, and soon repay it. Doubt is expressed as to the wisdom of government's throwing away money on such a hopeless cause. 'But large sums have already been advanced by government to Malik Shah Nadir and Malik Sher Bahadur, who were in money difficulties too.' Yes, but that was another affair. These two Maliks were hereditary enemies. In old days they and their followers would have fought it out with spears and matchlocks. Modern innovation had given a new complexion to the method of attack and defence. They

encouraged their respective retainers to ruin each other in lawsuits, and ruined themselves by paying their expenses, a reprehensible form of expenditure no doubt. Still it did not affect the fact that the men had large properties, which they managed well. A government loan to them, to save them from falling into the clutches of the usurers, was a safe investment. No such compliment could be paid to the scapegrace. If he would consent to become a ward of government, accept an allowance, and not exceed it, and hand over the estate to be managed by government till his debts were paid, what could be done would be done for him, but no other arrangement could be contemplated. Exit the scapegrace to ponder over the situation.

The next visitor is an extra assistant-magistrate, who is quickly disposed of. The ostensible object of his visit is to consult the deputy-commissioner on a point of procedure. One of the magistrates of the district has refused to try a case which he had sent to him on the plea of its being unsuited to a magistrate of his powers. The prisoner is being bandied from one to another, while the knotty point remains undecided. The extra assistant-magistrate's

appeal for support is interwoven with a subtle display of his knowledge of law and procedure, and many allusions to overwork and his qualifications for promotion. He is dismissed with a reference to a certain section of the Code of Criminal Procedure for his further instruction, and goes away happy in the memory of his legal fireworks.

The native head of the agricultural department has just returned from a tour of inspection in the district, and has come to report that the trees planted by the district board along the newly made road have been fenced in, and have taken root well. He says there has been a large demand by the wealthy natives of the towns for grafts from the government orange and mango groves, to be used by them in their private gardens. He begs to be allowed to increase his working staff of one hundred subordinates by four, to be employed in the new public garden under construction, and is very proud of the fact that there has been a larger sale of fruit this season than was ever known before in the district.

The next is a conscience case, which can hardly however be considered typical. A Hindu banker

has come hundreds of miles from a former district of the deputy-commissioner, to offer his congratulations and respects, and to give an account of all that has happened to him since they last met. He takes the opportunity of discussing at the same time his own mental and moral condition. Everything about him speaks of his material prosperity, from his beautiful white silk embroidered coat, lined with sable, up to the snowy folds of his muslin turban, and down to his gold-embroidered shoes. His rotund figure, his chubby, dimpled hands, his sleek, smooth visage and double chin all proclaim that he has the largest, highest house, the best-filled granaries, the largest sum of surplus rupees in his neighbourhood. A more curious mixture of self-consciousness and self-effacement, self-satisfaction and humility, never struggled for the mastery on any man's face. Self-consciousness, it may be safely prophesied, will not lose the day.

The man belongs to one of the new reformed Hindu sects. He has set himself to practise virtue and renounce the world. To attain to virtue he gives away large sums of money, and struggles to be fair and honest in his dealings. To attain to abstraction

from the world he has been practising a painful operation, which he has found effectual. It belongs to one of the eighty-four postures recommended by the priests of his philosophy as aids to contemplation. Retiring to a quiet quarter he sits upon the ground, holds his breath for some time, and does not breathe at all; then he breathes as little as he can for hours. At first the plan is so painful the devotee can only think of the pain and not of his surroundings. When the pain passes away the habit of abstraction has been acquired. Now hundreds might talk round about him and he would never hear them.

Notwithstanding these efforts he had lost his self-respect, and had come to learn how he could have it re-instated. The point was this. He had vowed to tell the truth, and had not wandered from it, to the best of his knowledge, for several years, till, being engaged in a lawsuit last summer, he had been tempted to suborn false witnesses, and had thereby perjured his soul and sacrificed his rest. What was he to do to regain his peace of mind? The answer was so obvious as to rouse speculations why he had ever come to hear it. Speculations

which include the efficacy of confessionals, and the complex mystery of human strength and weakness, have no time for growth, however, in a government office, so the man receives his answer, and signs, it must be hoped, another pledge to truth and uprightness.

Only one more visitor remains to be seen. After a long conversation about his numerous horses, he too leaves; but not before he has slipped a letter into the deputy-commissioner's hand. On opening it, it is found to be an entreaty that his land may be lightly assessed, as his family is large, and his expenses therefore heavy.

It is the first of a series of petitions that assail the deputy-commissioner in the long white-washed barn, with the raised platform at one end, which is called a kutcherry. His English official correspondence has been gone through in his office-room at home, the vernacular portion has now to be dismissed. On the railed-in platform half a dozen native clerks are seated, reading that part of the day's post which is written in Hindustani, and arranging it for his information and orders.

The report sent from one part of the district by

the tahsildar is not cheering. The plague of locusts has appeared. The green pests, like large grasshoppers, have covered every blade of wheat, and no doubt bared them by this time. The trees in a day or two will be leafless, and not a trace of verdure left. Orders must be given to organize a crusade against them, although at best it will be of little effect. Neither the shouts of a score of villagers, nor the rattle of their drums, can frighten them away, nor can the bonfires into which they are raked and driven entirely extirpate them. The only hope is to offer a reward for every pound of eggs collected by the peasants, in order that a second generation may not replace the short-lived creatures of destruction. In the same neighbourhood cattle disease has appeared; a veterinary surgeon must be despatched at once. It is clear that the payment of the land assessment for this half-year will have to be deferred till better crops make payment possible.

The much-longed-for rain has come at last in another part of the district, and a second tahsildar writes that the harvest will be a good one. He has inspected several wells, for the making of which

government advanced money. They are being substantially and strongly built. The new room added to the dispensary is nearly finished. A village school has been visited by him, and the attendance just now averages 82. He reports that the land revenue, which should have been paid into his treasury, shows a deficit of a hundred rupees, as certain peasants, whom he names, have failed to pay their taxes; and asks for authority to attach their property, in order to enforce payment.

So the day's work goes on. Petitions are presented and disposed of; complaints of assaults, thefts, cattle trespass, mischief, and hurt, have to be read and distributed to the different magistrates competent to try the cases.

A big riot case, beginning with a dispute over a donkey having trespassed on a man's corn, and ending in the death of one man, the wounding of ten others, the imprisonment of five men on one side and of two on the other, is wound up. Another case, which is of more importance, has several hours devoted to it. A gang of burglars broke into the house of a rich land-owner, and carried off as many as they could of his money bags.

As the cash was in silver, four of them could only manage to carry away thirteen thousand rupees, *i.e.* less than £1000, of which half was recovered, the rest probably buried by the thieves. The case against them is a clear one. The ringleader will be transported to the Andaman Islands for seven years.

Appointments follow—of a headman of a village, in succession to one dismissed for debt and misconduct; of a native teacher of English to a town school, into which the teaching of English has been introduced. Passports are issued to travellers to Arabia and Central Asia. Just as the deputy-commissioner is leaving kutcherry, to attend a meeting of the district board, a blood-red envelope is handed to him by a breathless policeman. Fortunately the appearance of such missives is not a common event. Envelopes of this colour are only used when the report of a murder or other serious crime has to be sent. The sessions judge will try this case when he comes on his quarterly round. As far as the evidence goes at present, it will not be an easy one to decide. The woman was found murdered in a wood two miles from her home. Her

age was twenty-two, and she and her husband belonged to the same caste, of a respectable standing. She had been married for a year. She and her husband, who was about her own age, were on bad terms with each other, and she was constantly beaten by him. At the same time, she had had a quarrel with her youngest brother lately, on the subject of her silver ornaments, which he asserted were family possessions, to which she had no right as private property. The body had been robbed of these ornaments, and there were marks of a scuffle near the place where it was found. On the other hand, a tracker, who had been brought to inspect the footsteps on the ground near the place, maintained that they were undoubtedly those of an old man, of a low caste, who was lame of one leg. Further evidence had not as yet been taken. While awaiting the action of the district superintendent of police, the deputy-commissioner sends an order to the tahsildar of the quarter in which the murdered woman was found, to take part in the inquiry, and give what aid he can.

And now the day is cooling, and four o'clock was the hour fixed for the district board meeting.

Riding on^e his way to it, the deputy-commissioner is followed by ten or a dozen horsemen, who choose this dusty method of showing their deference. As he passes the rest-house, in which travellers or inspecting officers lodge while they are in the district, the care-taker rushes out, with a duster in his hand, to shout a complaint that the leg of a chair is broken, that there is not a sufficient supply of forks and knives, and that the kettle requires a new handle. He is told to write out a list of his wants.

Now the town is reached. Policemen run in front, with a rapidity which would be thought inconsistent with the dignity of a constable at home, to clear a path through the crowd that fills the principal street of the bazaar, and shove obstinate mules and donkeys out of the way. Women turn their backs and stand motionless till the riders have passed. The grain merchant, who is picking up odds and ends of wheat from the dust, stops his economical search, to stand up like his neighbours and make his salaam to the cavalcade. The district board meeting-house, which stands beside the board school of the town, is at last reached, and there

we shall leave the deputy-commissioner, for with the meeting his work for the day is done.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS—AN INDIAN BUNGALOW.

IT may possibly interest my fair readers to know what an Indian bungalow in the Punjaub is like, to have a glimpse of a lady's first experience of housekeeping in India, and an account of camp life, so I give here the following extracts from letters, written shortly after first arriving in India.

Dear J.—We are just about to go into camp, that is to say, the string of twenty-eight camels left an hour ago, with chairs, tables, and rolled-up tents roped on their backs, boxes filled with napery, dishes, silver, glass, pots and pans, clothes and books, fitting into huge paniers; and such an assortment as you never saw of hen-coops, baths, and every kind of incongruous extra piled on to their humps. Men followed walking, with beds on their heads. I watched the start, and was much amused.

The live stock left this morning, including three

dogs, one cat, and two cows with their calves, a dozen sheep, and two extra horses for J. to ride, the whole accompanied by the grooms, milkman, and sweeper. We make up to them in the evening. J. rides, as he has to inspect the fields as he goes along. I shall drive in a tonga which we have hired for the winter. It is a cart, like an old-fashioned English waggon, with a seat in the centre and a covering hood, a pair of lanky but boisterous horses, and an Afghan as a driver. He is a splendid old man, with a turban and coat of many colours, and a horn to blow to clear the way as we go, or to announce, perhaps, that we are coming. He sits beside me, and my ayah and his stable-boy sit behind. We are going to be in camp for some months. It is the nearest approach to living the life of a gipsy which, I suppose, I shall ever enjoy, and I am looking forward to it immensely. In the meantime I have a day of blessed idleness before me, and I am going to employ part of it in writing to you.

Five weeks have passed since we landed, and they have seemed like five years. So many novel experiences have been crowded into the time. First of all there was the journey from Bombay, which

occupied four days—think of it, you, who consider twelve hours in the train to London an undertaking! I must allow that the trial is mitigated as far as may be; the seats are arranged, for instance, like a wagonette, so that no one sits with his back to the engine. The compartments are broad and comfortable, and only four people occupy them at night, upper berths being let down to complete the four beds. Each carriage has a dressing-room, and the windows have outer wooden venetian shutters, to keep out dust and sun if possible. Still, the four days and four nights, never hasting, never resting, were to me interminable

The immensity of everything struck one like the statistics that might be given by an American fond of 'tall' stories. One saw miles upon miles of flat land, and knew that thousands of miles lay behind them, and such masses of people swarmed everywhere. Every station platform was densely crowded by them, and it appeared to me that the later it grew the livelier and younger the people became! In the small hours of the night women rushed about with babies in their arms, and crying children at their heels; men ran helter-skelter, as you never see

able-bodied men running, from sheer excitement and the love of screaming to their friends, at a railway station—at any rate, in Scotland! And water-carriers and sweetmeat vendors shouted above the pitch of their voices, as if there were no such thing as night and sleep in their programme. From which you may judge that there was practically very little sleep in mine. Once, about four o'clock in the morning, J. roused me to 'look at a glorious sunrise'. I explained to him very quietly that I hoped it was the last, as it was the first I had seen in India, and I do not think this will occur on a railway journey again!

I honestly confess that the overwhelming crowds of people frightened me. It was a very foolish feeling, as I have since been told, still, there it was. What were we in the land, I thought, but a handful of Europeans at the best, and what was there to prevent these myriads from falling upon and obliterating us, as if we had never existed? There are many things to prevent it, independently of their being, as everybody tells me, the most law-abiding and loyal people in the world. But even yet my scepticism and fears get the better of my reason or my faith.

If anything could have reassured one, it would have been the reception J. received on his return after six months' absence. At the first station we reached on the outskirts of his district were a crowd of native officials and notables, who travelled along with us, their ranks swelling at each succeeding station. Finally, when we reached K., and looked out of the carriage window, behold the moon shining down on the dusky faces and white robes of several hundreds, waiting to welcome us! Triumphant arches had been raised in our honour, and, as we walked through the crowd, bowing in answer to their salaams, it was naturally 'one of the proudest moments of my life'. I felt as if I were the Princess of Wales at least, without any of the responsibility. After the excellent champagne dinner, which good Mr. D. had got ready for us in the rest-house, we sat out of doors and enjoyed the fireworks and illuminations displayed in our honour.

Next day about fifty of the native 'squires' rode behind us as we drove to our home. At one point in the road, an old veteran, in military gear and covered with medals, was drawn up with his re-

tainers to fire a salute as we passed. He and his men had fought on our side in the Mutiny, and, like the rest of the Punjaub, had been true to us throughout. J. assures me that just such a kindly welcome as we have received would be given by the people of every district in the Punjaub to any civilian they had known before.

To return, however, to my own particular history. More than four weeks have gone since then, and I may as well tell you that it is with a great sense of relief I find myself at the end of my first experience of Anglo-Indian housekeeping. I have been busy from morning till night, and the impression left on my mind is one of baffled impotence. Firstly, because I was unable to make myself understood. Sometimes I had the trusty old bearer Akbar, the head-butler, the ayah, and the tailor all round me, trying to make out what I wanted to tell them, but shaking their heads with respectful hopelessness. If I wished to give orders about the fire, about the flowers, about the arrangement of the dinner-table, about purchases, about breakfast, lunch, or dinner, not one Hindustani word could I say that they could comprehend! J.

did what he could for me; he translated my list of wants at breakfast every day, interviewed the cook, went through every room with me, accompanied by Akbar, and ordered the contents to be moved, removed, or destroyed. But then he could not 'give up to a party what was meant for mankind', and act interpreter the whole day long, which alone would have solved my difficulties.

Then, even with a knowledge of the language, Anglo-Indian housekeeping must be bewildering at first. The aspect of everything is so different from what it is at home. You see, individually we are but birds of passage in India, and have to build our nests of what material we can find. The result is simply wonderful, considering the absence of home appliances or skilled labour. The houses are adapted to the climate, and there are a dozen reasons why the arrangements should and must be as they are. I daresay, like other Anglo-Indian ladies, I shall get accustomed to the little differences, attached to them from use and wont, and even in the end prefer them in some ways. Still—at first you must just let me be as insular and as conservative as I please, and let me tell you of some of the domestic

peculiarities while they are new to me, and before I forget to notice them.

Picture to yourself, then, a square one-storied, flat-roofed house, with a pillared verandah at each side; indoors, nine rooms, three in a row, without an entrance hall or any passage, each room opening into the other as rooms do in an *étage* abroad, each room having one or two door-windows into the bargain, and then count how many doors or windows there must be,—a blessing no doubt in the hot weather, but not ornamental in the cold. I find myself parodying :—

‘ Here rooms have a thousand doors, and at home but one’.

I have seen already how pretty they may be made to look, notwithstanding the doors, with pictures, curtains, draperies, and feminine knick-knacks and devices. It is only the bare skeleton that seems so gaunt, and certainly it is not ‘when unadorned, adorned the most’.

Every room looks as high as a country church, the roofs are of unplastered rafters, the doors are folding doors, bolted in the middle. If you wish to keep them shut, you must bolt them. If you wish

to keep them open you have to fix a wooden block in, behind the hinges. At present a white cotton, sheet-like curtain, hangs from a wooden rod before each. The fireplaces, in which only wood is burnt, are low brick slabs, innocent of grating. Every bedroom has a bath-room attached, with a low wall in one corner, surrounding the place where the big bath is. The bath is emptied out on to the floor when one has done with it, the water running off through a hole in the wall.

There is no home-like pantry, with dresser and endless shelves and press, and hot and cold water arrangement. There is no kitchen with plate-rack, scullery, and larder. The kitchen is a little dark room, with a board on the mud floor to hold the meat, two tumble-down brick 'ranges' in one corner, a stone receptacle in another into which the water is thrown, which runs out through its hole in the wall into a sunk tub. There are two shelves, on which are an array of pots, a hatchet, drainer, one or two tin spoons, and some pudding and paté shapes. J. says a brick floor can be laid while we are out in camp, a sink built, the range rebuilt, and tables, presses, or anything I choose to order be put

into the place; so my spirits have risen since I saw it first.

Our servants live in a group of small detached houses. When I want one, an orderly, who sits in the verandah, goes to bring him, for there is, of course, not a bell in the house; or he stops half-way, and calls out his name, when he comes with an answering shout.

Needless to say, there is not an English shop within a radius of a hundred miles, and I have yet to find out what the native bazaar can supply, and how I am to procure what it does not contain. Meat is ridiculously cheap—three halfpence the pound, chickens threepence each, and eggs are threepence the dozen. By the way, some red cotton and white reels of thread were brought to me by the native shopkeepers the other day, and on them were stamped the names of Glasgow and Paisley manufacturers.

We have thirteen servants, including groom, waterman, sweeper, milkman, and house servants; but on questioning my neighbours as to the exact amount of work that should be performed by each, without infringing on their caste distinctions, the

conviction is distinctly borne in upon me that if one wants a thing done one must do it one's self, or at least superintend its being done, that one must look after the filter, see to the milk, the feeding of the cows, sheep, and poultry, the making of butter, bread, cakes, to the careful trimming of the lamps, to the dusting of books, pictures, furniture, to the tinning of pots and pans, to the way the cook uses his dishes or his dusters. 'Your only hope is to see your servant at work at these things', say my neighbours. 'Never expect them to do anything rightly two days running.' So I have at present visions of attaining professional skill as head housemaid, dairymaid, and shepherd!

I rather enjoy the notion, however, of learning to do old duties in a new way. It *will* be in a new way; for it is one thing, my dear, to order your glazier to come and clean the windows, and your housemaid to polish up the brass and furniture, and another to stand on your own resources and determine how paint and putty should be removed from glass by an unskilled Mahomedan, and furniture polished without the aid of paste!

An experienced Anglo-Indian housekeeper would



Our Servants.

tell you, no doubt, that she finds housekeeping easier here than at home, that servants are more amenable and obedient, that you would not find a laundrymaid in England, for example, who would do up any particular bit of her work in a day's time without a grumble, if you needed it, or a tailor who would work beside you for a month, mending old things, or making new, on a pound's wages. I expect I shall appreciate these advantages in time. I am only giving you, just now, my first and ignorant impressions.

Perhaps it would amuse you to hear what some of the duties of the different servants are. Shall I send you a photograph of them in a group, done by a wandering native photographer? The man in a white coat is Akbar, J.'s 'bearer', who has been with him for thirteen years, and whose honesty and truthfulness he completely trusts. It is rather difficult to describe his various duties. He acts as butler, and keeps the keys of the cellar and storeroom; he is intrusted with a certain amount of money for daily expenditure, and gives me an account of how it has been spent every three or four days. He is J.'s valet and my housekeeper. He is expected to

see that the other servants do their work, and acts as a buffer between one and the native world in many ways. The two table-servants are father and son. The old man has dyed his beard scarlet, and it flushes up and fades away in the most variable and unexpected way. They have one or two habits, peculiar, I believe, to native servants, of which I am trying to break them. One is to set the table for the next meal immediately after the last is over. Another is always to lay places for four people, when we are really entirely by ourselves, as if they were in a state of constant hospitable expectation, and prepared for any emergency. A third is to decorate the table with extraordinary patterns—a star of salt-spoons, a square of forks, and so on—made out of any silver we possess. Their worst and most trying habit is breaking dishes and glass. They have broken about twenty things in the last six weeks! And what can one do? Some people punish them by deducting a fine from their wages. But really the tragic sorrow, verging upon tears, of these great big men if you hint at their suffering the loss of a farthing, is such that I have not the courage to face it! There is nothing to tell about the cook to

distinguish him from cooks at home, except that I pay him so much a month for charcoal and spice, which he supplies himself, and that some people, and especially bachelors, make a contract with their cook, that he should feed them for so much a month, and more or less leave all further details to him.

The bleestie, who stands to the right of the group, goes to the well thrice a day to get water and fill up the leather bag, like bagpipes, which hang over his shoulder, and then goes the round of the house pouring it into the earthenware jars which stand in a row in the bath-rooms, kitchen, and servants' verandah. The sweeper at the end, to the left, is a species of maid-of-all-work. He keeps the wood-boxes, which do duty for coal-scuttles, full of wood, and makes all the fires in the morning, and sweeps out the rooms and verandahs twice a day. His wife is my ayah. Such a clever little woman she is! She knows her work as maid thoroughly, and I can quite understand how ladies, for many reasons, prefer these ayahs to home importations.

I think I have dilated quite long enough on the servants. There is nothing in particular to be said about the washerman, milkman, or three grooms.

A trying custom exists, that all servants should be off work, and have a recess, between 12 and 2 every day, during which time they have their mid-day meal, and smoke their hookah. Servants differ greatly in different parts of the country, and their employers' opinions of them as a class vary as widely, ranging from enthusiasm to despair. Take them as a whole, I think I find them as yet distinctly trying, not so much from what they do, as from what they leave undone, and I constantly recall the advice of the old Scotch lady I met when I landed, who, in answer to my question as to how I could help missions in India, said: 'The best way you can do that, my dear, is to keep your temper with your servants, and stick to your husband in the heat!'

One of the things that amuse me is to notice the way that natives reverse the order in which we do things. For instance, men take off their hats at home when they come into a house, natives keep on their turbans, but take off their shoes. We beckon with the palms of our hands turned inwards, they beckon with them turned out. My ayah lays my slippers in a row, with the toes pointing towards

me. The cook begins to read his Hindustani book of recipes from the last page backwards, and writes his accounts from right to left. When the carpenter uses native screws, he screws them from right to left, and saws *inwards*, which makes one nervous! And J. tells me that when they play cards, they deal from the undermost card in the pack, and send them round by their right. They think it rude to laugh, but they never hesitate to yawn!

You ask about our neighbours. You know we are in the wilds. There are three households besides our own, and nothing could exceed their kindness. We meet daily in the evening for tennis or golf, and dine with each other about once a week, besides exchanging notes constantly that come and go with books, home newspapers, flowers, fruit, and game. J. tells me I shall always find a good Samaritan in every neighbour, and that in times of sickness or sorrow an acquaintance acts as if he were a near relation, while on ordinary occasions, in isolated stations, people never hesitate to borrow daily necessities from each other, such as stores or soda-water, if their own should have run short before the arrival of their fresh supplies. So we

shall find no place without the possibility of receiving and enjoying loving-kindness, and what more do we need to make us happy! With which moral I shall end my lengthy letter and get ready to drive to our first halting-place in camp.

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS—ABORIGINES.

DEAREST M.—Here we are in camp, and anything cosier you could not imagine. We are sitting in our deck-chairs before the stove, with our feet on a wooden fender; the lamp behind us is hooked on to the central pole of the tent. J. is reading the papers while I am writing to you. A bowlful of *Gloire de Dijon* roses on the table beside me is a delight to my eyes, beyond is a little book-case filled with our favourite books, and on the top of it is the guitar, the poor ill-used guitar! We have pictures on our walls, comfortable chairs, tables and rugs, and in short are as snug as snug can be. You did not think that was what people's tents are like out in camp, did you? But I forgot, you cannot

imagine what our tents are like in the least; so I must try to be as circumstantial as possible, and tell you.

We have three tents, two for living in, and one for J.'s office work. While we are living in one, the other goes ahead, and is pitched at our next halting-place. We generally move on every second or third day; but this is not so unsettling as you might think, for the next tent is a duplicate of the one we have left, with everything in its place, our baggage having gone on before us. So the evening drive is only a little longer than usual, covering a distance of ten or twelve miles, and the daily routine is not interrupted. The servants occupy a row of low tents like a gipsy encampment, and the native officials who work under J. have their own small colony a little bit off. Guess how many we numbered altogether, of course including these officials, when the camp was counted on the night of the census? Fifty! You may well wonder how we are fed, for we are out in the desert, remember, in the barest and most thinly populated part of the district, and about sixty miles from head-quarters.

Well, to begin with ourselves. We carry our own

groceries with us, which come out from England—or rather, as far as we are concerned, from the Army and Navy stores at Bombay—packed in tins. We have also got our filter, and our supply of soda-water and wine with us. We kill our own sheep and chickens, have our own cows, and make our own bread and butter. We get our vegetables,—cabbages, cauliflowers, turnips, and peas—from the government public gardens; the nearest is thirty miles from our present halt; and that is where the sweet-peas and roses come from also.

The servants feed themselves. For neither Mahomedan nor Hindu would taste what a European had touched or handled, although their prejudices apparently do not extend to our milk or butter, sugar or jam! The village grain-merchant brings a supply of flour, sugar, melted butter, and tobacco from the nearest village, and squats with his goods and measuring weights underneath a tree, and there the servants surround him and make their purchases. He brings us grain for the horses and cattle, and labourers fetch our supply of grass and wood. So there you have the history of the whole commissariat.

I have not yet ceased to be pleasantly surprised at the clock-work regularity with which everything is done. A wizened old genius of the tents and Akbar, the bearer, are responsible for everything, and there is never a hitch. As for the cook, all that he seems to need is two bricks or a hole in the ground. He takes the pots out of the pannier—they are big, copper, bowl-like pots, by the way, that need re-tinning every fortnight—lights his fire of wood or charcoal, and gives us a dinner as good as he ever prepared in his kitchen at home.

All this time I have never told you what our tent is like. Well, each tent is about twenty feet square. There are two tents, one inside of the other. A passage runs round between them, one central pole being enough for both. We keep our boxes in this passage; the sideboard stands in it too, as well as the stove, which is right opposite one of the inner doors, and the table on which the milk for butter is kept in flat tin dishes. J.'s dressing-room is curtained off in another corner.

The inner tent has six doors which roll up, corresponding to six in the wall of the outer tent, with, outside of them, an arrangement called a chick,

which is like a blind of split bamboos, meant to keep out flies, while letting in air and light. The inner tent is divided into two by a curtain, on either side of which are the bed-room and sitting-room. I have told you what the furniture of the sitting-room is. Besides the bed and toilet-table in the other room is a brass basin on a wooden stand, and we fix half-a-dozen brass hooks over the top rim of the figured canvas wall, which act as wardrobe and towel-rack. The ground is first strewn with straw, then covered with dark-blue striped cotton carpets. You can't think how compact we are, everything fitting into the somewhat limited space and having its own place and corner.

We are on high-lying ground, where, at this time of year, the air is fresh and keen. The hard clay soil is barely irrigated by widely-separated wells, no trees manage to live, and only two kinds of bush in a stunted fashion. One is not unlike mistletoe, the other is a straggling mass of leafless twigs. The cultivated lands round the villages look like new patches on a faded dress.

We come across strange creatures, that are as much in keeping with the spirit of the scene as the jungle

cats and jackals; only these poor things have not so much life or aggressive power as the animals. They remind one more of the pariah dogs that slink about villages, half-starved, with their tails between their legs, ready to pounce on any food, if their watchful eyes let them hope for a moment that they can escape from sticks and stones. Like them, these people are outcasts; they are aborigines, and I question if they have always as good a time of it as the dogs.

J., knowing my interest in strange out-of-the-way characters, often has them sent to the door of the tent. Some of them are wolf-catchers. Three short wiry men, and an old wizened hag, clothed in sack-cloth and ashes, brought four dead wolves and two living ones to the office tent to-day, to claim the government reward of seven shillings for each. The dead ones looked so very dead, although they said they had only been killed four days, that J. is making enquiries to see if they have not been paid for them elsewhere, and omitted the ceremony of having the ears cut off.

The living wolves were very much alive, and were muzzled by a cord to which was attached a rope, by

which they were dragged. The wolves are caught in a trap with two rows of sharp iron teeth which snap when the trap is stepped upon. Kid's flesh is placed in the centre of the trap, to act as a lure.

Another set of people we once met on our evening walk were lizard-catchers. The only reward they work for is a good dinner, for they eat what they find, occasionally selling surplus supplies at a farthing apiece. Their mode of hunting is curious. One of the men we saw had a hoe, another a mallet, a third a spear, the fourth a brush of long grass. The lizard burrows under ground, and leaves a small mound on the surface which betrays his home. It soon becomes a monument, however, raised above his last resting-place, for it is a welcome sign to the hunters of the lizard's whereabouts; and they delve and follow the tunnel made by the lizard, till at last they find him deep under ground, when the mallet ends the hunt. Sometimes the lizard closes the hole and hibernates near the surface of the mound. On these occasions the lizard-catchers come up warily, and pounce on him with the mallet, breaking his back, when they dance in a ring and sing a song of triumph. A good

bag holds as many as forty. Boiled in water, salt and pepper, and allowed to simmer for two hours, a dish 'tenderer than kid' repays their labours. They declare that in summer they have only to rustle their bunch of dried grass at the entrance of the hole, and the lizard, believing it to be a serpent, comes out tail backwards to have a look at him, and their work is done.

You remember C. M.'s story of the Highland gillie who capped one of his veritable, *bond fide* tales of personal sporting experience, with—after a thoughtful pause—'Speaking o' lies—Donald Cameron once told me, &c. &c.' I am sometimes tempted to quote the gillie's comment to some of these people! But possibly they are telling the truth. When they are so nearly akin themselves to the beasts that perish, they ought to know their ways.

A dear old sportsman, with twinkling face and small, piercing eye like a bird's, holds to it that he merely stands behind his target umbrella, which is provided with two eyelet holes for his own observation, and imitates the cries of partridges when he can walk them into a snare constructed of arches of cane and netting, with a door made to close when

they are safe within, and that the birds flock to him placidly and are caught!

By far the most remarkable example of a keen sense on the man's part for the ways of man and beast, we found in a cow-tracker. These men possess the eyes of a red-Indian, and are largely employed by natives in cases of cattle theft. To test this man's capabilities we had our cow led out of camp and brought back by a circuitous path. While she was away, we told the cow-tracker we had lost trace of her, and that he must find her, while we followed to watch his mode of operation. It was extraordinary to hear him unfold the history of everything that had happened. With bent head, half-closed eyes, and unhesitating certainty, he traced faint marks in the sand, that we could barely distinguish. He described the shape of the cow's feet; then he cried out that the man wore shoes that were patched in two places: that he had taken them off at this point; that he had a long big-toe and a flat foot; that he must be an old man; that he belonged to a certain caste accustomed to carry burdens; that going through this field of grain the cow had wished to eat, had been dragged after the man and been tied

to a tree. 'Now', he chuckled to himself, after a quarter of an hour's work, 'I could follow that cow to Lahore, and know her among a hundred.' He was amusingly puzzled when it dawned on him that he had only to follow her back to her home in our camp, where she stood with her calf and her keeper to verify every deduction he had made.

