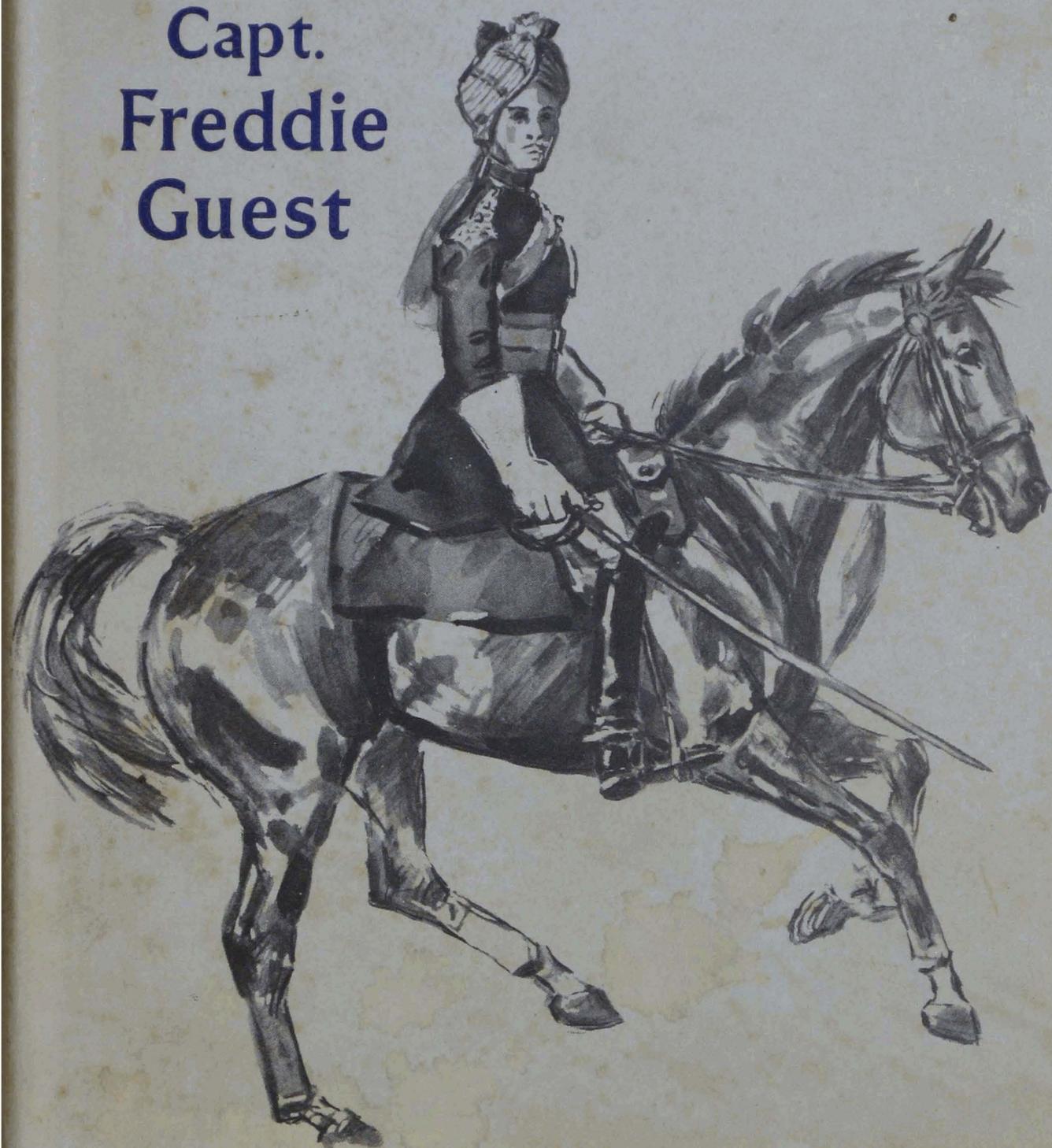


# INDIAN CAVALRYMAN

Capt.  
Freddie  
Guest



CAPTAIN FREDDIE GUEST

# Indian Cavalryman



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*To*

**MY GRANDSON**

**RICHARD CHARLES SCOTT**

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## Preface

**T**HE list of interesting and complicated careers offered by the India and Colonial Offices between the wars were many, such as Indian Civil, Forestry, Police, East and West African Political, etc.; but, to the man who liked soldiering, the Indian Cavalry stood in a class by itself.

Seldom has there been offered to a young man of British birth a more adventurous, exciting and colourful life than that of an officer of the Indian Cavalry.

The question quickly arises—why single out the cavalry from the infantry or other services of the Indian Army? The answer is that, owing to the different roles and functions of the cavalry, they were more fortunate in being stationed in the large cantonments during peacetime.

The Indian Infantry, on the other hand, often found themselves in some really unpleasant spots and would remain there for years. Also, because of the trying heat of India in hot weather, it was surely better to be horsed than on foot. In those days, when there was no mechanised transport, long marches had to be carried out which taxed the endurance of the toughest. To the cavalry went the pleasant jobs, such as those of A.D.C. to the viceroys, governors, generals and of escort for the many ceremonials for which India, in those days, was renowned.

The romantic names of the different regiments together with the colourful variation of uniforms were accepted features of the Indian Cavalry. It is difficult for those of us who were once privileged to serve in this exotic army to realize that it has already passed into history.

I feel that, for the benefit of those countries which tend to belittle the munificence of the British Empire, now the

Commonwealth, it should be made clear that the British officers undoubtedly gave more to India than they took from her. In the latter part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth it was virtually impossible for a young cavalry officer to serve in a regiment unless he had independent means. This meant that he actually paid out of his own resources for the distinction of serving the government of India. Admittedly we had a grand life, but this again was by our own making and efforts. The Indian Cavalry Regimental Officers' Messes of today still possess the silver (including all the sporting trophies), furniture, plate and appointments which were ungrudgingly handed over to them but which were bought and won by the British officers of the past.

That they appreciate what we have done for them there is no question, as can be seen by the way they revere and carry on the old customs and traditions of those regiments which are still in existence and also by the way they endeavour to keep in touch with the various regimental associations still carrying on in England. We wish them every good fortune and may they enjoy life to the full as we certainly did.

The Indian Cavalry reached its zenith during the First World War with over forty regiments, if one includes the Body Guards, although these were reduced considerably after the war when the amalgamations took place.

It is interesting to recall some of the grand but strange-sounding names of those days, many of which have now ceased to exist.

The Governor General's Body Guard, 3rd Skinner's Horse, 7th Haryana Lancers, 9th Hodson's Horse, 11th Probyn's Horse, 15th Cureton's Mooltanis, 22nd Sam Browne's Cavalry, 29th Deccan Horse, 34th Poona Horse, 37th Balach Horse, 38th Central India Horse.

The Body Guard was by far the oldest, having been raised in 1774. The Indian Cavalry as a force began to take shape just after the Battle of Waterloo, in 1817, when several regiments were raised. It therefore existed as a British force for just one hundred and thirty years.

## Voyage to India

WE were so seasick that five men literally went mad. When the ship reached Valetta's famous harbour on the island of Malta, we leaned on the ship's rails and watched the poor devils being swung over the side in stretchers to the waiting ambulances on the quayside below.

The S.S. *Ceramic* had left Southampton in the dead of night only seven days previously. She had been hurriedly converted into a troopship and with five thousand officers and men on board had steamed out into the English Channel on her way to India via the Suez Canal.

From the very beginning of that voyage things had gone badly. The seas were rough and when we entered the Bay of Biscay a storm was at its height. Within forty-eight hours the ship had become a floating cuspidor. Most of the officers and men and half the crew were ill with seasickness.

What intensified the trouble was that, although the ship was twenty-five thousand tons, she was so crammed full of troops that it was almost impossible to move around to try to get away from those who had been so quickly stricken with that dreadful malady.

I was one of a small company of officer cadets in the troopship who were on their way to India to be trained as British officers for the Indian Army as distinct from the British Army.

Our company was attached to one of the British regiments on board for all purposes, such as discipline, guard duties, pay and so on. We were dressed as privates except that we wore the

distinctive white tape under our shoulder straps which marked us as officer cadets.

'Lights out' had sounded on the bugles almost as soon as the ship steamed from the docks at Southampton into the open Channel. However, no one appeared to want to sleep and there was a great deal of pent-up excitement in the air. In the next bunk to me was a school friend of mine who, like myself, was one of the Indian Army cadets.

'Well, Tom,' I whispered to him, 'we're leaving England at last. How do you feel? Homesick?' I queried. I knew that he was the only boy in his family but had three pretty sisters besides a devoted father and mother and was the centre of interest. I felt sure he would miss them.

'No,' he answered, 'not unduly, but I am sure that if this confounded ship is going to continue to behave like this I shall be not homesick but damned seasick. How about you, Freddie?'

I, on the other hand, had come straight from boarding school and the army life did not seem all that different except that I had a feeling of suddenly becoming a man overnight. I had grown up completely detached and had learnt to rely on myself, and I thought my independence was now standing me in good stead.

'I'm feeling grand, Tom,' I answered slowly. 'This is just the kind of life I had hoped for, but I had not expected things to happen quite so soon. I consider myself lucky to be able to get started on our chosen career so quickly. You know,' I added, 'I just managed to wangle my age and got here only by the skin of my teeth.'

'Yes, Freddie,' he whispered back. 'Mind you keep quiet about it or they will be sending you back to school for being under age.'

'Too late now,' I chuckled.

The buzz of talking gradually got louder and louder until the voice of the sergeant suddenly boomed out. 'Stop that talking everybody! Didn't you hear the bugle? The next man who talks will be put on a charge. I could do with some names for fatigues. There'll be plenty of horrible jobs tomorrow by the sounds of some of you.'

With that ghastly threat the deck became silent and presently most of us fell asleep. But not for long. The ship was tossing badly and the disgusting sounds of seasickness began to be heard on all sides. As the unfortunate devils tried to scramble to the upper decks they stumbled over the feet of the crowded men sleeping on the floors and ended up by being sick over them. The cursing and swearing became intense and the situation was already beginning to be serious. The unfortunate N.C.O.s who should have been maintaining some kind of order were themselves too sick to do so.

It did not need bugles to sound reveille as the night had been just too ghastly for most people and everyone was in a hurry to get up on deck to try and get some fresh air. One of the major troubles was that where we slept we ate and the bunks had to be rolled up and the mess decks cleaned before anyone was allowed to go. Most people complained they were too ill to work and the sickness was already beginning to get out of hand.

The ship was crowded to capacity and it now became obvious that to pack five thousand troops on board was only possible providing things went according to plan. It quickly dawned on us that the voyage was going to be a horrible nightmare if this confounded seasickness continued.

Breakfast was no sooner over than the bugles sounded for boat stations. This was the drill which was to be observed in all cases of alarm. Although we realized it was necessary, it did not take us long to find out what a bore it was to become. It took place at all times, both day and night, and it was not surprising that with continual practice we became proficient. From the moment the bugles sounded for boat stations until the time everyone was at his post only four minutes elapsed; and this, considering the size of the ship and the number of men involved, was a really creditable performance.

When we paraded on the upper boat decks that first morning and glanced out to sea it was with a sense of relief that we were able to sight our escort for the first time. This consisted of two destroyers, one on each flank. They not only gave us a feeling of security, as they carried out their duties by making

wide detours and returning to their respective patrol positions, but they were also something to look at and talk about during the day. They did not stay with us very long, however, for as we rounded the north coast of France and Ushant Island to enter the Bay of Biscay, they gave us a farewell tootle on their sirens, which was answered by three lusty cheers from five thousand throats. They came in near enough for them to hear us and then quickly faded away out of sight, much to our regret.

Our entry into the Bay of Biscay was the real beginning of our troubles. The south-west winds hit us full blast and it was rough enough to upset the stomachs of most people. The decks quickly became a mass of seasick soldiers and in an incredibly short space of time the stench was so unbearable that even the strongest were affected. It soon developed into a major problem and the congested decks added to the general deterioration of the situation.

By the time we reached Cape Finistere, off the north coast of Spain, where the Atlantic rollers made their presence felt, the troopship was in such a state of seasickness that it was almost out of hand.

The captain of the ship and the O.C. troops decided to call a parade of the officers, who were, of course, just as bad as the men, and reprimanded them severely for allowing the sickness to get out of control. They were ordered to pull themselves together, get the men on parade as much as possible, and so try to help them get over their frightful malady.

Gradually the officers began to bring the men under control and things improved, but of the many voyages I made during my life I never remember seeing seasickness getting such a hold on a ship. The situation was saved when we reached Cape St. Vincent and turned eastward through the Straits of Gibraltar to the Mediterranean Sea. I often wondered just what would have happened if our voyage had continued on down the African coast. I had managed to keep fairly free of the sickness but had succumbed once or twice owing to being so surrounded by it.

Early one morning, just before the bugles sounded Reveille, a cry went up that Gibraltar was in sight. We were up on deck

in a flash and my first sight of that mighty rock was indeed inspiring. Although I have seen it many times since, that first vision has always remained a vivid memory. There was a slight mist as we approached but suddenly it lifted and there, in its majestic setting, was the Rock in all its glory.

The early morning sub-tropical sun was just rising, catching it a glancing blow on its purple face. The blue of the sea shivered beneath us and touched off a truly magnificent picture as we came sailing in from the west.

In the next few hours an amazing change came over the whole ship; the sun of the Mediterranean blazed down on us and suddenly everyone was up and about—the sickness departed as quickly as it came. The ship was cleaned and in a spick-and-span condition once more. Orders were given for everybody to change into tropical kit while boat stations was no longer a bore as everyone was anxious to get up on to the boat deck and remain out in the sun for as long as possible. Life on board had quickly become more tolerable in spite of the overcrowding; games were organized, including the everlasting Tombola or Housie Housie which the troops preferred to call it. I have often wondered how troopships would get on without this popular game. Although I have never been very interested in it there is no doubt that for keeping soldiers quiet and occupied for hours on end it has no equal. One can almost say it was the forerunner of the football pools; indeed the two are really very similar in their different ways.

‘Hallo, Tom,’ I said, as I saw my friend coming along the deck, ‘where have you been?’

‘Oh, just the odd spot of fatigue,’ he answered. ‘I have been down into the Frig stores helping to get the frozen meat out. Very interesting and a good opportunity to have a cool off. It is so hot up here. But,’ he said, ‘have you heard the news?’

With that remark we both laughed. It was always a joke when people started to talk about news on the ship. It was usually associated with rumour and there was more than enough of that. One day it would be that we were going to land in France, another that we were off course as we had been

chased all night by German submarines and yet another that the ship was turning back to go around the Cape.

‘No, Tom,’ I played up to him, ‘I have not heard the latest. What is it?’

‘Well,’ he said, ‘I hear we are calling in at Malta tomorrow and unloading the special sick cases.’

‘Well,’ I said, ‘that sounds to me to be very feasible, but have we men as bad as that?’

‘Yes,’ he answered. ‘I’ve heard that there are five lunatics to be landed.’

‘Lunatics!’ I exclaimed.

‘Yes, it appears that when the ship was going through the Bay some men were so seasick that they just went off their heads and have not yet recovered.’ He continued, ‘I am certain it is true as the ship’s doctor was down at the meat store and I heard him talking to one of the ship’s officers about it.’

And, sure enough, it was true. The next morning we steamed into Valetta harbour and while we took on coal we watched the stretcher cases being swung over the side and hurried away in the ambulances. There were, of course, other cases as well, as a ship with five thousand men on board was bound to have a certain percentage of illness.

Those five cases of lunacy through seasickness have always stuck in my mind as being the most unfortunate way for a soldier to become a war casualty.

However, life went steadily on and the following night I was doing my turn of guard duty when suddenly the boat stations alarm sounded. It was about one o’clock in the morning and as the troops came tumbling to their stations great excitement prevailed as there was no doubt that something out of the ordinary was happening. The ship was fairly throbbing with speed and it was obvious that a submarine had been sighted. The Royal Navy had suddenly appeared from nowhere and we could see and hear the flashes caused by the dropping of depth charges from torpedo boats far away to our stern. It was indeed an eerie feeling just standing there in the dark of night waiting for things to happen but being unable to do anything about it.

Presently there was a bigger explosion than usual and the cry went up that the navy had succeeded in sinking a German submarine, and it turned out that this was so. It also appeared later that this was the first enemy submarine to be sunk in the Mediterranean.

Except for an occasional alarm nothing of any special note happened in the next few days and at last we sighted the famous statue of Ferdinand de Lesseps, which marked the entrance to the Suez Canal. It is hard to realize that this monument to the celebrated French Consul no longer exists owing to the childish fury of an illiterate mob. It was destroyed by the very people who should have revered his name, for Egyptians have a lot for which to thank him. We ourselves have blessed his name over the years, especially those of us who were destined to spend so much of our lives in India.

Our sole means of transport to England in those days was by ship. I wonder how many of us stopped to think and realize that the Suez Canal saved us a distance of no less than four thousand miles in the journey from India to England each time we came home on leave. Considering the many times I have made this journey over the years, the Canal must have saved me alone many, many thousands of miles and months and months of time—a very sobering thought.

We entered Port Said on that lovely morning and the great change-over from the Western to the Eastern way of life seemed to come upon us very suddenly. This quickly changing scene has, over the years, always struck me very forcibly. I have never been anything else but awed by this striking phenomenon.

A great crowd of Egyptians, naval and military officials, had assembled on the quayside as the ship slowly made her way to the dock. Apparently the unusual interest was due to the fact that S.S. *Ceramic* with her twenty-five thousand tons was the largest ship up to that time to attempt to go through the Canal. Certainly as we docked we seemed to tower above the buildings, and that amazing emporium, Simon Marks, just across the quayside, looked quite dwarfed beside us.

What drew our attention among the military personnel on

the quayside was the large number of Australian and New Zealand soldiers (better known as the Anzacs). Evidently everyone concerned knew of our arrival and it was obvious that we were to be given priority so that no time would be wasted in getting us through. In a very short time we were away again, and began our passage down the Canal. It was soon noticeable that the ship was going to be a tight fit, for as we slowly entered the narrow portions of the Canal, the sides of the big liner seemed to touch the actual banks. This caused the water to flood the towpaths on either side, causing alarm to the groups of workers on them.

As we proceeded on our way we saw the camps of the Anzacs spaced at frequent intervals. It was not long before a great deal of good-natured banter was going on between the troops on the ship and the troops on the shores. Leg-pulling and chaffing became the keynote, all taken in good spirit on both sides. As we slowly passed the more lonely outposts there were yells such as 'What are you waiting for, Aussie?' And the replies came back, 'A bus,' 'My girl friend,' or 'The pubs to open'. But, as we got farther and farther along the Canal, the sentry posts became smaller and more solitary until we seemed to reach the last man. As the big ship approached him with the best part of five thousand men looking down on him, he got in his yell first. In a powerful voice he called out, 'Are we downhearted?' With one accord the ship yelled back, 'No!' Quickly came the lone voice of the solitary sentry: 'Then you bloody soon will be.' The explosion of laughter from the ship was the loudest I ever heard. That sentry was rewarded by an amazing shower of cigarettes which he must have remembered for the rest of his life.

We had passed the last outposts of the Anzacs and were now entering the first of the lakes. The journey so far had been extremely slow—I would imagine it was made at about half the usual speed of ships making the trip regularly—the reason being that we were, at that time, about seven thousand tons larger than the biggest ships which used the Canal. To give one some idea of the speed: there were several instances where Anzac soldiers had walked with us and talked to us from the

towpath for one or two miles. We entered the lake and it was decided that we should anchor for a time to let the ships on the up journey carry on as our slowness was putting the normal schedule out of order. This stop gave us time to sit around and watch the working of the Canal in all its aspects. There we saw the big dredgers at their continual task of keeping the channels clear. We saw the coming and going of the many types of craft which used the Canal, and the strange sailing boats with their bamboo masts and patched-up sails looking almost as old and ancient as the very pyramids themselves.

To young cadets it was all very thrilling, and, although we heard some of the old soldiers complain of the heat which was blowing across from the desert, we were in no way distressed or uncomfortable. We did, however, find the pith helmets a bit of a nuisance as the orders were that they must be worn in the open at all times, it being an offence to be caught not wearing one. The heat was certainly beginning to be felt by all, but just when it began to get really trying, we weighed anchor and once again steamed into the narrows of the Canal.

It was not long before we reached the Bitter Lakes and with this big expanse of water the air cooled considerably to the relief of everyone. We were definitely feeling the effects of the overcrowding but, as someone pointed out, we had not yet reached the Red Sea.

We finally got to the end of the Canal and stopped to coal at Port Suez. This was our last stop, for which everyone was thankful, as the heat was beginning to tell. As we steamed into the Red Sea the sun became really hot, but owing to the breeze it did not strike one quite so badly as in the Canal.

The following day, however, the heat became quite unbearable below decks with the result that everyone crowded on to the promenade and upper decks, and the congestion became almost intolerable. Men were now going down like flies with heat stroke and once again the situation threatened to get out of hand. How thankful we were when night came with its coolness; but it was still trying to go below owing to the heat and stench. The last day in the Red Sea was so unbearably hot, as the two coasts of Africa and Arabia closed in and

what little wind there was dropped completely, that we were thankful when we at last reached Aden.

Once again we were rewarded with the sight of the Rock which was something to be remembered. It was in the evening when we saw it, with the tropical sunlight giving it a rather strange, sinister look I thought. The general impression was that Aden did not look a very inviting place in which to be stationed.

There were no further incidents of any note as we crossed the Arabian Sea, except that as we once again reached the more open sea with its rollers the ship experienced another bout of seasickness, but not nearly so many were affected. To the great relief of all we came at long last in sight of our final destination, Bombay and India.

I was leaning over the rails on deck with my friend and companion, Tom Thompson, as we slowly entered the harbour.

‘Well, Tom,’ I said quietly, ‘here we are at long last. How do you feel about it?’

He did not answer for a moment; then he gripped my arm firmly and said, ‘Freddie, I want to cry, but I’m not sure whether it is with excitement or just plain homesickness.’

With that he let go of my arm and walked away. I did not follow.

We had our first view of Bombay in the morning after breakfast. To my mind it has the most eastern look of any of the Indian or Far East harbours. As the ship approaches, one is enchanted by the sight of the numerous palm trees which show up for miles along the Bombay coast. Then, as the ship nears the dock, the ‘Gateway of India’ suddenly rises up from the quayside and is framed by the domes of the Taj Hotel and the various tall buildings which have a particularly Oriental appearance. Added to this is the vast Indian crowd which meets and greets every ship which enters the port. There is an air of bustle and excitement which surpasses any similar experience elsewhere. However, when a troopship of this size comes in, it is by no means certain that one is going to get off it in a hurry, and so it was in our case.

We were not entraining until that night and so, after some

considerable time, we were given leave for six hours in which to have a look around Bombay. It was a wonderful feeling to be able to put one's feet on shore and walk about, after having been cooped up on board a troopship for nearly a month.

We went off in small parties. In our party there were six of us, including my bosom companion, Tom Thompson. We set off for a walk along Marine Parade, but had not been going long when a British civilian stopped and asked us if we would like to see Bombay. We said we would and he just hired a two-horse carriage and told us to jump in. He was an Englishman who had spent many years in India, particularly in Bombay, and was kind enough not only to show us around but also to take us into the Taj Mahal Hotel and invite us to lunch at his expense. Our first impression of India was certainly a good one! We finally thanked our host and said good-bye to him and made our way back to the ship.

It takes a lot of trains to move five thousand troops and it took a long time to entrain them all. Our small party, which was bound for Wellington in the Nilgiri Hills in southern India, had to wait until ten o'clock that night before we boarded the train for Bangalore, that delightful station on the Deccan. From here we would get our train to Wellington where our cadet school was situated.

Our troubles with overcrowding were not yet over as the special troop train was filled to capacity. Two regiments were bound for Bangalore, together with various oddments, such as the Supply Corps and medicals for the large European hospital there. However, we were entrained at last and we drew out of Bombay Station with a certain amount of relief and the welcome knowledge that we had finished with that dreadful voyage. Admittedly, it had been interesting, but the awful heat and discomfort of those last weeks had been just a little too much, even for the toughest.

We soon realized, however, that our trials were not yet over as railway travel in India was just as uncomfortable as a troopship. We had five days on the train before us and with six of us to one compartment it looked as if we were in for a rough journey. There were only four bunks and with all our

kit and baggage it was horribly congested, to say the least of it. We tossed up as to which two would sleep on the floor, but after such a full day nobody worried and it did not take us long to settle down. In a very short time we were all asleep.

In the morning our first halt was that most famous of all Indian stations, Poona. There was a general chuckle all round as the name was mentioned. How it has come to be understood as the hallmark of snobbery of retired officers is difficult to fathom but that it bears that tab there can be little doubt.

In my opinion it is owing to the strange phonetic sound of the name itself, together with the fact that it is practically impossible for any soldier to be in India for any length of time without being stationed there at some time or other.

We did not stop for long and the journey took us through the wonderful rugged scenery of the Western Ghats. We climbed steadily for three thousand feet to reach the cool plateau of the Deccan. The great point of interest we had been told to look for was the Duke's nose and, sure enough, we soon spotted this strange phenomenon. There, standing high above the surrounding rocks, is that huge unmistakable profile of the Duke of Wellington's face showing, so clearly, that wonderful aquiline nose which is so distinctive to him. One's first impression is that it has been carved by a gang of coolies working on the rock under the direction of some sculptor, but, as the train passes near and beneath it, this illusion soon vanishes. It does seem so strange and mysterious, though entirely in keeping with mystic India, that the one man who did so much to shape the destiny of that country (with the possible exception of Clive) should have an eternal natural monument there for all to see. A sobering thought for those of us who have spent so many years in India and understand what the Duke of Wellington meant to that great country.

We continued on our way and as we gradually climbed up on to the plateau, the change in the climate was very noticeable. At last we reached Bangalore where we were able to break our journey for a few hours before going on to the Nilgiris.

What a fine station it was! The home for so many years of

that famous corps, 'The Sappers and Miners', who were indeed lucky to have such a place as their permanent headquarters and were the envy of all. The climate, without a doubt, must rank as one of the finest in the whole world. I have been to many countries during my life but I have yet to come across a spot which could equal it for constant good weather. The sun shines steadily, but not uncomfortably, for nine months of the year. During the monsoons, which prevail during the other three months, it is blessed with rain which seldom lasts for more than an hour or two each day and which causes the wonderful flowering trees to blossom forth in all their gorgeous splendour.

## Cadet School

THE troop train by which we had travelled from Bombay had reached its terminus and the regiments had marched off to those fine barracks, 'Baird' and 'Cornwallis'. We were now reduced to our original small party of cadets under orders to continue our journey by ordinary passenger train to Wellington, just over a hundred miles south of Bangalore and situated in the heart of the Nilgiri Hills.

We left that evening and arrived the following afternoon. We had reached our destination at long last and from the moment of our arrival things changed with a suddenness which was truly remarkable. Equal to the ordinary private soldier on board the troopship, we now found ourselves to be no more than the lowest specimen of humanity that existed on earth. The almighty sergeant major and his terrifying staff had taken us over, body and soul. From now on we had to get permission for everything, and as one wag put it, 'Do we have to ask permission to breathe?' It was as bad as that. They were trying to make soldiers of us, and how they tried. The drill square became the nearest thing to purgatory that exists on this earth.

At the end of the first week we had almost reached breaking point, but were beginning to understand what it was all about. In the second and third weeks we started voice command training, that is that we tried to drill one another by words of command shouted out from an incredible distance apart. Along one side of the parade ground a line of men stood at intervals of twenty paces facing a similar line on the other side of the parade ground. Each man carried a rifle and the idea was that a man should drill his opposite number across the

square by shouting, or rather bawling, out his words of command. The trouble arose when, because everybody screeched out orders at the same time, the noise became so terrible that nobody heard anything. The result was that one's opposite number did nothing at all but stand still.

After two days of this confounded exercise the cadet school was the quietest place imaginable because nobody was able to talk at all; everyone's voice had completely gone.

From these horrible tasks we passed on to that most important form of infantry training of that time, route marching. We were made to march incredible distances day after day until the very sight of a pair of marching boots made us feel positively ill! In between times, while all this was going on, we studied military law, military history, map reading, mule and animal transport, field engineering, weapon training of all kinds, known in those days as 'musketry', man management, hygiene, and, last but not least, personal appearance. At all times we had to be scrupulously smart in washed and ironed khaki drill uniforms with polished buttons and blanched equipment. We changed our clothes so many times a day that it was nothing short of a miracle that we kept pace with it. Through all this we had to keep our rifles spotlessly clean so that they could be inspected without warning at any moment. At the end of a day bed was the most welcome place and we did not need to be sent there. Some of us younger ones could not get there quick enough. How swiftly the days passed but what wonderful soldiers we became.