Yesterday we went to see leech-gatherers in their tents, which were a collection of tattered rags, stretched over bamboo frames. Their dress was a further sample of tatters. They sleep on straw, and their only property is one or two pariah dogs and donkeys as lean and tottering on their legs as their naked children. They sell the leeches in mud jars for a penny, along with a doggerel charm, which they repeated to us, which completes the cure. I could not help contrasting them with the old leech-gatherer whom Wordsworth met on the moors of Westmoreland. And yet the same world holds them both!

A native squire got up tent-pegging for our benefit the other evening. It is a national game in the Punjaub. His retainers, dressed in a uniform of red cloth coats, yellow cotton leggings, and white

turbans, and armed with spears, rode at a hard gallop and picked up, as they passed, pegs of wood stuck into the ground. As they came they bent forward, making a whirring sound and shouting their war-cry of 'Aeli, Aeli', and kept their spears on a level with the ground; whirling the wood with a shout above their heads, on the spear's point, if they were successful.

The news of the proposed *tamasha*, as they call their great occasions, had spread like wildfire, and hundreds of men bordered the road as spectators. Some strolling performers were also present, men with bears, monkeys, and goats, wrestlers and acrobats who seemed to have learnt the secret of the fourth dimension, and to have acquired the power of living in space in a condition of perpetual somersaulting. The performer who interested me most was a small boy who sang a song. He was a slight graceful child of about fifteen, with a scarlet sash and turban. He climbed to the top of a pole, and a burly giant poised one end of the pole on his chin, with the child on the top. The man had a brass ring round his right ankle, with bells attached. As he jingled these and the drummer beat on his tom-tom, the

boy stretched out his arms, and sang his song with upturned face.

Indian music to my ears, as a rule, is only another name for discord. But this song had a haunting beauty of its own. It reminded me of the song I heard the Spanish gipsy sing in Granada. It was the voice of the spirit of loneliness, like the sound of the wind,

‘Wandering o’er the wastes of earth,
Sighing to the lonely stars of heaven’.

A song from the homeless hearts of outcasts. It was eerie to a degree, and gave me a lump in my throat. How strange these people are! What would I not give to be inside of their heads for an hour, to look out at life with their eyes! What do they think about, what do they love, what do they hate, what pains them or gives them pleasure? Are we really like each other fundamentally, or have we not a thought or a feeling in common? Oh, the pathos and the loneliness of separate existence!

‘In mystery the soul abides.’

And yet how horrible it would be if every mystery were dispelled, and everything were transparently

intelligible! Have you ever thanked heaven, my dear, for unsatisfied curiosity? It is at the heart of life: to be a week without it, is to be the prey of listless apathy. Curiosity is supposed to be a feminine attribute, and perhaps too many of us confine our curiosity to the limitations of the old lady who said of her daughter, 'There's Mary Jane, she takes an interest in the history of the Greeks and Romans, but, for my part, I'm satisfied to find out what I can about my next-door neighbours'.

It is all a question of degree. Animals are curious. Just look at birds with their inquisitive eyes, hopping on their little journeys of investigation; or dogs, with their cocked ears and tail erect. But they are only curious about what concerns their own interests. Without curiosity, on the other hand, Galileo would never have discovered that the round earth rolls through space, nor astronomers have learnt the laws of the most distant planets. While there is one thing left unknown to us on earth, we can never weep, like Alexander, because there is not a kingdom left to conquer. Not till we have solved the last great mystery of all need it be said of any of us, 'There is no speculation in that

eye', and, even then, who knows what surprises may await the wider vision?

This is wandering far from the account of the acrobats, but the boy's song is responsible for it. You must not imagine, however, that we spend our days interviewing jungle races. J.'s work begins at six in the morning, when he goes with a following of a score of horsemen to inspect the land. After his return, he sits in his tent and carries on the business of the district, just as if he were in his office at head-quarters.

As for me, if you saw our clothes and napery when they are returned by the washerman, after being beaten with a stick on a board, and then dried on thorny bushes, you would acknowledge there was work to be done, not to speak of curtains, blinds, and sixteen dozen dusters to be hemmed before we return to the station, letters that wait to be answered, books and newspapers to be read.

Thanks to my Hindustani grammar, I can make myself understood by the cook and bearer now. I take Akbar's accounts about twice a week, for he keeps the purse, and is major-domo, local caterer, middleman between us and the natives. The rest

of our shopping has to be done by correspondence, and is associated, in my mind, with interminable receipts, which have to be signed by the sender and receiver, as well as by railway and post-office clerks. It is the method used by Government for checking and supervising the work of its agents, the said post-office and railway clerks. There is an excellent institution, called the value-payable post, according to the rules of which you must pay your debt to the shop through the post-office, before you can open the registered letter which tells you your purchase has been despatched and encloses the railway receipt. It bristles with forms to be signed, but when one has fairly grasped who is the 'addressee' and who the 'payee', further trouble is at an end.

The days are only too short for the work that has to be done. Sometimes I could wish that the natives were less busy in the night-time! A certain number of them from the nearest village volunteer to guard our tents, and, seated round the watchfire, they wile away the time by shouting, for it seems a physical impossibility for them to moderate their tones. Then the wells are worked all night, and their voices become audible as the village gossip

ends. Sometimes the creaking of the unoiled wheels, as the buffaloes turn them round, has a high and a low note that are at war with one another, like this,



and sometimes two or three wells 'talk much', as the natives say, in different keys. But at delightful intervals the drone of the well is an old woman's croon, hushing tired humanity to sleep, beginning with the poor labourer on his plank beside his buffaloes, and gently closing the eyes of weary workers, far and near. And there is only a strip of canvas between one and

'The huge and thoughtful night,
The night in silence under many a star'.

CHAPTER V.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS—EXPERIENCES IN CAMP.

DEAR N.—'The wind is up and the weather broken', and now I expect I have had a sample of every vicissitude of climate presented by the Punjaub, excepting the hot weather. We had a beginning even of that, enough to generate a plague

of flies—common house-flies—which buzzed by the hundred, and had to be killed with a fly-flapper of bamboo and leather, with great possibilities of execution in it, and the satisfaction attending on revenge!

Inanimate nature is always still here. The branches of the trees never stir, the leaves, grass, and corn are never turned over by the wind, and made to show what their other side is like, in the enchanting way with which one is familiar in the restless North. Everything has an air of being arrested, and makes me think of the stationary figures in the palace of the Sleeping Beauty, before the arrival of the Prince. Nature was peculiarly still a week ago, before the arrival of our Prince, in the shape of a dust-storm, upheaving, whirling, and carrying everything before it. J. and I were riding the day's march, cantering as hard as we could, for we saw the dust-storm on the horizon, and the air had become warningly cold. In spite of our pace we were overtaken by the storm; darkness that could be felt enveloped us; straw, dust, and leaves whizzed past us, thunder rolled, hail beat on our faces. Bessie began to plunge. J. dismounted to

quiet her, whereupon his horse galloped off into the darkness. The dust-storm swept over us, but the rain was not ended. When we reached the tents we noticed they had been pitched on high ground. The servants' quarters had been placed as close to us as possible, straw had been laid down in the passages, and mounds of earth heaped up against the outer wall of the tent. Every preparation had been made for 'the rains'.

The signs of the times had been anxiously studied for the last week by the peasantry, for unless the rains come in season and plentifully water their crops, the spring harvest will be poor. On the rains, therefore, the harvest depends. But their taxation for the next twenty years is being calculated by J. at present, on the basis of the average value of their crops, and according as the harvests are likely to be good or bad, will the sum to be paid by the peasant be fixed. So whatever his private hopes may be of plentiful rains and a plentiful harvest, he warily only expresses his fears. 'The clouds are small', he says; 'they are blowing over the district. There will be little rain, and such as it is, it will do us no good.'

The clouds nevertheless have burst, and at night it is as if a gigantic shower-bath were pouring down on the canvas roof of the tent. In the morning we were surrounded by a lake, as the day went on we feared we might find ourselves in it. So we started engineering operations, and shouted our orders from the tent doors, for the formation of miniature canals to carry off the water; and the old tent-pitcher and his subordinate, covered with blankets and bare-footed, waded about in the water, hewing out channels with their spades through which the water could escape. Pools of water, however, stood in the verandah in spite of these precautions. Steadily the rain poured down for four days, when it stopped as suddenly as it began. Next day there was sunshine. Every piece of furniture was turned out of the tent to be dried; the damp straw was carried away, carpets were hung upon ropes, everybody buzzed and chattered and dried themselves in the sun, and rubbed up and polished everything they could lay their hands on. The trees looked ten years younger in their fresh greenness. After a day or two, the wells, which had been outrivalled and stilled by the heavens, were noisier than ever,

and the birds sang as if they at least would confess their gladness that they would enjoy a plentiful crop.

But although the floods had abated it was no easy matter to get away from the scene of them. There lay the pool of water still, and there was the tonga on the other side. But how was I to reach it? I refused to be carried, I could not well wade, and no bridge could be made. At last a substitute for one was hit upon. A succession of native low beds were laid on the ground, and along these I was able to make my tottering way.

I wished you could have been with us the following evening when five native musicians were brought to our verandah. I think you would have smiled, as I did, at the irony of the experience. To think that this was music, music the divine, music the one embodiment in art of what would otherwise be incommunicable!

Two of the instruments were like violins, the third was much longer and thinner, and its tone was like a zither. The men sat on the ground. They explained that their music is divided into modes, and that each mode has many daughters

and grand-daughters belonging to it. The exact meaning of this I do not know, nor do I know if there was insanity in the particular branch of the family to which we were introduced; all I can vouch for is, that there was a tendency in it to produce madness, and that as far as we were concerned it was a mode of torture.

Conceive three distinct strains of discord twanged on the violins with unrelenting vigour and insistence, and at interminable, unaccented length; three distorted faces uttering individual yells, starting afresh at odd moments, regardless of the violins or each other, two drummers beating a rapid accompaniment, and then imagine being told at the conclusion that this pandemonium was an oriental love-song!

Isn't it odd that the sense of colour seems to be the only feeling for beauty that very different races have in common? The Jap, Chinaman, Hindu, European by no means admire the same type of beauty in the human form. The music, poetry, architecture, of one race may not appeal to another; but they all unite in enthusiasm over combinations of colour which appeal to each. One would have hazarded the theory that dancing was an elemental,

universal language of the body, until one had learnt, by seeing it, how unintelligible joy or triumph may remain to a foreigner when expressed through this medium.

Dancing certainly has a more cosmopolitan element in it than music. We looked on lately at a sweepers' dance, after dining with a native squire, and one could quite follow the rhythm as they kept time to their clapping hands with a fascinating step like a waltz and reel-step combined. This sweepers' dance ended a very pleasant entertainment, our first dinner with one of the native gentry. J. was not quite sure that I should enjoy it, but we finally resolved to go, and are glad we did, as it was all very pleasant.

The Malik, a great dandy, came to our tent to conduct us himself to the English bungalow he has built beside his house. We strolled through the gardens first, to admire the illuminations which marked out the edge of the pathways. They made the garden so like a place that would be described in one's *ideal* (!) of an Oriental love-song, when Zuleika meets the young Hussain by moonlight, while the nightingales sing, and the scent of the roses is

wafted along! An old Mahomedan priest met us at the entrance of the gardens, dressed in scarlet turban and coat and white trousers. He brought a bunch of sweet-smelling roses as a present. He said he belonged to the sect of Sufi, to which Saadi, the Persian poet, belonged, and was pleased when we answered that we knew Saadi was also a lover of roses.

The Malik has built his bungalow English fashion. On the floors of the drawing-room and dining-room cotton floor-cloths were laid, with a dark-red ground and dead-gold pattern on them, and a beautiful border. There was an ottoman in the middle of the room, an English fireplace and mantel-piece, chairs with net and silk-embroidered antimacassars, and a table on which were placed a looking-glass, glass butter-dishes and salt-cellars, by way of ornament. Round the halls were hung framed Mahomedan texts, with English wooden cloth-pegs hanging evenly between them—also by way of ornament.

The table was set with our own things. So the Malik had arranged it with our servants, who waited on us. Our own food was also served, the Malik's being brought in towards the end, when we

helped ourselves to several different dishes of meat and sweetmeats served on one plate. After dinner the baby was carried into the drawing-room by its uncle, to play with its father for half an hour, and be shown to us. Then the Malik exhibited some of his wife's beautifully embroidered fancy-work, after which it was time to see the sweepers' dance and go home.

You must understand that some Europeans of the old school would not allow a lady to accept a native gentleman's proffered hospitality. They would not allow her to drive through a native town, be a spectator of tent-pegging, or receive a native as visitor, far less dine with him. They would, in short, prefer her to be as wholly absent from every kind of native society as are the inmates of zenanas. Their argument is that until a native gentleman will allow them to meet his wife, they will not allow him to meet an English lady.

A large section of the European community have different opinions. They hold, on the contrary, that there is such a thing as being too proud to be fearful of one's dignity, or to acknowledge it could possibly be affected by the attitude of others. They

think that where the convictions on either side are so diametrically opposed the line of conduct cannot be the same. Social customs are not matters of religion with us. We don't think it a religious duty to conceal our mothers and sisters, we change none of our hereditary habits by allowing a lady to meet whom she pleases. So it does not seem to them to be just to demand a great sacrifice in exchange for none, and they believe that if it is desirable that native ways should be transformed, the best beginning is to show them a different state of things.

I am glad that J. entirely sympathizes with this view of the question. He likes me to go into the villages, visit the headmen's houses, see their wives making butter, grinding corn, and baking bread; watch the blacksmith work his bagpipe bellows, the goldsmith with his blowpipe make gold and silver ornaments, or the weaver ply his loom. I have made the acquaintance of most of the ladies of the neighbourhood—beautifully dressed and bejewelled beings—and the squires bring their boys to read English to me, or show me their little English essays.



"The goldsmith with his bowl of making gold and silver ornaments."

J. takes me with him when he visits the dispensaries in the towns, or examines the boys in the schools. Our great ambition is to establish a school for girls, as well as a native female doctor in each of the four towns, before we leave the district. Whether we can accomplish this is doubtful, for these movements here, as elsewhere, cannot live unless they are kept going from within. While we are in vain trying to cherish the feeble, flickering beginning of a school we have helped to start in a large town where it is not much appreciated, we hear that a girls' school, started by the people themselves, has sprung up and is flourishing in a central village of our range of hills. Large schools already exist in two of the towns, supervised by public-spirited citizens, and a dispensary for women has been opened in a third by the American Mission. There they work day after day with an untiring devotion one cannot sufficiently admire, visiting the women in their homes, and trying to minister to the needs of their souls as well as their bodies.

If ever a country needed moral and spiritual regeneration it is this. Why this is not recognized as self-evident by those who are loudest in de-

nouncing its depravity, I cannot understand. I have, of course, only been six months in India, and our English society has been necessarily limited to not a very large number of Europeans travelling through the district. You must take my impressions, therefore, for what they are worth, as those of a solitary person in a lonely place. With this preface I must say I have been disappointed to find how little people know of labours carried on at their doors, how little they seem to inquire about them, how little they seem to sympathize with or help the labourers.

One hears it so often said that 'Missionaries have nothing to show for their efforts'. How noble it is of them, then, to continue to make them! We who are most of us so fond of success can surely reverence lives that are willingly sacrificed, and men who must often be depressed and discouraged, but who yet patiently plod on, working away for the good of others, refusing to acknowledge defeat. But is it true that they have nothing to show for their efforts? They say themselves that numbers come to them, avowedly Christians at heart, who have not the courage as yet to confess their convic-

tions openly; and surely it is some encouragement to know that so many modern Hindu sects are saturated by Christian teaching; and above all, that there are one and a half million of people in India who are Christians.

One hears people say, too, that 'it is a pity that such an ancient religion as Hinduism should be disturbed'. It is almost as if they thought that Christianity was not the Truth for all mankind, but a speculative hobby which belonged to Englishmen, and that to desire to share it with mankind was a form of eccentricity! Well, I wonder if we should still be worshippers of Thor and Woden if St. Paul had not been imbued by another spirit than that! And they complain that missionaries have servants and a pony, and that they are married men. Do you remember the old man we once talked to, who congratulated himself that his wife 'had two qualities which are seldom seen together, namely, piety and common sense'. We need both—and is it common sense to expect a man who is to devote his time to preaching and teaching to occupy it in sweeping out his house, cooking his food, bringing water from the well, and washing his

clothes? How can he preach and teach in a village thirty miles off, unless he can reach it on horseback, which is in many places the only means of transport?

And why should missionaries not be married men? I know the practical difficulties, but apart from these, do *you* think it wrong for the man himself to be happier? And cannot you understand the inestimable advantage it must be that these poor creatures, these millions round about us who do not know the true meaning of Love, either earthly or divine, who cannot apparently even grasp the idea of truth or fair dealing with each other, should have this vision of Christian family life lived out amongst them? When I look at these natives, I think of the old saying: 'I do not wonder so much at what people suffer, as at what they lose'. 'Perhaps if they saw the beauty of Love', I think, 'they might wish to have it too', and so I sadly wonder why any one should wish to take away the wife, the mother or the children from that otherwise cheerless home, but for the gravest need.

But now I must end this *olla podrida* of a letter. Dear, delightful camp life is at an end for this cold

weather. We return in two days to the station to be ready for the annual horse-fair—our gay week—when visitors from the outside world, chiefly officers of the staff corps, come to inspect the thousand-and-odd horses collected for their benefit, and to choose and buy the best for the cavalry.

If we leave the station again before flitting to our summer quarters on the hill top, we shall live in some of the gaunt, barely-furnished bungalows, or rest-houses as they are called, which are dotted over the district to shelter wanderers like ourselves.

CHAPTER VI.

ENGLAND'S METHOD OF GOVERNING INDIA.

FIVE years have passed since these first impressions were received—impressions followed by a somewhat wider range of interests in matters relating to India and Anglo-India, a sketch of some of which I now make bold to offer to the public.

But before describing certain aspects of the inner life of the people with which I afterwards became

more familiar, I venture to give a short account of some of the responsibilities undertaken by the Government of India, and of the manner in which they are discharged. In the following five chapters may be found some of the facts of imperial and national importance which go to form the background now of every Indian landscape. I present the account, inadequate and superficial though it is, with some degree of diffidence. It is a frequent complaint of Anglo-Indians—whether we are right or wrong in our belief I am not absolutely certain—that people at home know little about India, and take little interest in their great dependency, that they seem indeed to be born with a sense of weariness as regards India and all things Indian, that nothing can dispel.

I hope I am wrong about this, but if I am not, I am still encouraged to offer my statistics, by a story which I lately heard told of Thackeray and Carlyle.

At a Royal Academy dinner some artists, sitting in the neighbourhood of these great men, were expressing their enthusiasm about Titian.

‘His glorious colouring is a *fact* about Titian,’

said one man, striking the table to give emphasis to the remark.

‘And his glorious drawing is another *fact* about Titian,’ cried another artist.

And so they went on, until Carlyle, who had been sitting listening in silence to their rhapsodies, interrupted them by saying, with a slow deliberation, which had its own impressive emphasis—

‘And here sit I—a man made in the image of God—who *know* nothing about Titian, and *care* nothing about Titian—and that’s another *fact* about Titian.’

Thackeray was sipping claret at the moment. He paused and bowed courteously to Carlyle. ‘Pardon me,’ he said, ‘that is *not* a fact about Titian. But it is a fact—and a lamentable fact—about Thomas Carlyle.’

With which suggestive anecdote, I proceed to give some facts about India and the British Government

The constitutional governments of Europe, with the exception of Switzerland, are more or less founded upon the British model. Some of these

governments are revivals of systems previously in vogue, but swept into oblivion by ages of abuse. Others are creations of this century. But whether old or new, through all of them runs an obvious tendency to follow the precedent of the 'mother of parliaments'. No greater compliment than this could be paid to the genius of Britain for combining the principles of monarchy with constitutional liberty and representative institutions.

Only two countries in Europe, Russia and Turkey, stand without this pale of constitutional government. The rest of Europe has been content to profit in different degrees by the history of centuries of struggle in England, and by the experience she has thereby gained in the art of government, and to adapt her principles to its needs.

In none of her colonies or dependencies has Britain had such a free hand for the exercise of her gift for governing as in India. It is as if a child, bereft of other protectors or legal authority, were to be delivered into the care of a guardian, who found in it an unfailing object for his theories of management and upbringing. India, however, when she came into the possession of Britain, was a very

ancient child, who had already formed habits that were not easy to eradicate, and who had ways of her own which made the hope of improvement in certain directions seem vain. Nor was the treatment she received, in the beginning, at our hands at all times unimpeachable.

More than two hundred years have passed since the Island of Bombay, our first real foothold in India, was given as part of his wedding dowry to Charles II. by Portugal. Since then how many pages have been written by us in Indian history, by Clive of glorious memory, by the much-maligned Warren Hastings, by her first great legislator Cornwallis, by the all-conquering Wellesley. In those early days the territory governed by the East India Company was of much slenderer proportions than the vast Indian empire as it is now. Men had to act on their own responsibility then, to meet emergencies as best they might, to conquer threatening difficulties with the weapons at their hands. We live in another age, and other weapons are at our disposal. A story is told which illustrates the bureaucratic discipline of our system as it now exists. The native station-master of a lonely

railway-station is said to have telegraphed to his immediate official superior. 'Tiger on platform. Please arrange.' In the early days of the East India Company neither telegraphs nor railways existed. Six months had to elapse before answers to communications sent to England could arrive in India. Our heroes had to face their tigers by themselves.

It is unnecessary to trace the history of the stages by which we have reached the constitutional position we now hold. It is more important to describe the constitution as it is. India is governed by a Viceroy and Council subject to the Secretary of State in England. The Imperial government resembles the home Cabinet with the Viceroy as prime-minister. The Viceroy, as well as the members of Council, are nominated by the Crown. The members hold a position somewhat analogous to that of the English Secretaries of State, the departments which they superintend being Home, Revenue and Agriculture, Finance and Commerce, Military, Public Works and Legislative. The Viceroy usually keeps the Foreign Department in his own hands. The conduct of affairs is also somewhat similar in procedure to that

of the Cabinet. In every department there is a secretary who prepares a digest of each case for his chief, who again uses his own discretion whether his orders on it should be final, or whether it is of sufficient importance to be sent on to the Viceroy for his approval, or to be brought, if need be, before the Council. But the difference between the internal administration carried out by the Cabinet in England and that to be considered by the Council in India is more significant than the resemblance. The internal administration of the Cabinet deals with the affairs of a nation. Now the word 'nationality' cannot be more justly applied to the Indian races than it could have been in the Middle Ages to the whole mass of Goths, Alans, Franks, Huns, and Magyars who settled in Europe, if we can imagine them never intermingled or intermarried, compelled by the laws of their religion to remain for ever apart, although living side by side. Just so distinct do the foreign hordes who have entered India remain in their tribal, clan, and caste divisions.

The Viceroy and his Council do not deal with a nation or with nationalities. Napoleon, when he

conquered Europe, did not rule such diverse peoples or places as the Viceroy governs. The area to be administered in India is as large as Europe with Russia left out. No such contrasts are to be found elsewhere, as that between the torrid zones of India and its arctic regions, or between its sandy plains and its tropical vegetation. No such diversities in race, religion, and language exist in Europe as are exhibited in India. The Tamil of Madras, the aboriginal highlander of the Central Provinces, the supple Bengali, and the stalwart Punjaub Mahomedan, have less in common and are more unintelligible to each other than the Spaniard and Dutchman, the Hungarian and Frenchman.

The task of carrying out in detail the administration of such a subdivided continent could no more be contemplated by one small Council, consisting of six members and the Viceroy of India, than it could have entered into the mind of Napoleon to govern his conquered kingdoms in his single person. Excluding our native dependencies, with their population of about sixty millions, British India may be called a federation of eight states whose boundaries we have artificially fixed, and to which we have

given the names of Bengal, Bombay, Madras, the Central Provinces, the North-West Provinces, the Punjaub, Assam, and Burmah. They are eight vast provinces, each with its separate government.

The administrative arrangement is as if we were to suppose the head of a house granting separate establishments on the family property to the members of the family, allowing a certain play within limits to individual action, laying down general rules for their guidance, supplementing, from his own purse, expenditure which could not be met by the divided income, permitting a retention of the profits, if any, for the further improvement of that part of the domain, requiring a methodical account of the management, and keeping in his own hands certain branches of the stewardship which concern the whole property and can only be dealt with by himself.

The responsibilities of government have been distributed by a system of decentralization carried out in every department. The tide, which formerly flowed towards centralization, ebbs swiftly now in an opposite direction. There must always, however, be a central authority to guide the ebb and

flow. The imperial government is responsible for the laws and general principles by which the provincial governments are guided and controlled. Such imperial questions as the military defence of India, or our relations with foreign powers and native states can only be considered by the supreme government. Such departments as the post-office, telegraph, and mint, which are administered on a uniform system throughout India, are directly managed by the supreme government. The construction of railways and canals is chiefly treated as imperial business.

In financial matters, receipts and charges under the heads of opium, salt, customs, tributes from native states, post-office, telegraph, mint, the public debt, railways and army services, are considered as wholly or chiefly imperial.

The control of other departments, subject to general laws and orders, and to the principles laid down by the imperial government, has, in order to encourage good management and economy, been made over to the provincial governments. The financial arrangement between the imperial and provincial governments is very much as if the

former were to say to the latter: 'I give you the management of certain sources of revenue within your province. They should bring you in so many million rupees. This should be sufficient to cover your expenditure under certain heads, which are also left to your control. But if by good management you succeed in getting a profit, you can keep that for further improvements in the province.'

The provincial government, taking its cue from the imperial, makes similar bargains with its municipal committees and district boards. The nett profits are retained by them for new roads, new schools, or whatever need the district has.

In England, if the supplies of money voted prove in excess of the expenditure, the result is that the following year taxation is reduced. This is rarely possible in a country that cries for more railways, more canals, more necessary improvements. All the money she can give is needed for her urgent wants. And in this connection one may emphasize what is perhaps not generally understood.

No tribute from India goes to English coffers. India's revenue is spent in public works, in payment

of her British and native troops, in the maintenance of peace and order. But England's relation to India is not a commercial undertaking. Those who wish to see it represented in £ s. d., with a balance in favour of England, must be disappointed. India pays out nothing for which she does not receive an equivalent in services or commodities. It is the greatest dependency ever governed by a nation; the greatest opportunity Britain has ever had; the noblest field for her sons; but it is not a chance for adding to our exchequer. We may be a 'nation of shopkeepers', but surely it has not come to this, that we would have India treated otherwise?

To return to the system of administration. At the head of each province is a governor, lieutenant-governor, or chief commissioner. Madras and Bombay have executive councils. Along with Bengal and the North-West Provinces, they have also legislative councils. In every province the unit of administration is the district. In every province, except Madras, commissioners, who are in charge of so many districts grouped into divisions, stand midway between the provincial governments and the district officers. They supervise the details of the

executive administration, and all communications with the government pass through their hands. The departments of police, jail, education, medical services, public health and vaccination, land revenue, agriculture and commerce, forests and meteorology, registration, stamps and excise, and public works have their distinct heads, who act as advisers to the governor or lieutenant-governor, as the case may be, submitting their reports and receiving his orders on them through his staff of secretaries, if they do not themselves act in that capacity. The Governors again are in communication with the Supreme Government, which takes its instructions from the Secretary of State, and he again is responsible to Parliament.

So one link is connected with the other in the great administrative chain, till one is tempted to compare the system to one of those series of boxes which are a favourite exhibition of Chinese skill. When you open the first you find within it a second, which contains a third, and through a dozen others you work your way at last to a tiny box, no bigger than a pin-point. Take away one of the boxes and the whole is incomplete.

Just as the planets and their satellites revolve on their own axes with apparent independence, yet are all the while obeying laws from which they do not swerve, so is every servant of the Crown in India, from the Viceroy down to the humblest village watchman, limited in powers by Acts of Parliament, or of the Legislative Council, by standing orders, or by the system of which he is a part.

Some one has said that 'the government of India is a government by despatch-boxes', and has cynically added, 'tempered by the occasional loss of the key'. Generalities, as a rule, have to be taken with a grain of salt, but there are few which do not also contain a grain of truth. It is true that discussion, almost entirely carried on by correspondence, precedes the birth of every Indian Act. On the other hand, far from this discussion being carried on in secret, the draft of every Bill is published, and is open to the criticism and comment of every individual in the empire.

In spite of this the people have in reality very little say in the matter. Legislative Acts do not embody the will of the people in India as they do in England. The history of a measure before and after

it enters the House of Commons, and that of a Bill which is under discussion by the Legislative Council, are so unlike, that one is inclined to say there is no resemblance between them.

It is a long step from the crowded Houses of Parliament to the Legislative Council, formed by the addition to the ordinary Imperial Council of a dozen or more members, civil, military, legal or non-official, European and native. The gulf is wide between the hundreds of figures perched on British hustings haranguing their constituents, presenting the programme of their proposed policy for approval or dissent, and the half-dozen members of the Council at Calcutta whose names are recommended by the Viceroy, by the elected representatives of the chambers of commerce, universities, district boards, or municipalities. Once assembled, nothing further apart could be imagined than the deliberate, dignified procedure of the members of the Legislative Council, reading their written speeches, and the life within the precincts of the House of Commons, whose discussions are at times neither deliberate nor dignified, and which has become too often now the national bar for the trial of institutions. The two

legislative assemblies have indeed very little in common in any single particular.

When an Indian Bill has been drafted it is sent to the governors of provinces, with a request that it should be submitted to official and non-official specialists for their opinion on the subject with which it deals, while the press at the same time has access to it, and can use it as 'copy' to its heart's content. After the various criticisms have been collected, weighed, adopted or rejected in committee, a second draft is frequently published in the Government Gazette, and the same history repeated, till after being laid again before the Legislative Council, it is given to the Indian world as a completed Act.

Such is the procedure, and it must be noticed that in nothing connected with it is the opportunity for free discussion and the representation of opinion withheld by the government. The opportunity is given, but the inclination on the part of the general public to make use of it is not there. Reduce the swarm of English newspapers and magazines which daily and monthly hover ready to descend on every clause of an important Bill, tearing it to pieces, turning it inside out, to the score or so of English

papers, and the few native papers with their scanty circulation, which represent the 'fourth power' in the Indian Empire. Convert the general public into a population whose horizon is bounded by their village, and whose greatest ambitions are satisfied if they are left to plough and hold their fields in peace, and transform their profits into silver ornaments, as their fathers did before them. Eliminate the leisured classes, who make an employment of their civic duties at home, and an interest out of their discussion. Remember that such leisure is practically unknown amongst the Europeans who come to India to overwork and to leave it when they have earned their rest; and you will see that the audience of debate is necessarily reduced to that of government officials, a few educated natives, and to a thousand or two of British merchants if their interests are touched.

Party politics and, one might add, public opinion, in the home acceptation of the terms, are unknown. The distinction between England and India is immense. It remains an open question whether such a government as we have described, whose counsels are shared by expert specialists with opinions based

upon a lengthy practical experience on the point at issue, is to be preferred or not to one subjected to the fluctuating influences of the masses, too often as ignorant as they are prejudiced. However that may be, it remains a matter of fact that the government India has is the only practicable one for the country in its present circumstances, if its true progress is to be considered.

It must not, however, be assumed that this paternal government, whose *dicta* are as a rule accepted unopposed, is in the ordinary sense of the word despotic. It may be truly affirmed, on the contrary, that in no country, except America and Great Britain and her colonies, is the individual so little interfered with by the government. In Germany, France, Austria, Italy, Russia, a man is compelled to be a soldier or a sailor whether he will or no. In India no kind of pressure is put upon him to be anything but what he pleases. Perhaps it might not be amiss to transfer the powers of the English local government boards to India, if it be held that everywhere a government should protect the ignorant masses from themselves. Except in large towns, however, neither sanitation nor vaccination is compulsory.

Education is nowhere compulsory; nor is there any compulsory provision for the maintenance of the poor.

Far-off waves from British seas have reached the shores of India. Certain Acts of the Home government in relation to labour are here in force, in a modified form. The Factory Act, for instance, applies to the few factories in the country. A coolies' emigration Act is in operation, and a plantation coolies' Act, but they also apply to a very small proportion of the population. Otherwise relations between employers and labourers are not interfered with or regulated by the State. Any man can be of what religion he likes, he can express or publish what opinion he pleases, he enjoys the right of public meeting, and can freely criticise the action of the government, without fear of consequences.

Far from being a despotism, it would be more just to say that in India the theories of state socialism, omitting its elective principles, have been put into effect in some directions to a greater extent than in most other countries. 'In the particular circumstances of a given age or nation', writes Mr. J. S. Mill, 'there is scarcely anything really import-

ant to the general interest, which it may not be desirable or even necessary that government should take upon itself, not because private individuals cannot effectually perform it, but because they will not.'

What the branches are which have been undertaken by the State in India for the good of the community, may now be considered.

CHAPTER VII.

SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION AND LAW.

IN India the government not only provides for the maintenance of peace and the administration of justice, and retains in its own hands the management of the postal and telegraph services, as it does in most civilized countries, but it owns and manages the greater part of the railways and almost all the canals, and has a much more direct share in providing education, vaccination, hospitals and medical relief than is the case in most European countries.

In its position of universal landlord, it takes a more direct and detailed interest in the affairs of its

enormous agricultural population than is taken by the government of any other country in the world. Its officers, for example, measure and map each individual field in British India, and maintain a record of the rights in the land of each one of the many millions of tenants of various classes it contains. They make a careful inspection and record of the crops grown in every single plot from year to year, and publish the totals for general information, with remarks calling attention to anything abnormal in the state of agriculture, the range of prices or the course of trade. The nature of the crop in every part of the country is anxiously watched, and where any serious failure occurs, relief is at once given in the form of suspension or, if need be, of remission of the rent due to the State.

Should scarcity threaten to deepen into famine, the whole resources of government are directed to the provision of work and food, so as to ward off starvation from the people. Loans are freely granted from government funds to enable the peasants to purchase seed and plough-cattle, or to make permanent improvements on their holdings. And all classes of the people are encouraged, in every kind of trouble

or difficulty, to apply to the officers of government for aid and advice, which are freely granted.

In local affairs of all kinds, again, although there is now everywhere an elaborate system of local government by representatives of the people themselves, in many cases elected on something like western principles, it is to a large extent little more than nominal, the energy and the intelligence being supplied by the paid officers of government who have places on the local boards, or by those higher officials who are invested by law with powers of control over the action of the boards and committees, and although every encouragement is held out to the non-official members to manage all details for themselves, true public spirit is so rare among them that comparatively little is done without the intervention of some government official.

The State in India is thus the people's lawyer, judge, policeman, engineer, postman, schoolmaster, doctor, landlord and philanthropist. On the whole it may fairly be said that in no country in the world, at any period, except perhaps in Peru under the Incas, has so much been done by the State and its officials for the people. And unlike some Euro-

pean governments of the present day, the attitude of the Indian government towards its subjects is not one of compulsion, but of help and encouragement.

Government is like one of those Hindu idols stretching out its arms in every direction, and like the idol she is expected to appear upon all occasions as a fresh embodiment of beneficence. The wonders she has already worked are the argument for more. Of all her miracles perhaps her greatest is that she has made the native population the ministers of her will. Her work is carried out in a country whose native governments were characterized by disorganization and disunion in their disjointed parts, and by the irresponsibility of every individual of whom they were composed. The new order has been imposed upon a people to whose traditions it was diametrically opposed. Of the government officials, employed to maintain this order, nine-tenths belong to the conquered race. A native's highest ambition is to be employed by government, but how has he been disciplined into the method and exactitude, so necessary for success, yet so antagonistic to his natural bent?

The wonder-working potion is composed of many

ingredients, but the strength of the prescription lies in the definition of the responsibilities of those who have to follow it, and the multiplied supervision of their work. Government is an Argus with a thousand eyes, her employés are reporters with ten thousand note-books. On each step of the government pyramid stands an inspector, narrowly watching the work of the men immediately below him, and as closely scanned himself by those above his head. Excepting those who hold the highest or the most insignificant posts, every government official keeps a journal in which he has to note his daily work. The hospital assistant, for instance, records how many patients have come to the dispensary or hospital that day, and how they have been treated. All policemen who hold positions of any importance give an account of the crimes that have been brought to their notice, of any suspicious rumours that have reached their ears, or of suspicious characters that have been seen in their neighbourhood. The village accountant keeps a record of the rainfall, of the crops grown and of their state, of fields that have exchanged hands, and of any spread of disease amongst cattle. A magistrate's file is an epitome of each case

he tries, with the evidence given, and the reason for the judgment he has awarded, which is ready to be sent if required to the sessions judge or High Court. Schoolmasters write up a daily register of the numbers of children attending school. Any man employed on the canals, who can read and write, notes for how many hours the water has been given that day, and by whom it has been used.

Each man knows that an inspector may come upon him at any time to verify his statements. But the inspector comes with possible blessing as well as cursing upon his wings, for on his report depends in a great measure the chance of promotion with an increase of pay, the object of each native worker's hopes and prayers, and this incentive is a beacon to allure him on to steady efforts.

To analyse the system upon a larger scale, is to see the same pattern repeated everywhere. Divisions, with their subdivisions, are grouped under the supervision of a superior officer. They revolve round the provincial government like satellites round a planet, with the imperial government at the centre of the whole system

And now having briefly described as a whole the

work which is undertaken for the people, and the organization by which it is carried out, let us study more closely some branches of the State's administration.

Nothing more completely illustrates the change that has taken place in India under British rule than the domain of law. One uniform system of law is now applied to every part of India. Formerly, if cattle or other personal property were stolen, if debts were left unpaid, if a dispute about the boundaries of land or any vexed question arose, it lay in a man's choice either to fight it out himself with the principal offender, to make it the occasion of a family feud and the cause of constantly recurring riots, or if he were very poor, to recognize his own insignificance, and be resigned to his fate. For the majority of people law was represented by

‘The good old rule, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can’.

The rajah's favourites, who had been appointed by him governors of tracts of country, sat occasionally in the open air to hear the petitions of such as had access to them. Few, however, cared to avail

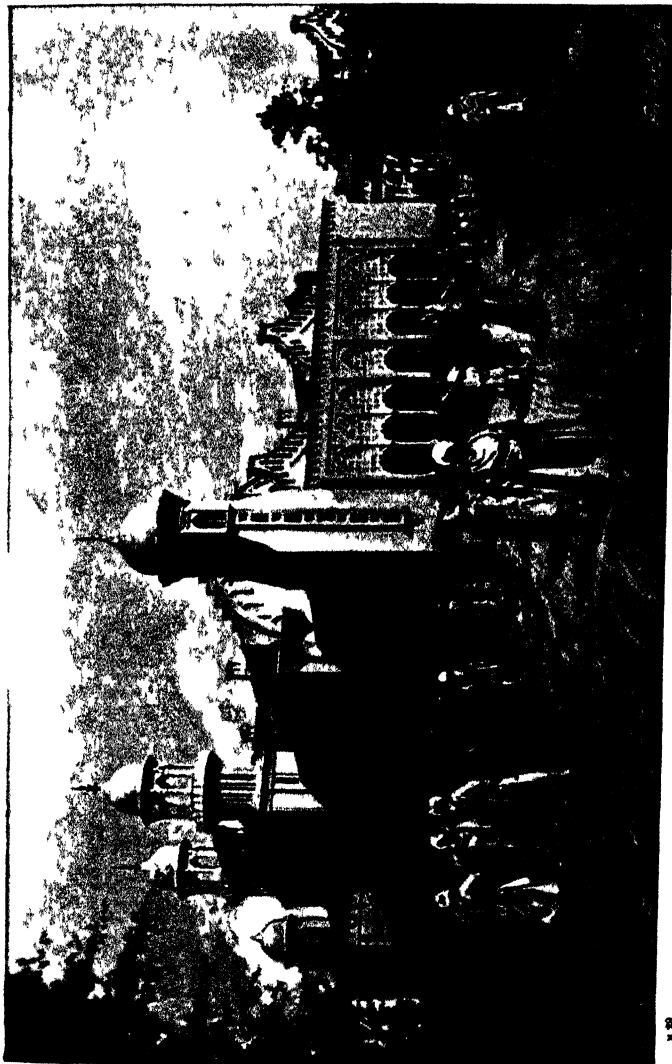
themselves of the opportunity. Their decisions were influenced sometimes by custom, sometimes by personal inclination, most frequently by the extent of the bribes offered to win their goodwill. The unsuccessful litigant was often punished by having a limb cut off by the carpenter or butcher of the nearest village, who acted as public executioner. A murderer, if he was unfortunate enough to attract sufficient attention to justify his being brought before this tribunal, was awarded death. Crime, however, generally flourished, and escaped unpunished except through personal revenge.

Now-a-days the native of British India knows well that the shadow of the law is everywhere, to be his bane or his protection. If he is guilty of a misdemeanour or a crime, the village watchman is there to report or take him to the nearest police station, to the native police officer of the division, with his force of constables and clerks. The European district superintendent of police at head-quarters, with his staff of inspectors, all hear of him in time. There is little fear that his case will not be conducted with decency and order. The Code of Criminal Procedure which is in force throughout the whole of

British India is a collection of rules and orders which define the powers of the police, of the magistrates, how criminals should be brought before magistrates, how evidence must be taken, how sentence must be passed, how an appeal may be made. In strict accordance with its mandates, he is taken before one of the three classes of magistrates that are to be found in every district in India. If he is guilty, the length of time he is to be imprisoned, the extent to which he is to be fined, is determined by the offence of which he is found guilty, and by the magistrate's powers. If he is dissatisfied he can appeal from the sentence to the magistrate of the district or to a higher court.

Serious cases are tried by the sessions judge, for in every province there are a certain number of divisions, in each of which a court of sessions judge presides. Disappointed in the result, the native can even appeal to the High Court of the province, or in the Punjab to the Chief Court at Lahore. But this is the final court of appeal, and further he cannot go.

All these courts are presided over by natives as well as Europeans, a preponderating majority of



The Court at Lanore

the subordinate magistrates being chosen from their ranks. They show a peculiar aptitude for their work, and one of the highest of English legal dignitaries has said that 'in respect of integrity, of learning, of knowledge, of the soundness and satisfactory character of the judgments arrived at, the judgments of the native judges were quite as good as those of the English'.

Sir James Stephen has given still higher testimony to the merits of the Indian penal code, which they administer. Its compilation was a splendid opportunity for legal heads, and the result has been described by him as 'supporting the test of experience for upwards of twenty years, during which time it has met with a degree of success which can hardly be ascribed to any other statute approaching the same dimensions'.

The ignorant layman, who turns from the study of English law to that of the Indian penal code, comes out of twilight into broad daylight. The first seems to him a patchwork, begun by the early Britons, and still unfinished, tattered in some places, mended in others, with old unuseable bits left hanging beneath the new. It appears to him to consist

of a history, partly written in obsolete words, of acts which were not always enacted, of laws apparently framed to prove the ingenuity of lawyers in evading them, of a medley of customs, precedents, judgments, express legislation and baffling technicalities, with a bewildering appendix of exceptions to emphasize how many clauses of every rule laid down have been annulled by subsequent legislation.

In England the basis of the whole system is still the common law of the realm; that is, the general customs which have been accepted and affirmed by generation after generation of the judges of the king's courts. These customs and decisions have not been embodied in one universal code. No complete code of any one great branch of law has yet been compiled and authoritatively promulgated by Parliament, although, especially in late years, considerable progress has been made in codifying limited portions of the general law. One consequence of this piecemeal legislation is that before a man can be sure in England of the law applicable to his particular case, he must be prepared to consult not only a large number of different Acts of Parliament, but also must take into consideration the old common law, so far

as it has not been modified by these Acts; and to wander, as we have seen, through mazes where he may easily lose his way.

The law of India, as it now stands, although largely founded upon the law of England, is arranged in a very different form. The Legislative Council of the Viceroy has, for the last thirty years and more, made it one of its chief objects to compile complete codes of different branches of the law, in as simple and popular language as possible, so that a man of ordinary intelligence may be able for himself to discover easily, and to understand without the help of a trained lawyer, the whole of the existing law applicable to his case, or which concerns the point in which he is interested.

‘Till I had been in India’, writes Sir James Stephen, ‘I could not have believed it to be possible that so extensive a body of law could be made so generally known to all whom it concerned in its minutest details. I do not believe that any English lawyer or judge has anything like so accurate, and comprehensive, and distinct a knowledge of the criminal law of England as average Indian civilians have of the penal code. Nor has all the ingenuity

of commentators been able to introduce any serious difficulty into the subject. After twenty years' use it is still true that anyone who wants to know what the criminal law of India is, has only to read the penal code with a common use of memory and attention.'

The Indian penal code contains the whole body of law applicable to crime, properly so called, with a scientific but simple definition of each class and variety of crime, with the punishment which can be awarded for each. Again, the code of criminal procedure contains, within one volume, the whole of the rules relating to the powers and procedure of magistrates and criminal courts generally. Similarly the code of civil procedure comprises the whole of the rules under which civil justice is administered; and other branches of civil law have been codified in such Acts as the Contract Act, the Transfer of Property Act, and the Succession Act. Indeed, so far is this object of having the codes complete kept in view by the Legislature, that when any material change is made in any of these codes, a revised edition of the whole code, containing all emendations up to date, is issued under the authority of government,

and in certain cases re-enacted as a whole by the Legislative Council.

These laws are not, like too many of our English Acts of Parliament, passed by fits and starts amid the strife of faction to meet immediate pressing needs, but are carefully elaborated after much deliberation and concentration by a few skilled lawyers and men of practical experience, who have to guide them not only the text-books of English law, but the codes of all nations and the experience of a century of Indian administration. As they are compiled by Englishmen, familiar with English law and English habits of thought, they are largely imbued with the spirit of English jurisprudence. But great pains have been taken to make them suitable to the Oriental people, for whose government they are enacted, and on the whole they form an admirable body of law suited to almost all the wants of a semi-civilized people. This is especially true of that portion of the law which deals with the repression of crime, and the result has been well stated by Sir James Stephen, who says, 'The vigorous administration of justice has beaten down crime throughout the whole of India to such an extent that the greater part of

that vast country would compare favourably, as far as the absence of crime goes, with any part of the United Kingdom, except perhaps Ireland in quiet times, and apart from political and agrarian offences.'

In some respects, it is true, the framers of the laws dealing with civil procedure and civil rights seem to have forgotten that they were legislating for a people, the great majority of whom are illiterate and ignorant, and more like children than grown men. So that some of the provisions of these codes, though admirably suited to a population such as that of a European country, most of whom are able to read and write, and have a certain amount of forethought, become only a means of strengthening the astute members of the commonwealth against their more backward fellows, and so, wrongly used, prove an instrument of injustice.

How unsuited much of the civil code, which has not been borrowed from Hindu and Mahomedan law, is to the character of the people and the stage of social development they have reached, will be shown hereafter. Meanwhile, let us turn from the consideration of the laws about the people to the

face of the country itself, and judge with what measure of success English efforts have been here attended.

CHAPTER VIII.

PUBLIC WORKS.

WE who chiefly associate canals with memories of Holland or Venice, and pictures of watery highways with lumbering barges and green banks, or sombre gondolas and dusky palaces, can hardly realize the part they play in India, where they are, as it were, the arteries of the land, conveying to it the life-giving element, without which drought to the country and death to its inhabitants would often be inevitable.

In a country where the rainfall is so uncertain as it is in India, water must be brought to the dry ground by every possible artificial means. From time immemorial the people have done their best to get this precious water, and to keep famine, with which they are too familiar, from their doors. They made their village ponds, they dug their wells, and

plied their ropes and ox-hide buckets. Night and day they and their patient bullocks worked the Persian wheel, with its ingenious ladder circle of pots emptying themselves into the troughs which carry off the water to the fields. In Madras they closed in valleys, so that when the rain fell they were converted into lakes. The supreme importance of canals was recognized as long ago as the fourteenth century. Canals were built by some of the Mahomedan sovereigns of the Moghul Empire. They were constructed by Akbar and his son Shah Jehan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Akbar the Great ordered that all parties, rich or poor, weak or strong, should share alike, and issued orders that on both sides of the canal trees of every description should be planted, so as to make it like the canal under the 'Tree of Paradise'. But with the fall of the Moghul Empire the canals fell into disuse, and few of their old channels are used in connection with those existing now.

It is believed that the irrigation works accomplished by the English government are of a more enduring character than these. The prophecy has sometimes been expressed that, when all other traces



Men and women use the Persian wheel to lift water from the well.

of our rule in India shall have passed away, the last vestiges of our presence there will be the roads, railways, and canals which we have made. They would be epitaphs of which we need not be ashamed. Canals such as the Sirhind, which is drawn from the river Sutlej, is carried upon aqueducts across mountain torrents, and intersects the drainage of the Himalayas, which has a total length of channel of 3000 miles, and irrigates over 600,000 acres, are not insignificant tributes to the skill of English engineers. Their earth embankments have no beauty to recommend them. The spirit of romance which lends its glamour to the silent monumental Roman aqueducts is not here to add beauty to the sombre colouring of the aqueduct in India, or to the broad beds of her canals. Yet it can at least be said that these bid fair to hold their own beside all others in enduring strength, and that 'no works of nobler utility were ever undertaken in the world'.

In 1892 the hundred and ten canals under the management of the British government in India, with an aggregate length of 26,000 miles of canals and distributaries, irrigated an area of close upon ten million acres, and the estimated value of the

irrigated crops amounted to twenty million pounds sterling. The value of one year's crop was nearly equal to the total amount spent from first to last in making the canals. This affords, perhaps, the most striking proof that could be given of the indirect benefits conferred on the country by these irrigation systems. So rapidly does the work progress that in the last ten years the area irrigated has been more than doubled in the Punjaub alone.

A description of how they are worked in the Punjaub will explain the different methods on which they are constructed. The Punjaub is for the most part a plain descending gradually to the sea. It is traversed by five rivers—the Sutlej, Bias, Ravi, Chenab, and Jhelum—which wear for themselves beds some miles in breadth, and run through wide spreading valleys. The soil of the high-lying land between the rivers is excellent, and only requires irrigation to make its cultivation profitable. In order to give this irrigation canals are made.

The natural course of the rivers is in some cases entirely dammed up, and the stream is diverted into the canal, which is so constructed as to lead the water on to the level of the country some distance

further down the stream. It is there, by a system of distributing channels, spread over the surface of the land. Such canals, commanding as they do by means of their dams, the whole water of the river, flow the whole year round, and are therefore called perennial canals.

In other cases advantage is taken of the annual rise of the rivers in summer, which follows the melting of the snows in the far-off Himalayas, where the rivers have their source. A passage is opened in the banks of the river, and the water rises into canals which have been constructed and are ready to receive it, and conduct it to the surface of the country, some distance from the canal bank. As these only flow while the river is swollen, they are known as inundation canals. In the case of either class, the branches are so constructed, by means of embankments, that the water flows along them at a slightly higher level than the land to be irrigated, and when the peasant wishes to irrigate his field all he has to do is to make a hole in the bank, and the water naturally flows over the field where it is kept in by an encircling ridge of earth. When he has had enough he stops the supply by re-closing the open-

ing. Each peasant has his stated time for his field. Woe betide the man who takes the water out of turn! His neighbour may crack his crown, or have him taken before the magistrate and fined for stealing the water.

Valuable as canals and wells are to the Indian farmer, large areas exist where irrigation by such means is impracticable. There are tracts of country which are too far from rivers for canals to be made, and where the subsoil water is either too far below the surface or too brackish to make irrigation by wells profitable. In such tracts, if cultivation is carried on at all, it is dependent on the local rainfall and most of all upon the monsoon.

The anxiety with which the monsoon is awaited is a measure of its value. The spring harvest in March or April is followed by two months of heat and drought, when agricultural operations are almost entirely suspended. Towards the middle or end of June the heat is greater than in almost any part of the world. Earth and man are waiting for the south-west monsoon, with its vapour-bearing currents and long-wished-for rains. The peasant knows that till the rain falls he cannot plough or

sow, that famine may be upon him if it is too long withheld, that if it does not come at all, thousands may be impoverished and brought near ruin. The dumb creation give signs of silent suffering, the birds' dry bills are open, and animals grow gaunt.

The silence is oppressive; it is as if Nature were listening for the sound of coming rain. Sometimes a dust-storm rises, and winds carrying withered leaves, straw, and dust before them, turn day into the blackness of night. Telegrams from the sea with news of the monsoon are watched for every day, as if a besieged city were waiting for the promise of relief. At last, if fate is favourable, the clouds gather with thunder and lightning: they break, and torrents fall. The earth is green again, animal life revives, and with an almost incredible rapidity the desert blossoms like the rose.

But even when Nature fails, and no rain comes to bring relief, even in tracts where neither wells nor canals can be constructed, no part of India need now be in despair, for no part of British India is beyond the reach of aid. No district is now so isolated that it cannot be reached by railways, none exist that are not traversed by roads.

Fifty years ago, and before the establishment of the British government, both travellers and country folk had another tale to tell. Leaving railways out of the question, there was practically not a road in the country. Native governments were satisfied if they planted a thin line of trees to help the wayfarer to distinguish the rough track that did duty for a path from the ordinary ground that lay on either side of it. Mounds of earth thrown down hap-hazard, and converted into floating seas of mud by the first downpour, were all the former doctoring a path received. The bridges in the country could be counted; they were the chary legacies bestowed by a few native magnates and governors, who wished to found a name for themselves by this gift to posterity.

To trust, therefore, to carry out a journey in a wheeled vehicle little more than thirty years ago, was probably to find yourself stranded in deep ruts of sand or clay, from which the help afforded by a dozen noisy peasants could barely extricate you; it was to run the chance of coming upon impassable streams or flooded fields and pathways, and to run the risk of altogether losing your way. Only those

who had no alternative resigned themselves to such a fateful means of conveyance. The majority were carried by men in a palanquin, and might consider themselves lucky if they were jolted, bumped, and swung over a thousand miles in a couple of months—a journey which, since the introduction of railways, can be accomplished in as many days.

About forty years ago the grand trunk road from Calcutta to the north was commenced, three principal lines of railway were begun, and the Ganges canal was opened. Now the country is covered by a network of roads, made green and shady by lines of widely spreading trees. Streams and rivers have their brick bridges, their ferries, or their bridges of boats. Every fresh year sees a new tract of land made fertile by canals. Railways connect every corner of the country, and no considerable town or city is without its telegraph office.

One can easily appreciate the impetus given to commerce by these multiplied means of communication, and realize how the material prosperity of the country is increased, while the possibility is lessened of the people being overtaken by drought or famine, the forms of distress most dreaded by

them. Formerly the only means of sending grain to a tract afflicted by scarcity was by slow caravans of laden camels or bullocks. Anybody who has read the history of the Madras famine, in 1877-78, can understand the value of the railway, by which grain was brought from overflowing granaries in more fortunate districts, to millions who without it would most certainly have died.

Not only is the railway the staunch ally of the people in their days of prosperity and hours of need; it has strengthened the empire in another quarter, where strength is of paramount importance, in a quarter in which weakness would result in British India disappearing from the map of the world.

‘Perhaps a more fortunate occurrence than the Mutiny of 1857’, writes Sir Lepel Griffin,¹ ‘never occurred in India. It swept the Indian sky clear of many clouds. It disbanded a lazy, pampered army, which, though in its hundred years of life it had done splendid service, had become impossible; it replaced an unprogressive, selfish, and commercial system of administration by one liberal and en-

¹ Sir Lepel Griffin's *Runjeet Singh*, p. 27.

lightened; and it attached the Sikh people closely to their rulers and made them what they are to-day, the surest support of the government. Lastly, it taught India and the world that the English possessed a courage and national spirit which made light of disaster; which never counted whether the odds against them were two or ten to one; and which marched confident to victory although the conditions of success appeared all but hopeless.'

We learnt other and no less important lessons than these through our disasters. Our army is now 200,000 strong. Our native troops bear to the European troops a proportion of only two to one, instead of five to one as they formerly did, and the artillery is now almost entirely in the hands of Europeans. Instead of drawing the greater number of our native troops from one class of the people and one part of the country, and so running the risk that attends similarity of feeling and interest amongst a large body of men, regiments are recruited from many different races and provinces, including the brave little Gurkha from Nepaul and the fiery Afghan from the north-west frontier, who have no sympathy with the stalwart Sikh or the wiry

Mahratta. Thanks, too, to better barracks in the plains and to cantonments provided in the hills, the annual mortality amongst European troops has been reduced from sixty in every thousand to fifteen.

Great as are these reforms, however, the part which is contributed to the increased strength of the Empire by the increase of railways must not be forgotten. 'A force of 62,000 European soldiers', says a report of a Commission on the Indian army in 1879, 'represents a power far in excess of that which it represented in 1857. In those days the British troops were scattered in small forces throughout the country, and it was a matter of great difficulty, delay, and expense to concentrate even a small British force on any one spot in India. When the mutiny broke out, we had hardly 400 miles of railway complete in the country, while at the present moment we have 8312 miles of railway open.'

'All our great cantonments, all our fortresses and arsenals, save one, are now connected with each other, and with the seaboard, by railway. The strength of our European troops for action at any point, within or without the borders of British India, has thus been enormously increased. For

example, whereas in 1857 a regiment took three or four months to march from the seaboard to Lahore, it can now move from Calcutta to Lahore in a week. Reinforcements from England, which then occupied three months on a voyage round the Cape, now land in Bombay within thirty days of leaving England.' ¹

It would, in short, require the pen of a Walt Whitman to sing with adequate enthusiasm the praises of the railway, and what its presence does for India. Nothing seems more incongruous to a stranger than the first sight of a train, one of the most modern of western inventions, filled by one of the most conservative of eastern races. Here it acts as a silent leveller of time-worn prejudices and old-world customs. 'An Indian railway station', wrote Dr. Norman Macleod in 1871, ² 'is unique, as affording an easy study of native races and customs. The crowds of third-class passengers, especially, are remarkable. For however great the

¹ Since this was written the position has been still further strengthened. The extent of railway now open is over 18,000 miles. Additional fortifications have been erected, and roads and telegraphs have been greatly extended; so that troops can be mobilized with much greater ease and rapidity than was previously possible.

² Norman Macleod, D.D. *Peeps at the Far East*, p. 61.

stride in Europe between the smartest and most rapid stage-coach and a railway train, it is still greater in India between a bullock garry, grinding and jolting along, and the hurrying speed of the locomotive. The difference is also great in the ideas of time suggested by both modes of conveyance. In the minds of the natives it would seem as if there were no clear distinction between time and eternity. Hours to them seem mere names, days insignificant. One gets a rough notion of how the antediluvians, who lived for centuries, must have thought of engagements, as contrasted with the way in which they are viewed now by short-lived and busy mortals, who reckon up minutes as well as days. No man who has been in India can have any faith in native chronology. The inexorable bell and guard's whistle are thus perplexing in the extreme to the natives. They assemble hours before the time of starting, and squat down and smoke their pipes till it arrives, when they rush to and fro in earnest excitement, dragging their children, with pots and pans, bed and bedding, as they yell and jabber, and with looks of frantic despair crush and push along in a continuous

turbaned stream, wholly forgetful for the moment of all caste distinctions, as they pour into the place assigned to them. Should a high-caste man discover to his anguish that he has to enter a compartment, already to all appearance crammed with low-caste men, it is in vain that he turns and shrinks back. The English guard pushes him in, locks the door, whistles sharply, and waves his hand, crying 'all right', and puff, puff, goes the engine, whirling off more than a dozen carriages filled with Brahmins and Sudras, holy and unholy, twice-born and low-born, all of them original emanations from the head or legs of the divine Brahma, but now united as second, or third, or fourth class passengers, speeding along the iron path of destiny at five-and-twenty miles an hour.

'It is evident that the railway, like other civilizing gifts of God is, in its own way, working out the good of India, by developing industry and commerce, bringing the people who have been long and effectually separated from each other, by distance, race, religion, and caste into closer contact, and adding immensely to the central power of government, making its presence felt at the farthest points,

and enabling it to hold the vast empire more firmly together. It is also rapidly and visibly telling upon the system of pilgrimages, and on the idle and confused gatherings of vast multitudes to the melas or holy fairs. Whatever has to be done is now done quickly, conveniently, and cheaply, and what the priests, beggars, and moving hordes of mendicants lose, the country and the people gain.'

CHAPTER IX.

EDUCATION IN INDIA—THE SYSTEM.

THE subject of education in India may be divided into three parts—the education given; the organization employed in giving it; the attitude towards the State of young India, by whom it has been received.

In India, education, broadly speaking, is supplied by the State. Primary schools, middle and high schools representing secondary education, universities, and the colleges attached to them are, almost all, practically State institutions.

For the first time in the history of India, educa-

tion has, from the beginning of this century, been within the reach of every man in the country. It is a benefit which was much required.

India is a country of extremes. The differences in her physical condition are not greater than the anomalies presented in her history. Open the newest system of philosophy and you find the wisdom of the ages not ashamed to show itself beside some imbecility unworthy of a little child at play. Study its native governments: in the foreground you have two figures prominently displayed, one a despot, the other a slave, now maintaining, again reversing their respective positions as if only a step lay between the two, or you find them both combined in one. People who can daily sleep through hours of apathetic idleness, are just as capable of excitement culminating in riot and blind massacre; either condition being equally congenial.

Beggars go about the country with the luxurious appendage of a horse, while rajahs, clothed in silks and velvets, in gold and silver cloth, scintillating with precious stones, carry with them a suggestion of the beggar in their retinue of rag-tag-and-bobtail followers that would do small honour to an Irish

wake. Houses of imposing exterior are within as bare as the peasants' of comfort. Men in love with wealth lead lives of needless penury; satisfied to live on a few pence a day, according to their standard of discomfort, they yet would sell their souls to add another coin to a store of treasure that remains unused. Examples could be multiplied. At every turn your curiosity is aroused and remains unsatisfied, for the mystery of race stands between you and your comprehension of a people, of whom you can assert two opposites, and prove both to be co-existent and equally true.

Education in old days was no exception to this rule of wide extremes. Between the pundits, who were mines of oriental learning, and the mass of the people, who were totally illiterate, there was no link except, perhaps, such shopkeepers as could just write enough to keep their accounts. If a man was a Hindu pundit, he could read the Sanskrit sacred books, and discourse learnedly on Hindu law and the religious ceremonial elaborated by the Brahmins from the Vedas. If he was a learned Mahomedan, he could quote texts from the Koran in sonorous tones, and was well versed in its doctrines. If he

belonged to a certain limited class, he could talk Persian, for just as French was the common language in Europe a century ago, in the same way you may hear gentlemen, who have been educated according to the old school, interspersing their conversation with couplets quoted from Saadi and Umar Khaiyum, or with tales and fables borrowed from Persian literature.