The rivalry between the different companies, of which there were six, was intense, both in work and sport. I was one of the lucky ones in that all forms of sport came easily to me and because of this fact, one's failings in other subjects were overlooked in many instances. To be in any of the representative teams was to be one of the favoured, and got one out of all kinds of the more irksome duties. I consider that my success at games enabled me to get through those subjects at which I was not particularly successful, for which I was very thankful.

At last the pace began to slacken and we were beginning to be treated more like human beings; life became enjoyable

and the time passed quicker than ever. The final exams were upon us and for days we appeared before the various examining boards of instructors. We were tested in all forms of outside work followed by days of paper exams. It was interesting to watch the names on the lists move up or down according to the placings in the various subjects. The fluctuations were considerable as daily we eagerly scanned the different lists to see the results. At last the final results appeared and everyone was anxious to know his fate—had he passed or failed? There were the inevitable shocks and surprises which are common to most examinations. There were the usual surprises concerning those cadets who had come out on top and those who had failed, and concerning the subjects one had expected to do well in but had done the reverse—and, of course, *vice versa*.

High marks for games and outside work had covered up weaknesses in one or two of the papers, as in my case, but I was well up the list and had nothing to worry about. Nor had my friend, Thompson.

‘Well, Tom, that’s that,’ I said as we scanned the boards together. ‘I am glad it’s over.’

‘Yes, Freddie,’ he answered. ‘I think this calls for a beat-up tonight, don’t you?’

I laughed. ‘We must be careful, Tom, and not get too drunk or we could still be out on our ears.’

That evening the last guest night took place and great were the celebrations. Everyone was in high spirits and if one or two drank a little more than was necessary, nobody bothered.

The general concensus of opinion was that it had been a good, hard course but that everybody was ‘bloody glad’ it was over. All we had to wait for now were the postings, which were expected to be on view the next day. These were without doubt the most important climax to the whole course. The pattern of our young lives was mapped on them. They would show the regiment of the Indian Army to which each officer was posted and also the British regiment in India to which he would be attached for one year before joining his Indian regiment. It was the custom for a young officer going into the Indian Army to continue his training for one year with a British regiment

before taking up his final appointment. In that year he was expected to gain experience in those important subjects, discipline, man management and mess conduct. He would also be a year older and not quite so young before joining the Indian Army where the long-serving private soldier is more predominant than in the British Army. In this British regiment he would have the help and guidance of experienced N.C.O.s in the performance of his numerous duties and so gain valuable experience in the handling of men.

The following day was one of excitement. It was generally expected that the postings would be displayed on the main notice board around noon, and as we came out from the last lecture of the morning there was a rush for the notice board. Sure enough, there were the fateful lists which meant so much to every one of us. To a stranger coming in from outside these lists would appear to be nothing very special. All that was on them was:

- 2nd Lieut. Smith—1st Gurkhas attached to The King's Regiment (Liverpool).
- 2nd Lieut. Brown—3rd Skinners Horse attached to The Devonshire Regiment.
- 2nd Lieut. Jones.—61st Pioneers attached to The Royal Engineers.
- 2nd Lieut. Guest.—8th Cavalry attached to The Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own).

In the owners of the names, however, they aroused piquant feelings, followed by a strange emotion which is hard to describe. Here were the lists for which we had worked hard for so many months and, in some cases, years. There on the lists were the regiments with which our names were coupled and which were to play such an important part in our lives in the years to come. In this regiment one would be expected to serve and spend many years of one's military life. To the young man who had chosen the regular army for his career this was indeed one of the most important turning points in his life.

One knew that, because the regiment was of the Indian

Army, the number of British officers would be few, and immediately the thought sprang to mind—what would they be like? What would the colonel be like? Would he and the officers be easy to get on with? Would one make a bad start and get off on the wrong foot and perhaps find life difficult? Would the Indian officers and men of the regiment accept the newcomer as one of them? These thoughts, or similar ones, must have rushed through the minds of most of us as we stood and gazed at the lists.

For a few moments there was a peculiar silence which one seldom associated with a group of 'Gentlemen Cadets' as they were known. No doubt it was because of the above thoughts and their innermost feelings, but, after a moment, there came a miniature explosion as everybody started to talk at once. The din was understandable.

Some expressed slight disappointment because they saw they had not been posted to the regiment of their first choice. There were, of course, a number of reasons for this. A cadet was allowed to put down in order of preference three regiments, and, according to vacancies in those regiments, he would be posted accordingly.

Why cadets chose certain regiments was easy enough to understand. In many instances it was a question of family connexions. Possibly a father or an uncle, or a relative on either the father's or mother's side of the family, had served with a particular regiment at some time or another. This would invariably carry weight with its commanding officer. This family connexion was indeed conspicuous in many regiments of the Indian Army and such names as Rivett Carnac, Young-husband, Hamilton, De Lisle, Lumsden, quickly come to mind.

In my own particular case I had an uncle who had served many years in India with the British Army. In my boyhood days he had told me stories of his service in India which had created a desire on my part to serve in India, particularly in the Indian Army. My love of horses had decided me to try for the Indian Cavalry and it was a great satisfaction when I saw my name posted to a cavalry regiment. I had previously met a Lieut.-Colonel Rivett Carnac who commanded the 14th Jat

Lancers and he was good enough to agree to have me in his regiment should there be a vacancy. I had put this regiment as my first choice. I had, however, stated that, failing this, I was prepared to go to any other cavalry regiment and this rather subtle move on my part was apparently the deciding factor.

I glanced quickly through the list of postings and saw at once that my first choice had not been successful but noted with satisfaction that I had been posted to the 8th Cavalry, Indian Army. My one year's attachment to a British regiment in India was to the Middlesex Regiment, of which there were two or three battalions serving in India at that time. From now on, I realized that I was completely on my own as I knew no one in either of the regiments to which I was going. Perhaps for a moment, for the first time, I felt rather lonely.

After a second's thought, however, I considered myself lucky to be going into the cavalry and received the congratulations of the other cadets who had not been quite so successful owing to the scarcity of vacancies.

It was with mixed thoughts and feelings we grouped together and discussed our various postings with excitement as to where the various regiments were stationed. We next discussed our respective journeys which would spread us all over India.

During the next few days the break-up was complete. Cadets were leaving at different times according to their train times of departure. Some would be going in groups to the large cantonments of northern India, others would have to depart singly for some outlandish destination. The times and departures of the various trains were displayed on the notice board. The necessary papers were collected from the orderly room and hurried farewells were taken. It was strange to realize that in many cases men who had been great friends just parted and never saw or even heard of one another again. Such was the case with me and my friend, Thompson. We travelled a little way together and then separated as he was off to Calcutta while I was to stay in southern India. Strangely enough, we never ran into one another again.

My destination was Bangalore where the British regiment, to which I was attached for one year, was stationed. I had

passed through it on my way to the cadet school and had been down on leave from the Nilgiris once or twice so I was feeling quite happy about going there as I had been rather impressed with the place.

We soon arrived at my destination and I stayed to see my friend off to Bombay where he would catch the mail train to Calcutta. Then I gathered my kit together, climbed into a *gharri*, and drove to the officer's mess in Trinity Road at the end of the large Maidan which runs through the centre of Bangalore. It appeared my regiment was in a brigade which had left recently for the frontier of India and that only the cadres of the various regiments were left behind. This resulted in a combined station mess—much more easy and informal than a regimental one.

It did not take long to find quarters and settle down to depot life with its hundred-and-one jobs, such as receiving and despatching drafts of men either to their regiments or sending them on leave. As is usual in depots, officers are scarce and there is always plenty of work. I was soon busy and the cadet school quickly became a thing of the past. From an interview with the adjutant of the combined depots I understood I was to stay there a few weeks but would very shortly be sent with a draft to join a British regiment on the North-West Frontier.

I was thrilled with the idea as the thought of being able to see active service before joining my Indian Army regiment was something I had not expected. It was generally understood that cavalry regiments did not get the same opportunities for service on the Frontier because this was more essentially work for the infantry. I took every opportunity of talking to officers and N.C.O.s who had served on the Frontier to try and get some idea of what to expect and what training would be the best for me to specialize in.

In the meantime I was given all kinds of work which gave me valuable experience in dealing with men. On one occasion, however, I was detailed for one of the most unusual and unpleasant jobs I ever experienced in the whole of my service career. It was indeed my first experience in having to deal with women in an official capacity. It shook my youthfulness

and trust in my fellow men and in human nature in general. I certainly saw life from a totally different and rather a sordid angle.

A certain British Regular Army regiment, which shall be nameless, had been ordered back to England after many years' service overseas. The regiment at this time was on active service in the Persian Gulf and it was decided that they should sail direct from there without returning to India first. Previously they had been stationed in Bangalore for some years before going overseas. As was usual they had left behind an established depot which looked after the regiment's interests. Besides the usual work of keeping the battalion supplied with drafts, looking after returned casualties, and keeping check on surplus kits and stores, there was the extremely difficult task of dealing with the wives of the N.C.O.s and men who had, of course, been left behind when the regiment went on active service.

Now that the regiment was already on its way to England it was decided that the wives and children should follow in due course. My job was to sort them out and get their papers and passports in order for their move. It sounded simple enough, but what a load of trouble I ran into.

I duly set up a special office for the purpose. I issued orders to the effect that all wives were to be brought before me for inspection of their marriage certificates and the birth registration of their children. I would then be able to make out a correct and formal list of those who would eventually sail for England. On the surface it appeared as a straightforward and plain instruction, but the effect was dynamic. The storm which burst around me was such as I never want to experience again!

When I arrived at my office on the morning following the issuing of the order, I found my sergeant-major surrounded by a large crowd of excited and angry women of all colours with their crying and frightened children clinging to them. As soon as I appeared they rushed over to me in a frenzy and tore at my uniform, waving pieces of paper at me and shouting. With the help of the sergeant-major I managed to struggle into my office and then asked him what the trouble was.

He explained he had dropped the first bombshell by declaring that I would see only those women who were in possession of their marriage certificates. They would be issued with passports and given warrants for the voyage to England. Although this appeared to be quite a straightforward statement the effect was too alarming and tragic for words. The children screamed and the women became very abusive and it was with difficulty that the sergeant-major restored some kind of order.

As the women came before me the cause of the trouble was very obvious. It appeared that the number of lawful marriage certificates amongst them was very few indeed. The most extraordinary pieces of paper were placed before me which quickly showed up the whole tragic affair. For every genuine legal document there were a dozen which were just scraps of paper, of no value whatsoever. They had been written out by the soldiers themselves. Some would state that Bill Smith was married to Mimi Lou, signed Bill Smith. Others would say, 'Kiki Narani is the wife of Tom Atkins. Signed T. Atkins'. In some instances they were written on coloured or printed paper such as beer-bottle labels or labels from tinned food—in fact, anything which might look impressive.

These unfortunate alliances had taken place while the regiment was overseas and men were continually passing in and out of the depot. The English women who had originally left England with the regiment were, of course, in order. A number of genuine marriages had taken place while the regiment was stationed in India, but the large number of Indian women who were waiting to see me had no proper certificates to support their claims. My decisions caused a riot among them and my movements were so hindered by these women as I went to and from the office that I had to have a protective guard to escort me.

By the time this unhappy business was sorted out I had become very unpopular and I was truly thankful when it was finished, and the orthodox party was finally on the train to Bombay. Even they had to be escorted on their way to the station. It was certainly very pathetic and to my young mind rather tragic, but there was little I could do about it except get on with the job in my official capacity.

## Buck, Bees and Monkeys

A FEW days later the Shikaris came to the mess and reported that there were numbers of buck in the district around Nundi Drooge. There two very high hills stood out and dominated the surrounding countryside about thirty miles north of Bangalore.

I was anxious to experience my first shooting trip in India and a party of four of us decided to go there for a week-end. We were not out after anything big but were contenting ourselves with the buck. We reached the hills in the late afternoon and found a good piece of camping ground on the grassy slopes of Nundi where we pitched our tents. It was a lovely spot with wonderful views of the surrounding country. Our Indian servants cooked an excellent dinner which was appreciated by all, we then made a camp fire which we sat around as the night was cool. After yarning for a time we turned in reasonably early as a full day was expected on the morrow.

After an uneventful night I awoke in the early morning and decided to take a walk down the hill and look for a suitable place from which to draw our water supplies, for drinking and possibly for bathing. I could see a stream in the distance and made my way towards it. Coming across a light track which looked as if it might lead to the water I decided to follow it. Presently the path ran through a lovely, leafy wood with tall, overhanging, brownish-green trees making a delightful shaded lane reminiscent of the countryside of England, although not quite so green. I walked slowly along, enjoying the cool morning air, when suddenly there were the sounds of noisy chattering mingled with ear-piercing screams just as if one

had come upon a children's playground. I looked up sharply and there, in the trees in hundreds, was a huge tribe of monkeys of all shapes and sizes. There were large male apes surrounded by the smaller females with tiny baby monkeys in their arms. They definitely took a dim view of my sudden appearance which had disturbed them in their quiet leafy home.

I, too, was startled as I had not expected to run into such an enormous number at one time. I stopped and looked about me; all I could see was monkey faces peering at me from all angles—they were everywhere. I thought the best thing was to take no notice and started to walk on in as casual a manner as I could. I quickly stopped, however, as I saw all the large males come clambering down from the trees in a most threatening way to take up positions right across my path. At the same time the females and infants let out the most awful screeching and the whole assembly bared their teeth at me. The noise reached an alarming crescendo.

By now I was thoroughly perturbed and did not know quite what to do. When I stopped again the screeching died down but the large males did not move from the track in front of me. I decided I would just try and frighten them away by running forward, shouting and clapping my hands, but I had no sooner started to move forward when the whole tribe came towards me in a most alarming way. Completely unnerved as I could see they meant to be nasty, I decided to turn about and walk away as quietly and as quickly as possible. It was as much as I could do to refrain from bolting but felt this show of fear might cause them to come after me, with what result I didn't dare think! However, this idea worked and I got away without further trouble.

As I gradually retreated back up the track I could hear the screaming and chattering die down. From what I found out later it appeared I had come upon a huge tribal gathering of monkeys right in the middle of their mating season, which was a very dangerous thing for anyone to do. This was one of their favourite haunts and the Indians were particularly careful to avoid it, as these were the sacred monkeys of southern India.

I found my way to the water by another route and then

returned to the camp just in time for breakfast. When I told my story to the others everyone thought it a great joke. I was considered pretty tough and the idea of my being afraid of monkeys caused a good laugh. My reply was that they could go down the track by the same way and try to get through the monkeys themselves. This they said they would do, and after breakfast they went down to the water the way I directed them. The laugh was still on me when they returned, however, as they all declared that they had not seen one monkey of any description.

That day we had some fine shooting and finished up with a good bag of buck and snipe. In the evening we again had a good meal and sat around the camp fire yarning. It was a lovely Indian night and everything seemed peaceful when suddenly there was a yell from young Megson. He called to us to sit tight and not move as he felt the coldness of a snake pass against his bare legs stretched out on the ground. We all strained our eyes towards the place he indicated and there, sure enough, was a large cobra slowly twisting and winding its slithery way across the grass in front of us. It had probably been drawn by the smell of cooking meat or by the light or warmth of the camp fire. One of the party quickly grabbed the tent mallet and killed it with a hard blow on the head.

This incident shook us up a little as from now on everyone imagined that his camp bed was just a haven of rest for snakes. Before turning in we all searched our beds very thoroughly but the joke was that, in the morning when we got up and shook out our beds, J.E. found a large tarantula spider resting snugly under his pillow, and to all appearances it had been there most of the night.

One never knows what to expect in the Indian jungle. The tarantula is, without doubt, the most feared of all spiders in this part of India both by Indians and Europeans. It looks rather like the hand of a human skeleton but with hairs on the fingers. It is black and very sinister-looking and measures five to six inches from front to rear when it is standing up. It is a blood-sucker and like most of the blood-suckers it stings to draw the blood with its poison. There is no doubt that

we were in a particularly wild piece of country on the fringe of the jungle and it was not to be wondered that wild life in its most fearsome forms should be around. I think J.E. got it right when he said that one did not mind it so much during daylight when one was awake but that it gave one the creepy crawlies when one had to try and sleep with them about.

We had not finished with insect life yet. During breakfast we discussed our plans for the day. We were shooting again in the morning but I said I would like to stop early and go for a climb up one of the two peaks to have a look at the view from the top. Two of them were not keen as they considered it would be very hot climbing in the middle of the day, but I argued that it would get cooler the higher we climbed. J.E. agreed with me and said he would like to come. It was arranged that we should all shoot for a couple of hours and then J.E. and I would break off and make for the mountain. We had another bag of snipe and after leaving our guns at the camp the two of us started our climb. It was hot going at the start, in fact so hot that we thought of giving up the idea as the sun was blazing down and the effort of climbing added to our discomfort. However, after continuing for a little while longer, it certainly became noticeably cooler and we were able to take breathers in some delightful shady nooks among the rocky boulders. In our efforts to avoid the sun we had got round to the more densely covered part of the hill.

I began to have doubts as to whether we were wise in going through some of the thick undergrowth unarmed for fear of disturbing some bigger game such as panther or leopard, although J.E. said he was fairly certain that they did not hide at such heights. We were now several hundred feet up and as we looked down on to the plains below, I was inclined to agree with him.

We had reached a small plateau and up to now there had been no climbing in the strict sense; all we had done was to walk up slopes some of which were a little steeper than others. To go higher from this point meant going into a dark rocky corner and actually climbing on to and over some big rocks—there was no other way. We stood close in by the rocks and

were debating as to whether we should go on when a large bee buzzed just in front of J.E.'s face. I glanced round and there above us was a huge cluster of mountain bees. I turned to him and, pointing to them, said, 'That decides it, let's get out of here.' At that moment J.E. struck out with his hand to brush the bee away, and in the next second they were upon us in their thousands. We were, of course, in shirt sleeves and shorts with no protection and the result was one of the most unpleasant experiences of my life. They attacked us from every side and their stinging was agonizing.

We started to run the moment they came for us and we went down that hillside like bats out of hell. They followed us in their hundreds, clinging to our faces, hands, arms, knees, legs and the pain was excruciating. We practically fell down the hill in trying to get away from them, but they never left us. We were now nearly blind with the stinging, as they clung to our eyes in particular. This is always one of their special targets when attacking their victims. Where we were running to I did not know, but there is no doubt that we were making for the water which, luckily for us, we never reached. We were both stung to unconsciousness and dropped in our tracks.

When we were found some hours later we were still unconscious and in a dreadful state. Our faces, hands, arms and legs were swollen to double their normal size and in some cases we were bleeding from the stings.

When I came round I was in the Bangalore hospital with a nurse bending over me taking out stings with a pair of tweezers. The pain was still severe and, in fact, lasted for exactly seventy-two hours, when suddenly it stopped and the swellings began to go down quickly. The nurse told me she had taken over one hundred stings out of my face and head alone. For weeks afterwards I would come across one here and there when brushing or combing my hair. Apparently we had been very lucky in becoming unconscious before reaching the water in our headlong rush towards it. From what we heard it was the usual thing for the bees to chase the animals which disturbed them to the water, hover over them as they ducked to get away from their stings, until they became

unconscious with the poison and were drowned. From this little tragedy we had been spared, but I understand that by this unsought for inoculation by bee stings, we are now immune for life from rheumatism and arthritis, for which I am truly thankful.

As I look back over the years, I always consider that that little shooting trip was one of the most eventful of my life, but the experience gained from it stood me in good stead on many future trips. Through it I was able to avoid some of the pitfalls which lie in wait for those who shoot in the jungles of India.

I had been at the depot three months when the adjutant sent for me one morning. A draft of men were going to Peshawar in northern India to join their regiment which was in camp, training for an expedition which was going to Waziristan very shortly. I was the officer detailed to take charge of the draft. The officer commanding the depot would see me in a few minutes. The next moment I was before the C.O.

‘Ah, Guest,’ he said, ‘you appear to be a keen young officer. I am pleased with the work you have been doing here. I thought you would like this opportunity of going on active service.’

‘Thank you, sir,’ I answered excitedly. ‘I like the idea very much. When do we go?’

He smiled at my enthusiasm as he answered. ‘In three weeks. You will see that your men are vaccinated, inoculated and completely outfitted by that date. Get along to the medical officer right away and make the necessary arrangements. That will be all.’

I saluted smartly and was away before he could change his mind! From what I gathered later from the adjutant, although I was rather young for the job, my exceptional physical fitness had influenced the C.O. in giving me the post.

I had three weeks in which to see that the men were vaccinated and inoculated against smallpox, paratyphoid and plague and to get them properly equipped with all the necessary articles which had to be drawn from the quartermaster’s stores.

The inoculation took a full week because we suffered from

the effects and were in bed for three days, but there were no complications. We drew our arms, equipment, stores etcetera and in a short time were ready to move.

The journey was uneventful but trying, as six days in a train across some of the hottest places in India can be very uncomfortable. We finally reported in to the regiment which was under canvas just outside Peshawar.

## The North-West Frontier

**D**URING the time we were undergoing training for mountain warfare in the country around Peshawar, we were given a rude reminder from the tribesmen that they, too, were in training for our coming. The first essential, they thought, was that if there was going to be a frontier war, they too had better try to replenish their stocks of arms and ammunition.

What more suitable place on which to carry out a raid for this purpose than the Peshawar Garrison, which, at that time, was so full of troops as to be uncomfortable! The barracks in Peshawar were full, and, on the plains outside the cantonment, large camps were going up daily to accommodate the extra troops which were pouring in to form the column from all over India.

When the troops reached the camps, they immediately placed extra double guards on their arms and ammunition, as they had been warned about raiding tribesmen. Of course, the tribesmen were well aware of these special precautions against them and no attempted raids were made at the well-guarded camps.

They looked elsewhere for their chances, and were not long in finding them. One evening a troop train arrived at the station and out poured crowds of soldiers who were only too relieved to get out of the train in which they had been cooped up for days. The train had come from southern India where they had been training, but they had not experienced that extra vigilance with regard to arms which becomes second nature to troops of the north.

They were a territorial battalion which had been sent out from England some months earlier to relieve regular regiments for service overseas. They were, of course, full of enthusiasm, and the idea of seeing service on India's famous North-West Frontier was truly exciting.

As the G on the bugles sounded they poured out of the train and lined up on the platform. The order was given to march to the road just outside the station and pile their rifles and dump their equipment. A sentry was put over the arms whilst they returned to the train to unload their baggage and stores. As was usual at any railway station in India there was always a large crowd of interested Indian spectators. This occasion was no exception and they appeared to be looking on quietly from a reasonable distance.

The troops had returned to the train and were very busy unloading, when suddenly there were yells and commotion. It appeared that among the interested spectators were a group of Pathan tribesmen, looking like ordinary bazaar people, who were just waiting for this chance. They had made a quick rush forward, knifed the unfortunate sentry before he could give the alarm, and every man grabbing a rifle, they were away into the crowded bazaars like lightning. By the time the troops were out of the station there was not a soul to be seen except the badly wounded sentry. It was indeed a damaging blow to the prestige of that particular regiment, as they considered themselves smart and well disciplined. They were just learning frontier warfare the hard way. Needless to say, this regiment never lost another rifle, and made its mark during that campaign which was about to begin.

We were in Peshawar for some weeks while the muster of troops went on, and all kinds of sporting activities took place daily to keep the troops from getting bored and to help to raise their morale. A rather uncommon event took place in which I became the most concerned spectator. It appeared that a certain gunner of the Royal Artillery wanted to try for a particular sporting record. This was an attempt to set up a new time for double sword swinging. The man practising this exercise has a cavalry sword in each hand and swings them in

exactly the same way as Indian clubs are swung—that is, the swords are swung backwards and forwards, sideways, upwards and downwards in unison. There is a standard number of evolutions to the minute to be carried out, and, of course, the whole action must be non-stop from the commencement of the swing until the end of the exercise. The record at this time stood at around the figure of sixty-six hours, which is just under three days and nights. Even though one may not be in sympathy with this particular kind of effort, it is a prodigious one.

I had been taking part in a number of sporting activities which had been going on, and having been successful in quite a number, I was soon singled out as one of the several officers selected to help supervise this rather odd and peculiar record attempt. The officers concerned met and drew lots as to which times we should be allotted for individual supervision.

Our task was to sit at a table on which was a time clock and a stop watch, check up the number of swings to the minute and when the man was being fed, check the number of swings carried out with one hand. We had also to see that he was not helped in any way contrary to the rules which controlled this strange and unusual sport.

The man began his swinging at eleven o'clock on the first night. He had taken a good rest during the day and by starting fresh that night he was expected to have little difficulty with his self-appointed task for the first twenty hours or so. I had already carried out a spell of duty and everything appeared to have gone according to plan.

My next spell of watch was from midnight on the second evening until four o'clock in the morning. I had a feeling, and it was generally agreed, that this might be a difficult and more testing period for the sword swinger.

I arrived just before midnight and relieved the officer doing duty. I asked him how things were going and he stated that everything was O.K. and that the man appeared to be in excellent health and fine fettle. The reason for this was that his friends who were interested in his task had arranged a late dance on this second night with the idea of entertaining him, helping him to keep awake and generally preventing him from

getting bored. The event took place in the barracks dance hall. The man was at one end of the room, on a raised dais, stripped to the waist and gaily swinging away to the time of the dance music. The whole scene presented a most unusual spectacle. The dance band was at the other end of the room and as the dancers tripped around they yelled words of encouragement and made jokes to keep him amused.

As I took my seat at the referee's table and exchanged remarks with the officer I was relieving, everything appeared to be going well. The man looked in wonderful condition and, although perspiring slightly, was performing his self-appointed task with confidence.

At one o'clock in the morning the dance came to an end and after more shouts of encouragement the dancers departed and a rather depressing quietness came over the whole scene. All that was left now was the man still swinging away with his swords, his helpers, or seconds as they were called, a supervising sergeant-instructor of the Physical Training Corps who was acting as my advisor, and, of course, myself.

I settled down in my chair with a book and hoped that my period of duty would pass quickly with little or no incidents.

All went well for just over an hour and then things began to happen with remarkable suddenness. I glanced up from my book and noticed that the man was swaying about more than usual and that his swinging of the swords had lost its rhythm. I picked up my watch and started to check up on the revolutions. All of a sudden there was a terrific clang as one of the swords flew out of the swinger's hand and crashed to the floor. This was an unusual happening as the swords are attached to the wrists by a looped cord. This cord had apparently broken or rotted with sweat and he had lost control of his grip. The rule governing such a happening was that I could give him a warning to pick up his sword and continue swinging again, but that the time allowed for this procedure was ten seconds only, equivalent to the same time as a knock-out at boxing. I was to call out the time in precisely the same way—that is, one, two, three up to ten, and if the sword had not been picked up, then he had broken the rules and was out of the contest.

As I began to call out the time I could see that the man had suddenly lost control of himself and all knowledge of what was going on around him. He was swaying about like a drunken man with wild staring eyes and a nasty, bad-tempered expression and had lost almost completely the power of his limbs.

His seconds were urging him to pull himself together and pick up his sword. They were not allowed to touch it or him. He was a pathetic sight as I continued to count and was swearing and cursing all and sundry. It was one of those extraordinary moments of one's life when ten seconds seem like eternity.

At last I counted him out but as I called out, so this seemed to bring him to some kind of understanding and with it a violent sense of injustice, and a conviction that I was the cause of all the trouble. He suddenly came lurching towards me with a look of mad fury on his face and brandishing the one remaining sword. He looked as if he wanted to kill his imaginary tormentor. I managed to jump up in time and quickly dodged out of his oncoming rush. By this time his seconds and the physical training instructor had grabbed hold of him and brought him down. They managed to rob him of the sword, but he was now fighting like a mad man—as indeed he was! I had to join in and it took the four of us all our time to hold him down. We got hold of some rope and tied his arms and legs together.

I immediately sent for the medical officer, who, luckily enough, quickly arrived. He gave him an injection and gradually our man quietened down. While we were waiting for the M.O. to come we poured buckets of water over him, as he was undoubtedly suffering from heat stroke.

The whole thing was very alarming and I must say I never want to see again such a spectacle, dignified by the name of sport. They kept him in hospital for a few days and when I saw him later he was very apologetic, but appeared little the worse for his extraordinary experience.