The educated in those days belonged to a distinct class, which did not necessarily include the aristocracy; and it is a characteristic fact that it was in no way thought derogatory to the dignity of the last great ruler of the Punjaub that he could neither read nor write, and had to use his royal thumb as a seal to attach his mark to important documents of State. There was not one man in a thousand who knew more than his Chief.

Such was the state of affairs towards the beginning of this century. Education was chiefly represented by the learning and knowledge of law and religious ceremonial imparted by Brahmin and Mussulman priests to their disciples, and by the smattering of knowledge gained by the shopkeeping classes in indigenous schools.

Now the educational institutions, including the

universities of Madras, Bombay, Calcutta, Allahabad, and Lahore, the colleges affiliated to these universities, those specially devoted to the study of medicine and engineering, the institutions for technical instruction, the establishments for training teachers, the primary, middle, and high schools, the indigenous and missionary schools, and colleges for the sons of nobles at Ajmir and Lahore, have swelled to the number of 142,000, the number of pupils attending them being nearly 4,000,000.

The gulf of ignorance which lay between those possessing the most recondite and the most inadequate knowledge has been partially bridged. The State devotes large sums to the support of primary schools for the masses of ignorant peasantry, giving grants in aid to every private enterprise that comes to her for help. But it must not be forgotten that those who use this aid are a comparatively small portion of the population. The statistics given are not after all very satisfactory, for 4,000,000 is only 19 per cent of the boys of school-going age in the country, and a considerable portion of even this number receive but a very elementary education, hardly worthy of the name.



"The H. H. School at the Headquarters of the District"

Let us follow more closely an ordinary Indian schoolboy through the schools he attends in his educational career, and see what he learns in them. From the primary school in his native village, where the teaching comprehends little more than the three R's, he passes into the middle school at the nearest town, and from that into the high school at the head-quarters of the district. In these two last schools the boy acquires a certain amount of knowledge. His teachers, who have themselves been trained in normal schools, have always the hope held up before their eyes of their salary being raised, if their pupils succeed in passing the examinations which are annually held by the government inspectors or by the university authorities. The desire to teach successfully as well as to be taught being fostered by the expectation of material advantages, the boy is instructed in vernacular and perhaps in English, or in an oriental classical language, and learns something of history, geography, mathematics, and elementary science. After that he is ready to pass the entrance examination for the university. But there he is usually content to stop. The degrees of bachelor and master of arts cost a

great deal of money, and do not always give a man much higher pay in a work-a-day world; and to get on in life in native India is synonymous with to get money.

The colleges, to whose attractions he is, as a rule, indifferent, are affiliated to the universities. The ordinary college course lasts for four years. After his first two years' study the student may go up for his first examination in Arts, in which the subjects are English, a classical language (Oriental or European), history, mathematics, logic, with natural science, and a voluntary subject. Two years after passing this examination he may present himself for the B.A. degree, in one or other of the following subjects—arts, law, medicine, engineering, or oriental learning. And if he wishes to attain higher honours he may continue to study for the M.A. degree in the same subjects, with the addition of history and physical science. A large proportion of the schoolboys, however, who pass the entrance examination required of students entering on a college course, do so merely in order to obtain a certificate of proficiency and never enter college. And similarly many students are content to study up to the first

arts standard and do not attempt to obtain a B.A. degree; while the number who reach the M.A. standard is very small.

We leave the typical Indian youth, therefore, at the goal which he most usually struggles to reach. He has passed his entrance examination, and at that point he has stopped. His attitude at this juncture, as a member of the State, must be afterwards considered. Meantime let us examine the organization of the Education department, or rather the agencies employed to carry out its work, beginning at the top and working our way downwards.

The constitution of the universities is not unlike that of the London University. They have each a chancellor, vice-chancellor, and senate, and as their examinations are accepted by all the schools and colleges in the country, and by the executive government, as the test of educational attainments, they to a large extent direct the course of education throughout India.

The Indian Education Commission gives the following description of the condition of the colleges affiliated to the universities:—

‘The strength of the staff in the colleges varies

with the wealth of the institutions, the number of the students, and the class of examinations for which candidates are sent up. Thus the Presidency college in Calcutta has a principal, two professors, and two teachers of Sanskrit and Arabic. This staff provides for lectures being given in all the various subjects of all the examinations. A smaller college will be content with a principal, two professors, a pandit and a maulvi.

‘In their scheme of discipline, and in the academic life of their students, Indian colleges have but little likeness to those of the older of the English universities, their resemblance being closer to those of Scotland and Germany. Residence in college buildings is not only not generally compulsory, but the colleges are few in which systematic provision is made for control over the students’ pursuits out of college hours. Boarding-houses are indeed attached to certain institutions, and their number increases year by year. But unless the student’s home be at a distance from the collegiate city, and he have no relatives to receive him, it is seldom that he will incur the expense which residence involves.

‘Two principal reasons account for this. First,

the initial outlay upon buildings is one from which government and independent bodies alike shrink; for so poor is the Indian student that it would be impossible to demand of him any but the most moderate rent—a rent perhaps barely sufficient to cover the cost of the annual repairs. The second obstacle lies in the religious and social prejudices which force class from class. Not only does the Hindu refuse to eat with the Mussulman, but from close contact with whole sections of his own co-religionists he is shut off by the imperious ordinances of caste.

‘Experience, however, has already proved that the barriers of custom are giving way. In the North-western Provinces and the Punjaub, where the residential system has been widely tried, the success has been considerable, and nothing but want of funds stands in the way of a fuller development. In the more important Bombay colleges also a considerable number of the students are in residence. In Bengal and Madras the system has been less fully recognized.’

As has been already seen, the colleges attached to the universities are attended only by a small frac-

tion of the people. This gives a larger practical importance to the primary, middle, and high schools in which the bulk of the school-going population get all their education, and whose organization therefore demands further analysis.

The education department has in each province a director of public instruction, with a large staff of European and native inspectors. The district board and municipal committees are the nominal managers of the schools in each district. These two last bodies are unfortunately not very efficient, and the point on which they fail is their inability to take an initiative, or to maintain a high standard of public-spirited disinterestedness. District boards, as a rule, show too little independence of opinion or action, municipal committees too much. The deputy-commissioner is chairman of the district board, and the attitude of the members towards him is too like that of Polonius to Hamlet.

Ham. Do you see yonder cloud almost in shape of a camel?

Pol. By the mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

Ham. Methinks it is like a weasel.

Pol. It is backed like a weasel.

Ham. Or like a whale.

Pol. Very like a whale.

In some rare cases intelligent members do take an initiative, and the experiment of selected educational sub-committees has been successfully tried; but, as a general rule, the deputy-commissioner is the school-board of the district.

The municipal committees, on the other hand, echo very faintly the voice of government, and are much more prone to exhibit a preponderance of native tendencies in their transactions. They procrastinate where promptitude is necessary. They have factions where unity of action is essential. They indulge in party spirit and partialities. They breed irritations and petty broils. They interfere with the legitimate authority of the head-master. Sometimes they refuse to spend public money upon necessary improvements, treating it as gingerly as if it were part of their treasured hoards. The conduct of municipal committees is, in short, in this department as in every other they administer, coloured too much by individual weaknesses, and imbued too little with the rectitude and sense of justice that should distinguish the servants of the State.

The district boards lay upon the shoulders of the deputy-commissioner the responsibility of action,

with the exertion it involves. The municipal committees accept these responsibilities and abuse them. Both bodies are morally, mentally, and physically inert. Their conduct is a striking comment on the cry of that small body of educated natives who call themselves the National Congress and clamour for wider powers and a greater proportion of representative institutions. These gentlemen might be satisfied with the powers and representative institutions that already exist in district boards and municipal committees. But why do the congress patriots not first aspire to train these captains of companies, before they dream of being generals of armies?

Government has no desire to keep the people swathed in swaddling bands. The fondest mother is delighted when her child can walk alone. Government offers grants in aid to any who will rid her of the burden of creating schools, and who will undertake to start them as private enterprises. How short is the roll of those who respond to the offer! Short as it is, it must here be given, and each name upon the list receive its meed of praise.

The best example of independent effort is given, not by natives, but by European missionaries.

Amongst the aided schools that correspond with middle and high schools those of mission schools lead the way, and ply their patient levers. These schools are conducted on the same principle as government schools, with the addition of the teaching of Scripture, which is omitted from the government curriculum. 'It would be difficult', writes Sir John Strachey, 'to give too much honour to the work of secular education, which has been undertaken by private agencies, and especially by Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries.' In 1890 there were in British India 7000 institutions of various kinds, conducted by Protestant missionaries, with 280,000 scholars. A testimony, which is not insignificant, of the moral tendencies of these schools was given to the writer by an Indian Mahomedan gentleman in the civil service. 'He taught me', he said, speaking of his Bengali Christian teacher, 'the meaning of truth and honour, of sympathy and love. No man ever influenced me as he did, and when he died, I mourned him as a father.'

Another instance of a successful result of private enterprise is furnished by Sir Syad Ahmad, a Mahomedan belonging to an ancient family that trace

their descent from the Prophet. He has founded a college for Mahomedans at Aligarh, at which religious and secular education are combined, and has devoted to it the best years of his life and all his means. It has an English principal; the schools attached to the college have an English head-master, and native teachers of English, Arabic, Persian and Hindu. Although the college was originally intended for Mahomedans, so much generous interest was shown in it by Hindu friends that its secular classes have been opened to Hindus also. The students live in separate boarding-houses, and the rooms of the first-class boarders are hardly less comfortable than those of an undergraduate at Oxford or Cambridge; and the Mussulmans take their meals together in a dining-hall.

The business of the college is managed by two committees, one composed of native and English gentlemen, the other of natives alone. Endowments have been offered and help given by Hindus, Mahomedans and English alike. Such public-spirited disinterestedness as has been shown by Sir Syad Ahmed is by no means common among the natives of India. It is the first public example of indepen-

dent effort which has been given by Mahomedans since Britain governed India.¹

In the last few years the Sikhs also, and others having the bond of a common religion, have combined to encourage education among themselves, to be given in the way most acceptable to their prejudices.

Lower down in the social scale and in educational ambitions are the headmen of villages who, wishing their boys to learn to read and write and know ordinary arithmetic, bestir themselves to start a primary school. The first step is to engage a certain number of the fathers of families to send their sons to it, and to guarantee a teacher his pay of perhaps 10s. a month. One of the headmen lends an outhouse in his courtyard, or perhaps the school of thirty or forty little boys gathers daily under the shadow of a spreading fig-tree. There, seated on the ground, with their earthen ink-pots beside them, they write the letters of the alphabet with reed pens on wooden slates from right to left, drawl their high-pitched sing-song reading lesson from their pictured

¹ A fuller account of this college will be found in the chapter on Education in Sir John Strachey's *India*.

Hindustani story-book, or from Saadi's tales. Or a leader is chosen to chant through every line of the multiplication table, the whole school joining to shout a repetition of each line, with all the deafening powers of their lungs. Primary schools are, again, occasionally started by some youth who takes to this as an employment, having failed to get any other after leaving the middle school he attended. Or the master is one of the maimed or halt of the village, who has been disabled by nature for more active work. His profits are small, and he is generally paid in grain or food for his labour.

These are the lusty exertions of the exceptionally strong, who wish to fling aside the swaddling bands. They are the rare attempts of the isolated few to dance when government pipes. But we must study the normal, not the abnormal, Oriental. Having seen what is always done for him educationally, and what he rarely does for himself, let us catch him at that moment in his career when he leaves school and essays to begin life.

CHAPTER X.

EDUCATION IN INDIA—THE NATIVE POINT OF VIEW.

IN England primary education is compulsory, but it is compulsory only until a certain number of very elementary subjects have been learnt. A large proportion of boys leave school and end their education at the age of twelve. From that time onwards, unless he is sufficiently disabled to claim protection in a workhouse, or wicked enough to deserve support within the walls of a jail, a boy expects no further recognition from the State in his material scheme of life. He leaves school, neither considering himself in the light of a subject nor of a citizen, but as a private individual, lost amongst a thousand others who disappear and are forgotten in the crowd. The thought that the State has educated him never crosses his mind, or that of his parents, as a fact that can affect his future, or supply him with a claim upon government.

The attitude of the Oriental is entirely different. No child in India is compelled to enter government schools. But if his father sends him there, it is in

order that he may pass examinations, and if he passes examinations they are credentials which he considers he may use as claims upon government. If his father sends him to school, it is in order that he may rise in life by stepping-stones of which education is the first and most important. Education is looked upon as a marketable possession. Is it likely that either father or son will forego its money value? Will the State, which is as powerful as their gods, which has already given education, refuse the successful student an appointment? Then woe be-tide the State! What their gods withhold is fate: what an all-powerful government fails to bestow is a just occasion for resentment.

And what alternative is there for the boy who has passed examinations but a post under government? Is it to be supposed that, equipped with a superficial knowledge of history and geography, and an equally elementary smattering of mathematics and physical science, he is to return to his native village and hereditary occupation, to be an artisan or farmer, for which no education is required, or to serve in a shop, where no one needs to know more than to write out an account and add up figures?

No manufacturing towns like Manchester or Liverpool exist in India. There is not the complexity of possible occupation which is to be found in Europe to furnish scope for an Oriental's energy. And, worst of all, the energy is not there to be exercised. He is deficient in enterprise, and too much accustomed to work in traditional grooves, or failing these, to follow lines laid down for him by others, to strike out a line of his own. Government must do for him what he cannot do for himself.

For civil posts more education is needed than for the army. The civil appointments being more lucrative are more largely sought. The holders of official patronage in all departments are therefore besieged by a crowd of young men who have received some education at school or college, and are anxious to obtain some appointment which will secure for them a small monthly salary, and entitle them to 'dress in white clothes' as a mark of their higher social status.

Although nine-tenths of the government work is carried out by natives, yet the number of appointments is small compared with the crowd of more or less educated men turned out annually by educa-

tional institutions. So every year more members are added to the growing class who play the discontented idler at home, or who are ready to earn their living and vent their spleen by writing abusive articles to one of the petty newspapers that have sprung up over the country, and to join the so-called 'National Congress', one of whose chief aims is to secure for the educated natives a still larger share of government posts than they already possess. Self-help and the conception of setting up in practice for themselves as doctors, engineers, or schoolmasters is a panacea which apparently suggests itself as yet only in very isolated cases.

If the youth of India is not satisfied, the older generation is no better pleased. The people criticise the situation according to the bias given by their class. If one urges upon a shopkeeper or farmer the advisability of sending his son to the school which has been started in his village, the not unusual reply is that as government posts are for the fortunate few, amongst whom his son might fail to be, he as a father has no ambition to exchange an uneducated help for an educated idler to be a burden on his hands.

Certain sections of the community would willingly dispense altogether with education as a condition of civil promotion. The old aristocratic families in the country, who, under the old *régime*, and in times not so very long past, when might was right, monopolized all positions of influence, now bitterly resent the power and pay conferred by government, merely on the score of better education, on men belonging to the classes whom they formerly despised. In no other country does the possessor of blue blood more proudly arrogate to himself a position of rightful superiority, which is as unquestionably conceded to him by almost every class of his countrymen. A prince of the blood-royal in Europe would probably object less to the promotion of a man of the people to be his superior officer than an Indian descendant of rajahs would resent a man of low caste being preferred before him for a post for which his social inferior had prepared himself by education as His Mightiness would not consent to do. A noble of the old school, himself a ruling chief, complaining not long ago of the indignity he had suffered at the hands of an educated youth, was told that education was

a necessary element in progress, and that the English people, in its love of freedom and equality, desired to confer education on all classes in India without distinction of persons, and to treat them as practically equal. He summed up his feelings in the reply: 'Yes, but freedom is not *impudence*'. A certain sympathy may be felt with the retort. For it is a common complaint that persons of humble origin, who have, by means of education received at government schools, obtained some trifling post, become so puffed up by their own importance as to be too apt to forget that they are meant to be the servants and not the petty tyrants of the public.

The warlike races, again, such as the manly Sikhs and haughty Rajputs, having laid down the sword, do not always take kindly to the ploughshare. They are still less suited to the routine of office. At heart they have the contempt of the man of action for the man of books. They despise the weak physique of the Bengali and his compeers; they feel themselves to be the better men. They have in them the sinews of war and the will to govern; but they lack the necessary qualifications to become

good servants of the State in times of peace. They make excellent soldiers; they cut but sorry figures at examinations.

So here we have both the discontent of the educated unemployed, and the resentment of the ignorant aristocrat and soldier, that the best government appointments should be reserved for the *élite* of successful scholars.

A certain amount of dissatisfaction and social ferment seem to be prominent features in periods of transition in all countries. Such difficulties in India are to some extent necessary accompaniments of a rapid spread of education among a people hitherto ignorant, but it is possible that they have been exaggerated by errors in the system on which education has been conducted. In their eagerness to raise the people of India to a higher intellectual level, its English rulers have perhaps held out too great encouragement to men of low degree to acquire an education very much superior to that hitherto attainable by men of higher rank and superior social instincts; and have given too much importance to mere book-learning among the qualifications for posts of more or less authority under govern-

ment, and too little weight to the claims of classes who are held by themselves and by the people to be their natural rulers; the result being that a far larger share of appointments falls to men occupying a low rank in the estimation of their fellow countrymen than is fair to the old ruling classes, or good for the health of the body politic.

It would perhaps be difficult now, and contrary to the spirit of the age, to retrace our steps and insist on other qualifications besides mere book-learning from those desirous of entering the service of government, but at all events it is now felt that wherever safeguards of the kind exist they should be carefully maintained. In the Punjaub, for instance, a number of the higher civil posts are reserved for men whose families hold a high rank in the country or have already done good service for the State.

In the discussions held on the subject, it has been suggested that something might with advantage be done to reduce the supply of discontented, educated, unemployed youths by reducing the number of scholarships and the proportion of the public money allotted to higher education, and by requiring those

who seek a higher education to pay from their own resources a larger proportion of its actual cost; by insisting, in short, that the expenditure on high schools and colleges should be met chiefly by income from fees, and should not be, to any great extent, defrayed by the State. The money thus saved to the State could be expended in encouraging the spread of elementary education among the masses of the people, and that education might be given a more practical form.

The subject of technical education has, in recent years, received more attention than formerly. Instead of teaching village boys to read ancient books written in a strange tongue, it is proposed that they should be taught elementary science and a knowledge of common things in their own homely vernacular; that they should, while at school, be made to work with their hands as well as their heads, and that the instruction given should be as practical and technical as possible. It is thought that in this way they would be educated for, but not above, their natural station in life; so that when they leave school they might be content to go back to their father's field or workshop, only better fitted

by their education to carry on the ancestral occupation.

The people who share these views believe that, if this were the broad aim adopted in the general system of education, no fear need be felt that boys of exceptional ability would fail to push their way upwards, and find ample opportunity for acquiring the higher education for which Nature had fitted them.

Meantime, if we place all the disadvantages, such as they are, of the present system of education side by side with the wholesale and degrading ignorance which preceded it, we may be satisfied that these disadvantages are more than counterbalanced by the general spread of intelligence among all classes, and the general elevation of the people as a whole.

And now to turn to minor aspects of the larger question. Perhaps the greatest innovation of all, and the most criticised, is the attempt to impart some education to the women of the country.

‘What is the good of educating a woman in India?’ some people ask. ‘Do you suppose that women who have been taught how to add up sums are one whit less likely to be cheated than before?’

Do you imagine that they ever failed to get their rights to the uttermost farthing in all their money transactions? Of what other use will a knowledge of arithmetic be to them? What is the advantage of their knowing the geography of their province, when they will possibly never cross the boundary of their village, if they ever pass the threshold of their courtyard? What is the good of their learning to read when they have not a book in their possession? The native ladies who attain academic distinction and obtain degrees are rare exceptions. The right class is not reached at present. What is the good of attempting to reach it?

To such short-sighted and utilitarian sceptics the reply is offered that the smallest rudiments of education are surely better than the present alternative of soulless superstition. It is not Utopia that we hope to reach. But those who cannot get a glimpse of the ocean in a wilderness learn to welcome the sight of a solitary tarn. Who knows, they say, how much may grow around it yet? Of this we may be certain. No nation ever rose while the women in it were creatures of the dust. It is no answer to assert that 'the women in India take

a larger and more active share in the practical business of life than is usually supposed; and that they often manage estates and large commercial concerns; and show extreme acuteness and intelligence'. A shrewd capacity for business does not constitute the whole ideal of womanhood, and those who are content that a higher ideal than the present should be worked for, even in disappointing, humdrum, humble ways, will rejoice over every English woman who enters a zenana as a friend and teacher, and over every Indian girl who goes to school.

Whatever may be thought of the necessity of doing something for the minds of Indian women, no doubts can be entertained of the benefits which must follow Lady Dufferin's efforts to bring female medical aid to rescue their poor bodies. Custom makes it impossible for many classes of women ever to enter one of the thousand dispensaries scattered over the country. The foolish, needless, and unreasonable sufferings which they endure from the hands of their own sex are best left undescribed.

Now Lady Dufferin's association trains women in India to act as 'doctors, hospital assistants, nurses, and midwives; it aims at establishing, under female

superintendence, dispensaries and hospitals for the treatment of women and children, the provision of female medical officers and attendants for existing female wards; and the supply of trained nurses and midwives for women in hospitals and private houses'.¹

Centuries of knowledge separate the western from the eastern schools of medicine. To hear the people talk who to this day are believers in the native schools of medicine is to be transported into an old world, in which so many of the ills that flesh is heir to were treated under the head of 'humours in the blood', and the unfortunate patient had his head covered with leeches like a coronet, or was bled until he fainted. Every year, in some parts of the country, the people, who 'take their pleasures sadly', combine the celebration of a festival in spring with a visit to some famous barber, who bleeds them by the thousand, the best preparation, as they hold, for withstanding the dangers of the summer sun.

Leech-gatherers carry on a thriving business; the people indiscriminately applying a leech when

¹ Strachey's *India*, p. 186.

in difficulty or doubt as to the cause of their trouble. Another remedy recalls a fallacy which was still prevalent two hundred years ago in Europe. With a dim foreshadowed knowledge of the benefits of vaccination, the people are still sometimes inoculated in childhood for smallpox. The marks on many faces show how much the cure resembles the disease. 'Hot' and 'cold' medicines are in great repute: their properties are apparently either stimulating or of a soothing influence, some of these native cures being pronounced excellent by those whose knowledge entitles them to judge.

No such praise can be given to native surgery, which was formerly at an extremely rudimentary stage, the means employed being as simple as they were excruciatingly painful. If a man decided he should have a limb cut off, he applied to the butcher, carpenter, or barber of his village, who did the business for him, using an ordinary saw, and then cauterizing the poor remnant in boiling oil. That such rude aid was ever sought is an evidence of the stoicism which characterizes the people to this day in the surgeon's hands.

In spite of the large attendance at the dispensaries

which are to be found in every town of any size, in spite of the numbers who fill the beds of the different hospitals, studded over every district, and the belief in the skill of native doctors and surgeons who have received an English training in medicine, and who show a peculiar aptitude for their work, and, in spite of the faith in the powers of the European civil surgeon at head-quarters, the appearance of a native *hakim* on the scene is always the signal for a certain amount of excitement amongst that portion of the population to be found here, as in every country, who find an occupation in the study of their health and a pleasant stimulant in a change of treatment. Old wives are still called in to mumble spells above the invalid, or to sprinkle him with charmed water, and astrologers are consulted and utter oracular sentences as to the probable length of his illness. As a rule, however, the benefits of a more scientific mode of treatment are recognized, as the presence of upwards of 14,000,000 patients yearly in dispensaries and hospitals may testify.

With this superficial account of the educational

and medical branches of the State's administration, the brief *resumé* of some of the most important of her varied functions ends. Let us now turn to certain aspects of native life, whether affected or left unaltered by the presence of the British in the land.

CHAPTER XI.

A PUNJAUB FARMER.

One horn up, the other down, that's a good bullock: a buffalo brown,

A good clay soil; and for working-man—give me the help of the good Jat clan.

That's all that I want. As for covering-stuff,—a blanket that need not be washed is enough.

In January or February, in April or in May,

No farmer, if he prize his land, asks for a rainy day.

For other months it matters not; give him but drought in four;

Then let the heavens open, and let the torrents pour.

Let it rain twice in June,

In July late and soon,

In August four times rain,

September once again.

Then fear no want of food,

Your harvest will be good.

In August if he see the sun,
A peasant's beggar-life's begun.

In October if the rain come, then prize it drop by drop,
For sluggard and hard worker will both have good spring crop,
In November and December, if the rain should fall,
Bring camels to the harvest fields, you cannot carry all.

In August there was plenty rain, though July brought us
none;
We said, 'We shall buy golden jewels,' when August first begun,
But we had to sell our silver ones, when autumn days were
done.

The stalk of corn is empty, and empty is the pod,
Not in July, nor in August, did a rain-drop wet the clod,
And let the farmer wish it, yet his wishes are in vain,
For he'll never get a seed he has sown back again.

'Oh woman, the clouds have broken, with joy my heart beats
high.'

'The clouds can do nothing for me, no cattle nor seed have I.'

Talk is good, but not too much, unless a story pleases you;
Quiet is good, but not too much, unless your wife should be a
shrew;

Rain is good, but not too much, unless in August it should fall:
Sun is good, but not too much, unless in May it shine on all.

If clouds are as gray as a partridge feather,
If a widow begins to paint her eyes;
Then look out for a wedding and squally weather,
For each is an omen that never lies.

A saline soil, what is the good of it?
The sunshine burns up every rood of it;
It is sticky and soft, if there's any rain,
And a man's best labour is all in vain.
The owners plough, who so happy as they?
They scatter the seed by the bushel all day.
The owners reap—Now they cry like cranes,
For now they throw up only sand for their pains;
And return from their lands,
Not a grain in their hands.

A good loamy soil, a good son, a good wife,
Good horses to ride, make a heaven of life.

With relations in high places, and land that's lying low,
You're Prime Minister already as your enemies may know.

A blunt-edged plough and a saline soil,
Bullocks that sleep in the midst of their toil,
A bad-tempered cow and a quarrelsome wife,
A man is in hell, if he's these in his life.

Plough your carrots sixty times, your sugar-cane a hundred
fold,
Each time you turn up wheat fields, you turn your silver into
gold.

Manure to the manured field, and water to the rice,
For every time you give it them, you'll get your profits thrice.

Sow in October, a farmer's best rule,
Sow in November, your barns are full,
Sow in December, and bring yourself dool.

Who sows seed through a drill is King; in lines, a Vizier he;
Who sows his seed broadcast, be sure a beggar he will be.

When laggards reap in April, nor gather in till May,
They when the blessed rain comes dare openly to pray:
'Good God withhold the rain now from raining everyday'.

The harvest's ripe and golden, then reap it while you may,
For while you think and dream of it, birds bear the grain
away.

When wheat is reaped and golden lies upon the threshing-
floor,
Then joy and happiness is yours, and sorrow is no more.

Dividing heaps of grain aright, for each to take away,
Is work that's quite as frightening as the Resurrection day.

These are a few of the agricultural proverbs of the Punjaub¹ which Mahomet Ali delighted to retail for our benefit in the verandah of the rest-house, half-way up the hill. More than half their pith has left them in translation. Robbed of the virility which is the backbone of dialect, they come off as badly as Robert Burns' verse would fare translated into English. To judge of their merits they should be heard with the resonant roll which was given to them by their expounder.

¹ A collection of more than a thousand of Punjaub agricultural proverbs, amongst which some of these here given may be found, has been made by R. Maconochie, B.A., B.C.S.

Mahomet Ali was a man whose sayings had themselves become proverbial. Mahomet Ali was not an ordinary character. He was an example of the pleasure which nature, like humanity, takes in asserting her independence, and her right to indulge in freaks. He was a living defiance of the laws of heredity. His ancestors had collectively held the village, whose ascending houses, connected by walls, looked down like some clumsy, drab-stained castle on the ploughed fields of the valley. They had never had the curiosity to climb to the top of the hill to see what it was like on the other side. Yet Mahomet, for some years of his life, had been a wanderer on the face of the earth. They had been satisfied to know enough of mental arithmetic to settle their accounts with the corn-merchant. Mahomet was a scholar, and had at one time been the tutor of the children of a neighbouring chief. He was a poet with the poet's experiencing nature, to which every episode is an indelible memory. He had the poet's need of self-expression. Added to the courteous responsiveness of his countrymen he had more than their share of communicativeness. He was an old man now, and any of the reserve

which might have been his in earlier life had relaxed like the muscles of his well-built frame.

Mahomet was one of the few among the population that had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Seated on the floor of the verandah beside us, gesticulating with his shoulders, arms, and hands as he spoke, he was never tired of recounting the adventures of that journey, describing the wonders of the sea, and the extraordinary feeling of illness and discomfort he experienced when the great ship tossed on the waves, the wearisome marches across the desert along with the caravan of pilgrims gathered from many lands, the attacks of the fierce Bedouins, the glories of Mecca, and the fatal pestilence which carried off so many of his companions at the threshold of the temple. He would dilate upon how much it had improved his position to have earned the right to be called a pilgrim, how proud his sons and grandsons were to be descended from such a holy person, and upon his regrets that he was no longer the man he was before his pilgrimage, being unable any longer to eat a pound and a half of butter daily, or to walk his eighty miles at a stretch without feeling tired.

The pilgrimage was an old story now. Thirty years ago his grandfather had died. The ancestral holding had been partitioned between his father and uncles at their request, and on his father's death he had returned to claim his ancestral share, and to till the ground for the remainder of his days. Despite of nature's freaks the hereditary bent was apparently strongest after all. He still remained a poet. It was his proud duty to annually compose a lengthy poem in Punjabi, and to recite it before the European officials and assembled notables of the district in Durbar, on the annual commemoration of the Queen's assumption of the title of Empress of India. It was his pleasure to entertain his neighbours almost nightly at the village club with occasional tales from the Arabian Nights, verses from the Koran, or incidents from his own life. There was a poem of his beginning, 'In Chitta lived a barber', which so happily hit off the peculiarities of that village dignitary, that the mere allusion to it was sufficient to convulse the neighbourhood. Mahomet was a poet, but he was pre-eminently an agriculturist, and, what was more extraordinary, he looked the part. Perhaps the return thirty years ago to the original

occupation had effected something like a reversion to the original type; but it would be difficult to believe that at any time, even amongst the crowds of pilgrims at Mecca, any one could for a moment have mistaken his ancestral history. In any case thirty years of toil had done their work, and Mahomet stood before us now, an unmistakeable tiller of the ground.

If environment modifies a man's character, so most certainly does occupation affect his appearance. A lawyer, a clergyman, a soldier, or an artist may be identified in most countries by the type of his face quite as much as by the cut of his clothes. Amongst tradespeople the expression is perhaps not quite so cosmopolitan, although amongst one's own countrymen one might have no difficulty in distinguishing a grocer from a butcher, a draper from a druggist, just as a carpenter stands out distinct from his brother artisan the cobbler. For the agriculturist there is, more than for any other, a universal expression. Who does not know the slouching, strongly-built frame, the look which speaks of drudgery, of watchfulness, of never-failing patience, of perseverance and attachment, more often, perhaps, than

of hopefulness fulfilled, the look which has been idealized in 'The Angelus' of Millet, and which is shared by all who have the elemental love of man for mother earth? The Highland crofter has it quite as much as the French, the Swiss, or the Russian peasant; it is recognized as quickly in the people of the Punjaub as in the Australian squatter. Perhaps it may have lived in Adam's face when he had learnt to till the ground.

Behold Mahomet in his fields! It is the beginning of April. Harvest-time has come, and the crops have to be taken in. To hold himself as free as possible for his work he has thrown off the sheet which usually covers his shoulders. His arms are bare. A string with three charms attached is tied above his broad elbow, another round his throat; his second sheet is twisted tightly round his loins. Long tufts of gray hair hang out between the coils of his turban and reach his bushy beard, which is dyed a fiery red. Now he squats on the ground, a sickle with a curved blade and a saw-edge in his hand. He cuts the crop by handfuls, tying it in sheaves as he moves along, and he is well pleased with himself if he has reaped a fourth of an acre by the end of the day.

There is no need to put the sheaves into stooks. The corn seldom requires to be dried in this hot country. Off it is carried at once then, when the reaping is over, to the threshing-floor, a piece of bare ground swept clean for the purpose. With a huge pitchfork Mahomet heaps up his golden grain round a stake in the centre. This done, his only son brings out the bullocks—a couple is all that he owns nowadays, and he has borrowed two from his neighbours. The old man drives them round the stake, singing a song of his own, while the bullocks thresh the corn, the son meanwhile plying the pitchfork to keep the grain well underneath their feet. Busily they rake the threshed-out wheat together with wooden scrapers, throwing the straw on one side, and not letting the bullocks off their share of the labour till they are satisfied that no re-threshing is required.

For the hundredth time that month the father and son calculate how much grain they will have this harvest. For the twentieth time that day they study the clouds and speculate when there will be enough wind for their women-kind to come with their trays of straw and winnow the grain. Some wind they must have, for without it the chaff will

not be blown away, while the contents of the tray are being gradually shaken out, and the grain sent dropping to the ground. The old man quotes one of his favourite proverbs:

‘The spring crop was ready, the farmer congratulated himself, But don’t let him be sure of it, till it has escaped the dust-storms, and is safe in his house’.

This harvest is of great importance to him. It is an excellent harvest. Wind and weather have been propitious. The village watchman with his shrill cries has kept off thieves at night, and the old woman he posted on the top of the platform of twigs on four poles to act as scarecrow by day, with awful threats if she ever got down to smoke her hookah, has done her work well. Not a bird has borne a grain away. It is the profitable harvest of the year, and he looks to it to clear off his debt at the grain-merchant’s.

Notwithstanding the poverty of the soil Mahomet Ali gathers in two harvests annually,¹ generally ar-

¹ The agricultural year in the north of India begins in June, when crops consisting of millets, pulses, maize, rice, and cotton are sown, which are reaped in October. The winter crop of wheat, barley, lentils, tobacco, linseed and peas are sown about the month of October, and are cut in March or April. For the people, the autumn crops are very essential, as they furnish food for themselves, and fodder for their cattle. The spring crops on the other hand are the most lucrative, being largely exported to England.

ranging that when one half of his land is under crop the other half should lie fallow ; so that, although he reaps two harvests in the year, he seldom cuts them off the same field. How he envies the man who can wander from fields of wheat, lentils, or tobacco to fields of barley, and count upon acres of millets, pulses, cotton, and rice ! Not half of these crops are ever seen on Mahomet's land, for Mahomet Ali has come down in the world. Although his ancestors held the whole village, he himself is no better off than the ordinary run of peasant proprietors, and holds no more than twenty acres of land in his own hands. The money-lender has got the rest in his grip.

He holds twenty acres of land while his ancestors held the whole village. That is the cankerous spot in Mahomet's brain. He has come down in the world. Yet his neighbours say he knows his work and does it to the best of his ability. In shrewdness, energy, and perseverance he can compete with any. What could a man in the countryside tell him that he does not know already ? He understands the advantage of rotation of crops, and acts upon his knowledge on broad lines. He well understands

the advantage of manure. He has not the innumerable composts of the west at his command, supplied by sea-shore, coal-mine, manufactory, and chemist's shop. But leaves and ashes, straw, the sweepings of old walls, the refuse of the town and of cattle-sheds are pressed into his service, and basket-loads are carried from the village by him and his son and ploughed into the fields. When October and April come round, he and his plough become like a part of the landscape. Whenever there has been a little rain, whenever he can find a little leisure, off he goes to his fields with his plough and his yoke of oxen.

There they are, his twenty remaining acres, to testify at least to one ambition gratified. Whatever fields his father owned were scattered here and there, many of them a mile or so apart. Mahomet Ali bought an acre from one neighbour, exchanged another with a second, till he had the whole of his land in one place, with a fence round it all. There they are on a slope, laid out like terraces, divided by banks, to catch and keep the water from the neighbouring hills in the rainy season. They have not the advantage that lands in the plains enjoy of

irrigation from canals, but thanks to the surrounding hills the rainfall here is pretty certain.

He has done what he could for them, and yet he has come down in the world. Let us go over Mahomet's expenditure and see where mismanagement lies. His fields should prove a profitable investment, for he can get an average price of £1 per acre for his grain, while he only pays two shillings per acre rental to the State. Then what is the cost of production to a man who ploughs, sows, and weeds his land himself? Fodder for his live-stock costs him nothing that his fields cannot supply. Like his neighbours he feeds them on chopped wheat or barley-straw from April till July, for the next two rainy months fresh grass, from October till April the straw of millets, followed by green fodder. Enough is given to support life and furnish sufficient strength for the work required of them.

At the best of times little care or money is thrown away on the cattle. In seasons of drought, when there is neither grass nor water to be had, and grain and straw are sold at famine prices, the animals are the first to suffer, and die by hundreds. But the peasant fully appreciates the calamity following the

death of the goose with the golden eggs, and does what his inertness and despair allow him, to keep his cows and oxen in life.

So much for the expenditure connected with his live-stock. As for his agricultural implements, compared with his appliances the rudest Irish hovel holds a mine of wealth. A fool has been described as a man who will not try experiments. The Punjaubi is no fool, though he resolutely refuses to try experiments with his land. Yet the wonder is not that he does not do better, but that with his primitive methods he should be so successful. With the exception of the well, which he occasionally shares with his neighbour, he owns nothing that could not be made by the village carpenter in a couple of days at the cost of as many shillings. The rough plough, which he guides behind his pair of oxen without the aid of rein or bridle; the clumsy beam of wood, to which he adds the pressure of his sturdy weight when he struggles to smooth down the furrowed ground and break the clods upon its surface; the drill he fastens to the handle of the plough, and through which he slowly drops the seed; the shovels, trowels, and rakes that clear his fields, could not be

simpler in construction. Yet these do their work so well, and the Punjaubi, in spite of the absence of scientific agriculture, uses them to such good purpose, that in 1878 the annual surplus profits of the Punjaub cultivators, after making liberal allowances for the cost of food, household expenditure, and taxation, were calculated at between £14,000,000 and £15,000,000. And in a society where a pair of shoes can be bought for 9*d.*, a suit of clothes for 3*s.* 6*d.*, where meat costs 2*d.*, and flour a halfpenny a pound, a profit of £6 is equivalent, as far as the recipient is concerned, to a profit of at least £60 in England, a sum not often saved by a peasant there. Moreover, since 1878, the peasants' wheat exports, with the increase of railways and irrigation, are more than double what they were.

Why, then, with this plethora of material blessings, is Mahomet Ali a poorer man than his grandfather? Can it be that the calculated £14,000,000 of profits is not by any means spread over the whole population, and divided by them equally? Or is it Mahomet's individual fate, and must he, like another poet described by Schiller, be content with his ethereal privilege to 'live near Zeus'?

A partial solution of the mystery might be surmised by any one who could have overheard a conversation which took place in Wazir, the fat man's, fields one evening. A week had passed since Mahomet had seen his corn lying in winnowed heaps. Since then he had divided it, giving to each villagemanial his just share and to the usurer his unjust allowance. It was safely stored in his corn-bins, huge clay receptacles reminding one of the jars in which Ali Baba's forty thieves lay hidden. He and his son were free from their own work and had joined two neighbours who had come as a relief party to help Wazir to get in his corn, before the clouds, which were as 'gray as partridge feathers', should break and damage his harvest.

That work, too, was over, and Wazir had made his wife bring a supper of sweetmeats and melted butter to the fields, where they sat eating it. Supper was over. The usual jokes had been poked at one another. Mahomet Ali had more than once twitted the cross-grained Jahana with his good appetite, and had hinted he had earned it with uncommon little work. Wazir the host had plied the old man with cakes and compliments to his heart's content.

And now the inevitable hookah was being passed from one to the other, at first with silence befitting the solemnity of its enjoyment; afterwards with lengthy discussions on the price of grain, the signs of rain, and the chance of sowing the seed for the next harvest before the coming month was over. Then there followed other and more general topics.

‘One good turn brings another,’ said Mahomet’s son. ‘Futteh Khan, too, is giving a feast to-night, to Pir Amir, his priest, who has come back again on his usual round. His family¹ were with ours this morning and gave them the news. The cattle are in the courtyard, and the priest will sleep in their shed. This year Futteh Khan has given him a calf, next year he has promised a bullock, the year after that, I suppose, he will part with his land. His family have vowed to visit the shrine of the Pir’s ancestors, if heaven will grant them a son through the priest’s intercession.’

‘How much the priest can do for us, that we can’t do for ourselves!’ said Wazir, who was not unlike a dusky Bacchus. ‘Futteh Khan can do

¹ A native never speaks of his wife except as ‘my family’. It would be a breach of etiquette for either husband or wife to speak of, or address each other by name.

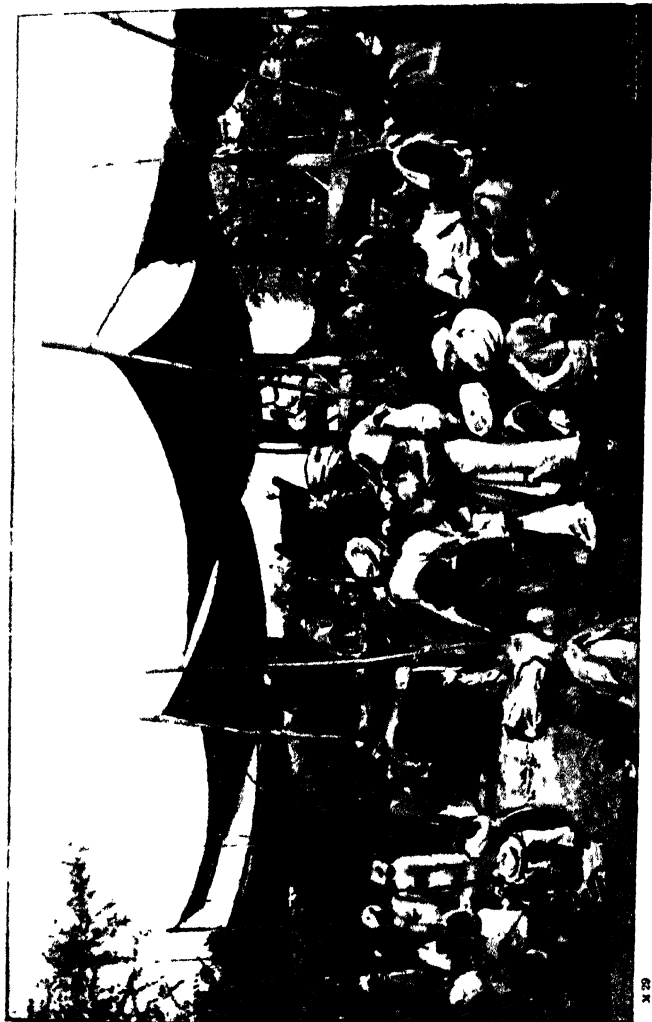
nothing for himself. He doesn't know the Koran. He can't say his prayers. Perhaps you saw him at the mosque, in the cholera year, knocking his head at least fifty times on the ground. But I was behind him, and I can tell you he was only making believe and talking gibberish.' And Wazir laughed uproariously at the recollection.

'Prayers and priests must bow before Kismet. Who can avert the fate written by God, though they be sons of King Alexander?' said Jahana, who was renowned for his want of tact. 'Look at Mahomet Ali. He prays at the five appointed times—twice—seven times—forty. He says the Kalima. He knows half the Koran by heart. He made the pilgrimage to Mecca. But his prayers come back on him upside down, and heaven gave him five daughters and one son, and half of his land went to the money-lender to pay for the girls' dowries and marriage-feasts.'

To Mahomet Ali an allusion to the money-lender was like a red flag to a bull; but the fat man dexterously turned the conversation.

'What was the fair like at Nurpur?' he asked.

Mahomet Ali cleared his throat, and shook him-



Fair at Narpur.

self as if to rouse the *raconteur* spirit within him. Now, eloquence is impossible in India without exaggeration. Robbed of it, facts are flat and tasteless. It is the cayenne and chili of conversation. The necessity for it is the effect, perhaps, of climate on the mental palate.

‘I have been in many countries,’ Mahomet began, ‘I have crossed the sea, and been in many lands, but such a fair, as the cattle fair at Narpur, never have I witnessed. Thousands of people were there. The road was covered by them for miles before it began. When the lights were lit round the saint’s tomb in the evening, and the fire-works were let off, night itself was turned into day, and it was like the brightness of the courts of Paradise. Hundreds of people swam together in the holy tank in the morning, so that you could not see the water for heads. There were thousands of camels, bullocks, buffaloes, donkeys, and goats. Husain Shah alone brought thirty camels with him. You could hear their bells jingling three miles off. He got £6 each for them.’

‘Who bought them?’

‘A silk merchant in Miani.’

‘Will they go to Bokhara?’

‘God knows. I sold my buffalo, which gives twenty pounds of milk a day, for £5, and my cow for £2. The usurer has got the money, the curse of Allah be upon him.’

The host sat up, prepared to avert the conversation from dangerous ground.

‘I am quite content to buy and sell my cattle in my own neighbourhood,’ Jahana said sulkily, for he had been put out of humour by Mahomet’s allusions to his idleness. ‘I wanted to buy a bullock the other day, and Manir said to me, ‘Imam Bux wants to sell his.’ At first Imam Bux said, ‘I swear I don’t wish to part with it,’ and I said, ‘I swear I don’t need a bullock just now.’ Then the rogue said, ‘Give me £5 for it,’ and I said, ‘I will give you £2.’ Then he shoved his hand under his sheet,¹ and put up four fingers. I put up three, and he closed with it. So I got it for £3.’

‘And is it worth it?’

‘It’s worth nothing,’ said the little man angrily.

¹ A native, when he wishes the price he offers in bargaining to be kept a secret, and to leave himself a loophole to deny what has never been put into words or writing, puts his hands under a covering, and lets the other man feel how many of his fingers are up, each finger standing for, say, ten rupees. This species of silent bargaining is very common.

‘It has no more strength in it than a cow after famine.’

‘They say,’ said a fifth man, who had contributed little as yet to the conversation. ‘They say there’s only half the cattle down in the valley that there was last year. The flood carried the rest away.’

‘Ha!’ said Mahomet, who felt he had not had an adequate opportunity to entertain his friends with his personal experiences. ‘That was a flood. I went to K. to see it. God knows where the water came from. The river had spread till it was like the sea I crossed when I went on my pilgrimage to Mecca. Dead men and living, cattle and beds were in the river. Men were swept past on the current, holding on to bits of wood, crying to us on the land to save them for the love of heaven. But who could get near them? People were rowing over their fields in boats, or floating on rafts or haystacks. Some sat in the branches of the trees; others sat beneath them in the water, with their furniture round them, weeping so that you would think death had carried off their only son.’

‘Sarkar has let them off the whole of this

year's revenue,' said the fifth man. 'They say that £100,000 has been lost in grain alone.'

'I heard that Hariram has made a fortune by it,' said Jahana, 'for his granary was on high ground, and escaped all damage, so that he could sell his grain at once, at what price he liked to ask for it.'

The fat man glared angrily at Jahana. He was too stupid, for Hariram was a fifth cousin of Mahomet Ali's greatest enemy—the money-lender. He knew the relationship to a nicety. He was cousin in the fifth degree to the man in their village. A man in India is known by the number he represents in the family, as precisely as a traveller is hit off in a waiter's mind by the number of his room.

More appalling than the floods were the vials of wrath now opened and poured forth by the poet. Let the curse of Heaven descend on Hariram and his house. It was thanks to them and their civil suits he was now a ruined man.

In vain did Wazir praise his son, himself, his learning, his wit, and recall some episodes of the famous pilgrimage. The old man would not cool

down. At last, after a pause and silence that might be heard, Hayat ventured to coax him to give them the benefit of 'In Chitta lived a barber'. The old man began his chant, the fat man roared obstreperously, and even the crabbed Jahana could not restrain his laughter. Then the meeting broke up.

From what had passed, however, it is evident that, despite the £14,000,000 of calculated profits, a skeleton of poverty and failure was in one man's cupboard. It is worth inquiring into how many houses in the Punjaub such a skeleton has found its way. To understand how it comes to be there at all requires some retrospective history.

CHAPTER XII.

LAND LAWS AND THE MONEY-LENDERS—THE PAST.

FROM the time when, centuries before Christ, Aryan colonists and Scythian swarms crossed the Indus, until the British entered into possession, nearly fifty years ago, the Punjaub, the gateway of the North to Hindustan and its most important frontier province, has been the goal of wandering

immigrants from the north and west and the battlefield of India.

The early Aryan tribes, the triumphant army of Alexander, the followers of Tamerlane the Great, mountaineers from Afghanistan and Khorasan, Hindus and Mussulmans, have all in turn coveted and conquered the 'land of the five rivers', to settle near their jungly beds, to wander from one green place to another, or to establish flourishing villages on the uplands that separate their valleys.

When we annexed the Punjaub in 1849, the condition of the people was nearly the same as it had been during all those centuries of change. Mud-built villages upon mounds, surrounded by green fields and cultivated ground, looked down on the brown country, as they had looked from immemorial ages. With the indolence of a race in whom the nomadic instinct has not yet died out, and the inertness of an indolent people in a fertile land, pastoral tribes still wandered from place to place in search of fresh pasture for their cattle. Chieftains repeated in mimic warfare the devastations of the past, and many of the people had not passed beyond the huntsman or pastoral stages of civilization.

Nearly fifty years have passed since then, and yet many of the features of those bygone ages still remain unaltered. But overspreading the whole is the modern network of British administration, introducing order where it was formerly unknown, and even now is not always understood, and effecting changes of which the end is in the future.

It is important that we should study the old condition of things, preceding and underlying the new. It is important, because India is a country of agriculturists. The population is composed of the millions that inhabit its villages and live upon its soil. So that to know the life of the peasant is to know the history of the people of India. If we take one small tract of the country we can realize some of the aspects of this life as it was, and understand some of the changes that have affected that life, always remembering that many of those changes have taken place within the memory of living men.

Let us then take the district of Sirsa, which lies in the south of the Punjaub, and on the borders of Rajputana. During the first quarter of this century nearly the whole of the Sirsa district was an uncultivated prairie with very few permanent villages.

The pastoral Mussulman tribes, who were its only inhabitants, drove their herds of cattle hither and thither in search of grass and water, and had no fixed dwelling-place. There were no boundaries and no defined rights. Some families of herdsmen had certain ponds and grazing-grounds, which they were in the habit of visiting in turn, and as long as they were strong enough to defend themselves they were left in possession of their favourite haunt. Sometimes, when grass was scarce, they would roam long distances in search of it, and settle down for a time in some place far from their former home, until grass or water failed again, or they were driven from their encampment by some family stronger than themselves, by whom it was coveted. There was very little cultivation, and, as the extent of virgin soil was so great, the same field was seldom long cultivated by the same family, for in the disturbed state of the country no cultivator could be sure that he would reap the harvest he had sown.

With the first approach of the British, however, and their conquest of parts of the Punjaub, the aspect of affairs was changed. Marauders, who had given a sense of uncertainty to every form of pos-

session, receded to a distance or became peaceable subjects of our rule, and as raids and forays became less frequent, the Hindu agricultural population from the north and south gained courage to colonize the prairie. As they had been accustomed to an agricultural rather than a pastoral life, they usually fixed upon some spot in which they settled down as permanent inhabitants.

In one respect Sirsa was not a typical district of the Punjaub. It had not for generations been rich enough to be coveted by far-off majesties and powers. No revenue collector had ever been sent by the Sikh ruler, Runjeet Singh, to take half of the sown crops at harvest. None of his soldiery had ever collected taxes at the edge of the sword. The poverty of the peasant had been his safeguard, his worst enemies had been those of his own neighbourhood, and his protection from them lay within his reach. In those days—I am writing of the beginning of this century, before we had entered into definite possession of this corner of the Punjaub—when a colonist decided to found a village and to cultivate the land, his first important step was to secure the patronage of a strong man. He had little

difficulty in finding a nominal protector. To the nearest chief he went, and came to terms. The chief consented to be his ruler, to accept a certain share of the produce, and in return gave him a grant authorizing him to settle on a certain spot, and promising to defend him against hostile tribes ; the colonist presented his offering ; his ruler placed a turban on his head. If the man had companions in the enterprise, the same ceremony was gone through with them also. Henceforth the chief was their ruler, and they the headmen of their village.

This done, the next step was to summon the relations and dependants from the old home, and to choose a site close to some natural hollow in the ground, which could easily be made into a permanent pond. Then the village was founded with some ceremony. The colonists consulted the Brahman astrologer, without whose advice no affair could have a fortunate beginning or conclusion. When he had settled on a lucky day for the rite, they all assembled on the site selected, and there the Brahman kindled a sacrificial fire and burned in it clarified butter, sesamum, barley, and perfumes, and, after feasting the Brahman, the leader of the

colonists planted a stake in the ground, and the others each planted his own stake round it, before beginning to build his house. The men who were present at the ceremony, and assisted in the actual founding of the village, were called 'stake-planters', and considered to be the actual settlers.

Another important episode in the early life of a village was its christening. Sometimes a village was named after the leader of the colonists, sometimes after his clan; or it was known by the name of his chief. Often a village borrowed a name from some conspicuous feature of the surrounding country, as Red Hillock, Shallow Marsh, or White Bank; or the founder called it after the trees, grass, or bushes of the neighbourhood, or after the wild animals, the boars, wolves, snakes, hyenas, jackals, which were as familiar objects to his eyes as any other feature in the landscape. The story of some striking event connected with the place is often told in its name. It was here, apparently, that a thief was killed; it was near here that a madman once must have lived; near that other spot a fakir who played on a two-stringed lute had his home; this was where a man found his tailless horse; and here a sweeper named

Titu died of the plague. Many of the names of these villages must surely be fanciful, for this one is called the 'fort of victory', that other is 'happiness and comfort', and the last, the most fortunate of all, is the 'place where hope was fulfilled'. And sometimes the village was called after a mound in the neighbourhood, which marked the site where another village had stood long ago, till famine or pestilence, warfare and death, had carried off its inhabitants and left it a heap of sand.

The christening over, the new generation set to work to build their new home. The colonists often underwent great hardships from scarcity of water and food and from the depredations of their lawless neighbours, who considered the presence of the newcomers an encroachment on their customary grazing-ground. Their present discomforts, however, were to prove the foundation of most important privileges in after years.

The colonization which resulted in a fresh batch of villages began about 1828. In 1839 Runjeet Singh, the first and practically the last king of the Sikhs, died. In 1849 the present Punjaub Province, portions of which had nominally belonged to Eng-



Discussed by them nightly

land from the beginning of the century, became, as a whole, an integral part of British India. Henceforth it was our duty to administer an additional tract of country covering an area of 147,449 square miles, and numbering in population some twenty million souls.

And now began a new era in the history of the people. How their new rulers would affect them in relation to the land was the only question that could touch their daily life, or be of any practical importance. It was the subject which, in one form or another, was to be henceforth discussed by them nightly, as they sat or lounged in groups upon their beds, or on the semicircle of stones which form the club or meeting-place for gossip in every Punjaub village; their views on it were to be put into proverbs by their wise men and into poetry by their bards. In some respects we perpetuated ideas which had been familiar to them for thousands of years. For that period of time the theory that the State is the ultimate landlord, and entitled to a half or larger share of the profits of cultivation, has been maintained by every government that has ever ruled over any part of India, and accepted by its subjects

unopposed. The government holds, and has always held, towards the people the position of an English landlord to his tenants. The holders of the land rent it from government as in other countries they rent it from private individuals. Thus the land-revenue in India can no more reasonably be considered as a tax on the people than rent paid for house or ground in England could be regarded in that light.

The British government introduced no novel or distasteful burden, therefore, when it arranged for the collection of a revenue on land. It is true that the amount of the assessment which was ultimately decided to be just was a fortunate contrast to any from which the people had hitherto suffered. When Todar Mal, the prime minister of Akbar the Great, carried out his famous settlement in 1582, he fixed the emperor's share of the gross produce of the land at 33 per cent. The demand was light compared with what was ordinarily exacted. The Mahrattas took at least one half. This was the amount received by the Sikh government which preceded us in the Punjaub, and by the native rulers of Bengal and the Deccan. Under native governments to this day

there is no other limit to the demand upon the land than the power of government to enforce payment, and the ability of the people to pay. After various experiments our government has fixed its share at a rate which averages about 10 per cent of the gross produce. And if about £14,000,000 is obtained in India yearly from this source, this should not be considered as a sign of a heavy burden laid upon the people, but as the result of the enormous increase in the area of cultivated land, and in the value of agricultural produce.

It was neither the existence of the land-revenue nor its amount, but the system upon which it was collected, and all its incidents, which created some entirely novel elements in the life of the people.

The British passion for definition is an absent quantity in the character of Hindu peasants. Accuracy and precision are alien to their being. Hitherto the boundaries of their land had been as vague as the nature of their rights in it. Their chiefs, under whose authority they had founded their village, had not allotted to them any defined area of land, but simply given them leave to settle at some fixed point in the prairie and cultivate the surrounding

land. Sometimes a field was separated by miles from the village to which it belonged. Nobody knew exactly what the village boundaries were. Nobody knew exactly where his own village lands began or ended. When land was so plentiful, and the population comparatively scanty, tenants were welcome and generally remained where they settled, and spread themselves out pretty much as they pleased. Large tracts apparently belonged to no one and every one, and were frequented chiefly by herds of cattle, flocks of sheep, their owners and attendants, including footmen and horsemen, besides footpads and highwaymen. Now the monotony of their days, which had only been disturbed previously by a riot with their neighbours, or the excitement of recovering their cattle from their friends, was to be enlivened by the appearance of strangers amongst them, intent upon a new business.

Sarkar, as the peasants call the British government, had ordered that the boundaries of their village lands should be marked by rude masonry or mud pillars, and the white Sahib who now lived among them forbade roving families to wander any longer into land which did not belong to them.

Then came a body of men with red flags and chains of iron, who measured the ground in triangles. They belonged to the survey department, and they would not rest from their work until the whole country had been measured and mapped. But even this did not satisfy Sarkar. For a settlement of the land was now to be made to determine the rental to which the State was entitled, and to make a record of all private rights and interests in the land. A settlement officer came into the district with a staff numbering hundreds of native subordinates, to do work which would occupy several years, and not be repeated for twenty or thirty. A map was made of each village, with every field it contained shown in its proper place. Then the settlement officer moved from one place to another, and gathering together the inhabitants of each village, their turbans and robes making the ground white for yards round his tent, their knees supporting their chins, their hands clasped in front of their legs, their eyes fixed keenly on his face, he cross-examined them as to their rights in the land. They held it as their fathers had done before them, according to customs which they knew as a matter of course from their childhood upwards,

but had never attempted before to put into language. It was only by dint of questioning them, and interpreting their thoughts to themselves, that the following facts were elicited.

There were, it appeared, two modes of tenure. The one belonged to the 'brotherhood' village. In these the cultivators were almost all on an equal footing, but some little difference was made between the ordinary cultivators and the original body of headmen. It may be said that the headmen held a position of more dignity and importance than their neighbours, but not of greater wealth and power. They were the representatives of the village community in its transactions with government. The leases granted to the village communities were made out in their names; they signed engagements for the whole body; they collected the land-revenue and other dues and paid them into the treasury; they were primarily responsible for the administration of the village, and were the first to be called on for information regarding its affairs. But ordinarily in brotherhood villages these headmen had little power apart from the rest of the cultivators. All cultivated new land, and as much of it as they chose,

without asking their consent; all sent their cattle to graze in the uncultivated pasture; each appropriated to his use the margin of profits on his land which was left to him by the State; and each had a voice in the settling of village accounts, and kept what was allowed by government besides occasional perquisites. The headmen realized nothing from the cultivators, except what was necessary to meet the expenses of the village, and burdens imposed upon it.

In other villages the position of the headmen was from the first much stronger than this. Here the 'rent system' prevailed. Here the original headmen had obtained the grant of a village-site as individuals, not as the leaders of a body of colonists, and had gathered together the body, on the understanding that the grant was theirs only. They had levied fixed rates of rent on all cultivation, so calculated as to leave themselves some profit after defraying the burdens of the village, and this profit had been shared by the headmen alone, who also bore all the losses and common expenses of the village. With the village expenses, or with the profits or losses they entailed, the cultivators had nothing to

do. They had only to pay their rent, and leave all further responsibility with the headmen.

In either mode of tenure, thanks to the Sikh revenue collectors, the profits of landlord, joint owners, headmen, or occupants of the village were so small, that the arrangements with their tenants or neighbours more resembled a co-operative system than that of a community composed of wealthy and poor.

Such was the former position of affairs in many villages of the Punjaub. But as it had been it would be no longer. The British officers came with certain preconceived ideas as to how property ought to be held. Finding nothing to correspond with them, they superimposed a new order on the old.

In villages hitherto managed on the brotherhood system almost all the cultivators laid claim, as has been seen, to the proprietary right. But here the original settlers, or their descendants, were alone declared to possess it, the rest were pronounced to be their tenants, and they only to be the proprietors of the village.

In villages managed on the rent system, the headmen were declared to have the proprietary

right in all the land of the township, and the other cultivators were declared to hold under them as tenants. And to the headmen were handed over the common and pasture-land of the village.

The tenants were then subdivided. Those who had been for more than ten years in the village were declared to have a right of occupancy, which they might sell, but could not lose so long as they paid the rent. They could also sublet the land, and they could not be evicted.

Those tenants who had settled in the village very recently, were declared to be tenants-at-will, liable to be evicted at the close of every harvest.

By this classification, landlords, joint owners, and the original headmen of the village, or their descendants, suddenly found themselves raised to a dignity to which they were not born. They were told the village was theirs; that the common land was theirs. The percentage of profits on the revenue they collected from their tenants was largely increased; in the case of solitary landlords owning a village it was enlarged to a hundred per cent. Further than this, not only did they find themselves possessors of land

which was now of selling value, but this new importation, this proprietary right, was theirs to sell also.