According to rumour, a task force was being formed to invade Waziristan on a punitive expedition. It consisted of two columns. One, to be known as the North Column, was to

assemble in the district between and around Peshawar and Nowshera. The other, known as the South Column, was fore-gathering around Rawal Pindi.

Troops were pouring in from everywhere and intense training in mountain warfare had been going on in the surrounding hills for some little time. When the columns were in full strength and had undergone sufficient training they were to entrain to their respective destinations. These were two small fortress stations situated in the North-West Province. The North Column was to be based at Bannu and the South Column at Dera Ismail Khan, better known as D.I.K. From these bases the expedition would set out. The general tactical idea was that the North Column in Bannu would advance across Waziristan in a south-westerly direction and the South Column would march north west from D.I.K. Both columns would finally converge on the capital town of Wana, which lies well hidden in the hills of southern Waziristan.

Provided both columns were successful, the whole country would be covered. Under this plan of campaign the Mahsuds tribesmen of the north and the Wazirs of the south would be forced to come to terms with the G.O.C. the expedition.

The time taken for this operation depended entirely on the amount of resistance offered by the tribesmen to either column. There were many reasons which could cause delay to the venture, such as sickness, bad or unusual weather, which might mean a breakdown in supplies. Either column might meet with fierce resistance by the tribesmen causing it to be held up and so upset the timing of the campaign.

The distance which the North Column had to cover was over two hundred and fifty miles, a formidable task indeed since every inch of the way was to be covered on foot. The South Column were to do about half this distance but was more likely to meet with stronger and stiffer resistance.

Perhaps it would be interesting at this stage to look into the reason why for a hundred years the North-West Frontier of India has been a hostile battleground and a source of trouble to the British rule in India.

It has been said, without a vestige of truth, that the

British have kept the Frontier hostile so that it could be used from time to time as an active service training ground for the British and Indian armies. This is, of course, a complete figment of the imagination. The fact is that in their conquest of India more than a hundred years ago, the British eventually reached the mountainous regions of the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush, a vast terrain of wild unbroken country inhabited in parts by uncouth warring tribesmen, who, from time immemorial, have lived by raiding the more settled farmlands of the plains of India. Their own lands are so barren and unproductive that any little setback in the weather can quickly reduce them to famine standards. They have no particular liking for farming and their badly tilled lands produce nothing like their subsistence requirements.

The result is that, being tough fighting men, they prefer to live free wild lives, gaining their livelihood by raiding the camel convoys which must use the trade routes through the passes and periodically descending to the plains for a full-scale raid on the hard-working farms of India.

Afghanistan, the country which adjoins the north-west of India, has never been helpful in the matter of defending the boundaries, and thereby accepting their share of responsibility. Because of this fact the obvious solution was not possible. The Indian Government would have administered the country up to its boundary and the Afghan Government up to theirs. The failure of the Afghans to play their part meant that the wild tribesmen could take cover in Afghanistan territory with no fear of being brought to task by the Afghan Government and they could then harass the tribesmen on the Indian side whenever the opportunity presented itself. It is difficult to put the blame entirely on the Afghan Government, because, their country being very poor, they were not strong enough to fight and disarm the tribes and so the situation remained unaltered. The tribesmen, mainly Pathans, have been allowed to occupy and live their own wild lives in this mountainous district providing they behaved themselves within reason. When, however, they stopped fighting among themselves and made trouble by raiding the peaceful farms of India, then a punitive

force would be sent against them to try and teach them the error of their ways.

In this particular case the tribesmen had taken advantage of the fact that England was at war with Germany and they considered themselves safe from punishment for the time being. That they had been got at by the enemies of England there can be no doubt, because, when later they were forced to surrender their arms, great quantities of these were of German origin and it was this which enabled them to put up a much stronger resistance than usual. It also caused this expedition to suffer the biggest number of casualties a frontier action of this size had ever known.

For many years the Indian Government had tried to keep the peace by making annual grants of money to the heads of tribes, to enable them to ride the periods of distress. They considered this a cheap alternative to the cost of a campaign. These grants could be withheld at the discretion of the British political officers who administered the various areas according to how well the tribesmen behaved. Things would go well sometimes for long periods, but sooner or later the tribesmen would get bored with the inactivity and their demands for increased grants to keep the peace would dismay their political officers who negotiated with the Indian Government on their behalf. When these negotiations broke down then war became inevitable.

On this occasion, because of their increased supply of arms, they had become arrogant and their demands were out of reason and consequently this punitive expedition was the result.

On the way up we had to make our way to a landing stage named Mari Indus. We heard there that a territorial infantry battalion was on its way to the frontier and that it was their first experience as they had been in India only a few months having relieved a British regular infantry regiment which had gone overseas.

I received orders to act as liaison officer to them, instruct them as to the correct numbers for embarking on the ferry and give them their destination that day. They duly appeared, marching

towards the village of Mari Indus, and I went along to meet them. I contacted their adjutant and was about to give them their instructions when I was promptly asked if, before anything more was done, it would be possible for the men to have a swim, as the sight of the big river, Indus, had excited them. It appeared that they had been on the march for days and were very hot and dusty so they were clamouring to be allowed to go for a bathe.

This was a problem which I felt quite certain had never previously arisen and I, for one, did not quite know the answer. However, it was my job to advise them and so I quickly suggested that because of the danger of depth and current I had better test it myself and see if it was possible. Their colonel, who had joined us by this time, appeared to be very happy at my gesture, as he said he knew nothing about these Indian rivers, and he would be only too pleased if I would do as I suggested. With no further ado I quickly slipped off my clothes and from the end of the landing stage dived into the water to the cheers of the troops who had quickly tumbled to what was happening.

Immediately I hit the water I knew I was in trouble because of the amazing speed of the current. As I came to the surface I called out that the current was too fast and that nobody must come in. I could see by their faces that they had understood as they watched me being carried away to the centre of the river at a great pace. They called out to ask if I was all right. I shouted back that I was, but I was now feeling very alarmed as the pace I was going was very frightening. I realized that it was impossible for me to attempt to get back to the landing stage and so decided to swim with the current down stream. I found that I was being drawn more and more towards the centre of the river, which was very wide, and that as I got nearer the middle the current there was much faster. In the distance I spotted a curve bearing round to my left, so I decided to try and make for the river bank on this side, and, as luck would have it, I saw a huge mud bank right in front of me. I thought this was my only chance and struck out for all I was worth to try and make it. Luck was certainly with me as

I swam straight into it and managed to land, although with some difficulty.

It was a ghastly experience as the mud was just soft and dreadful for several inches, and for a moment I feared it was going to swallow me up. It was firm enough, however, for me to be able to climb out on to the solid bank. I was now about half a mile from where I had entered the water and I had to make my way back along the road. I was completely in the nude and, to make matters worse, I would have to go through the village to get back to the landing stage. It had to be done, though, so off I went at a little trot, even though the sun was blazing down.

As I reached the village there were loud cries from the villagers and they disappeared right and left into their huts in alarm, and in a matter of seconds the main street was empty. This part of the walk back did not worry me unduly as I had realized that I had been very lucky indeed in getting away with my life. The next part was probably the most embarrassing, as when I reached the end of the village there were the British troops lined up in two long lines all the way to the landing-stage. There was nothing I could do. I simply had to run the gauntlet by walking right through them.

The cheers and laughter were terrific, to say nothing about the things that were said! It was generally agreed, however, on all sides that I had done a good piece of work in saving them from what might have been a catastrophe. There was no doubt that had they gone into the river there would have been a disaster which might have taken a lot of explaining away.

It was probably some such incident as this which inspired Noel Coward some years later to write his famous song, 'Only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun'. I quickly got into my clothes and felt none the worse physically, although I must admit I had been badly shaken and horribly embarrassed. The colonel thanked me for what I had done and I thought I detected a note of relief in his voice.

By this time the men had given up all hope of a swim and so, as usual when there was nothing left for the British soldier

to do, he made tea. Yes, tea, and what a wonderful drink it is. It has always been my humble opinion that for anyone to appreciate the real value of tea they must go to the lands from whence it comes, India, Ceylon and China, and drink it when a blazing sun has played hell with you.

The ferry-boat which had been plying backward and forward across the big Indus River was now alongside the landing-stage. It was time for a party to go aboard. As my job was finished here I decided to get across as soon as possible and join up again with my regiment. The ferry chugged its way over the swiftly moving river to the landing-stage at Kalabagh Gat. I said farewell to my companions, who were still pulling my leg and laughing about my recent little escapade, and walked along the road leading to the high ground where my battalion's camp was pitched.

On all sides one could see just tents and then more tents. It looked as if the whole British and Indian Army were on this campaign. As a matter of fact it was exactly half a division, but when half a division, together with all its transport and supply services, is crowded into a comparatively small area it gives the impression of being a very large army. An Indian infantry brigade at that time consisted of one British battalion and three Indian battalions and its supply services.

I walked through the brigade lines to join my regiment and, as I passed along the lines, I took a look at the Indian infantry regiments which were in our brigade. The 1st Gurkhas were the first lines I came to, and what a picture of a camp they made. The dressing of their tents and pegs was just about the straightest thing that could be done without a sextant or theodolite. Everywhere everything was in perfect order, and somehow their lines looked just that bit more extra special in comparison with other regiments, either British or Indian. Next to the Gurkhas were the 7th Rajputs, another grand regiment with a particularly fine looking lot of men. The British regiment in this brigade was the Middlesex, to which I was attached, and our lines were opposite the Rajputs. Next to us and opposite the Gurkhas were the 2nd Punjabis.

At the top of the lines of the four battalions was the brigade

headquarters. The whole layout was one of military efficiency and orderliness which did the brigade credit.

The next few days were spent in getting ready for the long march into the Frontier territory. This meant waiting for stores, guns and ammunition to come up. When one realizes that everything had to be brought up either by camel or pack mules in those days, then one understands what an enormous amount of organization had to be carried out for an expedition of this kind. Day after day, hour after hour, the camel convoys arrived with their valuable loads of stores of all descriptions. It is difficult to realize that every single article of food or material had to be carried all the way from Rawal Pindi or Peshawar, which were about a hundred and fifty to two hundred miles away.

What an amazing animal the camel is! Surely no domestic animal has served mankind better over the thousands of years of civilization. As one watched these long convoys, which appeared to be endless, winding their way over some of the most terribly cruel terrain in the whole wide world, one could almost visualize the long tortuous journey man has made in the struggle for survival. How one hates the very sight of camels when one first comes into contact with them. Their stench is nauseating, and together with the stupidity, absurd appearance and their apparent slowness, it all seems to build up a dislike which certainly has no justification when one has had more to do with them.

It is a strange fact, but where camels are so life is hard and difficult. What tougher places are there on this earth than the frontiers of India and Asia, the deserts of India, North Africa and Arabia? Possibly the wastes of the Arctics, but there at least one never goes thirsty. In such places the vital and very ordinary needs of life soon become scarce on the slightest provocation, and then the full worth of the camel quickly comes to be appreciated. The violent dislike which one has conjured up gradually turns to an affectionate gratitude which I believe lasts a lifetime.

Our main work at this time was the unloading and loading of stores, and a junior officer would find his day taken up by

being in charge of large fatigue parties for this sole purpose. This work went on all through the heat of the day and it became very trying for all concerned. With so much to do the days passed quickly, and we were now ready to get on the march again. Our first destination was Bannu, which was more than a hundred miles from Kalabagh Gat and would mean marching over some very tough country. The march proceeded day after day without much excitement, but one incident stays in my memory.

One morning we had been jogging along some flat country in the orthodox manner of march discipline, that is, marching by the clock and going steadily for fifty minutes and halting for ten minutes and on again. After about two hours, while the morning was yet young, everyone started complaining of a faint but ghastly smell. The troops, of course, started passing rude remarks and blaming the regiment in front of us! Instead of the smell passing away, it gradually got worse and worse until it became thoroughly repulsive. Nobody could quite make out what was happening, and, as it had been with us for the best part of two hours now, it was really getting unbearable.

At last the mystery was solved. It was a dead camel which had died on the march, and, of course, all that could be done with it was to let it lie there and be devoured by the vultures. These terrible birds had, in fact, given us our first hint as to what the trouble might be. As we approached the carcass we could see them flying slowly on their way to the feast. When we actually came alongside the body, which was lying not far off our road or track, there they were in hundreds, screeching and fighting all over the animal in their endeavour to get their fill before sundown, when the hyenas and jackals would come to finish the job. A truly ghastly sight and one that lingers long in the memory. The unfortunate thing about that carcass was that although we passed it by, the dreadful stench stayed with us for the same length of time on the far side, and, in fact, it appeared to be with us practically all that long day's march.

The following day we reached Bannu, which was a very small outpost in those days. There in the centre stood the fort,

which became G.H.Q. and all around it our regimental lines were formed. The fort itself was typical of the type of mud-coloured blockhouse which is a feature of the frontier. With its high walls, it had all the appearance of a prison and it was said that a spell of duty there was so grim that the names of officers who had committed suicide covered the wall of the small mess.

Once again we were halted for several days so as to allow the convoys of stores to catch up with the law of fast diminishing returns.

As we penetrated farther and farther into those sinister hills, so the problem of stores became greater and greater. Our long lines of communication were now stretching right back into India which meant setting up small depots every few miles. Each of these depots would have to have a small detachment of guards to protect it, and this, in turn, meant leaving enough stores behind to feed them. These depots would also become medical centres for the sick and, as the fighting progressed, casualty stations for the wounded with the added burden of medical supplies, which meant extra camels in the convoys.

## Frontier Warfare

**D**URING our halt at Bannu we had also to catch up a little with our training, as it was now weeks and weeks since we had done anything but march and store fatigue. We took the opportunity to get in some rifle shooting, as we were reminded that we would shortly be shooting against some of the finest natural shots in the world, the tribesmen of the North-West Frontier. That this was so, we were soon to find out!

It was at Bannu that I first experienced real fly pest. This is something which has to be seen to be believed. The flies buzzed around one's face in hundreds, particularly the eyes and mouth, lapping up the salt from our perspiration. When meal time came it was absolutely impossible to get food to the mouth without a desperate struggle to free the piece of food about to be eaten from hundreds of flies. They became so bad that a special order was sent back to India for fly swatters, and in due course every man of the column was issued with one. For a few days things improved as everyone waged war on the flies, but, as more and more convoys arrived, they quickly became as bad as ever, and so stayed with us throughout the campaign. Of course, our old friends, the camels, were blamed, but they were, in fact, only responsible for the first hatch, and to make sure that they got off to a flying start! The food wastes and the latrines of an army on the march did the rest. Unfortunately, with the flies came disease and now the sick parades in the mornings began to assume large proportions, and our ranks were beginning to show signs of it. The medical base at Bannu grew at an alarming speed and the medical officers and their orderlies were being run off their feet. Women were

not allowed up as far as Bannu in those days, so there were no nurses, no sisters and no matron. All staffing of the field hospitals was done by the men of the R.A.M.C. Although they were tough and crude in everything they did and were frightfully unpopular, there is no doubt that theirs was a thankless but merciful job of work.

The most common form of illness was amoebic dysentery, which was no doubt caused by the flies, but unless this reached the medical stage, a man would just call at the medical tent for chlorodyn and would be expected to carry on. This was only the beginning of our troubles, as a bad outbreak of sand-fly fever suddenly descended upon the camp, and both British and Indian troops went down in numbers with it. It lasted from six to seven days, and while a man had it he was quite incapacitated and incapable of doing anything except lie up. It started with a temperature which quickly rose to quite an alarming height, and then when it went down, the patient remained in a very weak state for two or three days. It seemed to be very similar to a bad go of influenza in that it was just as catching and very few officers or men escaped it entirely. Like most contagious diseases it was worse with some than with others, and, unfortunately, it caused quite a number of deaths. The treatment was bed and that wonderful standby of the frontier, quinine.

The time had come for the column to set about its purpose as a punitive force to clear up the hostile tribesmen right through Waziristan from Bannu to Wana, a distance of about a hundred miles. The overall tactical plan was that two columns, each consisting of two brigades, should strike right through Waziristan, one column based at Bannu and the second column based at D.I.K., with the object of clearing the country of all hostile tribesmen. As a punitive expedition not only did we have to fight as the occasion demanded but should villages or strongholds put up a resistance, they were to be razed to the ground.

As I have mentioned above, this particular expedition had been caused by the tribesmen taking advantage of the war in Europe, raiding the peaceful farming communities of

India on a large and brutal scale, stealing cattle, carrying off women and killing the men who tried to resist them. Usually the British political officers of the frontier tried to bring about a peaceful settlement as they were, quite naturally, against using force as it meant the Army fighting the very people among whom they carried out their work. However, when the negotiations broke down then war became inevitable. In this case negotiation had failed because the indemnity which the Indian Government demanded from the tribesmen to pay for their cattle stealing and wantonness was more than the tribesmen were prepared to pay. So a punitive expedition had to be launched against them to make them pay or be punished.

The time had now come for the Bannu column to march right through Waziristan to Wana, a hundred miles or so to the south-west, to clear the whole country of hostile tribesmen. These consisted of the Wizers of the north and the Mahsuds of the south. Both were tough fighting tribes, not too well armed, but sufficiently so to put up a good fight when they dictated the time and place. Their arms consisted of anything from muzzle loaders to the most up-to-date rifles, which might have been stolen from Peshawar or Pindi only the previous week. Their swords were few and old, but they were sharpened and could be most effective, when in the hands of these turbulent tribesmen.

Every tribesman carried his ill-famed knife. This is one of the most sinister weapons one could cast eyes on. The handle is made of bone, which or whose it matters not, but the blade is long and thin, broad at the base and going quickly to a fine sharp point with a thick stiffening edge running up the back of the blade. The whole thing is very crudely made and encased in a rounded plain wooden case. This was carried loosely by the tribesmen, just tucked into their belt at a slant across their navel. The idea being that it was readily accessible. They held it with the thumb on the handle near to the blade and delivered their blow rather like a low uppercut in boxing. This meant that the knife went into their opponent's stomach and with a rip came out somewhere around the throat. It was with these merry little thoughts in our minds that we marched out

of the camp at Bannu at three o'clock one cold and frosty morning.

The way ahead looked flat and uninteresting, but the going was very rough underfoot. In those days we marched in fours with one company out in front acting as advance guard, and then the main body with its pack mules, followed by a rear-guard. From now on there was no wheeled form of transport, which meant that there was a mule to every four men. When machine-guns, signal equipment, Q.M. stores, medical supplies and so on were added, it worked out at a mule to every three men throughout the brigade.

The Gurkha Regiment was well out in front on this first stage of the march into Waziristan. They formed the advance-guard for the column and a fine job they made of it. The British Regiment was at the head of the column and as first light began to break we could see the tough little men spread our right across our front in extended order.

We had been going a good three hours and the dawn was just breaking when the sound of rifle shots brought the column to a sharp halt. It appeared the Gurkhas had been ambushed and the tribesmen had got in their first blow. The Gurkhas' main body had got on to the scene pretty quickly but not before the tribesmen had taken their toll. At last the signal came for the column to get on the move again, and presently we came to the scene of the trouble. The sight before us now brought home to us very quickly the fact that we were very much at war. About thirty dead Gurkhas, including a young British officer, were stretched out awaiting burial. Scattered about on all sides were a number of dead tribesmen all minus their heads. These we could see piled up in a heap away over to our left flank. They made a gruesome sight and looked as if they had been put there for counting.

There is no doubt that the Gurkhas had taken their revenge swiftly and surely. We asked why the Gurkhas hadn't buried their dead immediately, and the answer we got was another grim reminder that frontier warfare was just that much different from any other type. It appeared that burials only took place at night for a very special reason: so that the graves

could be dug in an unseen and unmarked spot. The tribesmen could not then return and dig up the bodies in a kind of mutilation vendetta besides robbing them of their uniforms.

This ambush had been rather a surprise as the column had not yet reached the hilly country which, of course, afforded so much more cover and opportunity. It turned out to be a blessing in its sombre way since it brought home to everyone very suddenly the fact that there was really a war on; and from now onwards everyone became more alert.

The troops, especially the British, had been getting rather fed up and bored with the continuous marching which had now been going on for three or four weeks. The sun had been blazing down day after day, as it did in the dry weather, and as the days went by, so the rations had got more on to a war footing, which meant bully beef and biscuits, jam and biscuits, gallons of tea (which one never tired of) and lime juice, which is issued for special reasons. One is that it cools the blood and the other because it prevents outbreaks of scurvy owing to the lack of fresh vegetables in the diet.

In spite of its reputed excellent qualities, strangely enough, one just got thoroughly sick of it and I don't think I have ever willingly tasted the beastly stuff since!

With all these trying things it was small wonder that the troops were getting—very aptly—'browned off'! However, now that there had been some real fighting all these little pin-pricks seemed to vanish into thin air and everyone suddenly became alert and, in fact, soldiers once again.

This skirmish had started at first light and had gone on for two hours or more, which put the march time back. This meant that we were that much later in reaching our destination. This was a small fort blockhouse named Bogi Khel, which was occupied by a company of the frontier force.

When we arrived it was too late, for the tribesmen had over-run it and killed all the occupants, including the two British officers in charge. We now received our next shock and reminder of the utter ruthlessness of the Mahsuds. The bodies of the two British officers had been mutilated and their remains had been left hanging on a post on each side of the fortress gate.

We got them down and that night buried them in an unmarked grave, levelling the ground so that no mound showed. There was, of course, no question of putting up any kind of cross or headstone and although I remember the names of those two officers today as if I had heard them only yesterday, I cannot see that any good purpose would be served by recalling them. It is better to let them rest in peace.

What a price one could pay for serving in India, and in particular on the North-West Frontier.

At the end of the next day's march, which passed without incident, we had left the last of the flat country behind us and had entered the hills by the dried-up river-bed which was our road. On either side the hills towered above us, and from now on our journey had become very precarious to say the least of it. While the main body of the column marched on its way through the bed of the dried-up river, every hill which commanded a dominant position had to be occupied by pickets. This meant that the regiment doing advance-guard duty had also to supply the pickets for clearing any important hill which protected the main body of the column. This hill picketing was indeed a strenuous business. The officers in command of the advance-guard would decide that a certain hill-top which appeared to command an important position would have to be manned. The next picketing party, which usually consisted of a subaltern, sergeant or senior N.C.O. and from ten men to a platoon according to the strategic importance of the hill, was quickly called for. The hill in question was pointed out and orders would be given to occupy it as soon as possible.

The party would set off immediately and climb the hill, which might be anything from two hundred to six hundred feet. They would be watched and covered by the advance-guard until they reached and gained possession of the hill-top. It was usual for two pickets to go out at a time, one away to a hill on the left bank of the river bed and another to the right bank. When these two signalled that they were in position, then the advance would move a little farther, and another two pickets would be despatched farther forward. The last of the picket command would go forward, climb the hill, keeping a

look out for trouble by sending half his men up in short rushes, whilst the other half covered them, and *vice versa*. When the party was near the top they would lie low, take a breather and then, on the word of their commander, take the top of the hill with a rush in case it was occupied by tribesmen. Having got to the top their job was to make themselves a defensive position by building a round wall about three feet high. This is known as a sanger and from it the picket would be able to see the main body of the column passing along the river-bed, and at the same time have a good field of view of the surrounding country and so prevent the tribesmen from making a surprise attack on the column.

The country through which we were now going was the worst I have ever encountered in my life and one which is not easily forgotten. Underfoot it was broken rock for mile after mile, with the remains of the river winding its way like a silvery snake with no ending. Every now and again it would wind right across our path and we would have to wade through it; sometimes it would be deep enough to reach up to our waists and deep enough to cause trouble with the mules and their packs. The surrounding hills were just rocky scrub with, indeed, very little scrub, and, consequently, no shade of any description. The only shelter was that of some particularly large boulders on which the sun blazed down. To touch them would burn the hand. How any living being could exist in such a country was beyond understanding and, indeed, it appeared to be completely devoid of any form of life either human or animal, or even vegetable.

The picketing continued slowly, for it is a laborious business. The pickets had to be in position and signal 'all clear' before the column could move on. When it had passed a certain point the pickets would be withdrawn from their sangar on the hill-tops by the rear guard. This was the duty of another regiment of the column.

The responsibility of the officer commanding the rear-guard was great indeed. It was his important duty to see that not a man or animal or even dropped pieces of equipment were left behind. His position at the end of the column was clearly shown

by a party flying a large red flag. Under no circumstances was anyone to be left behind it. When a picket was withdrawn from a hill the flag party would have to wait until the picket had come down from its position and rejoined the small main body of the rear-guard before proceeding on its way.

It will be seen that such a slow method greatly retarded the progress of the column and that the number of miles which were marched in a day were very few. It ranged from about five to around ten or twelve. This would vary according to the amount of fighting which took place daily, and sometimes it would be held up by a number of false alarms by the advance-guard. At times the actual going would become very difficult because the river-bed had narrowed into a gorge. On these occasions a way up the sides of the hills had to be found. There would, as a consequence, be difficulties with the mules and their packs and the detour would add miles to the journey.

No expedition had been this way before and the general officer commanding was dependent on political officers for all information as to which points to make for to find suitable ground on which to pitch his large camps. These camp sites had to be chosen with great care for many reasons. The most important thing, strangely enough, was not a strategic factor, but safety from sudden inclement weather. The camp had to be pitched at a good height above the river-bed in case of a sudden spate. It would also have to be so situated that heavy rainfall could not cause a stream of water to run down the surrounding hillsides and flood it out. Strategically it had to be made as free as possible from surprise attacks. It also had to have access to good water supplies, which is always difficult in the dry weather. The water needs of a column with its ten thousand men and three thousand animals were great indeed, and any possibility of a failure in its supply could be disastrous to such a venture.

One morning I was the duty officer in charge of the animal watering point. This was a far more complicated and important job than would at first appear. No less than three thousand animals of the column had to be watered at least twice a day. When one considers the amount of water which such a number

of animals consume it will be realized that a suitable place for such a big task was not always easy to find.

The water front had to be a reasonable length with a good supply of deep water. At the same time the ground underfoot had to be stony if possible. Unless such conditions were found the first draft of animals to water would very soon churn up the muddy bottom with the pounding of their hooves and so make the water undrinkable for the animals following.

A strong picket or guard had to be mounted at strategic points so there could be no surprise attack by a party of tribesmen. They were always on the look-out for some such chance. Horses had to be watered before the mules and camels. The various regiments were given a timetable so as not to get congestion at the water front. The water duty officer had to remain on the spot to see that all the orders were carried out and the timetable adhered to until all animals had been watered. Then he would withdraw the pickets and, once these were inside the perimeter wall, no man or animal was allowed down to the water again.

While the watering was going on I decided to walk a little way up-stream to check up on the flow of water and to see if there was any chance of making it run faster and, therefore, cleaner, by being able to move large stones or small boulders from any catchments. I had gone a little distance but was still in sight of the pickets when I came upon a fair-sized pool which had been formed by the blocking action of a large boulder. I was considering whether it would be possible to get this moved when I noticed under a large rock, which gave a nice piece of shade from the blazing sun, a large number of fish. It was obvious that they had been trapped in the pool as the water was too shallow at the outlet for them to escape.

I was quite excited and immediately sent a message back for my orderly to come at once and to bring my mosquito net from my bed with him. He soon arrived and we quickly got down to dragging the pool with the net. In a matter of minutes we had caught some forty or fifty fair-sized fish of a type similar to small English trout. I divided the catch with my orderly and he went away very pleased with the idea of being

able to give his friends a surprise feed of fried fish and chips! My share I took along to the astonished mess sergeant and told him, 'Say nothing and serve the fish this evening as if it was nothing special.' It was funny to see the amazement on the faces of the officers as the trout was put before them. We had been living on tinned bully beef for weeks on end and the fresh fish was a lovely surprise! It was greeted on all sides with exclamations of pleasure and gratification. Needless to say I was very popular that evening! However, there was one difficult moment when some testy major refused it on the grounds that, as a fisherman, he could not eat a sporting fish which had been caught in a mosquito net. It is difficult to understand such reasoning in the circumstances.

The common sense of my action was proved when a few days later news was received that there had been a disaster to a camel convoy. A large supply of stores on its way from the depot at Tank to the column camp had been caught in one of the narrow gorges by a spate of water which had destroyed them completely. It appeared that there had been heavy rain in the hills and the water had swept them away before the convoy was able to climb the river banks to safety. The spate alarm had failed to reach them in time owing to some difficulty in getting the message through before they had entered the gap. The awful calamity was upon them without warning and the loss of stores to the column was very serious. No less than sixty camels and men, fully laden with stores such as food, ammunition and medical supplies, had been swept to destruction by the raging torrents. There was little chance of salvage.