‘At one bound we had converted collective into individual ownership of land, plus the right to alienate it at pleasure. By so doing we made an unconditional gift of a valuable estate to every peasant proprietor in the Punjaub, and raised his credit from the former limit of the surplus of an occasional good crop to the market-value of the proprietary right conferred.’¹

The result of this transformation will hereafter be shown. An elaborate system was meantime organized to make it hard and fast. The most important figure in this system, although the humblest in an executive body numbering hundreds in each district, is the village-accountant. Three or four villages are placed under his charge. His symbols of office are his village note-books and his map. Every field is shown in the village-map and is given a separate number. A rent-roll is prepared for every village, showing the fields and area of each cultivator's holding, as well as the names of the proprietors of land

¹ Thorburn's *Mussulmans and Money-lenders in the Punjaub*, p. 49.

in the village, the share of each, and the amount of revenue for which each is responsible.

‘Changes occur every year under nearly all the heads of the record which the accountant has to prepare. Field boundaries are altered, waste land is brought under cultivation, tenants are ejected, new tenancies are created, rents are raised or lowered, proprietors die, and their lands are divided among the heirs, sales and mortgages take place, irrigation and crops vary perpetually with season and market. All such changes are carefully noted every year by the accountant in the map and in his annual record. Abstracts of each year’s record are made for each village and tabulated, and these again are compiled for each subdivision of the district. In this way the agricultural resources of every village, subdivision, and district can at any time be ascertained.’¹

The system prescribed by government ensures that the measurements of the accountant are as accurate as his records are true. Not only does the peasant accompany him while his field is being mapped, and get a rough copy of the records made, to study at his leisure, but these are explained to

¹ Strachey’s *India*, p. 244.

him in the presence of his neighbours and of the officers, native or European, whose duty it is to inspect the accountant's work. The peasant is asked to express his satisfaction, and any objections he may make are inquired into and decided on the spot.

The agriculturist is part of 'our system' now. The old free-and-easy adjustment of his relations with his landlord and village neighbours is abolished. The rough-and-ready rule of the Chief in pastoral days has been exchanged for a hierarchy of officials, which begins with the accountant and ends with the occupant of the vice-regal throne in Calcutta. Every step of the process of fixing the revenue is minutely criticised. The settlement-officer's report of the reasons which have led him to fix the assessment at a certain sum, must pass from the hand of one superior officer to another, and his proposals be discussed by them severally, and the total assessment be finally determined by the Governor of the province, before it can be announced by the settlement-officer in person to the proprietors of each village, and before they can learn how far the sum will fluctuate according to their harvests, and how much

their headmen will ask each of them to contribute every year.

This sum is low in comparison with the wholesale appropriation of old days. Could the villagers but read the final report of the settlement-officer, and all that he has written in it, as if in a modern Doomsday-book, about their climate, history, castes, religion, population, commerce, education, systems of cultivation, irrigation, tenures of land, rates of rent and revenue, how could they but recognize how their condition has improved?

It has been said, however, that in another country a certain Saint Columba was wont, when he anathematized evil-doers, to curse them with prosperity. And so, in the shadow of the brightness which has shone upon the peasants of the Punjaub, sits a figure which daily looms larger and larger, till it threatens to obscure the light. It is around this figure that the discussion in the meeting-place of the villagers nightly centres. The figure is that of a merchant money-lender, and the part he plays in their good and evil fortunes must now be described.

CHAPTER XIII.

LAND LAWS AND THE MONEY-LENDERS—THE PRESENT.

OUR definition of rights has given birth to wrongs. We have done good but evil has come of it. Not any of our proffered doctoring is sufficient now to cure the ills that were unknown before. In a certain county in Scotland it is said to be the fate of lairds to inherit 'four acres of land and a law-suit'. Many of the present generation in India have to thank us for landing them in no better case.

Before our advent, alienation of land, the sale of land, mortgaging of land was practically unknown. Now 10 per cent of the cultivated area of the Punjab is under mortgage, and in the last twenty-five years 10 per cent of it has been sold. In a space of little over thirty years, the land has practically passed out of the hands of a third of its original owners.

Land was not formerly alienated, because by the customary law of inheritance it was held to be owned by the family. Upon the death of the possessor it was equally divided amongst his sons. Failing sons,

it was inherited by his relations in the male line, according to a certain order of succession. Everything hung upon this order. Lawyers there were none, written deeds, or any form of testament. But the family bard had the family pedigree at his finger-ends, and could tell exactly what place each branch held, and how it was connected with the central stem; and that was all that was needed to be known. To the next of kin it went. Without the consent of the agnatic relations the land could not pass out of the family's hands, and must inevitably belong to the next heir or heirs of the deceased.¹ This was unwritten law, its only sanction was the public opinion of the village, but that was sufficient to make it binding.

Land was practically never alienated. It was seldom mortgaged or sold. The truth was that although the people were attached to it, as men are attached to a rood of ground they can call their own, so far as money value went it was not often worth

¹The precautions which were taken to prevent a stranger entering the family, the customary law which obliged all daughters to marry out of the clan, and belong henceforth to the husband's family, and which prohibited the widow or mother of the deceased from having anything but a life-rent in his property, witness to the anxiety to keep the land in the family, and to the desire to keep all possible enemies or treacherous friends at a distance.

the selling. The irony of the situation must not be forgotten. It is the benefits of our rule that have brought disasters in their train. It is the value we have given to land which has made it valuable. It is the lowness of the revenue we demand from the land which has made it profitable. It is our passion for substituting definiteness for vague uncertainties which has given a man the indisputable knowledge of what he exactly possesses. It is that, and our gift of proprietary rights, which have made that possession covetable. Thanks to the peace and security of our rule, to the success with which we avert famine and pestilence, the population is much greater than it was. It is not the landlord who is in search of tenants now, but tenants who are in search of land. The fields which were formerly worth less than five shillings an acre can now be sold for five pounds.

Unfortunately the person who has benefited most by this increase and prosperity is not the agriculturist but the village money-lender. Now the money-lender is the Jew of India. He has certain characteristics which in every country seem to have a peculiar power of rousing hatred and contempt. In money matters he is ungenerous and unscrupu-

lous, and he is a liar who, with spontaneous craft and subtlety, can lie for his own hand. Too many opportunities are now afforded him for the development of these traits. Formerly if a peasant in straits for means to pay his revenue wished to borrow money, all the security he could offer was his personal jewels, his standing crops, or the margin, left by the Sikhs, of a good harvest. The money-lender was too shrewd to part with his capital if his hope of regaining it were small. He knew his man and his circumstances, and what was of more consequence, the village knew them too. The village was there as audience, and was ready to deal rough justice. The money-lender's transactions had to be carried on in the light of open day. There were no civil courts then to which he could resort, on the lapse of a few years, to have his creditor imprisoned for debt, or to have his goods attached, if he failed to pay immediately. There was nothing upon which he could depend, except the honesty and good faith of his debtor, the dictum of the village headmen, and the force of public opinion, which was, however, always on the side of repayment, sooner or later, though the date should be

postponed and the debt bequeathed to the sense of justice of a future generation.

The loan was calculated to suit the situation. If the borrower were extravagant, none would be granted. On the other hand, no higher rate of interest could be charged on money lent than was sanctioned by use and wont. To charge higher than was current in the market-place was held to be a mark of unsound business. There was a risk that the little shop, standing like an open box turned over on its side, might not be shadowed in the future by quite so many squatting customers. The money-lender had grain and other things to sell, as well as money to lend, and could not risk his popularity with his neighbours. Debtor and creditor understood one another, and business arranged itself amicably between them.

With the advent of the British government, and the work done by its settlement-officers, as already described, a change little short of a revolution of affairs took place. The market-value of the peasant's possessions under the new *régime* rose enormously, and with it his credit. The man who was worth but a few precarious rupees before had now a profit-



"The money-lender had grain and other things to sell, as well as money to lend."

able property. He was now the owner of land worth having and worth trying to get. When a score of warless years had passed, more than double the former prices could be got for agricultural and milch produce; even grass and straw were saleable, which had hitherto had no monetary value. The owner was now at liberty to mortgage or part with his land, and to mortgage or sell his proprietary right.

These were points of peculiar interest to the money-lender. Another matter of no less significance was that, although the peasant's circumstances had changed, the man himself remained the same. No alteration in his surroundings had in the least affected his natural bent. He was still the same ignorant, unthrifty, short-sighted, extravagant person he had ever been. In good years he spent what he might have saved; in bad years he borrowed as of yore, but with a difference. The money-lender and he had changed places. In old days he had most to gain. He coveted capital. Now the money-lender still more coveted land, and was determined never to rest until he was master where before he was more like a friendly servant.

So the thing stands. Allies have become enemies.

The money-lender no longer regulates the money lent according to the peasant's probable power of repaying it at harvest. He no longer congratulates himself on the peasant's prosperity. On the contrary, the more indebted he becomes, the better is the money-lender pleased. So much the quicker can he appropriate all that is not indispensable to the mere existence of the peasant; so much the sooner can he own the land. They are at cross purposes now. Mutual trust has given place to mutual distrust and enmity.

Let us see how the usurer spreads his net. At first the peasant's suspicions are easily lulled to rest. He is like a *nouveau riche* who is proud of his new possessions, lavish in the use of them, an easy prey to any one cleverer or more designing than himself. The money-lender is apparently still ready to serve his purposes and be a convenient help in money difficulties. What more convenient friend could he have to advance him capital on the many occasions when he feels the need of ready money?

The peasant's bullocks are stolen, or they starve in a season of scarcity. The usurer has the capital to buy more. He wishes to build a well, to improve

the irrigation of his land. The usurer lends him money. A daughter has been married, a father has died and been buried. Both events have to be celebrated by a feast. It is every man's ambition to make his entertainment last longer, and be given to a larger circle of relations and friends, than has been hitherto chronicled in the annals of the village. To attain this end he draws upon the money-lender. Or he goes to a neighbouring fair or festival, and a gorgeous coat and turban are indispensable to maintain his dignity. The cost of both again are borrowed from his Hindu creditor. He could walk, but he buys a horse; he could afford one, but he buys two or three. He has not many excuses for spending money, but such excuses as he has are ever-recurring temptations to him, and upon these occasions his extravagance is only limited by his credit, which to him seems now unlimited.

The usurer's methods of attaining his ambition are so shrewd that they deserve further examination. We shall suppose that the peasant borrows eighty rupees. Everything is made easy for him. All that he has to do is to affix his mark to the money-lender's statement of accounts at the end of every

six months. As time goes on some trifles are added to the sum originally borrowed. Part of the original capital is repaid. Everything works smoothly for five or six years. Then his affable friend changes front and is affable no longer. Some day, it may be when the peasant comes to borrow twenty-five rupees more, he points out that the balance against him has already mounted to more than two hundred rupees. The peasant has only a vague recollection of the original transaction; he cannot read or write, he cannot grasp the process of doubling and multiplying compound interest. He maintains that, as far as he knows, he has received from the usurer, from the beginning of their dealings to the present moment, cash and goods to the value of one hundred rupees, and has already repaid him to the value of eighty rupees. 'True,' says the usurer, 'but then there is the interest.' The bewildered peasant cannot follow the calculation. His present need, however, looms large in his mental foreground. So he says, 'Well, at any rate, you'll give me the twenty-five rupees I require just now?' 'That I can only do,' replies the usurer, 'if you will give me your written bond for two hundred and fifty rupees.'

‘But,’ cries the peasant, ‘granted even that I owe you two hundred rupees, with this new advance the total against me should only be two hundred and twenty-five rupees.’ ‘All the same,’ says the money-lender, ‘unless you give me the bond for two hundred and fifty rupees I cannot give you the money.’ Finally he complies, and writes his bond, acknowledging a debt of two hundred and fifty rupees, and promising to repay it with two per cent per month interest.

The next downward step is that the peasant gives his crops over to the care of the money-lender, who agrees to undertake all expenses connected with them, to deduct from the surplus harvest the interest due to himself, and to credit the balance to the liquidation of the debt. But strangely enough this seems to make matters only worse for the peasant. The harvests disappear, but far from the debt diminishing, it mounts up more rapidly than ever. The man is soon astounded by the sum he is said to owe; and refuses to pay it. He ponders over various ways of escape. None of them is possible. To Court then they go.

A decree is given in accordance with the bond

which the peasant cannot deny having executed. Not only has he lost his case; he must also pay the cost of both his own and his enemy's advocate. Various other petty charges are added, which help to sink him still deeper into the mire of debt.

Where is all his boasted prosperity now? His goods are seized under order of the court. To escape these vexatious proceedings he is compelled to submit to the usurer's demands and mortgage his lands, giving his creditor possession until the debt shall be paid. In the great majority of cases it is hopeless for him to raise the large sum for which he is held responsible, and the usurer remains permanently in full possession of the land, and can either allow the peasant to cultivate it as his tenant, or he can evict him altogether. The metamorphosis has taken place. The peasant, formerly an independent proprietor of his ancestral holding, finds himself either a tenant, holding at the will of his unscrupulous money-lender, or, in too many cases, he becomes a landless labourer.

That is a history of one of the methods by which the usurer attains his ends. Here is another. A money-lender, accompanied by a peasant, came to

one of the native petition-writers that haunt the neighbourhood of civil courts. The peasant had apparently an argument about terms with the money-lender, which ended, however, in his executing a bond and affixing a signature to the satisfaction of the usurer. The petition-writer reminded them that two witnesses were necessary. None being forthcoming, the money-lender offered to carry off the bond to the city to find witnesses there. To his surprise he was forbidden to do this. He then tried to slip the bond into his pocket. The petition-writer's suspicions being aroused he struggled to get possession of it, and a fight ensued. A European officer, appearing at this juncture, took down the statement of the three men concerned and examined the bond. In it an account-debt was referred to, but the page on which the knavish usurer had meant to record (and concoct) the debt was found to be as yet a blank. It transpired that the peasant and money-lender had met for the first time on the steps of the court-house. The peasant was in need of a few rupees to lodge a complaint. He readily agreed to earn them by enacting the part described, by forging the name of a man whom

he had never seen, and making him responsible for debts which had never been incurred.¹

Hundreds of bonds are executed annually in this way. The signatures, the executors, the witnesses are hired, the accounts referred to being supported by book-entries in the loose accounts which the money-lender has himself manufactured, and written into his book of business. Such is another of the means of which the money-lender is not too proud to make use to attain his ambition.

A usurer's account-book is too often a work of imagination and fancy. The accounts are kept in a character only understood by his own class and in his own immediate neighbourhood. They are roughly jotted down on a loose sheet of paper; wide spaces lie between the lines, as if to invite interpolation. Even the pages are seldom numbered. These opportunities are not unfrequently used. When it is added that the majority of Mahomedan peasants can neither read nor write, it will be seen how entirely they are at the mercy of their patient and astute Hindu creditors.

Formerly the panchayat, the village council, or

¹ Given in Thorburn's *Mussulmans and Money-lenders in the Punjaub*, p. 136.

the arbitration of the headmen, would have blown away the network in which the peasant is entangled as if it were a cobweb. The elders dealt rough justice. They knew the state of affairs. The man's crops had failed. At a hard pinch he had borrowed so much. The usurer deserved so much interest on his money (awarded at a much higher rate than that given in England). Let the usurer by all means have his money and his interest, they might say, but as for the demand of two hundred rupees in return for eighty rupees, the claim would be dismissed with derision.

There is little chance of redress for the peasant now. Our gift of the civil courts has made that impossible. 'Justice' must be done and enforced. There is not much margin left in Acts, sections, codes, for equity. The usurer knows his advantage and uses it. If his victim is restive, the bond with its exorbitant interest is taken to a civil court far removed from the scene of the dispute, where neither can the circumstances be understood, the principals known, nor the witnesses trusted.

By a *doctrinaire* application of the law of contract, the countenance of the civil courts is practi-

cally given to proceedings which are little short of fraudulent. The peasant is the weaker but the better man. Government puts weapons into the hands of his enemy, who has the cleverness to use them which the peasant lacks. What does the peasant know about British institutions and civil courts, or about civil procedure codes, contract, limitation, legal practitioners, specific relief, evidence, stamp and registration Acts? These laws are founded upon the laws of England, and would be admirable for a state of society such as that found in most western nations, where the majority of litigants are fairly intelligent, able to read and write, and presumably honest, and where the witnesses are presumably truthful. But when applied to a country where none of these conditions is fulfilled, and where knowledge and cunning are all on one side, they become, in the wrong hands, instruments of destruction. Shylock, by the law of contract, is here allowed to exact the pound of flesh, whatever be the expenditure of life's blood on the part of his victim.

The great majority of these cases between usurer and peasant are decided by native judges, who are

for the most part fairly honest, but whose training and character lead them to decide more in accordance with the letter of the law than with the real rights of the case; who, in short, administer law not justice. In one year in the Punjaub over a million cases are tried. The native judge of every petty court is expected to dispose of 2500 civil suits in a year. How can he afford time to unravel the plots and counter-plots which have led to this *dénouement*? In the opinion of the peasant, over the doorway of every civil court-house is written: 'Abandon Hope, all ye who enter here'. As the proverb puts the inevitable sequence of events: 'a bond, a witness, a decree'.

As to the old customary law, which forbade alienation of land without the consent of the man's male relations, this is ignored through the law as now administered. The men who suffer through his loss may revile the weak and ignorant victim who has robbed them of their ancient rights, as he himself has been robbed of his new possessions, but from the law they can have no protection.

Earth-hunger seems as much an instinctive craving with many as the inborn need in all for food and

drink. A man may hardly extract enough from his land to keep soul and body together, and yet he prefers semi-starvation beside his fields to the hope of plenty without them. He claims no natural right to possess a covering for his head, or clothing for his body, or food for his personal sustenance. But a part of the land is his, he says, by an unwritten law of birthright. To take it from him were as if to rob him of one of his senses. The agrarian riots in Rome, in Germany, in France, and in England all bear witness to this. The peasant of India has the same instinct as strongly developed as his fellows, not less deeply felt, if perhaps less fluently expressed. His fields are to him as children to a mother, to be watched in all seasons, to be guarded, fostered, tended, loved. When he loses them, he loses his livelihood, his occupation, his interest in life. 'Everything is for sale in the world,' says the money-lender, 'and he who can buy, can keep.' 'No,' replies the peasant, 'you cannot keep while I can kill.'

'In 1857 the villages on the banks of the Eastern Jumna Canal might be seen in flames in all directions. The usurers who had purchased them from the ruined owners were ejected and dispersed.' In

1870 the Sonthals 'burst over the plains of Beerbhoom with an army 30,000 strong, to avenge themselves on the money-lenders who had robbed and enslaved them under the tacit sanction of our civil laws'. In 1874 some Deccan villagers formed themselves into a Mahratta land-league, and attacked their creditors. In a village near Poona the cultivators rose and destroyed the shops of their oppressors. Their example was followed by a score of other villages. Government promised an enquiry and the redress of their grievances. The Deccan Ryots Act was passed. This Act has been called 'the Act for the protection of minors', for as children in intelligence, to be guarded till they come of age, these peasants must be considered. Amongst the provisions of the Act, 'the registration of all bonds between peasant and creditor was enforced, the cost of litigation was lessened, a civil court was required, after separating the true principal from the interest, to decree only reasonable interest and fix instalments for the payments. Agriculturists were exempted from liability to arrest and imprisonment in execution of a decree for money, the attachment and sale of the land, unless specifically mortgaged, was for-

bidden, and creditors were required under penalty of fine to grant written receipts for payments, to render annual statements of accounts, and even to provide agriculturists with pass-books, while suits between money-lenders and agriculturists were withdrawn as much as possible from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil courts, and a system of cheap and simple equity was substituted for the more complicated machinery of technical justice.'

This Act has been in force for thirteen years over an area of 21,523 square miles, with a population of over three million. Its effect has been like the beneficent gift of a fairy. In five years 10,000 mortgagees had redeemed their land. 'As for the money-lenders, some have been absorbed into the general population, and taken to honourable trading, and even to agriculture, as their sole occupation, and many of the best class still engage in banking in a legitimate way, only lending to solvent cultivators on good security, and on reasonable terms, and having given up land-grabbing as a bad speculation.'

This Act has, however, not as yet been applied to the rest of India. The gravity of the situation can hardly be over-estimated. Government gave the

people a gift with one hand, and took it from them with the other. It increased the peasant's possessions. By its law it also greatly increased the money-lender's power to rob him of them. Both have morally deteriorated by their changed position. In the Punjaub the hereditary land-holding classes who compose the people of the country are being ousted by 20,000 or 30,000 money-lenders, all men of no political weight. The loyalty of the vast majority has been seriously affected. Their discontent is a greater danger than the fear of any Russian invasion.

And what has the State gained by the course of events? The Sikh government realized one-third or more of the gross produce. The British government voluntarily gave up a half of this to the peasant, hoping to make him more prosperous and independent. But the peasant who has mortgaged his land is even poorer and more of a serf than he was when we found him, and the revenue so generously relinquished by the State, now finds its way into the pocket of the money-lender, who practically ran no risks in making his small loans, and has already recouped himself for them, many times over. In

return for this unintentional gift the money-lender does practically nothing for the State.

‘I would ask the Council’, said Lord Lytton in 1879, ‘is it not obvious that, if in any part of India the actual cultivators of the soil see not only the proceeds of their labour but actually their personal freedom passing from them into the hands of a class whom, rightly or wrongly, they regard as the authors of their ruin, and under the protection of laws which, rightly or wrongly, they recognize as the engines of it, the bitterness of sentiment, the sense of hopelessness and irremediable wrong engendered by such a state of things must be a chronic incentive, if not to social disturbance, at least to personal crime?’¹

CHAPTER XIV.

CASTE.

THE popular belief about caste held by those who have never visited India, and who have never given a thought to the subject, seems to be that every Hindu belongs to one of four castes—the

¹ Thorburn's *Mussulmans and Money-lenders in the Punjab*, p. 71.

priestly, warrior, mercantile, or servile—and that he is born and remains in one of these four moulds. But the caste system is not so easily described or dismissed. Far from there being only four castes, the number given by Mr. Ibbetson, in his Census Report of the Punjaub alone, amounts to many hundreds.

In addition to the four main castes already named, a man's caste may be further based on his following a more special occupation. Sometimes, again, it is the result of a union made amongst foreigners, or amongst soldiers of fortune; sometimes it depends on a man's descent; sometimes it corresponds to the trades-guild of the middle ages; sometimes it is synonymous with the exclusiveness of a religious sect; sometimes a man cannot tell you himself the origin of his caste, and you must rest satisfied with a vagueness, for which he can substitute no reason.

Let me venture to attempt to explain some of the complexities of the subject, as far as I may dare to believe that I understand them, and review in the first place the question of race as a factor in determining caste. In India, where tribal organization is the basis of a large portion of society, a man con-

siders himself first as a member of his family, then of his clan, then of his tribe, and then of his caste. The family, clan, tribe, are all graduated subdivisions of the caste; just as you might say in the Highlands of Scotland that a man was a Campbell of Duntroon, belonging in the second place to the Campbell clan, then to the Gaelic branch of the Celtic race. The Celtic race, therefore, to begin with the larger and return to the less, includes many branches, which in their turn are subdivided into clans and families. While a Highlander's genealogical table might be made out in this way—

Celt
|
Gael
|
Clan Campbell
|
Family of Duntroon.

A Hindu's genealogy would be like this—

Caste
|
tribe
|
clan
|
family.

This elucidates the fact that two men may belong to different tribes, and yet be of one caste. If they can trace a common descent from the same stock,

they know that they belong to the same caste, however far their branches may have wandered from each other; just as if we were to imagine the family of Duntroon claiming a connection with the whole Campbell clan, on the score of a common descent from a Celtic ancestor.

In this aspect of the caste question, the common bond of these families, clans, tribes, and castes, is blood. Relationship is the crucial test, and relationships are traced by the people and established almost wholly through connections on the father's side of the house. The children belong to the family and clan of the father, and a woman on marriage leaves the family of her father, and she and her children belong to the family and clan of her husband. Each individual recognizes all persons related to him through males as his brothers, as members of his family or clan. Persons related to him through his mother or other females are his relations indeed, but they belong to another family. These groups of agnates are classified into larger groups or tribes comprehending all those agnatic families who are supposed to be descended through males from some more distant ancestor, whose name

is remembered as the founder of the branch. These groups or circles have been compared to a number of rings upon a curtain rod, the rod being the common caste which runs through all.

Caste, therefore, is in such instances another name for race. Occupation in this particular section of the system does not affect the question. Several races may follow the same occupation, and yet, because unrelated to one another, be of absolutely different caste. They may, in fact, no more resemble each other in general characteristics, and have no more to do with each other, than a South Sea Islander engaged in fishing would resemble or amalgamate with a Norfolk skipper. A man's next-door neighbour may till a field which lies beside his own, but if each belongs to a separate race or caste they may be practically as far apart as if they lived in Northern and Southern India. The man's life and being is influenced and determined by his race or caste.

Take some of the characteristics of the races composing the agricultural classes as an example of their divergence. The Jat is the best husbandman and the best ratepayer in the Punjaub. He has all the

good qualities of the best type of peasant, being patient, industrious, sturdy, and independent. He occasionally breaks loose and gambles, robs, and murders, but as a rule he is peaceable and content if he is left to cultivate his fields undisturbed. 'The Jat's baby has a plough-handle for a plaything', says a Punjaub proverb, hitting off his proud satisfaction with his own lot in another saying,—'The Jat stood on his corn heap and said to the king's elephant-driver: 'Will you sell those little donkeys?'' while his rough exterior is described in the following:—'Though the Jat grows refined, he will use a mat for a pocket handkerchief!' and 'An ordinary man's ribs would break at the laugh of a Jat'. He has the sturdy rustic temperament, with a strain of reckless devilry in his blood.

The Rajputs, descendants of kings, as their name indicates, are on the contrary aristocrats. Their natural indolence makes them prefer a pastoral to an agricultural life. To follow the plough would be derogatory to their dignity. They are too proud to work, but they are not ashamed to steal, if they can steal cattle on a large enough scale to make it a gentlemanly profession. They are the reevers of

the Punjaub, with a pedigree which traces their descent back through a line of earthly kings to the Sun-god or the Moon.

These are two of the dominant agricultural castes. The hill tribes have very different characteristics. Go to the land lying immediately south of the Himalayas, and you find one of the inferior grades of agriculturists, a tribe of Girths, stunted in growth, afflicted with goitre, of the Tartar type of physiognomy, and of restless activity. Far from secluding their womenkind, Rajput fashion, they send them to the public market-place to sell vegetables, milk, wood, or grain; and can quite leave it to them to haggle over the price and to strike a good bargain. Both men and women are hard drinkers, but they never let their drinking debts mount to the height of their gains. Two peculiarities which are quite enough in themselves to make them stand out from the rest of their countrymen are that they tell the truth, and that, in spite of their love of a quarrel, they are honest in their dealings with one another.

The description, again, given by Mr. Barnes, of the Gadis, another pastoral tribe in the hills, is more like one's conception of a light-hearted Swiss than

suggestive of a likeness to the natives of India. Many Gadis cultivate the winter crops or wheat in Kangra, and returning with their flocks grow the summer or rain crop at Barmor, as the province on the other side of the snow is designated. They all wear woollen clothes, which they make up at home out of the wool from their own flocks. The men wear a remarkable high-peaked cap, with flaps to pull down over the ears in case of severe weather. The front is usually adorned with a garland of dried flowers, or with tufts of the Impeyan pheasant, or red beads, the seeds of parasitical plants growing in the forests. The rest of their dress is a frock made very capacious and loose, secured round the waist with a black woollen cord. In the body of this frock the Gadi stores the most miscellaneous articles; his own meal tied up in untanned pouch, with two or three young lambs just born, and perhaps a present of walnuts or potatoes for his master are the usual contents. . . . They are frank and merry in their manners; they constantly meet together, singing and dancing in a manner quite peculiar to themselves. They are great tipplers. The Gadis are, however, a very simple and virtuous race; they are

remarkable even among the hill population for their eminent love of truth, and crime is almost unknown among them.¹

Now, all those different races or castes practically follow the same occupation, but enough has been said to show how far they are from being shaped in the same mould. Each has the individuality of his race, and this individuality is maintained and perpetuated by restrictions which prohibit intermarriage with anyone beyond the precincts of the caste.

To follow the same occupation does not therefore necessarily imply a similarity of caste amongst agriculturists. A common kind of work is not a common bond of union if the caste is different. And if we go further afield, we find that just such a variety of castes as we have seen among agriculturists is to be found amongst other sections of the community engaged in other occupations—in the subdivisions, let us say, of the priestly, mercantile, artisan, menial, and vagrant classes. Two men may follow in a general way the occupation of one of these classes, and yet belong to widely separated castes. Just

¹ The description of the various castes here given is chiefly borrowed from Ibbetson's *Punjab Census Report*, 1881.

as sections of the agricultural class differ as much, and are as widely divided from each other, as two islands in the same sea, so does the priestly class, for instance, contain a scale of contrasts wide enough to range in its subdivisions from the ascetic orders leading quiet and peaceable lives in monasteries, or acting as the custodians of temples and shrines, down to the disreputable vagrants who impose on the public in the borrowed dress of orders whose names they have not even mastered, or to the smeared and dusty rogues who are ready to whirl themselves into ecstatic trances, exercise sorceries and charms, or practise any other fraud that will add a fraction to their ill-earned gains. All these subdivisions are separate castes.

In the same way a man may give himself out as a merchant, and yet under this general head he may subscribe himself as a banker, a grain-merchant, a trader in cattle, or a humble pedlar content to hawk his wares over the country. An independent artisan who is paid by the job would be indignant if he were confounded with the labourer who annually receives the same payment in kind for his services. There are grades upon grades

amongst village menials, and castes upon castes, and woe betide him who should classify them *en masse*, and fail to recognize that the butcher and oilman rank with the weaver, and move on a different plane from the scavenger, or that the blacksmith and wheelwright, carpenter and stonemason form one group, while the washerman and dyer are akin.

And now we come into a region of subtleties and finely-drawn distinctions. Blood relationship is not here the only, or even the crucial, test. General similarity of occupation is, if possible, of less importance than ever. Subdivisions such as we have described are now further subdivided; there must be an absolute identity of type and habit within the particular segment of the patchwork whole. An endless sum of compound fractions works itself out. The organism has the faculty of breaking itself up into bits, and asserting a right for each of its segments to exist by itself. A group of traders in cattle, for instance, move with their families to a distant part of the country where their habits and customs are sufficiently modified by their new environments to bring down on them the contempt of

their former and more fastidious companions. Or a new saint gives a fresh impetus to a new band of believers. These are quite sufficient reasons for a tacit separation from the rest of humanity, and the formation of a new caste, or sub-section, or sect. New habits—new caste, is the guiding principle here. It is as if amongst tradespeople a certain number of grocers, whose views were lax on the necessary employment of message-boys, were to hold aloof from all others of their class; or in the ecclesiastical world, as if a newly-formed party of Puseyites or Irvingites were to surround themselves with a cordon, and declare it to be henceforth socially and religiously impassable to all but their own particular body.

The only class whose liberty and emancipation is complete is the tribe of vagrants, which is so low that it can sink no lower. No restrictions confine them within one charmed circle. They are ready to intermingle with all the world; they will eat, or do, anything. The one thing lacking generally is the opportunity. Yet even the vagrants enjoy their vagrancy upon varied lines. Some are content with honest work, taking small contracts on the

railways, roads, and canals, helping to build tanks, working in the fields as labourers. Others belong to the criminal groups, who again thieve on varied principles, a certain number settling their wives and families comfortably for the winter in the Punjaub, and then organizing wholesale robberies which carry them to the south of India, while humbler stay-at-homes are satisfied with petty thefts from neighbours, or with a round sum paid as blackmail. The history of these sections can be read in the daily note-books of the police. Then there are the strolling jugglers, the leaders about of bears and monkeys, the singers, the hunters and fowlers, the riverside people who live in reed huts, and are boatmen, fishermen, divers, and well-sinkers, workers in reed and grass. All these are vagrants, but vagrants with a distinction and a difference. Treated as outcasts, however, and with such scanty pretensions to any social status, the vagrant classes can hardly be said to hold a place amongst recognized castes.

Another variety of caste is found in those which are more like the trade-guilds of the middle ages. A man can be taken into these castes whatever his former history may be. As long as he follows the

work of the members of the guild, so long does he belong to it. With the choice of a new trade comes the end of his connection with the caste, and he gradually becomes absorbed in another. While he belongs to the organization he is subject to its rules, and may be tried by its council.

Such are some of the complexities of the caste system; and yet so far as we have gone we have after all been on comparatively familiar ground. The landmarks are somewhat exaggerated, the fences somewhat more impenetrable and frequent, but such landmarks and fences have never been wholly absent from the social landscape. As far as we have gone, there is little in the caste system that is peculiar to India and not common to humanity. Tribal organization is one of the first stages in the history of social evolution. It is a common custom among all primitive people to strengthen the tribe by rules which ordain intermarriage and inheritance to be possible only within the limits of the tribe or caste. It is equally the tendency of all primitive trade-guilds to limit their privileges to the members of their own body, and to be chary of admitting outsiders. Pride of birth, pride of position, based

on a man's original descent and present occupation, are not confined to India, nor to any particular country nor class. The crucial tests occasionally vary or are subject to modifications. They are also often analogous. In India the questions, who was he? whom did he marry? and what does he do? have certain amplifications and additional queries, such as, what will he eat? with whom will he eat? with whom will he smoke? does he seclude his women-folk? might his widow re-marry? with what does he work? But caste prejudices are fundamentally the same everywhere. Just as English families dwell on the fact that they 'came over with the conqueror', or Scotchmen trace their connection with Robert the Bruce, so do Hindus describe themselves as descendants of the great Rajputs or of Rishis, famous in ancient story. Everywhere a man's wishes may deceive his memory on such points. Twenty years ago some Mahomedan peasants in our part of the country called themselves Rajputs. Last year the same people set themselves down as Afghans. Two hundred years hence, if we are still the permanent rulers, their descendants will probably vow their original home was England!

In England, as in India, to trace a further likeness, one sees the same subtle distinctions give an inferiority or superiority to occupations which in themselves seem equally honourable. There are shades and shades in occupation which determine a man's caste in India. In the same way in England you may with social impunity import cotton, but it is not so distinguished to deal in velvet or satin. You may trade in tea and coffee, but not in tobacco. You may distil hops or manufacture whisky, but must have nothing to do with oil. Between transactions that have grown to be on a large scale, and those which have continued to be on a small, between 'wholesale' and 'retail' merchants a social gulf is fixed. It is as difficult to give an explanation of such unwritten judgments as it is to be certain why a man in India may sow wheat or corn, but is tabooed if he has anything to do with vegetables, why he may make any kind of pots of brass, but must carefully eschew handling earthenware, or why he should rise in the social scale when he abandons leather for cloth.

The truth is that if we go more deeply into the matter we are disposed to think that in everything

except the minute, the multiplied, the tyrannical restrictions imposed by the Indian caste system, it differs more in degree than in kind from customs which have been exhibited elsewhere. For the vast majority in India, occupation is hereditary. For the vast majority, social ostracism is the penalty of any infringement of caste rules. In India it requires many generations to accomplish a change that in a European country might be brought about in two. Viewed as a whole the tyranny of the system is its most conspicuous feature, but studied more closely, its elasticity is, for a European, its ever-recurring element of surprise. There are gaps in its network of fences, its boundary lines have a vagueness with which it is not by any means usually credited. We have heard much of the rigidity of the caste system. It is rigid enough in all truth. And yet there is another side to the question which also requires to be emphasized, and that is, that it is surprisingly elastic.

To return for an example of this to the occupational castes. A man keeps the name of a caste which has a hereditary calling, but he does not necessarily follow that calling. Far from a man of

the merchant caste being doomed to be a merchant and nothing less or more, he is sometimes a civil administrator, a priest, or a soldier, an agriculturist, or a tailor, or goldsmith. Members of the leather-working castes are coolies, plasterers, village watchmen, field labourers. Those of the fisherman caste are sometimes cooks, bakers, or wood-cutters. Then again a man may lose caste in India as elsewhere, but the reverse possibility of rising in the social scale is a universal ambition from which the Hindu is not altogether debarred. The process is simple and suggestive. First of all a Hindu cuts his connection, and will not marry into his original 'set'. Then he takes to another business, and becomes more particular about his food. He next affects an exclusiveness which confers a lustre upon his acquaintance. His son buys a wife who belongs to a better class than himself. In one or two generations his children forget his origin, and no one reminds them of it. The transformation has taken place.

The transition is not complete in one man's lifetime, but the evolution of different stages may be witnessed at any time in village life. Take one of the lowest of the social types, the gipsy vagrant

class. A gipsy family settles in a village. Their wandering habits are dropped. They still eat carrion, but they eschew vermin. They still plait grass, but they take up scavenger's work as well, the lowest occupation they could have in a village; still it is a rise in life for them to be allowed to work in a village at all, and however much one is determined to soar eventually, the wings must be exercised first by fluttering near the ground. At that stage we leave them, for at that stage they must remain for some time. But in the same village you find a scavenger who has transmigrated, and is working out his social salvation as a tanner. He has renounced plaiting grass, but he has not renounced carrion. So a tanner he remains. He knows a man, however, whose great-grandfather was undoubtedly a scavenger, who will not touch animal food, who has taken to weaving, and who is charily acknowledged to be within the Hindu pale by the Hindu fraternity. So the tanner can die happy in the thought that his grandson may be accepted as a weaver and a Hindu into the bargain.

Not long ago a man, whose ancestor had belonged to an inferior caste, but who had succeeded in mak-

ing a fortune, wished to make a good marriage. Negotiations were opened with the aristocratic Rajputs, but they would have nothing to do with him. At last a poor but proud Rajput was discovered, who agreed to part with his marriageable daughter on condition that the suitor could produce a pedigree, proving himself to be also of Rajput descent. The family bard was consulted, and after much cogitation, he evolved out of his inner consciousness the history of a long-deceased and long-forgotten Rajput ancestor, and made out the necessary genealogical table. The marriage took place, and the man's descendants are henceforth Rajputs.

In witnessing such little dramas one is conscious that, in spite of the novelty of the background, the setting, and costumes, the plot is old and even a trifle hackneyed. But whatever analogies may be traced between the caste prejudices, social ambitions and petty struggles, triumphs and chagrins, of widely separated races, it would not be easy to find a parallel in any other part of the world to the caste restrictions imposed upon Hindus.

These restrictions seem so childish, trivial, and

hap-hazard, that it is difficult to realize that for a Hindu to violate them is to lose his caste and forfeit his social position. At the outset of his life his head must be shaved all but the scalp-lock. At the beginning of each day he must bathe, and at any hour of it change his clothes completely if bad fortune should bring him within the four walls of an alien caste or foreigner. Woe betide him if he buttons his coat to the left instead of to the right! Red or saffron are colours that may be worn with impunity, but if he dares to affect a turban of indigo blue he is a lost man. He may cook his food in a brass pot, but if it is an earthen vessel, it must be one that has never been used before. With the exception of the highest castes, anyone can take water from a man belonging to another caste, provided it is in a vessel which has been scoured with sand, but he must not drink it from an earthenware bowl. In the same way he can smoke in peace from an alien hookah, if the bowl of the pipe is made of brass, but he must not forget to take out the stem and smoke through his half-closed hand. Bread may be accepted if it has been purified by being fried in butter. Leather-makers,

washermen, barbers, dyers, and sweepers are castes whose touch would defile either food, drink, or hookah. Mussulmans are equally beyond the pale. A strict Hindu would rather starve than eat if a Mussulman's shadow darkened the ground on which he sat. As for the food he may consume, to eat fish is permissible, but to touch a tortoise would never be contemplated by any but the lowest classes. Many Hindus shrink from taking away life from any animal, while the cow is by all preserved with especial solicitude.

When we pass from the question of what and with whom a Hindu may eat and drink, to the question of whom he may marry, the plot thickens, for the prohibited degrees embrace such a wide circle that the difficulty must be to find a wife who does not bring excommunication in the trail of her pedigree. A man's property cannot be inherited by anyone not belonging to his clan, and he must not marry the daughter of his clan-brothers. He must go outside of his clan to find his wife. That is to say, a Hindu Mackintosh cannot marry a Miss Mackintosh. He must marry a Miss Maclean, or some other Mac. Moreover, he must not marry a

woman of his mother's or grandmother's clan. And she must not belong to his village, or to any village in the neighbourhood. The number of clans in which he must seek his wife is marked off more or less distinctly. For certain castes the rule is that they can only marry their equals. More fortunate is the man who can take a wife from a tribe of inferior standing, which makes marriage a less expensive luxury, the sum paid to the bride's relations being often the secret of mortgaged lands and ruined fortunes.

After his marriage, it depends on a man's social status or caste how far he must seclude his women, whether his wife may be seen on a journey or must be conveyed in a closed-up doolie; whether she may labour in the fields or only bring him his food there; whether she may fetch water from the well, or must be shut up altogether; whether she is merely an ornament to his household or one of its hardest workers.

According as a Hindu observes or does not observe these rules, does he mark his position in life, and make or mar his fortunes. These are the tyrannies, the burdens, and the chains of the caste

system. Caste, viewed as a bond of union based upon race and as the inseparable link formed between people following the same hereditary occupation, as an association entered into by workmen or strangers who find themselves thrown together for the time being in a new country, has nothing abnormal in its aspect. It is in the slavery of its petty daily ritual that its victims lie as if beneath the burden of a social inquisition, whose agents are the Brahmin priesthood. The system, as a whole, is a curious mixture of rigidity and latitude, and might be compared to a prison whose windows are not altogether barred, and in which ladders, ropes, and other means of escape are to be found, of which the prisoners from time to time avail themselves, although their ambition may only be to exchange one thralldom for another which is held in better estimation. From time to time, protests have been made against this paralysis of existence by Buddhist, Sikh, and other reformers. But equality and fraternity are ideas which have not thriven any better upon Indian soil than they have been realized for the majority in wider worlds than any dreamed of in Hindu philosophy. The prisoners taken out into

the free air of heaven, creep back ere long within the boundaries of their prison walls, and shut themselves again within their cells, to hug their own exclusiveness and chains.

CHAPTER XV.

VILLAGE LIFE.

WHAT an inadequate substitute for water is the village pond! It has too much mud in its constitution to be capable of reflecting the brilliant blue of the sky overhead; even the glories of sunset only bring a lurid sulky look to its surface. With the first heat of summer a coating of green slime covers its stagnant shallowness. When it is most needed, it dries up and disappears. Nevertheless, with what trouble it was sought, with what labour it was made, and with what care it is tended! 'In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king'; and people who depend on water for their life and sustenance learn to cherish even a damp resemblance of the prize.

The village life, at least all the life which has not to do with the beloved fields and land, centres around the pond. In the morning the market-gardener, who has brought in a store of vegetables for sale in the bazaar, stops in his leisurely walk to dip and shake his goods in the water, to get rid of the earth which sticks to their roots. Crowds of Hindus throng round the edge and cover the surface with their turbanless heads, as they perform their daily ablutions and offer their filled-up bowls to the sun. The village washermen and active house-wives thrash their clothes on a plank or stone on the brink, and spread them out, crumpled and torn, and only a shade less brown than the pond, to dry on the dusty ground. Women come in a straggling file, their earthenware pots piled one above the other, and miraculously safe on their heads, to carry away the household supply of water. As the day cools, buffaloes, cows, and oxen are driven into it, on their homeward way, and stand placidly chewing the cud of meditation. Boys swim about in its murky waters like young frogs, and women return to refill their drinking-vessels, with an oriental disregard to the family health.

The creation and preservation of the pond may be taken as an excellent example of the co-operative powers of the village community, and as such deserve a separate page in the story of its inner life. A grant of land has been secured by the little band of emigrants who wish to found a new home, and now their first anxiety is to discover any possible trace of water out of which they can develop a pond. A search party sets off, roaming over the waste of plain to find a natural hollow, into which the drainage from the neighbouring higher land has flowed in the rainy season. The clay they throw up as they delve, is only less useful to them than the muddy water that deepens under their eyes: for the clay will act as cement when they build their huts of wattles and grass, like the early Britons, or if they are a shade more ambitious, they will shape it into little bricks to be dried by the sun.

As the village grows, a constant exchange of benefits passes between it and the pond. Year by year the rain washes down some of the moistened mud of which the houses are built, to add to its slender volume, and the clay to repair and plaster the walls is scooped out of its miry bottom. Thus the pond

slowly deepens, and the village as slowly rises, until in a comparatively short number of years it stands out bare and treeless above the plain, strong in the height which was its defence in the old days of marauders.

The depth of the water is watched as eagerly as if it were a life that ebbed and flowed, and might pass away in a moment. Every exertion is made to enlarge the bed of the hollow which holds it. Men and women are alike called upon to do their best. Daily every household in turn sends out a man and a woman also; for, when the husband has done his share of the work, and shovelled out a fair number of basket-loads of clay, the wife follows, and before she carries off her daily supply of water, she, too, is expected to fill some baskets with earth, and empty them on to a bank some distance away; or, the villagers act on the principle that what has to be done is best done quickly, and throw aside every other work for a time, to devote themselves *en masse* to this one piece of labour; or, they transfer it entirely to other shoulders and jointly subscribe to employ some labourers to do it for them.

When the hot weather comes, and the pond in-

evitably dries up, the only deliverance from drought lies in wells. Again the village becomes as one man in the face of a common necessity. As the water-level is often more than a hundred feet below the surface, to make a well is frequently a work of great labour and even of danger, and sometimes a life is lost in the process; for only one man at a time can stand in the little hole dug at the edge of the pond, where he works his way down by degrees, filling the basket with earth, which his neighbours pull up and send down again empty. The man whose turn it is to step into that hole, carries his life in his hand, for as he goes down the narrow turret he makes, he is always further away from the breathless hot air overhead, and sometimes he dies for the want of it. Or it may be that, in spite of propping the sides up with twigs and branches, the sand falls in from above, and he is buried alive. But what would you have? The risk must be run, for water must be got at all costs. What is the possible loss of one life to the certain loss of many? And year after year a new well has to be dug, for year after year, when 'the rains begin', the old one falls in.

When the village has developed sufficiently to bear

the expense, the villagers subscribe and sink a permanent well, with a cylinder of brick, at the edge of the pond. But it costs a large sum of money to make a well where the spring-level is so deep, so a village often builds one by instalments. In a good year it will make an effort and burn the necessary bricks; it will then wait for another year before engaging the mason to come and construct the cylinder, and even then perhaps it will be able only to build half the well, waiting for another year before finishing it and raising a platform with drinking-troughs round its edge. Then even when this is done, the joint-work of the village is not over, for it requires considerable labour to draw water from such deep wells; so the villagers take it in turn to draw it day after day with the help of their bullocks, camels, or buffaloes, and keep the cattle of the village supplied with water; and sometimes a long string of women who have come to get water for household purposes take the place of the camels and buffaloes, and use their combined strength to drag the long rope which brings up the bucket out of the well.

Thus the village acts as a corporate body, not only in this, but in every particular. It would seem as if

Minerva did not spring from the head of Jupiter with greater rapidity, than a village community rises up from the ground, fully equipped in all its parts. Granted the headmen who found the village and a score of agriculturists and followers, and the village menials are also found attached to the group. Every village requires its full complement of artisans, but the demand seems at once to create the supply. The water-carrier in his uniform of red and blue is there, with his water-bag of goatskin slung over his left shoulder, prepared to carry water from the well, and fill the big earthenware jars in the courtyard of every household that employs him. The blacksmith, soot-besminked to a certainty, is beside his tiny anvil, with his bellows like a pair of Highland bagpipes in his hand, ready to supply all ordinary iron-work required by the peasant. The tailor sits cross-legged beside his iron, and friendly hookah, busily sewing garments for the villagers. The carpenter, who has only half a dozen tools in his possession, undertakes to make or to repair the peasant's wooden implements and furniture. There he is crouching on the ground, as if this had been his home from childhood, using his toes instead of a



Tailors at Work



Housewife Cooking



Carpenters at Work.

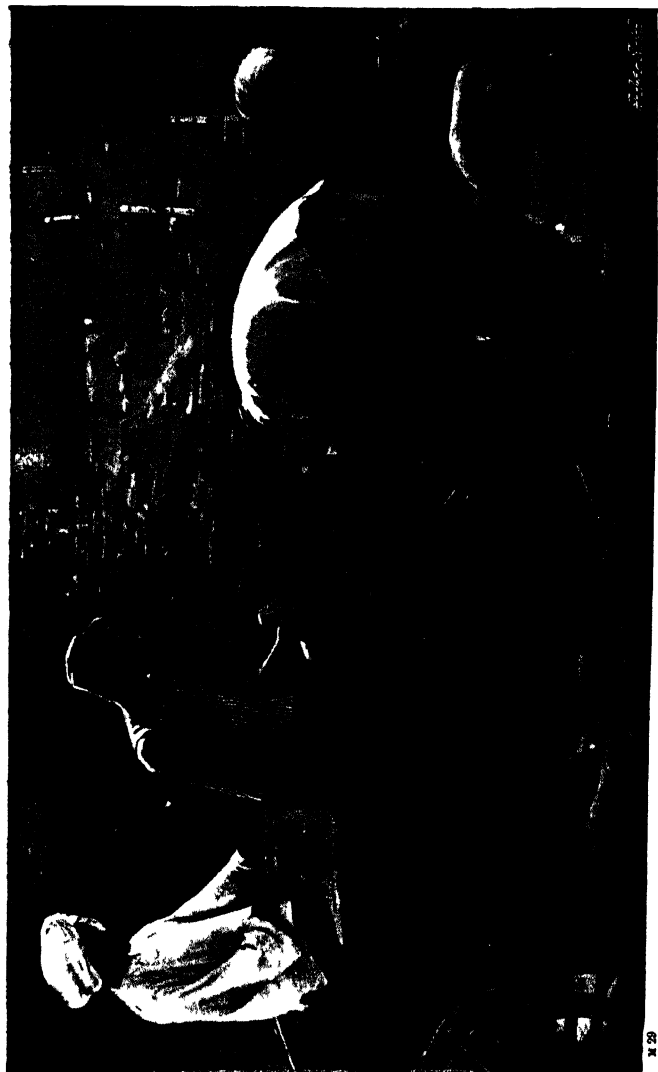
Scenes from Village Life

vice, and patiently hacking and planing the gnarled trunk which is to be made into a plough, or, with his brother, working the double-saw to make planks for the door-posts of the headman's house. In the shortest of time the potter sits squatted in his pit in the ground, twirling his mud disc, and shaping earthen jars and dishes out of clay with the rapidity of a juggler's trick. The worker in leather, if he is not mending shoes or making hookahs, is available for carrying burdens, such as sun-dried bricks, or grass and straw for cement, or the twigs which form the courtyard enclosures. The sweeper cleans the streets and houses; the watchman, armed with spear and sword, guards them; the baker parches the grain in his uncovered iron oven, and bakes the bread, which the house-wives bring to him in kneaded-up lumps. Last, but not least, the grain-merchant is there with his scales and earthenware jars, and the village will be fortunate if he does not start his second branch of business as money-lender, and so in time become its master.

Mutual services are rendered, and goods are bartered by the members of the village for the common advantage of the community, just as each separate

member of a body performs its individual functions for the good of the whole. Instead of making money payments the people pay each other by exchange of services. The cost of the blacksmith's work is paid for by the shoemaker when he sends him a new pair of sandals, or by the carpenter when he makes him a low narrow bed for his house. The baker keeps so many of the housewife's handful of scones which he has baked for her, for his own use. The potter is the richer by some yards of cotton as a return for the huge receptacle for grain he placed in the grain-merchant's courtyard. The village artisans are generally paid by the agriculturist at a fixed rate in kind for the work done by them for him, and at every harvest, according to the labour or goods they have given, they receive so much grain, weighed and given out to them by the village weighman.

So rapidly is this society formed, and each member settled into his proper place, that in the course of say ten years, where nothing but a stretch of brown sand could be seen, a complete little village community exists in full working order. In the plains of the Punjaub the village is generally formed on



Blacksmith and Wheelwright

one pattern. It consists of a number of separate enclosures or courtyards, each with its separate entrance and its own set of flat-roofed huts, usually inhabited by families related to each other, the whole intersected by narrow and rugged lanes, and surrounded by a deep ditch or a hedge of thorns, with a solitary entrance which is closed by a rude gate at night as a security against thieves. On the outskirts live a group of outcasts, kept at a significant distance from their kind. The village looks as if it had been built on a rock, and rises like the successive steps of a flight of stairs, in this respect reminding one of the villages perched by the people upon heights on the coast of Italy, as a protection against the pirates of the Mediterranean. Yet nothing could be more unlike the wealth of colouring, the irregularity of outline, the painted surfaces, the garden-roofs, which make the Italian village a patch of brilliant mosaic. Here everything is flat and brown, and houses and people alike look creatures of the dust. Very rarely does a two-storied house stand up above its neighbours, to proclaim that its owner is prospering in the world, and can afford an entrance gateway of red brick to his courtyard, some carved wood round the

framework of his door, and even a couple of carved shutters on his upper window, and a balcony from which his women-folk can sit and spy the land. If there is such a building, there is no other to keep it in countenance, unless perhaps the Mahomedan mosque, which occasionally breaks into high minarets and white domes, but is more commonly content with three mud pinnacles upon its roof, while only a waving flag announces that an ordinary mud hovel is a Hindu temple.

The similarity which is found in the organization and structure of the village runs through every phase of its life. The interior of each house and courtyard is a facsimile of every other. By no chance can one hope, when visiting one's humbler brethren in India, to come upon a bit of china, the last of the set, or on a quaint piece of furniture which once saw better days, and belonged, perhaps, to the great-grandmother of the present owner. In the best room of houses in small towns, a couple of English straight-backed, cane-bottomed arm-chairs probably stand in the centre side by side, in front of a square table with a looking-glass and tumbler perched upon it, and beneath a gaudy caricature of the Queen, or the

Prince and Princess of Wales surrounded by their children, hung up on the wall, a compliment to British rule, perhaps flanked by a Russian tea-set from Bokhara as a suggestive pendant.

This is the most of which the big house of an urban town can boast. In the village household there is no such element of the unexpected. String beds and a child's painted cot slung from the roof are all the furniture the one dark room contains. The courtyard round which the huts of the different members of the family are built, is the receptacle of the necessities of life, and the richest peasant's fancy never wanders far after luxuries. The costliest thing he owns is the silk and tinsel coat of many colours, that takes the place of the two sheets he winds about him on ordinary occasions, and which he reserves for high days and holidays, being as proud of it as his wife is of the woollen drapery she has embroidered for herself with so much skill. If he has any wealth, it is spent in buying land, or converted into the silver ornaments which adorn his wife's forehead, ears, and neck, nose, arms, and ankles. She carries about on her own person her dowry and his savings, and possesses more perhaps than ever

she displays. Of this more hereafter. To return meantime to the courtyard.

Here stands the cow or buffalo which the wife must milk to the tune of five o'clock in the morning, when she has given her husband the cold scones and drink of buttermilk left over from his last night's supper, and seen him start for his day's labour in the fields. Here are the two bricks projecting from the wall which form her fire-place, a great display upon the ground beside them of brass and earthenware dishes, in one of which she can let her fresh milk simmer, while she churns the milk of last night's boiling. Here is the earthenware pitcher which she carries to the pond, her churning over; and here is the broom of twigs to sweep the courtyard with, the quern for grinding corn thereafter, and the flour ready to be cooked for her husband's midday meal, which she takes to him in the fields. Here is the spinning-wheel in the corner waiting for her spare moments, the vegetables reminding her of evening supper, and the large fan speaking to her of the ease she can bring her lord and master when he comes home at sunset, and has a fancy to be fanned and massaged by his wife.



"While she churns the milk of last night's bo ling"

The court-yard is the stage on which the Indian woman plays her daily part, and if her experiences were confined to the drudgery of which it is the daily witness, her life would be as monotonous as her daily routine. But every mortal must have some excitement in his life, whether it be found in intellectual stimulus or physical exuberance, in competition, intemperance, or over-work, in the tension of anxiety or in minor gaieties. The satisfaction which is given to this natural craving through these and other channels is granted to the Indian woman through her quarrels.

Life to her would not be worth living without these, and she has recourse to them in every hour of flatness or depression. While she can meet her neighbours at the pond or well, catch sight of one of them upon a neighbouring roof with her spinning-wheel, or, indeed, while her mother-in-law is spared to the family to be her daily torment, opportunities are never wanting. The mother-in-law is the best subject, because she is always at hand. The mother-in-law has at the same time an inconvenient weapon in a stick, which she is at liberty to use quite as freely as her tongue and her imagination, and it is

sometimes upsetting if she gives full rein to both her fancy and her eloquence when her son returns in the evening, obediently ready to believe the whole history of his wife's misdoings, and to borrow the stick, if it has not been already employed.

According to her mother-in-law she is always the laziest, unthriftiest, most disobedient wife that ever lived, and if her mother-in-law had her will she would stay in her own court-yard, and do her spinning there when her day's work was done, and never get a chance to hear the gossip of the place from one year's end to the other. Happily for her, no mother-in-law would ever consent to carry the water from the pond herself, so that is always a chance and opening for the exchange of female amenities. An Indian woman, on these occasions, goes straight to the point with the frankness of a child, and without superfluous subtlety or sensitiveness.

'Your things are not as good as mine,' she begins by saying, 'my clothes and most of the things I possess are much better than yours.' 'God knows it is my fate to have poor clothes!' is the answer. 'If God willed He could give me good clothes, but

what can I do if it is not His will?' 'You must be a thrifty woman!' is a more ironical mode of attack. 'How do you know that?' 'Oh, you can't wish your husband to spend money upon you, or you would at least have one silver ornament.' 'God knows it is my fate that my husband should not have money. If he had money he would give me ornaments, but what can he do if it is not His will?' 'My husband,' is the shrill-voiced reply, 'gives me ornaments although he has very little money.' *Après cela le déluge.*

Malice is always a source of enjoyment and a nerve stimulant, and it does not much matter whether it thrills the whole frame in a personal first-hand encounter, or merely adds piquancy to an interchange of confidences as to the conduct of other men's lives. How can we properly hate our neighbours unless we know something about them? When Indian women sit down in a row in the dust of the narrow alleys to spin the cotton they have crushed, carded, wound, and tended since it left its home in the cotton-pod, even enemies become friends for the nonce, reviewing a neighbour's inferiority to themselves. This is an excellent method for maintaining one's personal

standard everywhere, and for keeping the critical faculties sharpened.

‘Huzia is a wretchedly bad housekeeper. Her court-yard is never swept out before noon, as yours and mine are. She never has any time to spin cotton.’ ‘B. is never at home. If you want to find her you must look for her gadding about into every house but her own. It isn’t respectable. She doesn’t know what it is to work every day, as we do, from morning till night.’ ‘Everybody knows why E.’s husband beat her three days ago.’ If this last piece of contemporary history is interrupted by the appearance of H., B., or E. on the scene, a pause is of course made for the sake of politeness, and as an opportunity for a welcoming chorus of compliments on their good looks, their good clothes, their industry, thrift, and devotion to home and husband.

Shopping is another excuse for getting outside of the court-yard, almost as good as spinning or fetching water from the well. When she thinks she can afford herself a new petticoat, jacket, or sheet-like wrapper for her body or head, and that the moment has come when she should look at samples, an Indian

woman understands the art of turning out the contents of a draper's shop, without committing herself to a single purchase, quite as well as her sisters elsewhere, and no one can make a better bargain. Seated on the ground, with her lynx eye fixed attentively on the scales which contain the grain or vegetables she is buying, and on the handful of cowrie shells (sixty of which are equal to a penny) which she is going to give in exchange for her purchase, she may be depended upon not to be cheated of a hairbreadth of the weight which is due to her. And a woman with foresight knows how to look after her own interests, while she attends to her husband's business. Her husband entrusts her with these cowries to buy the necessaries for household use which cannot be supplied by the cow, or from the corn-bin in the court-yard.

Now a native woman has not often a chance of handling money in her husband's lifetime. When he dies her prospects will be better. If he has children the peasant wife will hold the land and work the property, for her own and their benefit, till they are old enough to take the control of it out of her hands. If there are no children she will hold it for

herself. If the worst comes to the worst, and she is left without land, children, or capital, she knows she will never be deserted by 'the brotherhood' of her husband's caste, or by the loyalty of a system which is the best substitute which India can give for the faith and loving help of friendship. Yet in spite of all this, no one's prospects are so good that they might not be better. 'If I hed twenty pound mair than I hev,' said a sturdy Scotchwoman, 'which I hev not got and never will hev, I would not call the Queen my cusin.' This desire for the unattainable is shared by her Hindu sister. So while she has the opportunity, she subtracts a farthing to-day and half a farthing to-morrow, and artfully cooks her accounts so that the coins, hidden in a hole in the ground of the court-yard, are never missed. When she has collected a large enough sum, she invests it in silver ornaments, which are buried in place of her coins, and there remain till her husband is also beneath the ground, when her widow's fund is dug up and exchanged, as the need arises, for money. These negotiations are, of course, an added interest to life.

If a relation leaves the village, or returns to it

again after a certain time, a moving spirit in the little circle gets up a farewell or welcoming function for the sake of a little excitement, just as one may see working girls at home get up a subscription and buy an album or magnificent box, to be presented by a deputation, if one of the 'hands' is leaving the town. And just as they gather in a crowd at the railway station to see the lucky person start, who has thus awakened to find herself favoured, and the central figure of the sudden commotion, so I have seen twenty women at an Indian railway station, weeping, rocking, and singing a chant, screaming between times to the departing neighbour, and keeping an eye on the vendor of sweets, who would be called upon to administer comfort when the train was well off. The difference is that the code of speeding the parting guest is stereotyped in the case of the Indian woman. In external effect it hardly seems to differ from the howls and cries with which they issue in procession from the village to welcome the wanderer back, or indeed from the rocking, swaying, singing, and dancing formula with which they commemorate the fact that for the wanderer on earth all journey-

ings are over, and that she has gone to her long home from which no traveller returns.

Excitement is a marked characteristic in every case. Poor, ignorant souls, it is a question whether any excitement equals for pure joy the height of a spirited quarrel. And the men excel the women in the virulence of these village fights. Here are repeated in miniature, the wars and hereditary feuds, the marauding expeditions, invasions, insults, vengeance and reprisals, which have formed the life, on a large scale, of multitudes of races. To a native, a quarrel is what the public-house is to the British labourer. It is his refuge and his antidote, his consolation, his first and last resort. In the ultimate interests of public order it is perhaps the better of the two outlets for emotion.