The immediate effect of the tragic loss was that the column had to go on reduced rations for several days until the stores could be replaced.

It made one realize how precarious was such an expedition and how the fate of thousands of men and animals depended on things going according to plan, and it taught one to be prepared for any eventuality.

The column was now hundreds of miles from India, the only source of supply, and the sole means of maintaining this supply was by camel transport. Even mule carts were no longer

used as the country had become so hilly and rocky that any idea of wheeled vehicles was quite out of the question. The most serious thing about such a disaster was the loss of the camels and their sowars, for, whereas there were plenty of store replacements at the base in India, it was difficult to obtain more camels and sowars immediately. It would also be difficult for the supply service to make up the loss of time such a disaster entailed.

Sickness had now attacked the column in a big way. Ordinary dysentery had been fairly common but amoebic dysentery was becoming more frequent and was causing the troops, both British and Indian, to go down in large numbers. The medical corps were too short-handed to cope with the situation and the only way was to detail those who were recovering to act as medical orderlies to the more serious cases.

A large medical base had been set up back at the camp at Kirkee and from here the sick and wounded were cleared. The serious cases were sent back to India and those who had recovered were drafted back up the line to rejoin the column. Owing to the increasing number of casualties, another forward medical camp had to be formed.

When the column moved out from Ispana Raja it was decided to leave behind yet another casualty base with a small hospital. I had been taken ill with an attack of sandfly fever and had not quite recovered when the column moved out and so remained behind. Sandfly was the least serious of the many complaints which were afflicting us. It only lasted a few days and although it left one rather weak it departed as quickly as it came.

I watched the column move out from the hospital tent and did not like the idea of being left behind in an isolated camp, especially as we were now so far into Waziristan.

It was also decided to make this camp an advance stores depot and for this reason I had visions of a raid on us after the column had moved on; not a nice thought when one is feeling weak in the stomach! A company of one of the Indian regiments was left behind to guard the camp, which was comforting, but I looked forward to rejoining the column as soon as possible.

I recovered in a few days, but found it was not so easy to get on the move again because a draft to rejoin the column had to be of fighting strength before it could move out. The next camp was about twelve miles away—almost a day's march in such bad going—and an all clear report would have to be received. In the meantime, there was plenty of work for me to do at this base. Stores were still coming in by convoys and these had to be sorted out and made ready for the next move up to the column. Guard duties had to be done to relieve the officers as they, too, were getting scarce. Fatigue parties were on the go all day, and as these consisted mostly of men recovering from sickness, it was no easy job.

One morning the senior medical officer sent for me and said that the hospital had had a few deaths and that it would not be possible to carry on with the present system of having hidden burials by night. He said he wanted a small cemetery, and would I undertake the task of getting one made as soon as possible.

I immediately got together a fatigue party of the convalescent men from the hospital and drew up a plan. From what information I could gather from the M.O. I decided that a piece of ground about eighty yards by sixty yards would be large enough. This I paced out and got the party to line the boundary with large pieces of rock and stones. Somewhere about the middle an entrance was made, and then the lines were white-washed.

That same evening our first graves were dug and three bodies were interred. In the next few days one or two more were buried. I remembered the name of the man in the first grave because he died alongside me in the hospital tent after a very short illness. His name was Dalwood. I went to a lot of trouble to have crosses made with the men's particulars so that a good standard would be set for those to follow.

The sequence to this rather grim story is that when I left that camp with a draft to rejoin the column, there were about a dozen graves in the cemetery, but when I returned with the column some months later, it was unbelievable to see the size to which it had grown. My little piece of ground with its white-

washed stones had been replaced by a built-up wall and now measured two hundred by a hundred yards and was nearly full. This was quite a shock as I had not realized that our casualties both in action and sickness had been occurring at such an alarming rate.

When I met one of the political officers he gave me an assurance that this cemetery would be maintained and not interfered with by the tribesmen. I wondered.

A few days later, after I had rejoined the column which was on the move again, I was posted as officer in charge of the rear-guard—a most exacting duty. It was a particularly difficult day owing to the fact that the column was passing through a piece of country where the hills which had to be picketed were higher than usual. They were very high indeed and because of this it took a much longer time for the pickets to come in after they had been signalled to withdraw from their positions.

This caused a lot of tedious waiting about in the heat of the sun and everyone was getting very tired. Sometimes it would take as much as an hour for the pickets to rejoin the rear-guard from the time they were signalled to evacuate their sangar on the hill-top to the time they reported in.

My company commander, who was usually mounted, had decided to leave his horse with me and had given me permission to use it if necessary. The column was moving very slowly, but there were always a fair number of stragglers owing to foot trouble, and mules shedding their packs, so I was able to make good use of the charger in these circumstances.

The last picket had been called in and had rejoined the rear-guard. I was behind and had made sure that there were no more stragglers, when suddenly my horse cast a shoe. Owing to the extreme roughness of the ground I decided I could not go on and would have to cold shoe him at once. My sergeant suggested getting one of the men to do it, but as it was the end of the day and everyone was hot and weary, I insisted on staying behind and doing it myself. He then said I had better have a couple of men to stay with me while I shod the horse but I refused, thinking it would only take me a few minutes and that I would be able to travel faster without them and so catch up

with the rear-guard. He reluctantly let me have my way. The guard continued without me. I dismounted and quickly set about the simple task of cold shoeing the horse with a spare shoe which was in the saddle holster. The horse's hoof was between my knees as I bent down to remove the old nails when suddenly everything went blank.

Apparently I had fainted from the effort of bending down with the sun beating on my neck. When I came round the sun was going down and the light was going. There was not a soul in sight when I first glanced round and pulled myself together by sipping water from my bottle. I realized at once how foolish I had been in taking such a chance by staying alone.

I began to feel scared and a little unnerved, but decided I must finish putting on the shoe, which I did. This job done, I then looked around me just to make certain I did not start off in the wrong direction, as I realized what a grave risk there was of being captured by the tribesmen. I shuddered to think what the outcome of that might be!

It was not difficult to find my direction as, although the sun was going down, I was able to get my bearings by its position before moving off. How long I had been unconscious I was not sure as I had not noticed the time. Luckily I had slipped the reins of my horse well inside my left arm when I had started shoeing, and the horse was probably too tired to move anyway. I took a quick look around through my field-glasses. Imagine the shock I got when I saw in the distance about five or six tribesmen coming up the river-bed. I could not make out whether they were men or women, but luckily for me they were at least two miles away to my rear.

The next moment I had mounted and started off at a good brisk trot. It was a comforting feeling to get on the horse's back, as I was not too happy on my feet. Besides feeling shaky, I was definitely scared, and those sinister words of Kipling's 'Young British Soldier' floated through my mind:

'When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan Plain  
And the women come out to cut up what remains  
Just roll to your rifle and blow out your brains  
An' go to your Gawd like a soldier.'

It took me some time to catch up and as I came in sight of the new perimeter camp I could just see in the falling darkness the last of the stragglers and the rear-guard flag going in. Nobody was any the wiser as to what had happened and when I reported in to the company commander I did not tell him that I had missed being captured and skinned alive by not more than half an hour.

The forward troops were already well advanced with the building of the perimeter wall, which ran right round the entire camp. All the animals of the transport were being picketed in the very centre and the various regiments were allotted their sites in front of them. Their task was to build a stone wall three and a half feet high immediately and then join up with the regiments on their right and left flanks. This wall would form a square inside which was the entire column. The men building it were drawn up in a single line, after which they took off their equipment and laid down their arms. They would then face outwards with the camp behind them and start building their piece of wall. When this job was completed they would make their own bivouac behind the wall and stay put. Every third man became a sentry guard whilst the other two went out in front of the wall to put up the barbed wire. When this job was completed everyone would be ordered inside the walled camp and under no circumstances would anybody be allowed outside. Every third man would remain on guard day and night so that the whole camp was in a prepared state to resist any form of attack no matter from which direction it came. Not until this building of the wall and wiring of the outside was completed would any attempt to prepare food be made.

As can be imagined, everyone set about the task with a will and it was surprising to see how quickly a perimeter camp could come into being. As soon as things looked ship-shape, then the cooks would be allowed to get going with the food. Of course, the first thing to be produced would be that wonderful stand-by for British troops no matter where they find themselves, tea—or as it is better known by the troops serving in India—char. While the food was being prepared the animals

would be watered and fed. This watering of the animals was indeed quite a business, as only a proportion could be let out of the camp at a time and an armed guard had to go with them down to the watering point. This point had to be downstream below the place from which drinking water for the camp was drawn. This operation took up a considerable amount of time but it was all part of the job and by the time this was completed and the meal finished, it was time for bed, or rather sleep; but even this only applied to those not on guard duty, which was still maintained by one in three. The men lay down to sleep with their heads close up to and under the wall and their feet pointing towards the centre of the camp. So, in the event of an alarm, all a man had to do was to wake up and, without getting up, just turn round and take up his place on the perimeter wall. His rifle was by his side and, of course, loaded and so, in a matter of seconds, everyone was in position and ready for any eventuality. As can be imagined, such an acute state of preparedness was not without its weaknesses, as the following story shows.

One night, everything having gone more or less according to plan, the camp had settled down. It was past midnight, all the fires had gone out and only the restlessness of the animals and the sentries disturbed that eerie quietness of an Indian night. There was no moon but just that fierce blackness of a starry sky. All of a sudden there was a shout from a sentry, quickly followed by a shot, and in the next moment there was pandemonium as the whole camp took up the bold challenge. Every man was in position on his wall and letting fly with everything he had. The noise was just terrific as machine-guns, Lewis guns, and rifles were fired with a rapidity which was staggering. Added to this was the baying of the animals and the shouting of the officers and N.C.O.s.

The flashes from the guns and rifles lit up the whole scene in the most spectacular manner and, together with the fantastic din made by the whole procedure, it was one of those moments in one's life which are never forgotten. We never experienced quite such a happening again during that campaign. It was the best part of an hour before the situation was

under control. Bugles sounded the cease fire and the awful din subsided.

What had happened was that a jumpy sentry had heard something rattling against the wire in front of his wall and, after a quick challenge had fired off his rifle. Other sentries nearby had become equally jumpy and, before anyone knew what was happening, all had grabbed their rifles and started firing away for all they were worth. The 'something' turned out to be some poor, unfortunate donkey, possibly from some tribesmen's village, which had drifted into the wire in the dark. The animal had, in all probability, smelt the corn and fodder of the camp transport lines. It was, of course, shot to pieces and when morning came all there was to be seen was one dead donkey.

The episode did a certain amount of good in that it caused a lot of good-natured banter between the various regiments, as each accused the other of being jumpy and getting the wind up. It also brought a lot of sanity and steadiness to the night sentries. Nothing quite so silly happened again during that campaign.

This particular camp was our first perimeter one and as it was some time before the column got on the move again it was used as a demonstration to show what the ideal perimeter camp should look like. Every regiment set about improving its wall and it was not long before a really fine specimen of a North-West Frontier perimeter camp was built. Groups of men from each regiment went around and looked at the work of other regiments and all gained a little knowledge from each other.

In the meantime, all kinds of warlike activities were taking place. Each day and night, patrols were sent out and on all the overlooking hill-tops were small outposts which had to be watched and victualled. After a spell of duty these guards had to be relieved, which was quite an ordeal. Relieving parties had to be covered every inch of the way to the sangars and the party being relieved had to be covered all the way back to the camp. Some of these posts were as high as eight hundred feet with nothing but loose stones and rocks under foot, and large

black and grey boulders dotted about everywhere. These were capable of being used for cover for as many as five or six men, and the tendency was to regard every boulder with suspicion as a cover for snipers.

Scouting parties were sent out at the crack of dawn and these would search the ravines and nullars for miles around and would return to the camp at the end of the day hot, dusty and very tired. Every party had to be checked in and out and during the time they were out a system of communication by signalling had to be maintained all the time. There were no walkie-talkies in those days as they had not yet been invented. Most of the signalling was done by flags and helio by day and lamps by night.

This all took up a great deal of time and made the movement of the column a slow, laborious undertaking. It had at least one good result, and that was that as the weeks and months went by the whole force became a thoroughly well-trained and efficient body, well-versed in the arts of frontier mountain warfare.

## The Tribesman's Revenge

THE days went by and once again the column moved out of this well-established camp. From now on things began to happen, as we were now right in the heart of Waziristan and were being attacked from all sides. The route along the river-bed became more difficult as the gorges narrowed and the surrounding hills offered more cover to snipers and raiding parties. Outposts would be attacked and, in some cases, completely overrun and wiped out. Large fighting units would be sent out to try to engage the enemy in battle, but it was always difficult to find an enemy force of any size. They preferred, and rightly so, to fight the war on their own terms, which were never to muster in force but to harass the column at all times and in places of their own choosing. Gradually, however, the enemy were being forced back as village after village was being cleared and it became evident that sooner or later they would have to make a stand and fight. This clearing of the villages was quite an undertaking, which had to be carried out in an orthodox way. When a village had been cleared of enemy snipers, which were the only signs of life left in it as the column approached, an attacking force would be sent in with the object of razing the place to the ground.

Firstly, all stores of grain and fodder had to be taken back to the camp to swell the food supplies of the troops and animals. Then all timber and fuel dung had to be salvaged to replenish the camp-fire stocks needed for cooking and which were extremely scarce in this barren and treeless wilderness.

One particular village stood out on a piece of flat ground towards the end of a large, open valley, with the hills fading

away in the background. From a distance it looked rather like a child's sand castle on some sandy beach. We approached it across dried-up land which looked as if nothing could ever grow on it. Possibly it might produce some small crop during the year. The ground was hard and stony with no semblance of shade or cover. The only kind of protective cover we could get was that which we made ourselves. This we did by pushing up a few stones and earth in front of our heads as soon as we came under fire from the village. The attack on the village was by two companies. One company was to advance in extended order on a broad front with the object of swinging its right flank round towards the village and so causing an encircling movement. The other was to do the same but to swing its left flank round and cause the tribesmen to retreat to the rear end of the village.

The troops were in position by first light and the operation commenced just after dawn. We were about a thousand yards from our objective and so out of range of effective enemy rifle fire. We advanced slowly until the light broke and we reached a point about six hundred yards from the entrance of the village. Not a sign of life could be seen and it looked as if we had an easy task before us. Any idea of quick success faded, however, as we came within effective range of their accurate fire and they soon had us scrambling to earth like rabbits. The tribesmen had taken up good defensive positions behind the hard-baked mud walls of the village and were able to bring fire to bear on any section which got within their range. We had started the operation in the bitter cold of a frontier morning but now the hold-up caused us to lie on our bellies hour after hour until the sun was well up and blazed down unrelentingly on to our backs. Now and again we managed to move forward a little, but, as we got nearer, we became sitting targets for their confoundedly accurate shooting. Casualties began to get heavy and our number dwindled as the stretcher bearers following us picked up our wounded. We cursed and swore at the enforced slowness of the operation. We blamed the flanking platoon for not getting on fast enough and they blamed us, no doubt, for not giving them sufficient covering fire whenever they moved. The horrible truth was that the tribesmen were

too well concealed behind their mud fortifications for our fire to be really effective.

We hoped that the mountain batteries might be brought into action and made to shell the village. There was little chance of that as the orders were that they must not be used because of the possibility of setting fire to it. This would destroy the timber which was so essential for fuelling the cooking fires of the column. This was one of the more urgent problems of the expedition! We just lay on the hot, stony ground with the sweat pouring from every part of us, which caused the flies to torment us almost to breaking point.

Gradually, however, the flanking movement began to take effect and the tribesmen began to scuttle and make for the hills. We had been getting nearer and nearer and, luckily for us, their fire was less concentrated, and accordingly our casualties became fewer. At last we were within two hundred yards of the village and the order was given to fix bayonets. The bugles sounded the charge and, with one last rush, we charged forward with a yell and quickly took cover at the entrance to the village.

It was just after the successful attack on this village that I ran foul of the General commanding the column. Being one of the officers of the attacking party it was my job to make sure that all grain and timber was retrieved from the village as soon as it was cleared of the enemy. We had reached the entrance to the village but were still getting the occasional sniper's bullet and I was not quite certain we were not running into a small ambush from some of the nearest huts. Perhaps they were just waiting for us to go in? I decided, therefore, to lead the first party in myself. Our covering party was well placed and, as it was ordered to cease fire, I ran forward with my own party and, as I reached the first house, I hurled a hand-grenade into the building just to ensure we were not running into trouble. This was the usual procedure and had the effect of letting the troops see that there was nothing to hold us up.

Unfortunately, on this occasion the Mills bomb had a devastating effect, for, when it exploded, it set the house on fire. As luck would have it, the G.O.C. came upon the scene just at that moment and I received the full blast of his wrath. How-

ever, we quickly stopped the fire from spreading by breaking down the huts and continued with our work of salvage.

I must say I felt a little peeved at the time. I thought I had done a particularly fine job that morning as we had received a lot of opposition from that village! It turned out that this house was a fodder store and was just that much more inflammable.

We continued our work of salvage and it was interesting to see how these villagers stored their grain. In practically every hut there was a trap-door in the floor which led down a number of steps into a large store room. This would be filled with grain, but the soldiers going down into these stores had to be very careful not to be overcome by the fumes, which was a common feature of these godowns. Fatigue parties would get to work immediately and grain would be put into sacks and loaded on to mules for transportation back to the perimeter camp.

This was, of course, all part of the punishment, for ours was a punitive expedition.

We were now far into the heart of Waziristan and from our perimeter camp at Ispa-a-Rasan various forces of varying sizes would go out on fighting patrols with the express purpose of engaging the enemy in force if possible. Reports would come in from the different regiments as to what was happening.

One day the Gurkhas were ambushed in a big way, but had routed the tribesmen by outwitting them, putting up a fine show. They had anticipated that when they had to go through a certain gorge at Hadra Catel the Mahsuds would lay an ambush, which they did. But the Gurkhas had sent out a large patrol during the night to lie up in hiding and within range of the spot where the attack would probably take place. At dawn the small party reached the gorge and the tribesmen's ambush descended on them in a fierce attack. The hidden Gurkhas were out of their hiding place in a flash and a savage battle took place. At first there was very little firing because of the half light and it was one of those terrible encounters, for which the North-West Frontier has such a name, between the famous Gurkhas' kukris and the khanjars or pointed knives of the Mahsuds tribesmen. It was indeed a bloody battle with the terrible stomach slits inflicted by the tribesmen on the

Gurkhas and the heads of the tribesmen rolling all over the place as the Gurkhas put their famous kukris to work. We came upon the scene only an hour or two later and the carnage was one of those sights which one never forgets.

The news in the next few days began to improve as reports came in that patrols had contacted those of the southern column. This meant that the two forces were beginning to close in on the town of Wana from the north, east and south, but this left a gap on the west from which the tribesmen could still get out and operate, sometimes with telling effect. Battles and skirmishes became more numerous and most units of the column were in action at some time or other. Night pickets had undergone some fierce attacks and in one or two instances had been overrun with terrible results. Advance and rear-guard actions had been fought with bitterness on both sides. We appeared to be getting to grips with our elusive enemy at last!

The two columns, however, pressed on relentlessly and carried out their task of clearing the country behind them. The tribesmen had fallen back on the capital town of Wana, which was practically surrounded, but were putting up even stiffer resistance as the raiding parties grew larger. When this happened the mountain gunners with the wonderful heavy-weight mules were used with telling effect.

It was always a grand sight to see these mountain men go into action by climbing some terrible slope in order to get into position. In those days a battery consisted of four guns, one of which was manned by British gunners who set a fine example of team-work. Now that we were reaching the closing stages of the campaign these guns were brought up to occupy commanding positions overlooking the town.

The time had come for the political agents to be called in to do their work. This was to make contact with the Faqir to get him to surrender and to arrange a meeting with the G.O.C. After a great deal of talk with the agent going to and fro, some kind of temporary agreement was reached and the cease fire sounded at long last. It was arranged that the G.O.C. and the Faqir should meet and discuss the terms of surrender. These, in general, meant that the Faqir would be responsible for an indemnity of money,

a supply of grain and fodder to the columns and the surrender of a fixed number of guns, arms and ammunition.

The meeting took place under a large tree just outside the town. I was one of the officers in charge of a guard detailed to attend the 'Jirga', or peace meeting, and we formed up in a large square. A big table was covered by a Union Jack behind which sat the general and his staff.

The Faqir entered the square, followed by a number of head tribesmen, and sat down on the ground facing the general. Everyone was dressed for the occasion and the whole scene was part of a colourful ceremonial. The parleying started and there was fierce discussion among the tribesmen when some points arose. I got the impression that most upsets were caused by the question of the number of arms to be surrendered—the tribesman loves his rifle! The terms were finally settled after much talk and at last a party of the most murderous-looking cut-throats began to file into the arena and proceeded to lay down the most extraordinary collection of small-arms. There were muzzle-loaders; matchlock guns with ram-rods; all kinds of rifles dating back to the Indian Mutiny—and before—right up to the present time; swords of great age and antiquity; pistols and ammunition of all kinds, some of it obviously home-made. Altogether an amazing assortment.

I was young and at an impressive age and that Jirga has always stamped itself on my memory. The arms were counted and recounted and at last the show was over, which was a good thing for all concerned. It was my opinion at the time that we could not have carried on the campaign much longer without a strong supply of reinforcements, as our casualties from sickness alone had run into thousands towards the end.

The column was indeed showing signs of distress and being very much the worse for wear. Uniforms were ragged, frayed and dirty, and boots had worn thin with the continual marching and hard climbing; in fact, they became almost a major problem at one time. However, it was definitely over, or so we thought, and the columns began to pull out and march back to the large perimeter camps. Here it was decided to rest for a few days before starting on the long march back to India.

A sports meeting was organized with the idea of raising the morale of the troops, but the British troops were feeling the effects of the hard conditions of the past months and it was difficult to arouse any real enthusiasm for the meeting. The fitter of the Indian troops took part and one item which created a good deal of interest was the hill race between the Gurkhas and the Sikhs. Teams of twenty men from each regiment competed and we watched them through our field-glasses as they clambered over a huge rocky hill of great height. It was uncanny to see these men going up hills with almost the speed of goats. It was a great race which the Gurkhas managed to win although it was a close thing as the Sikhs put up a magnificent show against the natural hill-climbing men of Nepal.

At last the camp was struck and the long march home started. It was decided to return by a different route from that by which we had come; via the town of Tank as this was the shortest way out of Waziristan; and after several days of marching without any further undue incidents, we reached Tank. Here we found the congestion of troops very great owing to the fact that both columns had chosen this route. We therefore had to go to another camp which was not quite so well placed as the rest. Whereas those camps were situated on suitable high ground, the new camp was erected on a site which was at a much lower level. There was a general air of relief and relaxation as we marched in; everyone seemed cheerful. The cooks had been sent on ahead to get the food ready and when the men sat down to the first fresh food they had had for months their spirits rose and the whole camp appeared contented.

Bugles sounded lights out in the usual way but most people had turned in long before as it had been a hard day. The night was still and the camp was in slumber when suddenly the bugles sounded the alarm. But they were too late, the calamity was upon us. Water, water everywhere, and, as I put my feet over the side of my small camp bed, it was already up to my shins and rising fast. I glanced at my watch—it was three-thirty in the morning and completely dark. Somehow I managed to get some clothes on and groped my way out of the tent. Confusion was everywhere, everyone was shouting and it

was difficult to find one's way. Men were groping about, cursing and swearing, and no one could produce a light of any description. The water was rising fast and there was a near panic. Nobody seemed to know what had happened or what to do.

At last it was possible to hear the sergeant-major above the commotion. 'Everybody to the railway station with your rifles. Don't worry about your kits. Hurry up. Get to the station.'

Presently there was some semblance of order and, as one's eyes grew accustomed to the darkness one could see a stream of figures plodding through the still-rising waters. I followed the crowd and at last reached the station and climbed up on to the platform.

The sergeant major yelled out in his powerful voice, 'Quiet everybody,' and there was a general lowering of voices. Again the sergeant-major bellowed, 'All officers this way, please. Come to the lamp,' and, at last, there was a glimmer of light as he waved a hurricane lamp above his head. A piece of the platform was cleared and under the lamp stood the colonel while the officers gathered around him. We then heard what had happened. It appeared that the tribesmen had decided to have the last word and had got their revenge. The laugh was on us!

Apparently when they saw that the retreating columns were concentrating on Tank they quickly realized that all the troops could not be accommodated on the high ground. They waited until a large area of the low ground was occupied by camps and then had diverted the river by blocking the normal channels with mud and rocks and so sent the rushing waters plumb in the direction of the camps with appalling results.

At first it was thought that the disaster might be followed by a raid on the camps with the object of trying to recover another lot of rifles to replace those that had been surrendered. It was soon realized that the waters could not rise much higher than the three feet which it had reached. Guards were quickly posted at points along the platform and all men who had left their rifles behind in the tents were sent back for them immediately. In fact, no man was allowed on the platform without his rifle.

Gradually we got the situation under control and by this

time dawn was breaking. When it did the sight before us was one of complete chaos, bordering on the humorous. Half-naked and naked men were everywhere. Some were standing about with only a shirt on, others with only a pith helmet, but all holding on to their rifles. Gradually the funny side of it began to be obvious and we all started to laugh but I think the real laughing was done by the tribesmen!

It took hours for the water to subside and many more for the troops to recover their wet and soaking kits and equipment. The accommodation on the high ground had to be doubled up, which added to the discomfort, and then, to add to our troubles, people began to go down like flies with malaria.

Once again sickness struck a hard blow at us and the casualties became another major problem. The railhead at Tank had been working to capacity trying to get the troops away, but when the malaria epidemic hit the camp then the R.A.M.C. took over to get their patients away as soon as possible. As there were large numbers of stretcher cases which took up a lot of space, this caused a big hold-up with the trains and the exodus became painfully slow. Those of us who were well had to stay behind, no matter which regiment was due for entraining.

I was young and fit and stayed until almost the last train, which did not get away until two weeks after the night of the flood. How some of the men kept going was amazing, as most had had about all they could manage, and it was a great relief to us all when we at last reached Rawal Pindi. Two days later, even I could hold out no longer, and I went down with malaria and a bad attack of jaundice.

An emergency hospital had been established up in the Murry Hills above Rawal Pindi and those of us who were considered bad cases were taken up by special ambulance service in a few hours.

So, after nearly twelve months, one of the toughest frontier campaigns of this century ended. It is interesting to note that no form of mechanical transport was used during the whole of that operation.

A few weeks later I had recovered completely and was on my way back to the depot at Bangalore.

## Silladar System

ON returning to the combined depot at Bangalore my first appointment was to the remount depot. It covered a large area of training ground near Agran Plain. Here horses and mules were trained for their various assignments before being despatched to the many units which needed them. There was also a grass farm at Hosur about fifty miles away where the animals were sorted out before being sent to the main depot.

I was pleased to get the opportunity of gaining such real experience with horses before joining the Indian Cavalry. The work was particularly interesting because it covered so many phases of horse training. Animals had to be found for horse artillery, both light and heavy chargers for mounted infantry officers and other services also had to be supplied. For instance, draft horses were needed for the transport services and mules for draft and pack—not to speak of the special mules for the mountain batteries.

The work was exceedingly interesting and, as is always the case with horses and mules, constantly exciting because something unusual is happening all the time. The question as to which animals would be the best suited for some particular demand was always an important one and it took up a lot of time to get them sorted out. The days were full and time passed quickly. I was learning a lot about horses which I knew would stand me in good stead later.

At last my orders came—I was to report to my Indian Army Cavalry Regiment, which was the 8th Cavalry Indian Army, at Secunderabad. I had now completed my year's

attachment to a British regiment and what a year it had been! I had done depot work, taken part in a full campaign on the North-West Frontier and spent a few months with Remounts. I felt the year had not been wasted.

Before reporting to my new regiment I was given a few days' leave in which to pack and shop and generally equip myself for the new venture. We also had one or two farewell parties at the club and I had just enough time to attend the big dance at the palace before I went.

The occasion was the birthday celebrations of the Maharajah of Mysore and to end the week of festivities there was to be a day of sporting entertainment for the Europeans, followed by a grand ball at the palace.

The palace was a fine building in the style of an English country house, built in the reign of Queen Victoria. It stood in lovely grounds just outside Bangalore.

The sporting activities were a point-to-point for the mounted guests and a treasure hunt for the unmounted. The race was unusual in that the riders taking part in it were allowed to change horses at the half-way point. This did not mean that the rider with two good horses would have a greater advantage for the simple reason that all riders had to be in at the end of the first leg before anyone was allowed to start on the second leg. It was a fine course across country with six fences, including a water jump, finishing in front of the gaily dressed crowd of spectators gathered on the lovely lawns of the palace. There were two prizes, one for the winner of each leg of the race. I was fortunate in winning one of them, the prize being a beautiful riding-whip.

The treasure hunt was for a magnificent gold watch and the difficult clues took the competitors through the delightful grounds and gardens of the palace.

That same evening the ball was held and what a spectacular sight it was! The only means of transport were rickshaws or the occasional horse-drawn carriage. It seems strange to look back and compare the quietness of the rickshaws with their bare-footed coolies of those days to the noise of motor-cars with their slamming doors which is so common today.

As one entered the ballroom one's breath was taken away by the wonderful array of colour. There was the maharajah in his robes of white and gold and wearing a be-jewelled turban which sparkled with diamonds and rubies. He was surrounded by his Indian court and their ladies in saris of lovely colours. There were the bright dresses of the European women but these were overshadowed by the mess dress of their officer escorts and, in particular, by the spectacularly colourful mess dress of the officers of the Indian Army.

The ballroom was large and on the grand style, lighted by enormous chandeliers, each of a hundred lights. At each end of the room was an orchestra, one with the conventional instruments of the Western world while the other contained the fantastically soft musical instruments of India. They took it in turns to play and the contrast was striking.

One side of the ballroom was heavily curtained off with coloured beads behind which was total darkness, but from the sound of many voices it was obvious that there were people behind it. They were the ladies of the palace harem and, although they could see into the ballroom, it was impossible see them. There was something very peculiar and uncanny in being watched all the time one was dancing by an unseen audience of over a hundred women whose chatter and laughter could be heard quite distinctly.

Outside in the beautiful grounds, which were illuminated, was an enormous, gaily coloured and decorated marquee. In this was a magnificent champagne buffet which was being served by Indian servants in decorative palace dress. The whole scene was just about as brilliant and fantastic as could be imagined. In my travels to many lands over the years I have never again seen such splendour and magnificence. Parties on such a lavish scale have become things of the past, together with the costly uniforms which no longer exist, so I am glad to have had such a wonderful experience which I enjoyed to the full.

A few days later I was on my way to Secunderabad, a young man at the beginning of a new and exciting life—that of a British officer of the Indian Cavalry. As I mused over the thought it made me feel proud and truly elated. However, as

the journey dragged on I began to realize that I knew nobody in the regiment. I felt certain, from experience, that—apart from some very brief Indian Army instruction which quite probably had not even reached the adjutant yet—I was not even expected. With that sobering thought I hoped for the best.

I arrived in the late afternoon when most officers would be away from their quarters. I gathered that the 8th Cavalry were not even in Secunderabad but were about three miles away stationed in a small cantonment named Begumpet. I managed to get a gharri, or horse-drawn cab, from the station and duly arrived at the officers' mess.

On inquiring about accommodation I was told that a certain Major Harpendale, who was a bachelor, would probably allow me to share his bungalow, so I took my luggage along and installed myself in one of the spare rooms. That evening I decided not to attend mess as my kit was not unpacked and I was therefore unable to dress for dinner. In those days dinner was regarded as a parade and under no circumstances could one appear improperly dressed. To be correctly dressed one wore blue overalls with Wellington boots and a white monkey jacket in the hot weather and complete mess dress in the cool weather. Dinner was served in my room and I went to bed early as I was tired after the long train journey.

The next morning I reported to the adjutant and I was taken in to meet my new commanding officer, Lieut.-Col. Heather. My first impression was of a rather haughty man with little sense of humour and an unfriendly manner. This turned out to be a very correct picture and from what I gathered by talking to the other officers it appeared that his appointment to command the regiment had not been a popular one. Although he was due for command by virtue of his seniority, he had served so little time with the regiment that it was generally thought he would not get it. For the past fifteen years he had had a succession of staff jobs, and it was not usual for an officer who had been away from regimental duty for so long to get command of his regiment. So, perhaps, owing to the rather exceptional circumstances of his appointment he was feeling his way.

After a very brief interview the adjutant took me into his office where he introduced me to another young officer, John Megson, whom he asked to show me around the lines. The layout of the Begumpet Cavalry lines was very similar to many others in India.

There was a parade ground with a road running straight along one side of it. On this road there were a number of stone-built bungalows which must have been there for many, many years. At one end of the road was the colonel's bungalow. This was the first building as one approached the small cantonment from Secunderabad. The officer's mess was at the other end of the road. There were about six or eight bungalows in between and these were occupied either by married officers and their wives or bachelor officers sharing, with sometimes two or three to a bungalow according to the size of the accommodation available.

On the opposite side of the parade ground were the horse lines, beyond them were the Indian officers' quarters and farther back were the men's barracks.

The whole set-up was spacious and convenient. Sometimes during the hot weather on a particularly sticky day the inspection of lines, which had to be carried out every day by the orderly officer, seemed to be rather difficult to cover because of its very spaciousness, but, on the whole, they were well laid out and adequate from all points of view.

As John Megson and I walked around together I was able to get a good picture of what would be expected of a young officer joining his regiment for the first time. Megson had only been with the regiment for about eight months but this was long enough to know what was wanted. He pointed out that their cavalry lines were notable because of a rather tragic memorial which stood close to a very sinister-looking well to one side of the horse lines. On the memorial was engraved an epitaph recording the tragic circumstances in which a certain Lieutenant Young and his horse met their death while attempting to jump the nearby well in the year 1807.

The story goes that in attempting to jump the well, horse and rider crashed and were both killed instantly. The interesting thing about this story is the incredible type of jump

which this officer was trying to do. The well was thirty feet deep and was surrounded at the top by a solid stone wall built in an unbroken square. The wall was three and a half feet high on all sides and the measurement from either side across the well was twelve feet. The complete jump was over two walls, each three and a half feet high, with a distance between them of twelve feet and a thirty foot drop into the well below. Allowing for the take off, which would add about six feet, and the landing, which would add another six feet, it meant an overall jump of somewhere around twenty-four feet. A really formidable and remarkable performance. Apparently Lieutenant Young's charger was a particularly fine jumper and on his way to stables parade in the mornings the lieutenant would sometimes jump the well. It appears that on a certain morning a general's inspection was being carried out. The colonel of the regiment was escorting the general around the lines during his inspection and, as they were passing the well, the colonel casually mentioned that he had a subaltern who made a habit of jumping the well. The general is reputed to have said that he did not believe it, and, as was common in those days, stated he would be prepared to bet on it. The colonel was, of course, happy to make the wager and sent a message to Lieut. Young asking him to come over with his horse and jump the well for the benefit of the general who had said he thought the task was impossible.

Unfortunately, the colonel was unaware that Lieut. Young was not on parade that morning being in bed with fever. However, the message was duly delivered to the subaltern, and whether he took it as an order or not is not known, but he quickly had his horse saddled up and went over to the well where the general and the colonel were waiting.

I have no doubt that the rest of the officers were gathered round to see this incredible jump. I could almost visualize everyone standing there waiting for this young officer and his amazing horse to carry out the remarkable jump.

Whether the small and probably excited crowd disturbed the horse or whether the fact that Lieut. Young was unfit caused a certain nervousness in them both it is, of course,

difficult to say. The awful thing is that on this particular occasion their gallant effort failed and both rider and horse crashed to their fearful death into the well before the eyes of the small party and the general.

They are buried together under the stone memorial which marks the spot beside the sinister-looking well. The epitaph reads:

Beneath this stone lie the bodies  
of Lieutenant Young and his horse  
killed attempting to jump the well  
1807

I well remember being very impressed at the time for various reasons. Firstly, it was difficult to understand why anyone should attempt such a jump, and then because it had happened well over a hundred years ago. I was proud to think that these same cavalry lines had been in existence for so long and that young men like myself had served their country in this far-distant spot.

We proceeded on our way round and I was introduced to the other officers who were serving with the regiment. As was usual with cavalry regiments there were only a few officers actually with the regiment because of the various duties which officers are called upon to carry out. Although the number of British officers on the strength of a regiment was fifteen, which included a medical officer, there were seldom more than eight or nine serving in the regiment at any one time. A number would be away on courses of instruction (either local or in England), staff duties, leave or sickness owing to the Indian climate which was particularly difficult during the hot weather.

The adjutant took me under his wing for the next few days and I quickly began to learn something about the regiment to which I had been posted.

The first thing was the composition of the regiment as regards the kinds and types of men enlisted in it. These were of Hindu Rajputs, Jats, Punjabi Mussulmen and Pathans. The first two are, of course, Hindus, and the latter two are Mohammedans.

The regiment consisted of four squadrons, A, B, C and D. A Squadron was composed of Hindu Rajputs; B Squadron of Jats and Sikhs; C Squadron of Punjabi Mussulmen and D Squadron of Pathans. This division or segregation of the different religious sects in the Indian Army had come about as a result of the Great Indian Mutiny of 1857 and 1858. Before then there had been whole regiments of Hindus only and whole regiments of Mohammedans only. From experiences during the Mutiny it was realized that seldom were there strong religious feelings shared by both Hindus and Mohammedans over the same incidents and at the same time. Therefore, it was advisable to have composite regiments. By this method at least half of the regiment could be relied upon to stand fast during some form of religious disturbance which might be upsetting either Hindus or Mohammedans. There is no doubt that this proved successful up to the time of the cessation of British rule in India.

The composition of the 8th Cavalry was undoubtedly a good one in that these four sects were known to be of exceptionally good fighting quality and that they were not likely to be unduly aroused by religious upsets. But even the best and most unlikely of people sometimes go wrong, as will be seen later.

The Hindu Rajputs probably rank as the first and highest type of fighting soldier amongst the Hindus. They are particularly fine-looking men of good physique, cheerful, resourceful, reliable and good horsemen; it would have to be something very serious indeed to upset their loyalty. The Jats, although Hindus, are in almost complete contrast to the Rajputs. They are not nearly so fine-looking and have not such good physique but undoubtedly have more natural intelligence. They make good soldiers and, although not outstanding horsemen, they are better than some of their more distinguished brethren. One of their big assets was that they were particularly good in all special jobs such as orderly room clerks and quartermaster stores personnel in all their many ramifications; farriers, pioneers, signallers and armourers. Lucky indeed is the regiment which has Jats included in its complement for this very reason. So much for the Hindu Squadrons.

We now come to the Mohammedans. C Squadron consisted of Punjabi Mussulmen. The Punjabi is probably the best type of fighting Mahomedan in India. They are fine-looking men of magnificent physique, standing well around and over the six-foot mark, madly keen on their profession of soldiering, unquestionably loyal, good horsemen, although possibly a little heavy-handed. They are thoroughly reliable, although they can get upset if got at by unscrupulous religious fanatics. They are fine men in tough circumstances and can stand any amount of rough campaigning.

D Squadron consisted of the Pathans. These men, who really come from the wild hillsides of the Himalayas, although there are many in such stations as Peshawar and Rawal Pindi, are without a doubt the finest soldiers of them all, providing, of course, that they are well led. For sheer bravery they have no equal, with the possible exception of the Gurkhas, but, being more fanatical, their contempt of death makes them completely fearless. They have the most fierce expression, are not particular about their appearance, are not outstanding in physique and have a queer sense of loyalty. They are loyal enough when they are serving with their regiment but are quite capable of fighting against the British when they go back home on leave to the rugged hills of the Himalayas. When their leave was up they would return to their regiment sometimes with a small flesh wound and carry on with their soldiering as if nothing had happened. If there was fighting somewhere around they had to be in it!

This strange loyalty was at its best in relation to their British officers. Here again it showed itself as being something different. If they did not particularly like their British officer their loyalty was to the regiment in which they served but if, on the other hand, they liked and accepted their officer as one of themselves, then they would follow him through the very gates of hell itself. Throughout my whole life I have always been considered tough, so it was hardly a surprise to hear from the adjutant that I was to go to D Squadron with the Pathans.

From the very beginning we got on well together and in a very short time I felt that a bond of mutual trust and under-

standing had grown up between us. This relationship came about in rather peculiar circumstances which I will relate later. I became very attached to the Pathans; they even went so far as to perform a blood-curdling ceremony for my benefit to initiate me into their tribe!

In the meantime I was learning more about the regiment. The 8th Cavalry in comparison with other regiments did not have a long active service record but it was an interesting regiment for all that! It was one of the very last of the Indian Cavalry regiments to finish with the old 'Silladar' system which I shall explain later. It was the first of the cavalry regiments to become Indianised and one of the first Indians to be granted the King's Commission was posted to the 8th. He was Nawab Pratab Singh, a nephew of that well-known Indian prince and celebrated England and Sussex cricketer, the late Prince Sahib Bahadur Ranji Singh, more popularly known as 'Ranji'. The 8th Cavalry, which later amalgamated with the 5th Cavalry and became the present 3rd Cavalry, was one of the last cavalry regiments to remain horsed before the final mechanization of all cavalry regiments.

The 'Silladar' system to which I referred above was indeed an amazing type of administration used by the old Indian Cavalry regiments. It is difficult to realize that such a mediaeval system existed within living memory. It worked in the following way. The colonel commanding an Indian Cavalry regiment received an annual grant of money from the Indian Government in a lump sum of rupees and with this money he became responsible to the Indian Government for a complete regiment of cavalry. The *sowar* (soldier) paid for his horse and equipment and on his discharge from the regiment, his *assami* as it was called, was valued and a lump sum was paid to the soldier. His horse and equipment remained with the regiment. The colonel was free to buy horses, saddlery and equipment, fodder and grain for the horses and rations for his men. He would decide from where in all India his men would be recruited and he could actually decide how he would arm his regiment. He would say whether they were to be lancers or light or heavy cavalry. The colonel had complete authority as

to what kind of dress and equipment his officers and men would wear. It may be interesting to mention that it was from the Silladar system the world gained the famous Sam Browne belt which became the symbol of authority in practically every army throughout the world. It came about this way. A certain Colonel Sam Browne who commanded an Indian Cavalry regiment under the Silladar system (which later became known as Sam Browne's Cavalry) designed the belt and had his regimental officers equipped with it. As we know, the belt still bears his name. It was not, at first, adopted by all Indian regiments but gradually its usefulness was appreciated and later its smartness was possibly the deciding point which made its popularity universal.

Under the Silladar system, the powers of the colonel commanding a regiment were fabulous and immense. He could decide on the type and colour of the horses on which he would mount his men and could also decide where he would buy them.

This was generally done by a detail of British officers usually consisting of an experienced senior officer, possibly a major, although in those days a captain could be both very senior and experienced, and one or two other officers, one being a very junior officer gaining experience. Sometimes the party would include an Indian officer if he was considered by his long service and great experience to be a good judge of horses. When notice was received of the arrival of the horse-transport ships from Australia the party would proceed to the docks at Calcutta where the horse auctions were held. It was an amazing sight. These horses, which had been shipped from Australia, were some of the wildest and most uncouth creatures I have ever seen. Their hair and coats were long, ragged and caked with mud and dirt as well as sometimes being in a very indifferent condition according to whether the voyage had been a rough one or not. They were just taken straight from the ship and walked around in a quickly improvised sales ring looking just about as bad as horses can look. From these motley hordes we officers had to try and pick out thirty to forty horses which we considered might be suitable for training as cavalry horses. It was a wonderful opportunity for a young officer to gain

first-hand experience in trying to pick out good horses. It certainly taught me something which stood me in good stead over the years.

Another feature of the Silladar system was that a regiment was able to run its own grass farm. Here the regiment were able to breed a certain number of its own horses. This was a great experiment. Brood mares were brought out from England and crossed with an Australian Waler stallion. The results were country-bred foals which, in some cases, turned out very well indeed. The strange thing about this breed was that whereas the foals from this cross were quite good, the strain quickly deteriorated if an attempt was made to breed again from the country-breds. Their foals lacked bone and, for some unaccountable reason, were very excitable animals and were definitely not a success. I understand, however, that as time has passed, the country-breds have gradually improved in class and tone and today some really fine animals are being bred in India.

The regiment's farm was at Sagoda in the hills, and a very pleasant place it was. To do duty by having to go up and inspect it occasionally was one of those nice little jobs which were much sought after! The responsibility of running the Silladar system was indeed great, but with the help of the British officers, assisted by the Indian officers, the system worked very well. Various committees were formed and it would be their job to run a particular section and report to the commanding officer accordingly. There were in the regiment no less than fourteen of these committees and they were called by such titles as 'Regimental Stores', 'Mr. Duffadar's Account,' 'Bazaar and Syce Mandi,' 'Regimental Account and Treasure Chest,' 'Grass Farm' and 'Regimental Workshop'. They usually consisted of one British officer and two Indian officers, who always had an answer although not necessarily the right one! My impression of these committees was that one was always serving on some other officer's committee because he was away, and that the Indian officers of the committee were doing their level best to pull the wool over the eyes of the substituting officer to hide some deficiency!

Probably the most important of these committees was that concerned with the 'Treasure Chest' and I append one or two written instructions concerning it:

2. The Chest will be opened only in the presence of the whole Committee and the Regimental Mir Munshi;
3. The keys of the Treasure will be kept by the Ressaldar Major;
4. On no account is any money to be issued except as instructed. Chits will not be accepted.

There was, indeed, a lot to be said for the Silladar system at that time, but the First World War quickly showed up its fundamental weaknesses. These were, of course, the differences in arms and equipment and the impossibility of interchange from a general pool during war. It was quite impossible for two regiments to draw from each other or from a central store of any kind. Each regiment had, as it were, to carry all its own spare parts.

Up to that time it was not considered that the Indian Army would be called upon to fight in a big war outside India but, with the coming of the First World War, the Silladar system was outdated from the start and it was only those regiments like the 8th Cavalry which did not see service overseas, that found themselves still carrying on the system for some few years after the war was over.

When the Silladar system finished in 1921, the Indian Government took over all the tangible assets from the regiments. This included the many funds accounted for by the various committees which I previously mentioned.

It is interesting to note that a single cavalry regiment, such as the 8th Cavalry, handed over to the Government a sum of no less than eight lakhs of rupees—a lakh being fifty thousand—which represented in sterling a sum of twenty-five thousand pounds!

The old-time Silladar regimental commanders had been great men, some of them with a real flair for business who had run their regiments on sound business lines. Strangely enough many of these men were Irish, for the Indian Cavalry had

always been a happy hunting ground for these naturally keen horsemen. It is not usual to associate soldiers with sound business sense but from whatever part of the British Isles they came they had undoubtedly built up, both efficiently and financially, some fine regiments. Their records will live long in the history of the Indian Cavalry.

I settled down very quickly to my new life as a junior officer. I had to undergo special training such as riding school, training of remounts, squadron drill under the adjutant or squadron commander, animal management and language classes in Urdu under the regimental Munchi. As the junior officer I automatically became quartermaster and member of several of the regimental committees. Life was very full and it was some time before I was able to slow up and contemplate what was happening around me.

## Stampede

ONE evening after dinner the Second-in-Command told us the following story: Two years previously the regiment had suffered the greatest shock in its long history. There had been a mutiny which had resulted in a number of British officers being killed. The Major was the only officer then serving in the regiment who was there.

It was a tragic story out of keeping with the regiment's record of loyalty especially as at the time of the Indian mutiny in 1857 the regiment had remained completely loyal throughout that tragic period. They carried on with their work in keeping order on the North West Frontier when the rest of India and the Indian Army was in a turmoil. They had not been on active service since the Afghan war of 1879.

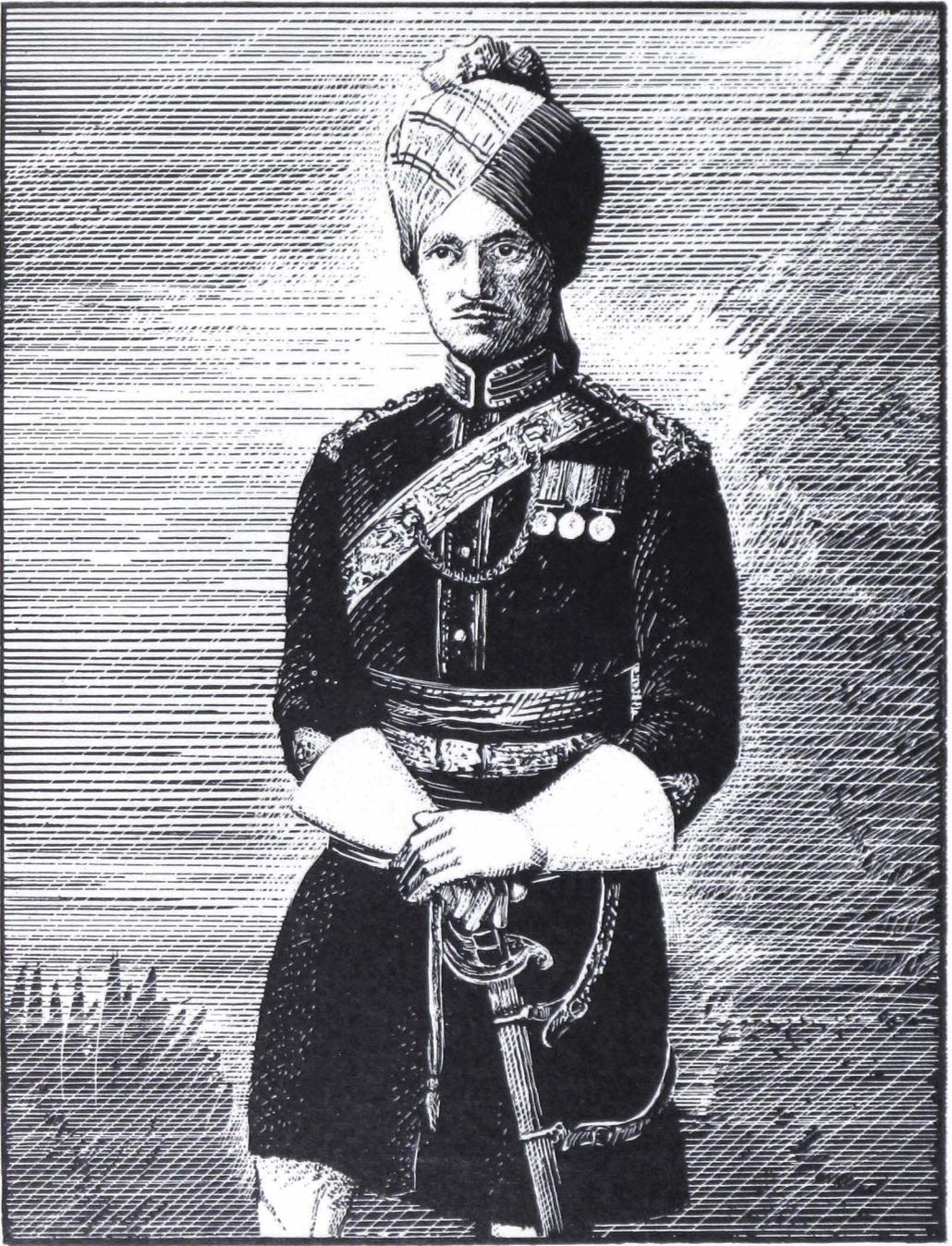
During the South African War, although most of the British officers of the regiment had managed to see active service there, the regiment itself had not been out of India. When the war of 1914 broke out it brought a great chance for cavalry regiments, such as the 8th Cavalry, to see active service at long last. It was not until the war in Mesopotamia was well under way though that its chance came.

Unfortunately things did not turn out as might have been expected.

Towards the end of 1916, when the war in Mesopotamia was going badly, the colonel suddenly received orders to prepare his regiment, then stationed at Jhansi, for service abroad. At this time the Turks, who were Mohammedans, were fighting the British in Mesopotamia. Word had quickly gone around the lines that the regiment was under orders to Mesopotamia. Two

squadrons of the regiment were, of course, Mohammedan and this would mean that they would be fighting against the Turkish Mohammedans. For some little time past in India religious feeling had been rising amongst the Mohammedans about fighting their fellow brethren of the same religion. I think it was generally under-estimated at the time just how strong this feeling was. There is no doubt that the subject had been very much discussed in the temples and was having an effect on the men

On this particular morning the colonel had called the regiment on parade to tell them the news about going on active service, and had expressed his pleasure at having the honour to lead his regiment. The news was received in silence by the Moslims and the senior officer of the Mohammedan squadrons called on them to stand fast after the colonel had dismissed the parade. The Major who was in command of the Mohammedan squadron, decided to speak to the men about their obvious sullenness. He stated that he had heard rumours about their religious difference, but did not believe that this applied to his men. On the other hand, he added, if there were any men on parade who, because of their religion, did not want to go on service to Mesopotamia, would they now step forward. He had hardly got the words out of his mouth when every single man on parade immediately took one pace forward. One can imagine the awful shock this must have been to a keen soldier and one who had spent his life with the regiment. The story goes that the major was so taken aback that he quickly became very angry and slated the men for being cowards and hiding behind their religion to avoid going on active service. We, who have served with the Indian soldier, know that this is a grave charge to make and, of course, it is completely untrue. There is no soldier in the world whose love of active service is so keen as that of the Indian, and especially the Mohammedan, personified by the Pathans and Punjabis who composed these squadrons. The damage was done, however, and he dismissed the parade with further strong words. Nothing more happened that day and, except for a certain amount of discussion in the mess that evening, the whole thing was treated as an unpleasant incident.



The author by Tom Barnard



Indian Cavalry 'Sowars'.