However that may be, a neighbour has but to surreptitiously plough up a field which is part of the peasant's property, to take the water out of turn from the canal, to build a wall on a plot of ground in the village which is his by rights, to allow cattle to stray on to his pasture land, or to let the rain-water-spout on the roof empty its contents into his court-yard: the quarrel is begun. If there is a

brick, a clod of earth, or a stick handy, it is continued. If that does not finish it, it becomes magnified into a case for the civil or criminal courts. The story runs a small chance then of dying out. For ever afterwards when a man is smoking his hookah seated in a row with his fellows in the bazaar, when he is walking home from his work with his one choice companion, or resting on the heap of stones which stand in lieu of a village club, the quarrel and the case, with all the evidence given by each witness, and all the intrigues, plots, and counter-plots, are a never-failing part of his stock of autobiographical monologue, and occupy as large a part in the foreground as the wars between the Sikhs and the English, if he or his father were soldiers, or the details of the last cattle-theft in which he played a part and outwitted the police.

Such are some of the elements that are found in the external and internal life of every village in the Punjaub; the laws of co-operation and discord being as powerful and invariable factors in it as the laws of attraction and repulsion in the economy of nature. Out of the slight sketch the religious life of the people has been left, and any account of

their social ceremonies. What they are must now be briefly described.

But first we must notice that it is very remarkable how similar in their general character the social ceremonies are, as observed by all, whether high or low caste, Mahomedan, Hindu, or Sikh. The differences that exist are insignificant as compared with the general resemblance. A change of religion brings with it but a small change in ceremonies. Of course certain forms are necessitated by the essential doctrines of the creed. A Sikh or Bishnoi is baptized. An orthodox Hindu receives the tonsure and dons the sacred string. A Mussalman performs the actual wedding contract according to the procedure laid down in the Koran, instead of the circumambulation round the sacred fire which marks a Hindu marriage. The Hindu burns his dead, the Mahomedan buries him in a four-feet deep grave of bricks, with his feet pointing to Mecca. The pious Mahomedan prays at least five times a day; in his house, his fields, or his mosque. The Hindu worships his idols as his Brahmin priest may prescribe. But all of them have, in addition to their religious rites, an elaborate ritual of do-

mestic customs, which are carried out with almost equal care, which have much the same character amongst the followers of all religions, which are performed by the relatives themselves with the aid of the servants and dependants; suggesting an origin in tribal custom rather than in religious influence.

Such of these ceremonies as are connected with the three great events of a man's life, his birth, his marriage, and his death, will be described in the following sketch of a Hindu merchant. In it will also be given a few characteristics of the Hindu religion, those of the Mahomedan being too well known to require description.

CHAPTER XVI.

A HINDU MERCHANT—IN PROSPERITY.

HINDUISM has been described as religion in its sacerdotalage. Neither monotheism, pantheism, nor polytheism, but Brahminism, is said to be its only name. You are told you will find a Brahmin

priest behind each dogma; that Brahmins have always been the medium of revelation; the only interpreters of the Holy Vedas; the only ladders between heaven and earth; the priests, the augurs, lawgivers, judges, the conscience and the scourge of the community.

The Brahmin is undoubtedly the master of ceremonies on the Hindu's earth, the entrance-keeper of his Olympus. Hinduism is as complex as life, and the Brahmin does not let a thread of the web slip out of his hands. Many of the threads were brought by his deft fingers to the loom. But does he bring them all? Has he done more than set his stamp upon a hundred other contributions?

Is it, in short, just to ascribe to a class, superstitions which are common to the race, and indeed to all primitive beliefs? The tale which gave a religious sanction to the belief or custom, was probably the Brahmins' gift. But does not the belief itself, the Hindu's fetichism, the Hindu worship of the elements, of animals, ghosts, ancestors, gods, demi-gods and demons, exist in countries where Brahmins are unknown? What is it but the recognition given by helplessness to known or possible

power? One might compare it to a hereditary disease, known in many lands, which spontaneously reappears in different generations, and does not need to be explained by any kind of infection caught from others. This is a branch of universal pathology which can be studied in no place better than in India; for it is one of the most noteworthy features of its religious condition in the present, that it exhibits, as in a shifting panorama, specimens of every disorderly confused and contradictory superstition of which the ancient or modern world has been possessed. The old gnarled tree of paganism still flourishes in India; it still shoots out grotesque buds and branches, and there any one can witness still their strange abortive birth.

Just as the Greek called all those 'barbarians' whose language he could not understand, so does the Hindu call everything supernatural whose laws he cannot comprehend. He accounts for the unaccountable by calling it divine. Observant of the objects around him, yet wholly ignorant of their origin and of the laws of cause and effect, he blindly believes, as he has always done, that all things have personal power to benefit or ruin him. Everything

in nature that is out of the ordinary, an isolated boulder, a tree with a queer shape, a stone with a curious mark is extraordinary, superhuman, possessed. It is a symbol of or synonymous with the deity. Water is revered for the good it can give; it has inherent power to bless or curse the crops, and is the servant of a god who is to be propitiated. A fruitful tree has actual being and potentiality. The wind, the sun, the earth, are worshipped partly for themselves, partly for their ability to bestow or withhold good harvests. The dead can harm or befriend the living according as they are malevolent or the reverse. The Hindu accepts the position of impotence; the rest of his world and creation are to him overshadowing power. Some fortunate mortals by their divine right, their strength, or their abstinence, have won immunity from the common lot. They are the people who are to be enlisted on his side, or in any case appeased.

The people create their own gods; the Brahmins just as often as not accept the creation, assimilate and adopt it as their own, as genius embodies the spirit of the age. Brahmin and peasant are cast in eastern mould: they have lived from immemorial

ages under eastern skies, and until lately under the shadow of eastern potentates. Their conception of their gods is a reflection of their life and circumstances. They and their possessions were at the mercy of the fickle elements, and of marauding tyrants. Their gods are therefore fashioned in the likeness of capricious despots. Their sense of right and wrong was as undeveloped as their scientific and historical faculties. Their gods were on the whole less moral than themselves. Not what he was, but what he could get, was the absorbing interest of peasant, Brahmin, king. Their fears were physical, their wants material. Their gods dispensed these favours and no others. Their earthly rulers had to be propitiated by offerings. Libations and gifts were laid before their gods.

This was quite as much the work of the people as of the Brahmins. It is a phenomenon of all races in their childhood. What the Brahmin contributed was his countenance and support. Every province of life was taken under his wing, and his right to levy a tax on every event in a man's existence began with his birth and ended with his burial. No law, dogma, or domestic episode could have any hope

of success unless it received the stamp of his approval. The Brahmin decides what a man shall eat, whom he may marry, solemnly studies his horoscope, and settles the date when he shall begin or end his undertakings, prescribes him his medicines, and will allow no distinction between sacred and profane in the ordinary routine of his days.

Men have rebelled against the orthodoxy of their world, against sacerdotalism, ceremonial, and caste. They have claimed personal inspiration, and supported their claims by miracles and wonders; they have had their followers, and another sect has been added to the many. But the descendants of such rebels soon return in practice to their ancient allegiance, retaining only their distinctive exclusiveness and titles, and some outward mark, such as a stroke or line on their forehead, as their badge. The high ideals of Buddha and of Baba Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, have been long forgotten. In the Punjab, Buddhism and Sikhism alike have dwindled into mere Hindu sects.

The pinnacle of the temple stood out against a dull, deep pink, sunset sky. Beyond the wall of the

town we could see our camels browsing near our row of tents. In the middle of the court-yard the old fakir attached to the temple sat on a rug, fingering the rosary of brown beads which hung round his neck. As new-comers entered they touched his feet and then their foreheads with their right hand. Some women peeped in at the gateway, and seeing the white strangers, covered their faces with their sheets and retired smiling. They had already been at one service at ten o'clock that morning. Ramdas's wife was not amongst them. She had gone to the temple of Vishnu this evening. She was a worshipper who liked to wander, and she went to the temples of Shiv or Vishnu, or to the Sikh Dharmshala, as the fancy seized her, or according to the inclinations of her immediate neighbours. Neither her husband nor her mother-in-law had the smallest objection to her doing as she pleased in this respect. 'To go,' they said, 'is the great point.'

Ramdas, who had brought us to the temple at our request, watched us with a complacent smile as we looked at the hideous image of a god seated on a raised dais in the centre of the building, some withered flowers and a small heap of grain on a tin

plate laid near him, and water trickling on him from a pitcher on a shelf above. Trumpets were blowing discordant blasts, as night and morning their tones had rent the air for centuries. Two rows of men in ragged clothes, whom Ramdas had disturbed from their work to swell the congregation, were standing opposite to each other at the door of the temple singing a hymn to the god, their mouths twisted to one side, and their heads moving incessantly as they examined the company.

This is what they sang:

‘All praise to almighty Shiv,
The giver of death and of birth;
All praise to the mighty tortoise,
Who holds on his back the earth.

‘Shiv is the god of all gods,
He giveth both glory and fame;
He giveth his servants wealth,
Then blessed by all be his name.’

Ramdas looked as if they were singing of him. He had an air of ownership in the temple, the god, and the fakir. He had a right to be proud, for he was their patron as well as their devotee. It was his rupees which had rebuilt the decayed and

crumbling temple of Shiv, and erected the brand-new, rambling, two-storied monastery beside it, for the fakir and his disciples, as well as the three or four rooms attached to it for the benefit of travellers. Ramdas had the reputation of being a very pious Hindu, although he was a money-lender. He was a short, stout, black-bearded man, with beady-black eyes, and stood with his hands clasped at his waist over his white, buttoned coat, which was several inches shorter in front than behind. He smiled continually, and had a slight halt in his gait. He looked prosperous, and was certainly ambitious.

When half of the hymn, of which there were forty verses, was sung, Ramdas gave an order to his servants. When it was finished, and we left the temple court-yard, we found the man waiting beside our carriage with an array of trays on the ground. On one were pieces of costly silk; on another sugar and grain; on another flowers and fruit. Our acceptance of them was the least of the vain petitions which Ramdas had to proffer, patches of temple dust still strewed on his turban, and a futile attempt expressed by his figure to reach our feet before touching his own forehead with his right hand.

Would we do him the honour to visit the school? or the dispensary? We had seen them last week? The Sahib knew his deep interest in both these institutions. He had subscribed to them more than any man else in the town. Would government grant his prayer to be made a rural notable? He was reminded that such titles were kept for men who were hereditary owners of land, and who could help government to keep peace in their neighbourhood. Had it been forgotten for the moment that several mortgaged properties had passed into his hands? Ramdas with a deprecatory movement of his hands recalled his possessions, and the existence of a son to perpetuate his position among landed proprietors. Had government issued no orders that he was to be nominated a member of the municipal council? No; he ought, like the rest of the candidates, to solicit the votes of his fellow-citizens, and take his chance of election. Another deprecatory movement of the unclasped hands. And when might he have the privilege of sitting down in the presence of government officers? He would have news of that when orders were passed on the request by the commissioner.

At last we drove off. Hardly was the limping, bowing figure entirely out of sight when another suppliant bid fair to cut short our evening drive. A man with an emaciated figure, and an expression in his eyes that reminded one how narrow the borderline is that divides sanity from madness, sprang from the side of the road, threw his turban on the ground and himself after it before the horse's feet, and cried out for mercy and the love of heaven to save him from ruin and despair. When after a short conversation it was found that his complaint referred to a case in Court, he was told to come to the office-tent the following morning and put in his petition, whatever it was, when the matter would be inquired into. Unfortunately he never came, and why we never knew. Inquiries were made on all hands, but no one could identify the man. We left in three days. We had reason afterwards to know that this was one of Ramdas's debtors.

Ramdas had as many debtors as would have filled a small debtors' prison. But his debtors were among his most profitable investments. They were all land-owners. Ramdas was a clever man as well as a holy. By a skilful manipulation of his accounts he had won

several lawsuits; by dint of exorbitant interest several farms and properties were now in his hands. And witness his piety. The first use he had made of these gains, after making a new house for himself, a garden, and a grove of fruit trees, and sinking some of the capital in jewels for his wife, was to renew the temple to Shiv, and to lay the foundation of the monastery.

Ramdas's mother had taught him to be pious. She took him regularly on Sunday to the shrines of Bhumia and Sitala, god of the homestead and goddess of smallpox, and made him join his palms and raise them to his forehead before them. She gave him dust to eat from the ground of temples, both Hindu and Sikh. She trotted him after her to every semblance of a holy place within a mile of the village, and told him to lay down saucers filled with sweetmeats or cakes, and to give some to the attendant if there were any. On Saturday she took him with her when she put bowls of milk under the shadows of the pipal, van, and jand trees, the sacred dwelling-places of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiv. She told him stories at night, before putting him to bed in his little cot which swung from

the rafters, and he had to repeat them to her next morning.

The earliest tale he could remember was of a child devoured by a lion in the forest, and turned into a star, with seven attendant stars as servants. His mother taught him to do *pūja* to that star. She used to tell him of the good king who was carried by a bird to a lonely island, of the child who slew himself there with the king's dagger, because the Brahmins had prophesied at his birth that such would be his fate, and of how the king by abstinence and sacrifice had become more powerful than mighty Shiv, and had wrested from him the promise that the Brahmin's prophecy would be but half-fulfilled, and another son be born to the parents in their sorrowing old age. Shiv, she said, it was allowed by all, gave more to his devotees than did any other god.

One of her favourite stories showed him what punishments follow if we neglect the Brahmins. Once upon a time there lived a rajah who was benevolent and rich. This rajah commanded that every day before he ate, sixty pounds weight of gold should be given to the poor. Yet, although he gave

them so much gold, he never gave them so much as a grain of rice to stay their hunger. In process of time the rajah died, and went to heaven. There he was received into a house of gold, everything on which his eye lit, whether it were furniture, dishes or clothes, was of gold, and when he asked for food, nothing but gold was given him. In answer to his remonstrances he was informed, 'What you have given on earth, you will receive in heaven.' Then the rajah begged he might be allowed to return to earth, to warn his brethren of the awful consequences attending upon failing to feed the poor. And since that day no Brahmin has had cause to complain of hunger.

These and many other stories she told him, and the beliefs were a part of the fibres of his brain, or the constitution of his blood, that the gods, like all great rajahs, give or withhold success, according as we do or do not propitiate them with gifts, and that the Brahmins' goodwill is of hardly secondary importance.

He grew up his mother's own child. He was as complaisant to gods of the most varied description as if he were himself a Brahmin. He did *pūja* to

the Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs, as they lay on their cushion covered with silks, and were fanned by singing attendants. He did *puja* to Mahomedan shrines, especially if the dead had a reputation for being malevolent and difficult to please. He did *puja* to half a hundred local deities. Not a scrap of food would he allow to cross his lips before he had thrown part of the meal into the fire, as an offering to the household god. Every morning when he got out of bed he did obeisance to the earth, and said, 'Preserve me, Mother Earth.' When he first stepped out of doors he saluted the sun, and said, 'Keep me in the faith, oh Lord the Sun.' On his way to bathe in the Hindu tank he repeated intermittently the verse of a Sikh hymn, and offered some of the water in the tank to the sun, in his brass drinking-bowl.

Twice a year he decorated his well with lamps in honour of the god of water, and in the week devoted to that deity, when his neighbours were content with floating lamps upon the river, and daubing themselves and their houses purple, he added an orthodox entertainment, and gathered his friends in his court-yard, where, seated in a row in death-like

silence, they watched for hours the antics of a singer, with body smeared with red and yellow, and wearing a false beard and wig, whose songs would not bear repetition, and the pattering feet and waving arms of a boy dressed up as a be-muslined woman, with a face mosaiced out in different squares of colour, like a clown turned dancing dervish.

When Mahomedans dared to kill a cow in the neighbourhood of the Hindu place for burning the dead, he led the riots against them, or, to be more accurate, he paid some men to throw down missiles from the roof of some distant houses upon the enemy's head.

His wife had to pour, as a libation to Mother Earth, the first five streams of milk she drew from every cow he wrested from his debtors. He never heard that the lands he held in mortgage were being brought under the plough for the first time in spring or autumn, or harvested for his enrichment, without that goddess being invoked by him.

About nothing was he so punctilious, however, as about feeding the Brahmins. One Sunday it was in honour of Devi, another of Dharti Mata, another of Bhumia, and so on, through as many of the thirty

score of deities in the Hindu Pantheon as his priests could name or number. On his particular days of the fortnight devoted to the memory of ancestors, the Brahmins swarmed in his house.

Even in the days when he had quite a small shop, in which he ate and slept, he had had a Sanskrit text written in red paint above the door, and feasted the Brahmin handsomely who wrote it for him. When he moved into a larger house, and only sold in the bazaar, he would not fix upon his temporary dwelling without consulting his priests. When he built his present gorgeous mansion, which towers above all others at the corner of the street, no part of it was begun without their consent, and when it was finished, the entertainment he gave them was a thing to be remembered. The saucers of oil that were lit would have kept a poor man in lamps for a year. Beautiful patterns of cows and snakes were drawn in coloured sand on the floor. The spices offered on dozens of plates to Bhumia, goddess of the homestead, were bagatelles compared to the platters of good things the Brahmins consumed, and the grain they carried off with them to their homes.

All went well with him. His grain was most

skilfully mixed with sand, and his weights so cleverly constructed that he gained more than his customers knew, on every pound he counted out, always saying 'blessing' instead of 'one' at the beginning. He bought grain cheap when it was plentiful, and sold at famine prices when it was scarce. Soon he had to buy only half his former quantities, for his debtors' payments in grain kept him comfortably in stock. He built new granaries round a square, and thought his prosperity was established. And then came the greatest event of his life.

CHAPTER XVII.

A HINDU MERCHANT—IN DISAPPOINTMENT.

A SON was born to the house of Ramdas. The father looked on this, the most valuable of his possessions, as the reward of a pilgrimage he had made to the highest point of a neighbouring range, where he laid a stone on the cairn that was raised there, drank a bowlful of the water of the Ganges which had miraculously sprung up near the spot,

and gave the fakir £3, 10s. to buy an idol of Shiv for his temple. The mother believed it was due to her footsore wanderings made on the same weary quest. Both congratulated themselves to the echo.

A son is welcomed into the world in India with rejoicings such as never mark the birth of a girl. The word used for son is, I am told, derived from the Sanskrit, and means 'saving from hell', Brahmin priests teaching that a man's soul is released from purgatory, not by gifts, nor by masses, but by a son's daily worship of his immediate ancestors. The birth of a son was therefore a matter of no small importance to Ramdas. Which feeling, I wonder, was deepest in his breast? The thanksgiving for this solution of far-off difficulties, or the old elemental joy that a man-child was born into the world, to perpetuate the father's name, to cherish him in his old age, and above all, to keep in his hands the property he had won, which would otherwise pass to another branch? A Punjaub Hindu, as a rule, is more really anxious that his possessions should be heired by his son than that his soul should be delivered from hell. With Ramdas the feelings were probably equally balanced.

Looked at from every point, the gain was incalculable.

So brass trays were beaten upon the day of the boy's birth, a net and a garland were hung upon the doorway, a branch of a tree decorated the front of the house, a fire was lit on the threshold to shut out malign powers. When he was six days old the women relations came to express their congratulations. Next day the family bard sang in praise of the line from which he sprang, and recited his genealogy. When he was ten days old the Brahmin priest cast his horoscope, gave him the name of Shivram, and tied a yellow string round his wrist. The Brahmins and the brotherhood were feasted, the house was replastered from top to bottom, old clothes were given away to the village menials, and life begun again in fresh attire.

For a mere daughter no such displays would have been made. The mother's fate would have been very different. She would have been held accountable for the general gloom, and treated as a pariah with whom no one would eat for weeks. No wonder she had done her best according to her lights, and had dedicated offerings at the shrines of saints, had

made vows, and drunk potions, and lurked about cemeteries at night, prepared to stand upon the bodies of baby boys, if watchful mothers would but let her have the chance to steal them from their new-made graves. 'She knew that if she had not given Ramdas a son he would have married another wife, whose subordinate she would have been thenceforth. So the father could not be so pleased as she, the wife and mother, because her vows and wishes were fulfilled, and a son granted to her.

When the little boy was six or seven years of age, and old enough to play half-naked in the dust, to make mud-pies, build toy houses, and enjoy his forms of leap-frog, hide-and-go-seek, prisoners' base, or spinning-tops, his father began to think it was time to look out for a suitable wife for him. A *mariage de convenance* had to be arranged, in which the bride's father would come off the richer by a round sum received as *dot* from the father of the bridegroom.

I have known young couples of other races who have had their foolish dreams, and have believed that the garden of Eden was reopened to them, once in their lifetime, and that they (poor mortals)

re-entered it together hand-in-hand. And old people I have known, nearing the last act in the history of their union on this side time, who have held to it, that old, familiar, hard-trying love has yet had power to keep a bit of Heaven in their erring troubled lives. From such fond dreams and possible fulfilments the little Hindu boy and girl are apparently shut out. Their elders get a good deal of mundane satisfaction, however, out of the wedding ceremonials.

Of these about a score mark every step in the proceedings connected with betrothal and marriage, and an atmosphere of excitement pervades the household until the last is concluded. Everyone is uplifted for the time being. The bride's father appreciates the sum he gains by the transaction. The womenkind have the second-hand pleasure of getting ready the feast, and welcome the new clothes that fall to their lot. The village menials relish the presents showered upon them, and the family barber and Brahmin more than all the others enjoy the prominent parts they play, which are hardly second in importance to those of the little bride and bridegroom.

It was a Brahmin who, accompanied by the village barber, came as emissary from the girl's relations to say they were satisfied with the proposed alliance. It was he who thereupon marked Shivram's forehead, and gave him a loin-cloth and cocoa-nut, and the rupee which had lain in milk all night. It was he who consulted his horoscope, fixed the wedding-day, decided for how many days before it the boy must be rubbed with oil, communicated the mystic number of oilings to the bride's relations that they might follow suit, and let them know how many guests they might expect.

Through every stage of the marriage preparations the olive faces and sleek figures of the Brahmins might be seen appearing and disappearing, with signs of visible elation, now fixing two saucers on the wall, to represent the shrine of the ancestors, and smearing the marks of a bloody hand on either side of them, now playing indulgent audience to the parts assigned in the performance to the different branches of the family, to the mimic fight between the bridegroom and his girl cousin, who tried to stop his starting; to the mock attempt on the part of the bride's relations to shut the gates of her

village in the face of the bridegroom coming in his tinsel crown and palanquin, surrounded by his train of male relations, to the hundred and one minute observances which have lost their meaning while retaining their importance, or which suggest at best a bygone age when Brahmins were not met and fee'd at every turn, but marriage by capture was the rule.

The sacred enclosure was ready, the five earthen pots were put in position, the fire lit, and seats placed for the young couple. A very little girl walked seven times round the fire, in an uncertain childish way, behind a little boy whose sash was tied to the end of her frock, according to the orthodox custom, and then sat down on his right hand to listen to the vows made for her by her priests, and to the responses of her husband's Brahmin.

The ceremony was over, a ceremony which more resembles a fast and binding betrothal than a marriage; for, although the bride returns with her bridegroom to her future home for three days to feast, and go through a fresh series of formalities, she does not take up her abode there until she is grown up. By the time that this bride came back again, Shivram was no longer in his home.



The shrine outside of the village

The little boy grew up as unlike his father as a son could be. His emaciated figure was more like a being that might come out of the famine-stricken house of a debtor, than one that belonged to the family of the prosperous money-lender. The poor child had had smallpox when he was ten, and not all the dancing of the attendants of Sitala, the lamps lit where four roads met, or his father's gifts of corn sent to the shrine outside of the village could save him from being disfigured. Perhaps it would have been better if he had died then, or on the night, a few years later, when the serpent came into the room where he lay in bed, and filled the parents' heart with reverent fear, till the snake-charmer had piped and carried it off the premises.

But all went well. His father grew stouter, and his business seemed to increase with his bulk. About this time he staked upon building the rest-house for travellers close by the temple to Shiv, and waited to see what would happen. He redoubled his petitions to government. All went well to a wish, till a most unexpected break came to his prosperity. One of his debtors—it was the very man, Hyat Khan, who had thrown himself in our

way on our drive—grown desperate, brought a civil suit against him. The case was tried by a sub-judge and given in Ramdas's favour. The land, cattle, and implements of the debtor passed into his hands. The ground lay next another of his properties, and he put Shivram, who had successfully passed his middle school examination, in charge of it. Next day a letter came in the morning to say the Commissioner had given his consent to his having a chair.—In the evening his son was murdered. Hyat Khan gave himself up to the police. They might hang him if they liked. He had had his revenge, and was satisfied to die.

But Ramdas? What were his thoughts as he limped into the room to look at his son's body covered with a shroud. It was his only son that lay beneath that sheet, disfigured and so still. The silence of death was broken by the wails of the living, his friends and relations filled the room, and women with streaming hair tore their clothes, beat upon their breast, howled and rocked like wild figures moving in the 'dance of death'. In the early dawn of the following morning the boy was carried to his funeral pile. Not a shadow of the cus-

tomary observances was forgotten. His nearest relations, before leaving the house, poured water on the ground, and the father carried with him a ball of flour and water which he laid upon the corpse before it was burnt. When they reached the outskirts of the village the ladder-shaped bier was turned, and then the procession of mourners went on their dreary way calling to the god Ram without cessation. When the body had been laid upon the wooden pile, and fire had been set to it, each friend took up a stick and put it on the pile, as mourners at home drop a handful of earth upon the coffin of their beloved dead. Before his body was completely burnt the skull was broken by the father. The bones were buried in the jungle. For three days afterwards a ball of flour and water was laid upon the ground above them for the benefit of the departed.

Shivram was dead. And what were the days like that followed, to his father? How rich he had been, how appallingly poor he had become! He had no son. Did he remember his gifts, his feasts, his rites and ceremonies, his dishonest tricks and lies innumerable, and contrast his hopes with their baulked fulfilment? Did he wonder if he had mislearnt the

knack of life, or was there no corner in his brain that was not numbed by custom into questioning nothing? Did a sense of the transitoriness of all things, the emptiness, the irony, the mystery of his days, weigh upon the beatings of his heart and threaten him with madness? Who knows? Does anything like shame distress a mind to which a higher ideal has never been presented? Does a crust of formalities and falsehood become a hardening second nature, or does the same poor human heart for ever dumbly question, beat, and break in every corner of this unintelligible world?

Ramdas had to go on living, and to go on doing as his fathers did before him. He had to give a funeral feast in honour of his son. After Hindu and Mahomedan funerals alike feasts are given. It is the universal custom for friends to come from far and near on these occasions to express their condolence, and they must be entertained on the same principle that the company at an Irish wake are fed and hospitably entreated. So, after the death of this honoured relation, you may be sure that eating would be seen in all its glory. A brother of Ramdas undertook the business. A trench was dug in the

ground of one of the houses of the village, and in this trench a strong fire was set burning. A dozen servants were kept hard at work. At one end of the trench stood a small cauldron filled with sherbet made of coarse sugar and water, and at the other a large cauldron containing over a hundred pounds of coarse sugar and about half that amount of melted butter. This was continually stirred by three or four men with long poles. When the mixture was well cooked, the sherbet was added, and the sweet pudding was then ready to be eaten by the hundreds of guests, who already sat about, with expectant eyes turned in the direction of the cauldron, a fringe of village menials behind them, eager to get the benefit of remnants left.

More than a hundred pounds passed through the hands of the excited and busily occupied brother upon this occasion, for he was entrusted to give presents and largesse to the poor of the town. He was the right man in the right place, for he was both eminently practical and a well-known gourmand. Two or three years ago he had given his own funeral feast in anticipation of the event, not being able to understand why he should lose the pleasure of the

toothsome meal, while he could still participate. He knew what a great disgrace it is held to be, if there is not enough at such an entertainment for all the guests that come, and that sometimes people, having a grudge against the host, or wishing to play a practical joke on him, make up a 'surprise party' and come in a body, to try to eat him up. He made preparations sufficient to meet every emergency.

Many had a grudge against Ramdas, but all their malignity could not have brought about such a catastrophe in his house. His feast was inexhaustible. It was excellently prepared. Numbers came to enjoy it, to talk the family tragedy threadbare, and to look with furtive glances at the sonless father, as he sat in a corner of the court-yard, his bushy beard and hair completely shaved, his face more downcast than they had ever known it hitherto.

And now it was over. Shivram was dead and buried. His funeral feast was given, and everything externally went on as before. A heavy stone had been thrown into the water. The water eddied for an instant; then the eddies died out, and it was as still as before. The routine of Ramdas's life was

resumed and remained unaltered. Bhumia, Sitala, Devi received their offerings, the Brahmins their feasts; he did *pūja* to Mahomedan saints, or Hindu devils, morning, noon, and evening as of old. He looked the same as ever. His was not the figure to take on the lines of tragedy. Some things went well with him. He is a member of the municipal committee now. His wife has found a successor. She brought some money with her and a large assortment of jewels. His business thrives. But—he has found no other son, and all his wealth, his honours, his land, he would give up to have a son. Without one they will all pass from him.

A greater dread hangs over his horizon. Not all the reassuring flattery of his hosts of Brahmins can save him from a conviction lurking in the innermost recesses of his mind, that when he loses them for ever, and passes from his day to night, his fate will be to wander without end, a malignant, homeless, never-resting ghost—the doom of the sonless dead.

And so disappears from sight one of the many strange mysterious personalities amongst whom our lot in the East is cast.

But he stands in my imagination still as I saw him first, in the court-yard of the temple, a group of native officials beside him, and the crowd of yelling worshippers behind. I see the pinnacle of the temple against the sunset sky, and the row of tents outside the town, that stand like symbols of the presence of the English in the land. I hear again, between the verses of the hymn to Shiv, the cries of the children in the street, the voices of the crowd in the bazaar, the droning of the wells at work in the brown fields, the noises from a hundred homesteads, echoing like a low refrain, and joined as if unconsciously they sang the 'still sad music of humanity'.

And a crowd of thoughts and questions throng upon me. What will the end of it all be? What will the Western race do for the Eastern which it governs? Here upon this land of battle-fields we have played our part in history; we have fought and conquered; we have lived—and many a lonely gravestone shows how we have died. We have worked and drudged, and in spite of work and drudgery have gathered many memories of happy, priceless days. We have given the country peace,

order, and good government, some knowledge, many material benefits, and greatly increased prosperity. What will the end of it all be?

Will those benefits remain external like clothes upon a body that is old, diseased, and miserable, or will our influence permeate beneath the surface, modifying and altering tendencies, renewing and reforming the whole man?

When a century or two have gone, will all traces of those tents and their occupants have disappeared, and the sun set upon a thousand towns where life goes on unchanged and unaffected by the ephemeral phase of foreign rule, and millions yell discordant praises to the crowd of idols before whom they eat the dust?

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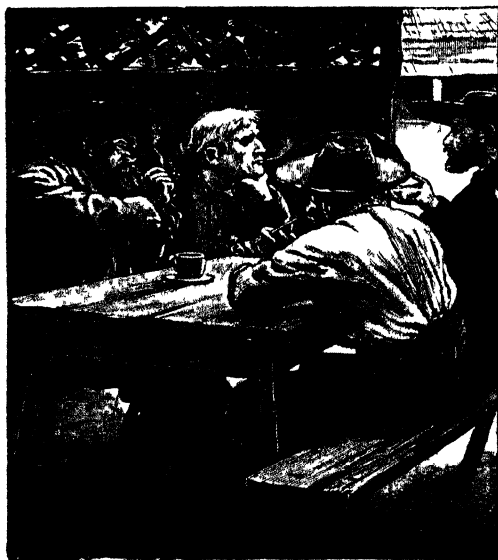
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