British Officer 8th Cavalry



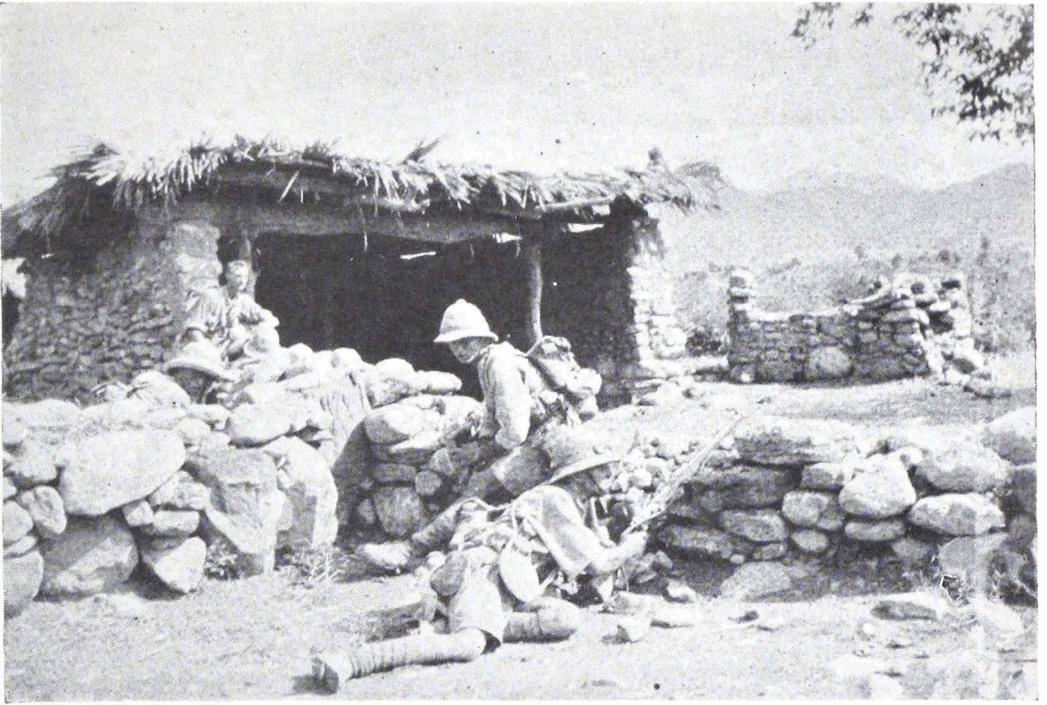
The author as a young British officer, Indian Cavalry



Royal Corps of Signals on active service. North West Frontier



Mountain Battery in action



British troops in action. N.W. Frontier



Mahsuds Tribesmen prisoners

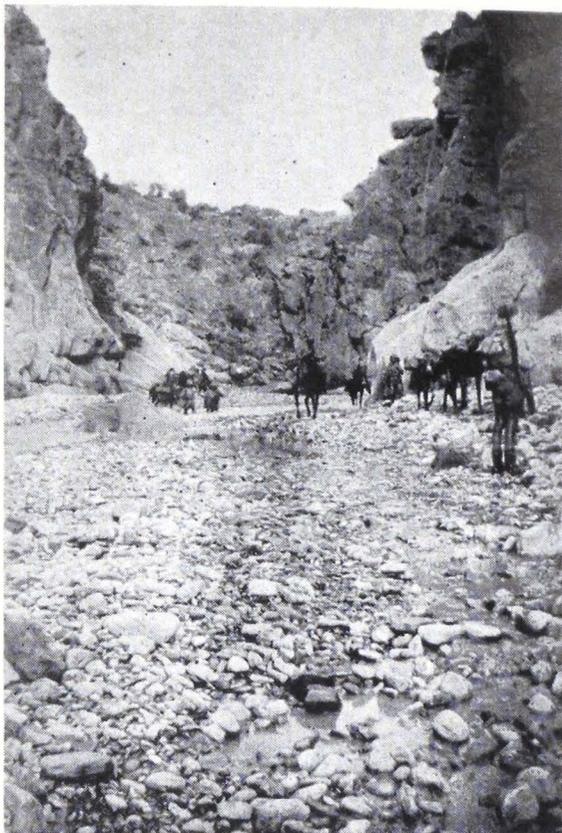
Frontier Tribesmen



Waziris Tribesmen prisoners



Typical Frontier  
Terrain



Camel Convoy approaching Perimeter Camp





The Flooded camp 'the Tribesmen's' revenge'



Indian Officer  
'Probyns Horse'  
(Afghan) Risaldar



The Governor Generals'  
Bodyguard



British officers Indian Cavalry in full dress. (5th Cavalry, 23rd Cavalry Frontier Force, 17th Cavalry, 26th King George's Own Light Cavalry, 11th King Edward's Own Lancers Probyns Horse)



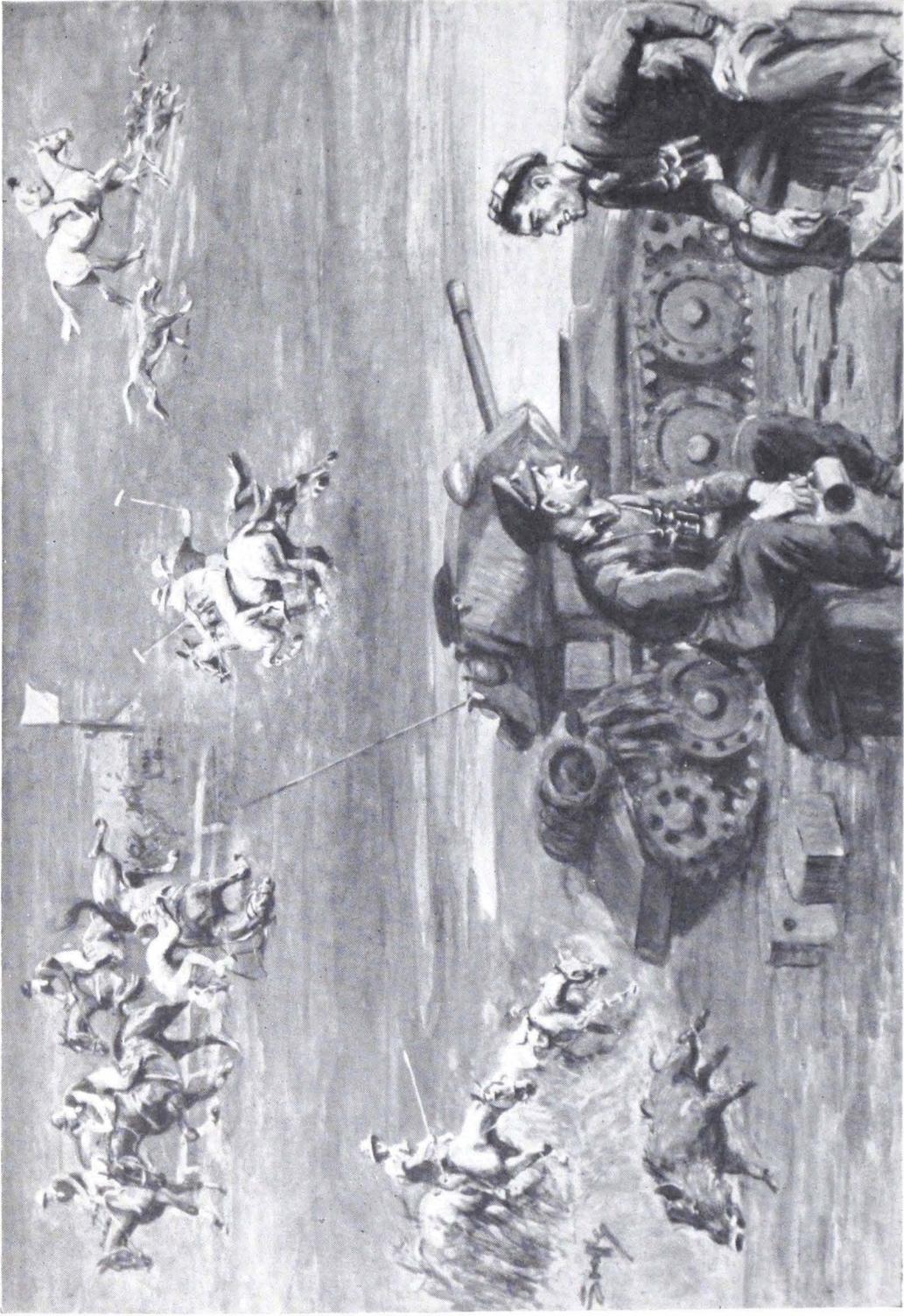
Pigsticking (Lionel Edwards)



An Indian Polo Scene from the picture by Lionel Edwards



British officers. Indian Cavalry Regiment



'Once upon a time' (From the famous war picture by Snaffles)



An unusual Spectacle (Drawing by Tom Barnard)

Next morning the awful tragedy happened. The men were on stables parade and, as was the custom, an Indian officer was usually in charge until the arrival of the British officers—the major in command of the squadron and a captain or subaltern.

In a cavalry regiment, morning stables is just about the busiest parade of the day. There are so many things to be done in addition to grooming the horses. Sick or thin horses have to be sorted out and attended to, grain and fodder has to be inspected, damaged equipment must be investigated and the cause discovered and, in general, the whole efficiency and appearance of a regiment greatly depends on having a thorough overhaul at morning stables.

On this occasion when the squadron commander entered the lines accompanied by one of his subalterns, there appeared to be no Indian officer in charge to call the men to attention. The British subaltern, noting this, quickly gave the order 'Stand to your horses'. There was no response from the men and a certain uneasiness and expectancy was apparent. Again the order was given 'Stand to your horses'. As there was no immediate response the major, becoming angry, strode forward shouting out, 'What the hell is going on here? Stand to your horses!'

At that moment two men who were standing behind a stable post armed with service rifles, raised them to their shoulders and took aim. Then they fired and the major dropped, mortally wounded. The subaltern, who was an athletic young man, immediately dived at the men in a Rugby tackle. He brought down one of them but before he could get the other one who was still on his feet, the man swung at him with a rifle butt, catching him full on the head as he lay on the ground, killing him instantly.

Whether all the men were concerned in this mutinous behaviour is difficult to say but in a few minutes not a man was to be seen in the lines. The British officers of the Hindu squadrons acted at once. With the help of the Hindu Indian officers they ordered the men of the Mohammedan squadron to their barracks and, after having them disarmed, placed a guard from the Hindu squadron over the lines.

In the meantime, the mutineers, of whom there seemed to be only a few, had left the stable lines and completely run amuck around the cantonment. Another British officer had been shot and the men were now apparently making for the colonel's bungalow which was some distance from the lines. On their way they met the station staff officer, who was not an officer of the regiment, cycling towards his bungalow. He was not aware, of course, that anything unusual was happening. The mutineers, who were running up the road towards the C.O.'s bungalow, saw this officer turn into his drive and, before the eyes of his wife who was actually on the veranda at the time, fired their rifles at him, killing him instantly.

Even though things had happened so quickly, news travels fast in India, and when the mutineers reached the colonel's bungalow, the colonel's servant, who was a Mohammedan, told the C.O. that there were *badmash* (bad men) outside and implored him not to go on to the veranda. The colonel gently pushed him aside and strode outside to see what the trouble was about. The men were then coming up the drive carrying their rifles at the ready but stopped short on seeing the colonel standing on the veranda waiting for them.

After hesitating for a moment they raised their rifles to take aim. The colonel quickly held up his hand and, speaking to them in their own language, told them not to be foolish because if they killed him there was no one to whom they could make their complaints. This appeared to unsettle the men for a moment and they lowered their rifles. By this time the colonel's servant had joined him on the veranda and was about to talk to the men when the more excited mutineer of the two turned quickly to the other and said, 'Don't let us listen to his soft words. He will only deceive us—let us shoot!' With that they raised their rifles and fired. The colonel's servant, a brave and loyal man, threw himself in front of his colonel and received both bullets, which killed him instantly, thereby saving the colonel's life. The men, not quite realizing what they had done, turned and ran out of the drive. Calling the other servants to attend to the dead man, the colonel quickly called for his horse, mounted, and immediately rode out after the murderers. As

they heard the horse coming after them they turned round to fire again but this time they were too late as the colonel, riding hard with drawn sword, rode them down, running his sword through them both. He then drew his revolver and shot them dead.

In the meantime, strange things had been happening elsewhere. The alarm had spread and the Indian officers of the Hindu squadron had taken quick action to protect their own British officers from the Mohammedans. They had shut them up in the grain godowns and placed a guard over them until they thought the immediate danger to their lives was over. This, of course, was not in keeping with the British officers ideas and one captain managed to break out. He immediately decided to go for help to the British Gunners barracks, which were about three miles away. Collecting about four Hindu Indian officers, he galloped off to the British lines. Here a certain amount of grim humour enters into the tragic story.

The news of the mutiny had spread quickly and the Gunners had already been informed of the trouble. Indeed they were actually preparing to come and see what assistance they could give when they saw in the distance a small party of horsemen galloping towards them. The Gunner officer in command raised his field-glasses, and one can imagine his reading of the situation when he observed a British officer riding hell for leather across the plain and apparently being chased by a number of Indian soldiers whom he could only distinguish by their flowing turbans flying in the breeze.

It is easy to see how the misunderstanding arose. Not unnaturally he at once came to the conclusion that the British officer was being chased by the mutineers and promptly gave orders to his men to open fire on the Indian officers. Unfortunately for them, before the party could get near enough to explain what was actually happening the Gunners had shot and wounded two of the Indian officers, luckily not seriously. The casualties of the episode were six British officers killed, four of whom were in the regiment, two Indian officers wounded and two mutineers killed.

The prompt action on the part of the colonel in killing the

ringleaders and the quick action of the Hindu Indian officers undoubtedly saved the situation and soon brought the mutiny under control. Meanwhile, the colonel ordered the whole regiment to parade immediately. He had the dead mutineers brought on to the ground and burnt in front of the parade. His intention was to make an example by a show of fearless discipline and determination and thereby put a stop to any further trouble.

G.H.Q., however, took a completely different view, owing to the war in Mesopotamia and the Dardanelles which was going badly. This state of affairs was causing unrest among the Mohammedans in India and such action as the Colonel's was more likely to do harm than good. It was thought that his action at such a time was not warranted and was possibly too strong under the circumstances. So, after thirty-three years with the regiment, he was relieved of his command.

The fact that the mutiny spread no farther than the one regiment speaks for itself. By his action the murderers were killed at the time of their crime which is a just law understood by most men. I sometimes wonder what would have happened if these men had been taken alive and brought to trial. It would have given time for civilian agitators, of which there were plenty, to get to work at a critical time in India. Who knows what the outcome would have been? It will be remembered that the Great Indian Mutiny of 1857 started in a small way and for possibly a less significant reason.

However, G.H.Q. later relented and the colonel was made a brigadier and given the Secunderabad Brigade, where, in the course of duty, I met him many times. He used to come over and dine in the mess often and seldom missed coming to the lines if there had been a new intake of remounts, as he was a particularly fine judge of horses.

Strangely enough I bought his regimental kit which included his sword which I still have in my possession.

Lieut.-Col. Heather took over the command of the 8th Cavalry from him.

I had been with the regiment now for some months and had settled down completely. I found life both exciting and exacting.

The calls on British officers in an Indian Cavalry regiment were many. There were various staff duties which had to be filled, courses of instruction to be attended, and leave, both local and overseas, so the number of officers actually with the regiment was seldom little more than half strength. This resulted in junior officers often finding themselves in temporary command of squadrons with responsibilities far in excess of officers of equal rank in the British Cavalry.

Early one morning my squadron commander sent for me just before parade.

'Oh, Guest, I shan't be coming on parade this morning as I shall be doing accounts with the commanding officer.'

'Yes, sir,' I answered.

He continued, 'I want you to take the squadron out on to the plains and practise your squadron drill with a full squadron.'

'Yes, sir,' I murmured.

I rather liked the idea of having the mounted squadron to myself away from the barrack square with the eternal weapons training and foot drill. I saluted smartly and was away before the squadron commander could change his mind!

I crossed over to the horse lines where I was met by the senior Indian officer of the squadron. He was a fine-looking Mahomedan by the name of Mahomet Ali Khan, who had been with the regiment for no less than thirty-one years. He was one of those most loyal Indians of the best type who loved the regiment and were very much the mainstay of the Indian Army. He was a great cavalryman and knew everything about soldiering and the regiment in general including its officers, both British and Indian. He was a great help to me in my early days as he must have been to all young British officers joining the regiment.

I passed on the major's orders and he quickly gave the command for the squadron to get on parade. It will be understood that because of the heat of India our first parade was at six o'clock in the morning which meant that the men would have to be ready and on parade at five forty-five.

It was a fine crisp morning in January and the squadron was on parade drawn up in four troops in line, looking grand.

They were dressed in light order and carried lances. This meant that they wore breeches and long shirts with cummerbunds and turbans and carried no arms, such as rifles or swords, but just bare lances with no penonns flying.

I inspected the squadron and we moved off from the parade ground, crossed the road on the outskirts of the lines and made our way out into the country. We quickly reached the plain on which we did all our mounted work and, as luck would have it, there were no other squadrons of the regiment in the vicinity doing training that morning. This meant that I had a very free run of the countryside and would be able to carry out fast mounted movements with no fear of interference by other squadrons. This is a great factor as the trouble with mounted drill done at the canter is that one covers the ground so rapidly that it is only a matter of seconds before the horses have reached some kind of boundary, such as large 'nullars', the jungle fringe, water or some kind of unsuitable ground for the type of movement one has in mind.

On this particular morning I was practising movement of troops in echelon. This means that a squadron moves in line with the left flank of the second troop just behind the right flank of the leading troop and the left flank of the third troop just behind the right flank of number two troop. It will be seen that if the order is given 'right wheel into line' the whole squadron half wheels into one straight line still moving forward but inclining to the right. It is a grand movement, in fact the best in the whole of the cavalry drill book. It is certainly the most spectacular from an onlooker's point of view and, of course, is very effective in an actual attacking action.

The squadron was actually in echelon at the trot and alongside a piece of jungle scrub which I was taking care to avoid, when suddenly without warning, up popped a large jackal on our right centre. It was just too much for me to miss such a wonderful chance of giving out the right order for such an affront. I whipped out my sword with a flourish and shouted 'right wheel into line—prepare to charge. Charge!' and away I went after the jackal. The squadron had been quick to see what was in my mind and had wheeled smartly

into line. Down went their lances and away we went in true cavalry fashion.

All of a sudden there was a terrific yell of 'Halt! Halt!' and, as I looked up, there, tearing down on us from the left flank, were two men on horses galloping like mad across our front. I gave one glance and to my horror recognized the colonel of the regiment and the adjutant. I realized that I had been caught out and knew at once that I was for it! The troops had been equally quick to understand the position and had come smartly to the halt in line immediately.

The colonel just rode over to me and gave me a terrific dressing-down then and there and ordered me back to my quarters immediately. He told the adjutant to order the senior Indian officer to take the squadron back to the lines as it was more or less the time for the parade to end.

I returned to my bungalow to await further orders from the adjutant, but it was not until the following day that I was sent for. In the meantime, I had to have all my meals sent over from the mess and, of course, was not allowed out. By this time I was beginning to think that this was the end of everything and wondered how it would finish. However, on the following morning I received a chit from the adjutant to be at the orderly room to go before the colonel.

He was looking as black as thunder as I went in and once again he blasted my head off. At last he finished and dismissed me, and, as I went out of the door with my tail between my legs, I heard him say in a quiet voice, 'Pity you didn't get him, Guest.' I dared not look round, but felt relieved and realized the colonel was human after all!

Strangely enough this little episode did me far more good than harm, for it had gone down with my Pathans in a remarkable way. They had completely taken me to their hearts as a sportsman and were full of sympathy for me because of the awful wiggling I had received from the colonel in front of them.

Imagine my surprise when I was asked by the Subidah Ali Khan to stay behind after stable parade one morning. The men all clustered around me as one of them came forward and

presented me with a completely new set of Indian clothes, complete with turban, as worn by the Pathans when off duty. In a little speech, he said that the men had accepted me as one of themselves and that from now on I was to consider myself a Pathan.

I felt very touched and thanked them for their understanding, and, as I walked away, I could hear the word '*shabash, shabash,*' on all sides. Strangely enough in all my travels in India and talks with other British officers, I never once came across another instance where the Pathans had taken a British officer into their fold. What I do know is that from then on I had the complete confidence of the men and knew that they would follow me through the gates of hell itself if I only gave the word. I never once, after that little ceremony, remember seeing a sullen look on any face when I gave an order, no matter how unpalatable it was.

It took me some little time to live down that unfortunate episode as my squadron commander had also taken rather a dim view of the way in which I had misused the squadron when he was not there but, strangely enough, he, too, came to grief a few weeks later as the following story will show.

One morning the squadron commander sent for me. 'Oh, Guest, I think it would be a good idea to take the squadron on an all-night exercise while the weather is cool.'

'Yes, sir,' I answered.

He went on. 'I think Thursday night would be suitable as this will give us time to get back on Friday to get cleaned up for the week-end.'

'Right, sir, I will see the Subadah and tell him to make the bandabust,' I answered.

The major nodded his head, and, as an afterthought, commented, 'Don't forget to give the mess orders about our food. I think dinner and breakfast will be enough.'

I saluted, went over to the lines and met the rissaldar and gave him the necessary orders. I called in at the shutterkhana (camel stables) and ordered a sowar and camel to report to the officers' mess. Then I gave the necessary orders to the mess duffadar for sufficient food to be packed, together with bedding

rolls, and loaded on to the camel as two officers would be out for dinner and breakfast. The camel sowar was to make his way to the village and await the squadron's arrival.

On the Thursday evening the squadron paraded in full marching order, which meant that the sowars would be carrying lances, rifles and swords. A number of mules were on parade packed with sufficient fodder for the horses, rations for the men and ground-sheets as it was to be a bivouac camp only.

The object of the exercise was to get the men away from the lines to practise night picketing of horses. A certain amount of night exercises, such as advance- and rear-guard work over rough ground was contemplated. Our destination was a certain village about eight miles away over some very rough country which was studded with nullars and hillocks.

After a thorough inspection by the squadron commander, we moved off from the parade ground just as the sun was going down. This meant that it would be dark in less than half an hour. The major ordered an advance-guard movement as soon as we were clear of our lines and by the time this had got under way darkness was upon us. It was hard and difficult going as the nullars were steep and deep and it was not long before we were in trouble with fallen horses and mules.

However, the exercise proceeded according to plan and we eventually reached our destination with no more than the few mishaps which such work would naturally entail. It was between eight and nine o'clock at night when we stopped work and the order was given to picket the horses. This was carried out in the following manner: two strong iron stakes would be driven into the ground about twenty yards apart and a rope firmly tied connecting them at not more than six or eight inches from the ground. To this rope twelve horses would be tied by their head stalls. A similar rope and stakes would run parallel about one yard from their hind legs. There would be enough play on the ropes to give the animal a little freedom of movement. The horses were given their feed which was later than usual and in a short time they had settled down and all was quiet. The men were now lighting small fires and cooking their evening meal.

In the meantime the officers' mess camel had been unloaded a little distance away and a nice evening meal was laid out on the ground for the squadron commander and myself. I was just checking up to see if everything was in order when the major came over, after having gone around the picketing lines to inspect them and see that everything was correct and to his liking.

'Well, Guest,' he said as he threw himself on the ground. 'I think that was a good evening's work and now what about a drink?' He called the kitmaghar who had prepared the meal and was close at hand. 'What about a whisky and soda?' and he added, '*Jaldi, jaldi!*' (Hurry, hurry). The servant came forward with a tray on which was a bottle of whisky, two glasses and a jug of water.

The major just gave it a glance and said, 'I want soda not water.'

The kitmaghar answered, 'Sorry, sahib, no soda.'

That did it! The next moment I thought the world would come to an end as the major blew up in wrath. He cursed and swore at all and sundry for their incompetence—even I came in for a share of it.

All that had happened was that the mess duffadah had thought that the soda water would not stand up the shaking it would get on the camel's back and had decided not to pack it. I tried to reason with him to this effect but it was no use. He insisted that the camel should be sent right back to the mess at once to get the soda. I pointed out that it would take the best part of two hours for the camel to do the return journey but he was in no mood to listen to reason and the sowar was ordered to get back to the mess and pick up the soda water as quickly as possible. Although we had come across country there was, in fact, a reasonable bridle track which went more or less direct and, with a good trotting camel, which this one was, I estimated that he might do the return journey in about an hour and a half; but that would be good going.

Off he went and after a time the squadron commander and I settled down to our meal. It was an excellent one. It had been well prepared and was nicely laid out on the ground with a

clean tablecloth and crockery. The kitmaghar had lighted a fire and the food was served piping hot.

This made the major begin to relent a little, although the mealtime itself had been rather strained owing to his ill-temper. We had sat down rather late so it was now about half-past ten. The orderlies had got our bed rolls down and we were resting on them smoking. We had not yet turned in as I knew the commander was bent on getting his whisky and soda that night as never before.

Everything and everywhere was quiet, the fires were going out one by one and the men were beginning to settle down for the night. The horses sounded particularly quiet with only the rustle of a shackle here and there and the steady sound of fodder being munched. It was a lovely still Indian tropical night with no moon, and although the stars gave out quite a light there was still a kind of eerie darkness which I thought was a little foreboding.

I was inwardly beginning to curse the damned soda water as I was sleepy and wanted to turn in but I knew I dare not until the camel returned. All of a sudden there was a crash, yells, screams, commotion and pandemonium let loose. Before one had time to wonder what was happening there was the thunderous noise of galloping horses and the next second a batch came past us with a rush. We both jumped up and were very nearly knocked down as another crowd of horses flashed by. My first thought was that we had been taken by surprise by another squadron of the regiment which had decided to make a secret attack on us in the nature of an exercise but as the next batch of mules and horses went screaming past, I knew we were in trouble and that it was a complete stampede of our own horses. What had happened was that the wretched sowar and his camel, in their hurry to get back with the ill-fated soda water, had trotted right up to the picketed horse lines in the dead of night.

As this strange and unfortunately shaped creature loomed quietly out of the darkness it was just too much for the horses, and being startled they had taken fright and bolted. It did not seem to matter how well the horses and mules were picketed, the

stakes and ropes could not possibly stand up to the sudden wrench of concerted effort which the fright had caused. It was indeed a calamity.

The poor unfortunate animals stampeded in all directions and in a few seconds the camp became an inferno. Horses and mules were galloping about everywhere, some in bunches still shackled together. Men were dashing all over the place, either trying to catch them or avoiding an oncoming rush. It was, without doubt, a frightening experience. It would have been bad enough in daylight but at night it was just a nightmare. After the shambles and excitement of the first few minutes, we quickly got the men into organized parties under their Indian officer and N.C.O. and proceeded to round up the animals.

The hunt went on all through the night as there were over a hundred and fifty horses and mules to be accounted for. By the dawn we had got the majority together but there were still a number of them missing.

An Indian officer and a party of mounted men had immediately been sent back to the regimental lines to take care of any animals which had instinctively galloped back home. There was, of course, the possibility of the loose horses creating havoc back there. Luckily the party had arrived in time to prevent further chaos.

At last we paraded the men and a very tired squadron led by a very tired, dejected commander, wended their way back to the regimental lines. We had accounted for all the animals but four had to be destroyed, and nearly twenty were lame—a rather grim night's work.

Later that morning I saw the squadron commander coming from the orderly room, looking more serious than usual, but, by lunchtime, the C.O. had forgiven him and all was well.

## Meeting Mahatma Gandhi

**T**HAT same week I was due to attend a course of instruction which was generally welcomed as an occasional break from regimental duty. It was a physical training course which was to be held in Poona. I handed over my numerous duties to another officer, collected my warrants and left on the night train.

On the journey which was to take a few days, I had an interesting experience. When the train pulled into the station of Sholapur there was a large excited crowd on the platform. I sent my bearer to inquire what it was all about. It did not take him long to find out and the news was that Mahatma Gandhi was going to board our train on his way to Poona. The great gathering consisted of his followers who had come to see him off. I was extremely interested to see this extraordinary little man who was such a thorn in the flesh of the British Government and who inspired such amazing devotion amongst Indians of all castes and creeds from the very highest to the lowest, and in particular among the poor and outcasts.

I looked from the window of my compartment and there stood this small skeleton of a man accompanied by his ever-faithful disciple of those days, the Englishwoman, Miss Slade. The daughter of a British naval officer, she was undoubtedly the first European to believe and understand the greatness of this man.

She called for silence and their idol addressed them for a few minutes. The stillness as he spoke was intense, but as soon as he had finished the scene changed to one of great excitement. He was acclaimed on all sides with a devotion filled with admiration and emotion.

A little later he took his place on the train and we steamed slowly out of the station. My bearer informed me that the Mahatma was on his way to Poona which was about a hundred and fifty miles farther on. The train stopped at a halt later and I decided to go along and ask Miss Slade if Mahatma Gandhi would let me travel a little way with him in his compartment.

He said he would be pleased for me to do so, and I was able to talk with him for about an hour as the train continued on its journey. It was not long before I fell under his spell. I was terribly impressed by his simple saint-like humility, his undoubted wonderful courage and his almost fierce inward determination. He talked about the time he spent in England as a young student; about his work in the Boer War and about Christianity; but the aim which appeared to me to be uppermost in his mind at that time was to try to heal the bitter antagonism which existed between the Hindus and the Muslims. He thought there was little hope for the future of India while this terrible gulf continued.

Our conversation during the short time I was with him left me with an extraordinary impression. In some peculiar manner I had a feeling that he was basing his actual mode of life on that of Christ, while at the same time remaining faithful to his own Hindu religion. His defence of the untouchables—the lowest caste of the Hindus—was, without doubt, his bravest and most successful work, for the simple reason that there were so many of them in the vast masses of India. It was easy to understand why the millions of poor and oppressed people found a new hope and comfort in his inspired leadership. He was very outspoken in his criticisms of Hindu customs and beliefs which he considered harmful; in particular he mentioned the Hindu child marriages, having himself been married at the age of thirteen.

I returned to my compartment a little later and the memory of my talk with that devout little man has remained with me throughout my life. When the train reached Poona there was an enormous crowd waiting to greet him. They were so excited and demonstrative that I thought it safer to pull down

the blinds of my carriage and so escape from any undue attention from the mob.

All my life I have followed the life of Mahatma Gandhi with considerable interest. When the terrible riots broke out between Hindus and Muslims there was no doubt about his deep concern over those tragic events. His declaration that he would 'Fast unto Death' was believed by all and affected Hindus and Muslims so much that, in many instances, the rioting ceased.

He had used this same threat against the British Government for political purposes from time to time and, although there were some who doubted the seriousness of his intentions, I was sure that it was no idle threat. I remember so well the time during one of his fasts when it was reported that he was actually dying and the grave concern it caused as to what would be the outcome should this tragedy occur. He was in prison for political offences and the implications of his possible death had everyone considerably worried.

Years later, in 1948, when the news of his tragic assassination by a religious fanatic was flashed around the world, I was as shocked as if it had been that of a personal friend but thought at the time how fortunate it was that it had happened after the British had left India. I have always been of the opinion that as his death recedes with the passing of the years, his name will be added to those of the great reformers of mankind. I will even predict that because of his ethereality the Hindu religion will, in time, come under his tremendous influence. By his teachings, together with his wonderful example of simple, frugal living, the Hindu religion may become more definable and intelligible. This would undoubtedly lead to a better understanding by its followers and by people of other creeds.

It is difficult to write about India without getting involved in the subject of religion as it is unquestionably the most religious country in the world. Anyone who has visited India, if only for a short period, cannot avoid observing how great a part it plays in the everyday lives of the people. The most important religion is Hinduism with its infinite variety of sects. It is followed by no less than two hundred and fifty million

people. The Muslims account for another hundred millions and there are fifty million adherents of other religious bodies, such as Parsees, Buddhists, Jews and Christians.

Hinduism is one of the most sinister forms of worship. It is difficult to define but can perhaps be likened to some obnoxious weed as it seems to entangle every cult or religious thought with which it comes into contact. Into the fanatical extremes of the hundreds of different sects every known human failing or vice seems to have found its way. There is always an excuse there to cover up any transgression and most religious thoughts and beliefs seem to have become involved in its mesh.

Studying this fantastic conglomeration of idol worship, it dawned on me why the Christian religion had not met with the fierce opposition which might have been expected from its history. The startling revelation was that Hinduism had a place for the Christian religion within its tangled stems. It gradually became absorbed and easily fitted into the rigid laws of the caste system.

The distorted and grotesque figure of the Hindu god Shiva—the Destroyer—with its five or seven arms outstretched, seems to suggest that they are reaching out to clasp at anything which might come under its evil influence. That the Christian religion in India has fallen under its spell there can be little doubt. This is easily seen when one notes the striking resemblance between the Christian churches and the Hindu temples of southern India. One has only to look inside these churches used by the Indian Christians to observe it. The entire interior of the church will be a mass of highly-coloured decorations with tawdry statues of saints and images of the Virgin in profusion. Lighted candles will be everywhere in their hundreds and the church will be lit up in the most fantastic manner. The floors will be of polished, coloured stone and there will be absolutely no furniture such as chairs or seats of any description. The Indian congregation crowd together in a perpetual kneeling position, prostrating themselves before the various statues, whether there is a service going on at the time or not. There is very little difference between these churches and the Hindu Ganesh temples which are not far away. Perhaps the

only difference is the hideous idol of the half-man half-elephant carved from a large black shining stone, which is on the altar surrounded by the tawdry trappings which are similar to those in the churches.

The Portuguese Christian priests with their long flowing black beards fit well into this fantastic picture and one comes away with the impression that it is just another cult or sect of the ever-absorbing Hinduism.

Thus, it can be easily understood how the low caste Indian welcomed the coming of a sect which gave him an uplift in the hide-bound caste system of Hinduism, so long as it conformed to the temples from which he was barred. It catered for the Indian love of tinsel and statues.

If, in spite of this, the teachings of Christianity can penetrate this jungle of spiritual undergrowth then I would regard it as just another miracle. It gives food for thought to think what will happen to the Christian Church in India during the years to come, now that the British influence is no more.

The course in Poona was indeed a strenuous one for not only did we learn how to organize physical training within the regiment but we had to undergo a complete course ourselves. Once again my natural ability at games and athletics stood me in good stead and I was able to hold my own in most subjects

It was during this course that the great influenza epidemic struck the world and India in particular. During its worst period millions of people died and Poona suffered as badly as anywhere. For days and days on end a steady stream of funerals passed on their way to the burning ghats which were not very far from our lines. At night we could see the flames from the pyres as they lighted up the night sky and the stench from the burning flesh became nauseating. Nothing could be done about it, though, and we had to bear it as best we could.

It was during this epidemic that a European girl of doubtful fame died in Bombay and her funeral was one of the largest seen in that celebrated city for many years. She was a lady of easy virtue but such was her charm and beauty that she was known throughout India and wreaths poured in from all over the country. She was mourned as no other girl of similar

occupation had been before or was likely to be again. She was a Hungarian known by the name of Sonia and lived in Grant Road. She was very much in demand because of her amazing kindness and understanding. It was said that the funeral procession was miles long and she was mourned by all Bombay.

The physical training course of instruction was held at a time which would include as much of the cool weather as possible. Just before the end of the course the famous Royal Connaught Boat Club, which was situated at Kirkee just outside Poona, held a regatta. The clubhouse stood on a high bank surrounded by lovely lawns which swept down to the water-side. From them a commanding view of the river could be seen. As soon as the notice of the regatta was published, the P.T. School immediately went into special training and entered teams for every event with great enthusiasm.

More because of our physical fitness than our watermanship, we won everything, as might be expected. I took part in several events and was lucky enough to win the single sculls so had a very successful day. I shall always remember the crowd of us sitting around in long chairs on those lovely lawns in the cool of an Indian evening with a long drink by our side. It was quite unforgettable.

The most eventful evening of the course was the night of our farewell dance at the Poona Gymkhana Club. It was held in fancy dress and four of us decided to go dressed in long black hooded gowns. These covered the whole body, including the face, except for eye-holes in the hood to see through.

On the back of each gown was sewn a word in large white lettering and when we paraded in correct order it read, 'The Black Hand Gang'. Our original intention was that we should be two girls and two fellows, but, ladies being scarce, we had to be content with one. The party of four consisted of Kerr, Billingham and myself as the three men, and a young married woman whose husband was not in the station at that time, as the fourth. Her name was Doris and it was agreed that as Billingham had quite slim ankles he should wear ladies' shoes and stockings and play the part of a girl. To all intents and purposes when we lined up in our black uniform gowns it

looked as if we were two men and two women, as only the feet and ankles could be seen.

We were all set for a good party, in high spirits and full of fun, but the final result was disastrous. We made a point of arriving a little late just to cause an element of excitement and surprise. This move succeeded as immediately we arrived in a gang everyone became mystified as to who we actually were. The idea of getting Billingham to wear ladies shoes completed the deception because most of the women who frequented the club could be accounted for. Our plan was to remain silent and refuse to talk except in monosyllables until the customary hour of midnight. I need hardly add that we had been most careful to keep our plan a secret before the dance. We danced only with each other and resisted offers from the other revellers.

Things went well and the party raged with gaiety until around midnight. The dance was at its height and champagne was flowing and having its usual exhilarating effect. The gala was at its merriest. The four of us had gone into the bar, still trying to keep up the deception, when suddenly one of the fellows at the P.T. School who was, perhaps, a little merrier than most, yelled out that he knew who we were, that there were no women amongst us and we were four chaps from the P.T. course. 'Let's debag them and prove it!' Before we could do a thing, the crowd in the bar was upon us and the damage was done. We quickly realized the danger and, grabbing hold of Doris, we tried to make a bolt for the door, at the same time yelling out who we were with the object of stopping them from doing something silly.

It was no good, however, as the crowd in the bar had entered into the spirit of the thing, and in a flash they were upon us! We were now really scared because of the female in the party and we three men fought like demons. We knocked out people right and left, with the result that it developed into a free for all. However, we were hopelessly outnumbered and were soon overpowered and quickly debagged. The gowns were torn off our backs and we were in what little under-clothing we had, including poor Doris, who was now thoroughly

frightened and upset. As she was thought to be a man she had come in for the same rough treatment and was now in her scanty undies!

In a moment someone realized what had happened and everybody was embarrassed. The fighting stopped as quickly as it had begun and the bar cleared like lightning. We threw a gown around Doris and made a hurried exit before there was any further trouble. It certainly was a dramatic end to a hectic party! It was as well for everyone concerned that the P.T. course ended the next day and people returned to their respective stations; thus a veil was drawn over an unfortunate episode.

On returning to the regiment I found that there had been a number of changes among the British officers. This is essentially a part of life in the Indian Cavalry. A lot can happen in a comparatively short time in India and I had been away for a few months. The C.O. had gone on leave and the second in command had taken over the regiment. One of the squadron commanders had been appointed to Staff and two young subalterns, one of them an Indian, had joined the regiment which moved me farther up the ladder. One took over my job as Q.M. and I went as second in command to a squadron, which was very gratifying. One or two other officers had come back from leave and others had gone so the mess had changed quite a bit. The one British officer who seemed to stay put longer than most was the adjutant who was a very important person, as the regiment more or less revolved around him and was in his safe keeping. On the other hand, the real stability of an Indian Cavalry regiment undoubtedly lay in the reliable hands of the senior Indian officers. These wonderful men with their incredible periods of long service—many of them serving for thirty years or more—were the mainstay of any regiment. With their great experience they were always ready to advise and guide any young British officer through the many problems which confronted him from time to time.

However, notwithstanding the various changes, the work of the regiment went smoothly along. A large draft of new remounts had recently arrived from Calcutta and these were

creating the usual amount of excited interest. The squadron commanders took it in turns to make their selection according to their seniority. For instance, if there were forty new remounts there would be say ten for each of the four squadrons. Within a day or two of their arrival the horses would be walked round on the parade ground or in the riding school and the four squadron commanders, in consultation with their own British and Indian officers, would make their choice of each animal in turn. That is to say that B squadron commander, being the senior, would pick out one remount, then D squadron commander, being the next senior, would make his choice and so on until each squadron had reached their quota. The discussions, opinions and arguments as to which should be the choice each time can well be imagined, but it was all terribly interesting especially to the young British officer, and the selection of these remounts was an education in itself to a young horseman. In the first place, the remounts were very young and rough and it was always a difficult task to pick out an animal which was likely to make either a charger or a polo pony and, of course, most officers were looking more from the polo pony point of view! Most interesting of all was to see how the various selections later turned out, especially during the first six months when they were undergoing schooling for the different purposes for which they had been allotted.

## Pigsticking and Polo

A FEW weeks later I attended another course of instruction in Delhi which was to last six weeks. I was always pleased to go on such courses as I considered it a good thing to meet officers of other regiments of both cavalry and infantry and exchange ideas about everything in general.

I had never been to Delhi before and was looking forward to seeing the Old City and the New, which was very much in the news at that time. I was lucky enough to be given a special letter of introduction from a local Gunner friend of mine to another Gunner named Dallas, who was stationed in Delhi. I was particularly interested in him as I heard that he was a very keen pigsticker and was, in fact, one of the keenest members of the Delhi Tent Club. I was hoping to get initiated into the sport about which I had heard so much; but so far, because of being stationed in southern India, I had not had a chance of taking part in it.

The journey from Secunderabad to Delhi by train is a long one; it takes three or four days and can only be done in that time by going to Bombay and catching the mail train from there. Long distance train travelling in India is always an event and full of incident. This particular journey proved to be no exception. On the way to Bombay I had to change in the middle of the night, as always seemed usual! Of course, the station was one of those outlandish places in which India abounds. It was about three o'clock in the morning and completely deserted. The connecting train steamed in and, as there was no corridor, my bearer made for the nearest first-class compartments, which

are always shut, with all blinds drawn, and invariably locked. He found one which was unlocked, opened it and quickly pushed my luggage in. Then he called to me and, as soon as I had got in, he disappeared to his part of the train.

In consideration for the other passengers I did not turn on the lights. I could see that three berths were occupied with their curtains drawn but that the fourth—a top one—was empty. It did not take me a minute to slip off my clothes as one wears as little as possible in India. On went my pyjamas and, with one high step, I was in bed. I was very pleased with myself for not having disturbed the other passengers and, drawing my curtain I had settled down to sleep in a very short time as I was extremely tired.

The next thing I remember was the sound of strange voices which gave me quite a shock. I drew my curtain and there, sure enough, my worst fears were realized—three young women were right in the middle of dressing themselves! I would have drawn back but it was too late, as the two facing me let out yells of distress. Luckily they were all Europeans, two army wives and one civilian, the wife of a young business man from Madras.

After the first embarrassment we managed to laugh it off but I did not think it quite so funny when I heard that all three husbands were on the train in another compartment!

When the train stopped and we got out for breakfast I received a rough look from the husbands, two majors and a young civilian, when they came along to collect their wives, especially when they pointed out to me that the compartment was very clearly marked on the outside 'Females Only'. The two majors were both in British infantry regiments and, as I was in cavalry uniform, it took a little while for the air to clear, the reputation of young cavalry bachelors with the fair sex, especially married ones, being considered to be from bad to damned bad, and I suppose I looked no exception to the rule!

However, after my rather feeble explanation we gradually laughed it off, had a jolly breakfast and travelled together during the day for the remainder of the journey.

I duly arrived in Delhi without further incident of any

note and reported to the camp where the course was being held. This was a little way outside the city on the road to the famous Valley of the Tombs.

After a few days, by which time I had settled down to the routine of the school of instruction, I decided to look up my friend. The gunners were stationed in the Old Delhi Fort right in the centre of the town, which is well remembered because of its part in the Indian Mutiny. I easily contacted Dallas and he invited me to their guest night, which was the following evening. As was usual on such an occasion, I was first introduced to everyone in the ante-room.

We went in to dinner and it soon became obvious that the sport which interested the great majority of the officers present, both senior and junior, was pigsticking. Polo was almost unheard of in this particular mess. The conversation was all pigsticking and I soon became enthralled with the description and stories of the sport. It appeared that the Delhi Tent Club, which is one of the oldest pigsticking clubs in India, held their meetings every week-end.

By the time dinner was over I had received an invitation to join them and go out the following Saturday and Sunday, which I readily agreed to do. The arrangement was that a number of us would go out on the Saturday afternoon and camp out that night. Our job was to get things ready for the big day's sport on the Sunday. We would decide which country was to be hunted, pitch the camp, meet the shikaris and organize the beaters.

On Saturday I went to the Old Fort and found the party waiting to go. There was Dallas, who appeared to be the leader, and three other gunner officers. We were to go out and make the complete bunderbus for the other members of the Tent Club who would be coming out the first thing in the morning.

I was given my mounts for the week-end. They were two very useful-looking Australian Walers, standing about fifteen hands. They were troop horses reputed to be trained in the art of pigsticking and were usually hunted by an officer who was away on leave. They were both good weight-carrying animals, not very fast to look at, but I was assured they were sure-footed

which appeared to me to be more important for my first outing with a tent club.

Being so far away from my own station I considered myself lucky to get mounted at all and I was very grateful to my host. Everyone present was taking two horses. We each packed our baggage on one and rode the other, taking the spare on a rein. Two gunner orderlies carried our lances and equipment. A sowar and his camel packed with tents and food and a mess servant made up the party.

We moved off and rode out of Delhi towards the Jumna River on the south side; entering the dried-up river-bed and continuing along its rough surface for a few miles. Dallas soon called a halt at an ideal spot. This would be our camp and the meeting place for the club on the following morning. The camping ground was a delightful piece of high, flat ground shaded by a group of trees with a nice little stream flowing freely below. We could see a long way over some good open scrub country and up and down the river-bed which was much overgrown with grass and ghow, and, as I had noticed on the ride out, very rough and loose underfoot. I realized at once how much depended on a good sure-footed horse. It was not long before we had the tents up and hoisted the Tent Club's flag which could be seen for miles.

By this time the shikaris had arrived and were in earnest conversation with Dallas, giving him all the information he wanted for passing on to the honorary secretary who had said he would be out later that evening or first thing in the morning. The shikaris had brought the head beater and, as we expected a big field the following day, it was arranged that there would be at least forty beaters.

Time was now getting on. We had picketed our horses, sent the camel back as he would be needed for bringing out food for lunch on the following day, and most of the bandobast had been fixed up regarding beaters. As it was the end of January the evenings were still cool and it was pleasant as we sat round and had our evening meal.

A little later the honorary secretary turned up and straight away plunged into details with Dallas while we listened. They

discussed where the various beats would be positioned, which cover should be beaten and from which direction, who was expected out and how the heats should be made up. It was decided to divide the experienced hunters with the novices and altogether I found the conversation very enlightening and entertaining. After everything had been discussed we decided to turn in fairly early as we had a big day in front of us.

We were up early next morning and as we were having breakfast the members began to roll up in their twos and threes. Ten turned up, making fifteen altogether. We were quickly organized and divided into heats of three fours and one of three. It was decided that as I had never been out before I should join the most experienced heat, follow them without a spear and keep in the rear. This I was pleased to do as I wanted to see how things were done. My heat consisted of two very experienced hog hunters, one being the honorary secretary, a man named Brand of the I.C.S. who had hunted the country and knew every inch of it for he had been with the club for fourteen years. He was a first-class pigsticker and I was very lucky to be in his heat. There was also a Major Scott, a gunner, who was, again, very experienced and, of course, there was my friend and host, Charles Dallas, who was as keen as mustard and who was considered one of the up-and-coming hunters. As he was responsible for me he said he would like to be around to see that I did not get into trouble and also to keep an eye on his kit as practically everything I had borrowed was his!

The line of heats was strung across the wide river-bed facing south, with the domes of Delhi away in the distance behind us. It was decided that the beaters would beat on a line running north-east to south-west and leave the thicker jungle far over to the east side of the river. If the plan worked out well, it would mean that the pig would break cover and cross the open scrub country in an effort to get to the jungle.

My heat was No. 1 and left of the line. The idea was that with the experience of Brand and Scott they would head off any game going away on the left of the beaters so that the pig would move across the line of heats to the right. The scheme had been well thought out and, in fact, it worked well. Our heat

was standing quietly under a shady tree facing slightly south-east.

Presently we heard the beaters coming along with all the noise and hullabaloo that forty men could make. They were strung out in a good long line but every now and then they closed in as the grass and ghow got thicker. We were soon rewarded as a good thirty-two-inch grey boar suddenly appeared about a hundred yards ahead and making for the scrub country. With a yell of 'Ride' from Brand, away we went hell for leather. I quite forgot all my instructions in the excitement and was going like the wind when Major Scott yelled at me to get back and reminded me that I was not armed with a lance. I, of course, eased my horse a little, much to its annoyance, and tacked on at the rear of the heat. Brand had easily gone into the lead and was making for the pig, going like hell. Charles Dallas was riding second spear and yelling like mad, Major Scott was a little way behind as third spear and I was riding a good fourth. I was very thrilled indeed with my first chase and sight of pig. The big boar had got away to a wonderful start and had cleared the rough undergrowth of the riverbed before us and was going flat out across the scrub country before we could get clear of the long grass. However, we were all up and the boar was giving us a marvellous run. Brand was now getting near him and from the distance I thought he was going to spear but the pig made a wonderful jink to the right before Brand could turn and Charles was riding too close to take advantage of it. Major Scott, who was an old hand, was just at the right distance and, with a quick turn he was up alongside the pig with a yell and away they went like fury. I now realized my danger without a lance and quickly dropped back to give the others a chance of getting into position again.

Scott was now going really well and the pig was beginning to tire. With a squeal and a grunt the huge boar swung round towards the rider and the horse, but Scott was ready and ran his lance right in between the shoulders. The pig seemed to stop in its tracks and before it could move again Brand and Dallas had finished him off. Everyone was pleased as it had

been quite a show piece of work and I was lucky to see such a hunt on my very first time out.

As we stood around waiting for the shikaris to come up we saw one of the other heats going like mad some way over to our right and then the third heat killed a boar about a quarter of a mile away. Altogether six boars were killed and we returned to our camp for a well-earned lunch after an eventful morning.

We were out again soon after lunch and three more boars were killed, making a day's bag of nine, a very satisfactory week-end's sport. It had been a grand initiation and I was now very keen and became a temporary member of the Tent Club for the remainder of my stay in Delhi.

The best and most thrilling hunt, and one which I will always remember, took place a few weeks later. I had quite settled down as one of the keen and regular followers of the sport. On this particular morning I was in a heat of three and was, of course, carrying a spear this time. The others in the heat were Mr. Brand of the I.C.S. and a young gunner subaltern named Lawrence Speed, and naturally known as 'Jaldi' after the Indian word meaning 'Quickly'. He was not a regular follower but had been out a number of times.

Our heat was standing under cover in some rough grassy country where it was a little difficult to get a really good view. However, a good sized boar broke cover and as the order 'Ride' was yelled, young Speed was off like a shot from a gun and beat Brand to it. I got the impression that our I.C.S. friend was being kind. The going was really bad as the long grass and ghos were all around us. The boar was bounding along up and down as if looking to see what was going on. We had just got clear of the river-bed when things happened with startling rapidity. Young Speed was right up alongside the boar with the beast on his offside and was about to spear when the animal jinked across his front over to his near side. In his enthusiasm and not stopping to think, Speed swung his spear across and foolishly made a jab at the pig on the near side. He just touched when the pig jinked again in front of his horse. The obvious happened and the horse came down and Speed was unseated. He lost his spear which luckily did no damage to any of the heat who

were following up behind. The boar, which was now in a tearing rage, turned again and, seeing his enemy lying on the ground, charged at him full tilt with his head down. It looked as if Speed was in for a really nasty mauling but for the nerve and experience of Mr. Brand which showed up to its best advantage. With a quick movement of his pony, his head and lance well down, he rode between the man on the ground and the charging and infuriated pig who were separated by not more than six to eight feet. His lance went right into the great chest of the boar, killing him instantly. I followed up only a few yards behind and got my spear well home just to make sure.

Jaldi Speed picked himself up none the worse for his fall but definitely shaken by the narrow squeak he had had. Brand just laughed it off by saying, 'That was a near one!' but we all knew it had been a superb piece of riding and everyone was full of the incident when we got back to the club tent, as most of the party had watched from a distance including the beaters. None of them, however, had had my view of the episode and quite realized how close we had been to a tragedy.

During those weeks with the Delhi Tent Club I learnt a lot, not only about pigsticking, but about riding in general which stood me in good stead for my years in India. Perhaps one of the most important things was how to ride a horse flat out on a loose rein when the going was really difficult. I think this particular course of instruction was the most enjoyable I ever attended!

When I reported back to the regiment and resumed my normal duties I found that not only had my riding improved but that my polo had made a big leap forward, as the regiment found out to its cost. The result was that one of the most outstanding games of polo which stands out in my memory took place just after my return. It happened this way. When I arrived back in Secunderabad I called in at the club before going back to the mess. I found the place full and, after greeting one or two people, asked about the station news. It appeared that there was a certain air of excitement as the annual station polo tournament was due to take place the following week. The size of this tournament depended on how full the station was

and on this occasion it was pretty full as the brigade was right up to strength.

In this tournament teams came from all over southern India and included the private teams of the Maharajahs and also the teams of some of the Imperial Service troops such as Mysore and Hyderabad. Secunderabad, being the largest cavalry station in southern India, contained a complete cavalry brigade. This included three Indian cavalry regiments, one British cavalry regiment and one battery of Royal Horse gunners. Added to this was a complete infantry brigade and all the supporting services which such a contingent of troops entailed. In this particular tournament there were no less than twelve teams, which is quite a number for any station.

The regiment had entered a team but, as I had been away on the course of instruction, I was not included. I was disappointed, of course, but the others in the team had been able to put in some good practise together and a new young subaltern had been given a chance to win his spurs.

The following evening I walked into the Secunderabad Gymkhana Club and, quite by chance, met Major Shah Mirza Beg of the Hyderabad Lancers. He was, at that time, one of the best polo players in all India and would certainly be reckoned in the first six. In other words, should there have been an occasion to pick a polo team to represent India he would in all probability have been in it.

I greeted him, 'Hello, Shah, it's not often we see you in the club. How are you? Have a drink?'

'Thank you, I am well,' he answered and added, 'yes, I will have a chota peg.'

I called the kitmagah and ordered two whiskies and sodas. We took two chairs by a table on the veranda and sat down.

'Well, Freddie,' he said, 'I suppose you are looking forward to the polo tournament?'

'Yes, Shah, I am, but, unfortunately, I'm not playing.'

He turned to me quickly. 'Not playing?' he queried. 'But surely they can't afford to leave you out.' He smiled.

'I'm afraid they can and have, Shah. You see, I have been away on a course and am just a little out of practice. They

are giving young Megson a chance. He is as keen as mustard and I suppose it is only fair.'

He nodded his head, but said nothing.

'What about you, Shah, are you in form? I shall be looking forward to watching you play.'

He again turned in his chair and looked at me and said with a wry smile, 'I can see you have been away, Freddie, as you are behind with the news. No,' he continued, 'I am not playing. My brother Kardir is not well and Green is away so we are unable to raise a team.'

It was my turn to sit up in my chair. 'Well, I'm damned, Shah. I hadn't heard that news,' I exclaimed. 'Just fancy a polo tournament right under our very noses and neither you nor I playing. This is really nonsense,' and then, as an afterthought, 'can't we do something about it?'

Excitedly we both jumped up, and it was obvious that the same thought had come into both our minds.

'What about raising our own scratch side?' I said. I could see by his face that he had already fallen in with the idea.

'Of course, Freddie,' he said. 'I was just about to suggest the same thing. Can we find two others to make up the team?'

'Leave it to me, Shah, I will find two somehow. Come on, let's have another drink and get down to details.' We were both as excited as a couple of kids. Two more drinks were brought out and we toasted one another.

'Here's to the scratch side, Shah. What shall we call ourselves? Any ideas?'

'That's easy, Freddie, the name's right here—the Gymkhana Club side,' and he grinned as he said it.

'Of course, that's quick of you.' I raised my glass. 'Here's to the Gymkhana. Now look,' I said, 'don't let us say anything to anyone about this and we will keep it dark until the day. I will pop in the entry at once with four blank names and tell the secretary I will let him have them later. I will let you know as soon as I have got the other two players. In the meantime, Shah, a little practice!' I said with a grin.

He laughed. 'Yes—for both of us!'

We finished our drinks, got up and went our respective ways.

The thought of playing in a side with Shah was very exciting indeed, but when I tried to think where I was going to raise the other two players from I realized it was not quite so simple. The regiments which could scrape together a team had already done so and, in some cases, had also entered a B team so spare players were not easy to find.

However, I proceeded to keep on the look-out. Two days later I came across a young horse gunner named Munro who was a keen rider and was gradually getting interested in polo. I approached him and he jumped at the idea and said he had two very useful ponies which were going very nicely. I swore him to secrecy and told him to practice just plain straightforward ball hitting for all he was worth in the next few days. He wanted no telling!

The following day I spotted a keen young player by the name of Collins, belonging to an Indian infantry regiment which was not strong enough to raise a team on its own. He was elated at the prospect, needed no persuasion and quickly entered into the spirit of secrecy. I was now finished and the team was complete. Collins had only one pony but I knew I would be able to find another from either my stables or Major Beg's.

That evening I went over to Hyderabad to contact Shah Mirza, and, sure enough, he was just coming in from polo practice when I arrived at his bungalow.

'Come in and tell me your news, Freddie,' he called out. 'Have a drink?'

'Right, Shah, I will, thanks. Would you like to have your bath and change first?'

'Oh no, I can't wait that long! I will have a drink with you and hear your news. Have you got the team together?'

'Yes, Shah, I have them,' and I proceeded to tell him who they were. He knew George Munro and thought he was very promising.

'Who is the other chap?' he asked. 'I can't place him.'

'A Peter Collins,' I replied. 'In the Carnatic Infantry. He has only one pony but is very keen. How many ponies can you manage, Shah?'

'Don't worry,' he said, 'I have two and I can have two of my brother's so that will make four from me. What can you do, Freddie?'

'I can manage three, and George Munro can do two.'

'Marvellous, Freddie, that makes our string ten ponies in all, not bad for a four chukka match. That will give us two ponies each with two in reserve.'

'Good, Shah, now what about our plan of campaign?'

'Well, I had better go number four and you, Freddie, will go number two—that will divide our strength between defence and attack. I would like you at number three but I don't think we would be strong enough up forward.'

'Yes, Shah, I agree, but how are we going to place the others? I think George Munro of the gunners is the better player of the two, so he had better go number three and that leaves Peter Collins at number one. What do you think?'

'Yes, I think that is our best formation. We can always change it if things get difficult. I suggest you bring the others along tomorrow night and we will have a talk.'

'Grand, Shah, I feel quite excited. I wonder who we will draw against. It will be fun seeing some of the faces when they see the Gymkhana side.' We both laughed.

The following night I took George Munro and Peter Collins over to meet Shah Mirza Beg. Although they knew of him, and had seen him play, they had not met before. I introduced everyone and we quickly got down to business.

Shah's main idea was that Collins at No. 1 should concentrate on marking and riding off the opposing No. 4 and not worry too much about playing the ball. In the case of Munro at No. 3, he was to mark the opposing No. 2 in the usual way and to concentrate on hitting the ball towards the side lines as much as possible, especially when in our own half of the field, but at all times to leave the ball alone if Shah Mirza was following him up. I was at No. 2 and my job was to get well forward every time Shah was on the ball and pick up his long raking shots.

We did not stay long and, after leaving Shah, we made our way back to the club. We parted company here as we were still holding on to our little secret and did not want to give the show away.

In the club bar the general conversation was the tournament and the draw which was to take place the following day. I did not want to be drawn into any discussion which might lead to indiscretions, so I quickly made my way upstairs to the ball-room which was usually occupied by the ladies sitting round and chatting. There was a gramophone playing a dance tune, so when I spotted one of my favourite partners I whiled away an hour out of harm's way!

The next day was one of real excitement. The draw had taken place and had been posted up on the club notice-board. There were the names of the teams and the result of the draw for the first round. I thought I detected a buzz of excitement over the names of the Gymkhana team, firstly because of its strange composition, and then for the fact that the great Major Shah Mirza Beg was playing after all. Being one of the very best players in all India he stood out far and away ahead of any other player in the station. Owing to the inclusion of our two lesser players our team was rated about average handicap with the other teams but it had a rather odd and unbalanced look about it. Our combined handicap was seven goals for a four chukka match which compared favourably with most of the other teams which were around the six to eight goal mark. Shah Mirza Beg's high handicap was brought into proportion by the noughts of our two inexperienced players.

The next piece of real excitement applied to me and me alone! The Gymkhanas had been drawn against none other than my own regimental team, the 8th Cavalry. This was really putting the cat amongst the pigeons—I can think of no better way of expressing it! As I looked at the list of the draw I was not sure whether I wanted to laugh or cry. I suddenly had the feeling that if there was one team which our scratch side was likely to beat this was it!

We were down to play the first match the following afternoon. I decided to steer clear of everyone by being very busy at work in my office that morning.

In the afternoon I went to the polo ground fairly early to get a good position for our ponies and made a point of standing

as far away from the 8th Cavalry ponies as possible. The Secunderabad polo ground was already being lined by hundreds of soldiers, both British and Indian. The whole panorama presented a brilliant sight as the colourful tents for the spectators and players lined all one side of the ground. On the far side were the reserved spaces for the ponies and their saises (which is the Indian word for groom). Each pony had his own sais, who practically lived, ate and slept with his pony. Dust sheets in the colours of the respective regiments covered each pony's back and in front, laid out in a neat row, were the polo sticks in varying lengths used according to the sizes of the different ponies.

Officers in and out of uniform, together with their ladies in their coloured dresses and parasols, filled the chairs in front of the tents. There were also large numbers of civilians, both British and Indian, the Indian ladies looking particularly colourful in their wonderfully decorated saris. It was a glorious sight, the like of which may never be seen in such splendour again.

The rest of the Gymkhana team had arrived, and we gathered round Shah Mirza for his last few words about the game. The bell sounded and I mounted my bay mare, Hermione. I felt in good trim and knew instinctively that I was going to play at the top of my form. I slipped the loop of my stick over my wrist, wheeled my pony and cantered up alongside Peter Collins, who I knew would be feeling a little nervous at the ordeal of playing in his first biggish tournament.

'Don't worry, Peter,' I said. 'You will be O.K. when we start going. Leave the ball alone until you are away and stick to the number four like glue.'

'Thanks, Freddie,' he answered with a reassuring smile. 'I think we are in for some fun.'

I looked round and saw the other two cantering up together. I thought I spotted a trace of expectancy in Shah's face as he smiled back at me. George Munro was looking serious but steady.

The 8th Cavalry team had reached the centre of the field. We all exchanged greetings and wished each other luck.

Colonel Heather, who was captain of their team, was playing No. 4. He was a fine horseman and looked it. He was a reasonably good player but was inclined to miss more shots than would be expected on his handicap of four, especially when he got a little rattled, which he was apt to do. Major Hammond was playing No. 3 and, therefore, would be opposing me. This fact pleased me, as I had never been impressed with his play. He was inclined to be windy in a hard game and did not like being ridden off forcefully. Captain Birch was playing No. 2 and I considered him to be their best player, in fact, he was the one to watch. George Munro had been briefed accordingly. Lieut. Megson was at No. 1. He was a keen player who played polo with a rugby football outlook, which was to ride your man like the devil. Not a bad idea if you can do it and keep it up. His immediate problem was to be able to do it to Shah Mirza Beg. I was not worried unduly!

The whistle went. The bamboo root ball was thrown into the pack of players by the umpire and the game was on. There was a click which echoed around the ground as Birch for the 8th connected with the ball with a neat wrist stroke and away he went. He was well off the mark and got in another good shot as we all streamed off after him. Shah Mirza, who had been hovering a little way away from the pack at the start, was quickly up alongside Birch who decided to strike the ball again and sent it forward. It was his first mistake as he should have left it to those coming up behind. Shah just leapt ahead of him and we saw the first of many of those wonderful splitting back-handers for which he was truly famous. We all turned and now the pace began to quicken and I could see that their ponies were, with the exception of Shah's, just a shade faster than ours, and I thought that this might tell against us in the long straight runs. I decided to keep the ball along the side lines as long as possible. Any loose ball getting into the centre would be dangerous from our point of view. I hung on to the ball as long as I could and then hit one to the centre towards the goal-mouth. Peter went after it like a good 'un, but the colonel was quicker and made a good back-hander which, in turn, relieved the pressure against their goal. The game was now fast and

furious with the two backs rather dominating the game, with their back-handers. Shah Mirza's splitters, being so much longer, were getting us out of trouble again and again. However, there was no doubt that our opponents were playing better as a team and their work was rewarded by a clear two-goal lead at the end of the first chukka. As the bell went for the end of the chukka, we galloped off to change ponies. Shah got in a quick word with me.

'Play the ball to the right side of the field all the time, Freddie. Keep it away from the centre and this will slow down the game and give our ponies a better chance,' he said.

'O.K. Shah,' and I quickly told the others.

The bell rang for the second chukka, and, as we galloped to the place for the ball to be thrown in from where it had gone out of play, it was obvious that the 8th were a bit cock-a-hoop with their two-goal lead. As the chukka proceeded it was soon seen how Shah's great experience began to tell. He was continually hitting the ball out to the right as we went towards their goal and to the left as we defended our own goal. It will be seen that by these tactics, our team was always playing the easier offside right-hand shots, but our opponents were having to hit near-side shots to enable them to bring the ball into the centre. These are, of course, the more difficult shots. These tactics paid us well, and, by the end of the second chukka we had managed to chalk up a goal which was scored by George Munro and the score was now two goals to one against us.

The bell went for the end of the second chukka and as we streamed off to change ponies one could feel that the excitement had gripped the crowd. As usual the crowd was on the side of the underdogs, which in this case was us.

Once again the bell went for the third chukka and, as we galloped out, Shah murmured, 'Keep it up, Freddie. Don't let up on the plan.'

I nodded. 'Right, Shah,' and I again spoke briefly to the others.

This time the chukka started with a hit from behind our goal line by Shah and once again he hit one of those long raking right-handers right up towards the right side-line

which in this case was the side of the tents and spectators. Each time the ball came back so he would hit it in the direction of the tents. This meant that we were always galloping towards the crowds, which caused the ponies to slow down as no one, neither man nor pony, likes galloping towards a crowd of people. What with the heat, dust, the cheering, excited crowd and no scoring, tempers were getting a little frayed. The colonel was definitely getting rattled and was cursing his pony, his team, himself when missing, Peter Collins for sticking to him and finally us for our tactics.

This, in turn, was upsetting Major Hammond, who was having a bad game in front of him and being pushed about by me on every occasion. Birch was having the best game and was definitely playing well. But, of course, the man of the match was Shah. Nothing seemed to rattle him and he was playing at the top of his form. The ball was always being sent through to us up in front and then, when we were in trouble, he would pull out those wonderful back-handers and relieve the pressure.

With the colonel rattled I knew I would get a chance sooner or later and, sure enough, Shah hit up a long shot which the colonel covered beautifully but, as he went to take a simple back-hander, he glanced round to see where he would place it, took his eye off the ball and, alas, missed his shot completely. His team had already half turned in anticipation and I was left spare and unmarked. Like a shot from a gun I went forward, picked up the ball nicely with a little forward tap and, with an open goal in front of me, hit a beauty through the middle.

This put us on terms of two goals each and now the battle was on. One felt that at this stage the only rightful thing to do would have been to exchange polo sticks for swords or lances. Death was in the air! The crowds were now hysterical and on their feet. The noise was terrific. The ponies all knew that something was happening and were going like the wind—there now appeared to be little difference in their pace. I swear Shah was hitting the longest shots of his life. I was playing right above my form and Peter Collins and George Munro were now fully blooded and experienced. It had developed into an amazing game,

As the third chukka was drawing to a close Captain Birch stopped a grand hit from Shah and, getting away quickly, scored a fine goal from a difficult angle. We had each scored a goal in this chukka so the score now stood at two goals to three against us.

We quickly changed ponies and as the bell went we came out for the fourth and final chukka. Shah had impressed upon us to keep to our scheme of playing the side lines and it certainly had paid us well.

The last chukka started from near the centre and once again Birch got away but Shah was after him and again he got in one of his splitting back-handers. I was quickly off the mark with young Megson streaming after me. The ball was away on my right as usual but this time it was not quite so far over. I saw Megson coming for me and instead of making for the ball I decided to try a stunt which, if it came off, could mean a goal. We were away ahead of the field and as he came for me I closed with him. He, not realizing the ball was well over to the right, proceeded to give me all he knew in a ride off. I pretended to resist but was not actually doing so. The result was that he had pushed me and my pony right on to the line of the ball. I then gave him a quick shoulder and, as he rose in his saddle to retaliate, I got in a fine quick shot just in time and through the posts it went. The score was now three all, and there was still quite a little time left of the chukka.

The colonel's temper had gone again, and he was cursing all and sundry, with the result that even Birch was going to pieces. The pace was now crack-a-jack, and luckily for me I was on my best mare, a grey Australian Waler named 'Wintry', very temperamental but a grand pony when things were going right and she was on the top of her form now.

The pace of the game was telling on us all. The colonel was looking quite done up as he had been playing a hard game. Hammond was almost out in his saddle, Birch was still going but had been ruffled by his colonel's shouting and cursing, while Megson, who was as strong as a young lion, had had a rough time trying to ride off Shah for four chukkas, a tough enough job for any man.

Peter Collins was still going well but the colonel's cursing had shaken him a bit. I had had about all I could take but was still feeling excited over the possible result and this gave me added strength. George Munro had had a good match and was still going strong. Shah was in his element but was showing the strain of a hard match, besides having had to carry a little more than he was used to. Time was now running out and the score was still three all. The play was getting a little ragged when suddenly Shah called out, 'Now, Freddie, this is it!' This was the signal for our final gamble. The idea was that when the ball next crossed our goal line and Shah Mirza would take the hit out as usual, we were each to mark our man more closely. Then, instead of Shah hitting the ball up to us where we were all bunched together over to the right side of the field, he was to change his shot at the last second and risk a shot down the left centre of the field. He was going to try a run through on his own. I quietly signalled to the others and they nodded, quickly taking up their places on the inside of their man with little notice being taken. Then Shah Mirza, taking a longer run at the ball, caught it a lovely crack right down the left centre of the field and quickly followed it up with a tremendous turn of speed. Our job now was to ride our men off like hell and prevent them getting into Shah. The language they all let fly as they realized the trick which we had played on them would have shocked the Royal Navy.

The whole movement was one of surprise, and it depended on the success of Shah Mirza making a clean run through on his own. Failure could mean disaster as he would be too far forward should he miss the shot and not be able to recover. He got away to a wonderful start which electrified the crowd who were quick to spot the trick we had pulled off. The effect was amazing. Everyone, Indian and British alike, was standing up and shouting themselves hoarse. The colonel on a fast pony had cut himself loose from Peter Collins and was going for Shah like a bat out of hell, but I had anticipated his move and, being on my reliable grey mare, I was up alongside him in the nick of time and, what is more, was on his inside. We became locked together and I held him in a vice with my right leg in

front of his left knee. His curses were enough to turn the blue skies pink, but I held on for grim death.

Shah was still in possession and was going like the wind at a speed equal to any horse-race. At such a speed could he possibly hit the ball—and hit it straight?

We were catching him up at an angle and the colonel was gradually forcing me over towards him with every ounce of energy left in his body. Could I hold out? I saw Shah give a quick glance over his shoulder and realized what was happening. He was now getting within shooting distance for a shot at goal but at that speed he was liable to be off the target. Shah then took his last gamble. He altered his course slightly so that his next shot would have to be from the near side of his pony and this shot must be for goal.

He came at me with all his weight which promptly sent the colonel and me off at a tangent and, before either of us could recover from the shock, with a wonderful flick of the wrist from the near side, the ball was through the goal.

The cheers from the crowds were deafening. It was the decider and the Gymkhanas had won by four goals to three. The bell went just after that and I quickly managed to send the ball out of play. We all rode off thanking each other and our opponents but I had a feeling that that was not the end of the match for me.

After we had changed our shirts and joined the ladies in the tents everyone was full of congratulations, and it was generally agreed that it had been a great game and that we had given the tournament a grand start.

As I walked into mess that evening and clicked my heels to say good evening to the senior officer, conscious that my dress spurs jingled more than usual, I felt the atmosphere could be cut with a knife. I sensed a feeling that I was not a popular member at the moment! When, a little later in the evening, someone inadvertently uttered the word 'Gymkhana' there was an embarrassing silence. It reminded me of my childhood days in the nursery when we had been caught saying a naughty word and would hear the nurse say, 'Oh dear, and that is a little word we never mention.'

## Indian Cavalry in Peacetime

WITH the return of the cool weather and the influx of women the racing season began. This was always an exciting time because it gave a great start to the social activities which carried on right through Christmas and well into January. The Gymkhana Races were great fun. Most young subalterns of the cavalry regiments fancied themselves as G.R.s—Gentlemen Riders—and the rivalry between the various regiments was very keen. British Cavalry units just out from England invariably had one or two G.R.s with reputations. They, of course, never worried us Indian Cavalry types as racing in England and India are two very different things. This was very much the same with polo as again the conditions and style of play differed considerably in the two countries.

The racecourse, except for one or two enclosures, was completely open to the public. The Indians, being great gamblers, turned out in vast numbers and surrounded the course making the whole scene bright and colourful.

At this particular meeting I had an experience which I am never likely to forget. I was down to ride in four out of the six races and had ridden in two with a little success, having won one and been placed in the other. In the fourth race of the day I was to ride a big black Australian Waler which went by the name of 'Thunderbolt', a very appropriate name for him too. I had never ridden the animal before. When the bell went for the jockeys to mount I approached him with caution as from the moment I appeared in the ring he began to play up like the devil. It took three men to hold him while I mounted and the minute I was on his back I felt instinctively I was in for

trouble. He plunged and reared, scattering people right and left, and, as we turned into the course to go to the starting point he gave one high bound and away he went. It was as much as I could do to keep my seat as he had a mouth like iron and in a second was out of control. Away he went, right past the starting-post and down the course, going like the wind with me hanging on for dear life. We did a complete lap of the course and as he came up to the other horses who were lined up at the starting gate, he stopped.

The starter cursed me for holding up the race and asked me if I intended to start. I was too scared to say no as I felt I would not be able to get the beast away from the other horses. With that he dropped his flag and the race started. From that moment I knew I was really in trouble. I had just about as much control over the wretched animal as if I had been riding a tiger! Away he went and, in spite of his previous gallop round the course, he went through the field as if they did not exist. I got cursed and sworn at by the jockeys but that didn't mean a thing. The race was seven furlongs, but it would have been the same if it had been seven miles. We were right out in front with the others streaming behind. I thought to myself that this was about the best thing which could happen as he would tire at any moment and pack up with sheer exhaustion. But not a bit of it. He was going like mad, the crowd were yelling him on like mad, the jockeys were cursing like mad and I was feeling mad at the whole wretched business! We flashed past the post, to all intents an easy winner—but now the real fun began. Attempts by me to stop the brute were just useless. He made straight for the nearest opening leading from the course, scattering people like chaff before the wind. He had the bit between his teeth and was now heading for the regimental stables which were about two miles from the course and nothing I could do would stop him. The best I could do was to hang on like grim death.

We had now reached the road so any chance of throwing myself off was out of the question. We passed bullock carts and in many instances succeeded in frightening the animals which were pulling them—how we avoided a collision with some of

them I don't know. Eventually we reached the regimental lines and galloped right into the stables before the brute stopped.

I slid off his back in a state of collapse. My hands were bleeding from being cut by the reins; my white breeches were bloodstained through the galls on my legs and I was aching all over from the effects of the ride. Perspiration was pouring off the horse and his mouth was bleeding from my tugs at his bit, but apart from that we were not as bad as might be expected.

I did not return to the races again that day and it took me many weeks to live down that undignified episode.

Life with the regiment at that time of the year was indeed very pleasant. The mess was fuller than it had been for some time with the result that there were sufficient officers to get the work done. Our routine was early morning parade, breakfast followed by stables; then C.O.s or Adjutant's parade once or twice a week. On other days we would have riding school, remount training, weapon training or such work as the squadron commander thought necessary. During this time orderly room would be held and perhaps the C.O. would have a conference with both British and Indian officers attending. By lunch time work for the day was over for most people. After lunch everybody would rest for an hour because of the heat but the young British officers would have to spend one or two hours with the regimental 'Munchi' who was the Urdu language instructor. Most of us thought this the worst period of the day. When one had really got the hang of the language it was not too bad and because of its necessity in dealing with the men one got keener on it but still, for the first year or two, it was really very difficult.

As soon as tea was over—and it was taken early—life began to move again, especially on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, which were polo days. The other days were taken up in schooling polo ponies or young horses and sometimes breaking in a horse or two for the regimental drag—a four-in-hand break. Occasionally we would play the odd game of golf or sometimes manage to sneak away for a little 'poodle faking' tennis. The expression 'poodle faking' seems to have gone completely out of date, no doubt due to the levelling up of the

sexes, but, in those days, it was generally frowned upon by the C.O. of a cavalry regiment for certain reasons. In the first place he did not consider that a subaltern had the time to waste with women because they had their jobs to learn and secondly no young officer in an Indian cavalry regiment was allowed to marry before the age of twenty-eight. There were, of course, good reasons for this. One was because it was quite impossible to have too many married officers in a regiment as it would mean that there would be too few officers in mess which, in those days, was considered the main centre from which the regiment was run.

Therefore a considerable time was spent on courses of instruction during the first few years, learning the art of war which, again, was very different from what it became later. In those days so much depended on the actual individual officer. Probably the most convincing argument against marriage, though, was that a young subaltern could not afford it. Unless a young officer had some private means it was quite impossible to live on an officer's pay. Our basic pay was 5s. 6d. a day so any nonsense about how we drained India dry with our high living can be completely overruled. It was said that a young British officer of the Indian Cavalry was in debt for the first half of his service and spent the second half getting out of debt just in time to retire. Be that as it may the fact remains that it was a grand life and well worth any sacrifice.

The weather began to get hotter soon after February and one day as I walked into the mess at lunch time I was greeted by the kitmaghar who said that the regimental shikari was outside and had reported that a large panther was causing a lot of trouble around a small village on the road to Nagonda, which was about five miles away.

He wanted to know if any of the officers were prepared to go out and shoot it as the villagers were scared and upset at the amount of damage it was doing. From his report it appeared that the panther had made its hide-out in some rocks just outside the village and was making killing raids on the domestic animals of the small community almost nightly. Some nights it would be a goat and others its prey would be a donkey, but

the killings were continuous and the villagers were in a state of terror. If the victim was a donkey then the panther would return to the kill as he could not finish it at one sitting, but if it was a goat he was able to devour it all in one night and would make another kill the following evening.

As can be imagined the villagers were in a very agitated state and had implored the shikari to come in and try to get someone to go out and help them. They had hoped that the panther would pass on its way after a few kills but, as so often happens, when a beast comes across an unwallled village where the domestic animals are free to roam around, he finds his prey so easily that he decides to stay.

There were no other officers about as it happened so I decided to have an early snack and go out immediately after lunch to try and rid the village of the unpleasant visitor that very evening.

I finished my sketchy meal and called to my bearer to go and get my things ready at once. I decided to wear just a pair of corduroys and a bush shirt and told my servant to pack my holdall and bedding, together with a small bivouac tent as I would be staying the night. I told him to put some food in my haversack and make sure to take two or three water bottles. My next job was to sort out my guns and ammunition. This is always a bit of a problem as one wants to take so many, but I finally decided to take only a .405 game gun and a .303 trusted service rifle. I would, of course, take my .45 pistol and holster and also a good bowie knife.

As I looked at the amount of kit which was rapidly piling up, I realized that it was too much to try and get on a horse, so I decided to take one of the regimental camels which could easily carry all my kit, the sowar and myself. I would not then have the trouble of taking any horses. The thought also passed through my mind that horses might not be too safe from the panther just picketed around that village—whereas the camel would be.

In less than an hour all was ready for me to make a start. The sowar and the camel arrived at my bungalow and he ordered it to kneel down in that strange language which is used only to camels and which they seem to understand. My baggage, complete with guns, was loaded in two neat bundles

on each side of his back. The sowar then took up his position in front of the hump and I quickly took up mine on the back of the hump. Another peculiar sound from the sowar, a grunt from the camel and the animal rose slowly and majestically to its feet and away we went.

To the uninitiated riding on a camel's back is just about the most uncomfortable means of transport one can imagine. Not only it is uncomfortable, however, but unless the rider is used to it, a certain type of sickness is very easily come by. Because of the long slow stride a kind of boat roll is set up which causes a peculiar feeling very like seasickness and with the same dire results! This feeling is accentuated when the camel breaks into a trot because the whole rolling movement is quickened and the ride becomes thoroughly uncomfortable. However, I had long ago got used to it and I was more bent on getting to my destination in time for a possible shoot this evening than on giving way to sickness!

It was early in the afternoon when we got away and the sun was a bit trying but my inward feeling of excitement made light of such things. I estimated that it would take me just over an hour to reach the village and I expected to take another hour getting into position.

The shikari had gone on ahead with instructions to get things ready for my arrival. His job was to go out into the jungle which surrounded the village to scout around for panther spoor or the previous night's kill and decide as to whether the panther was likely to return to the kill or whether he would strike again that evening.

We duly arrived at the village and the villagers turned out in force to greet me as they had been warned of my coming. There is no doubt that they were delighted to see me and tried to express their pleasure in various simple ways such as helping the sowar to unload the camel, fetching water for us and helping to set up my small camp. When one looked around and observed the poor and simple way in which these people lived, one got the feeling that it was a very good thing indeed to try and help them by ridding them of a menace which took such a severe toll of their meagre livestock.

I had pitched my camp just outside the village and by this time the shikari had returned from his work in the jungle. He reported that he had found the kill of the previous night but, as it was that of a small goat, there was nothing left of it and he felt sure that the panther would strike again this evening. After a little more talk with him, I decided to get off at once to the machan which he told me he had built. This is a hide-out, built at some height above the ground, from which the hunter takes up his position in order to get his shot at the game he is after. Sometimes it is built up a tree or on a rock. The important thing is that it must be inaccessible and well camouflaged with either branches or palm leaves. It had a peep-hole through which one could look around and through which a rifle could be fired.

In this particular case, the shikari had built the machan on a good-sized rocky boulder, the top of which was about twelve feet from the ground. My first impression was that it was a good one with a nice view over a piece of clearing some eighty yards in front. But, on looking around, I saw that the back of the rock sloped down to the ground and that it did not present any great difficulty to an animal which wanted to climb it, such as a panther or a tiger. I pointed out this fact to the shikari but he just said that he did not think the panther would come this way. I only hoped he was right. He had brought a live goat along with him and this he proceeded to tie to a stake about sixty yards out in front. It was now about half past five in the evening and according to my calculations it would begin to get dark about half past six and, as is the way of the East, it would be completely dark before seven o'clock. Everything in fact had got to happen within an hour.

I had taken up my position in the machan and was watching the shikari tying up the goat. He had just finished and I expected him to come back and join me in the machan. Imagine my feelings and surprise when I suddenly realized that he had gone right past my machan on the rock and was making his way back towards the village, apparently in a hurry judging by the sound of his fast receding rustle through the undergrowth.

The goat had now started to squeal and for a moment I

felt rather like the goat, lonely and a bit unnerved, and I began to wonder what was happening. It was not long before I realized what the commotion was about. As I looked through my peep-hole, there, only about a hundred and fifty yards away, sitting on a large rock, was a fully-grown tiger apparently engaged in watching the entire proceedings.

Apparently what had happened was that while the shikari had been tying up the goat it had suddenly let out a squeal at which he had looked up and spotted the tiger. He decided it was no place for him and had made off as fast as he could. I was now definitely shaken as I had not expected things to happen in quite this way and so very quickly. I had come out to shoot panther and now found myself quite alone and faced with a fully grown tiger.

I reached for my water bottle and took a deep drink of water with the object of calming my shaky nerves. Feeling a little better I decided to take stock of the position. My guns consisted of a .405 express rifle, a .303 service rifle, a .45 pistol and a good bowie knife. I had previously loaded both my rifles and pistol and so was quite ready to go into action.

My next concern was how to go about it. I looked around and realized that my position was not nearly so good as I had first thought and I had a nasty feeling of insecurity from behind. However, there was nothing I could do about it now so the only thing was to get on with the job. I looked out again and there was the tiger still sitting on the rock staring at the goat which was, by this time, making a fearful noise. I saw the tiger glance once or twice in my direction but I felt that he had not spotted me and that he was much more interested in the goat. He appeared to be in no hurry to attack. I was already getting very worried as time was now definitely going against me. Looking at my watch I saw that it was past six o'clock and there was still no sign of action on the part of the tiger. Presently he got up and began to pace backwards and forwards along the top of the rock which must have measured about twenty yards. At each end he would pause, look toward the goat for a second, and then turn around and walk back again. Still no sign of attack on his part and I was really getting more than worried.

The time factor was now beginning to get on top of me. I had got to do something. I knew that to take a shot at this range was the height of folly as the chances of making an outright kill were remote. Although the tiger silhouetted against the skyline presented a wonderful target and one which I felt quite competent of hitting, I could not be sure that my shot would be fatal. There could be no question of my leaving the machan, as to get down now and walk back through the jungle would be asking for trouble.

I looked at my watch and saw that it was nearing six thirty and the sun was going down fast. Something had to be done, so, after thinking things over, I decided to try a long shot with my .303 rifle which I thought would be the most reliable at this distance. The tiger had now stopped his pacing and was sitting with his eyes fixed on the goat which had quietened down for a moment. Now was my chance. Raising my rifle I took very careful aim. I felt I was right on my target and, after taking a deep breath, I pressed the trigger. That was the loudest shot I ever remember as the report echoed through the jungle. I felt sure I had hit him fair and square. He appeared to leap into the air and crashed down again, but, to my horror, he had completely disappeared from the top of the rock and out of sight. My next thought was—had I killed him outright or had I just wounded him? If it was the latter I was now in dire trouble as the thought of a wounded tiger only a hundred and fifty yards from me was rather terrifying.

There was nothing for it but to get back to the village as fast as possible. Quickly I climbed down from the machan and made my way over to the goat which I released. He gave a bound and made his way off through the jungle as fast as he could go. I followed him as quickly as possible. Without a doubt it was one of the most frightening journeys I have ever made. I had decided to leave my .405 gun behind with the idea of collecting it later and carried my .303 rifle and my pistol which I had in my hand at the ready.

The journey back was unnerving as I imagined wounded tigers at every turn and, what made matters worse, I was not too certain of the way back as I had expected the shikari to

be with me. However, my sense of direction had not deserted me and I was very relieved when I got clear of the jungle to see the village ahead of me.

The shikari, followed by a group of the villagers, was coming towards me and I was truly thankful to see them. They had, of course, heard my shot and clustered around me to hear the result. My first reaction was to slate the shikari for deserting me but I saw that he was quite prepared for this and grinned sheepishly. I told him what had happened and that the only thing we could do would be to go out first thing in the morning to see what had happened as it was now far too dark.

I went back to my camp and found a good meal of curry and rice waiting for me. After dinner I went into the village and talked to some of the older men for a little while and then went back to my tent to bed.

I slept well but was awakened once during the night by the sinister laughter of a hyena and the howl of jackals not very far away. However, I went to sleep again and awoke at dawn to the chatter of the children of the village.

The shikari was waiting for me and with a small party of villagers we set off for the scene of my previous night's adventure. The villagers were armed with stout sticks cut for the occasion which I advised them to take as I was still uncertain as to what had happened. We reached the jungle and I got them to spread out in a line but told them not to get out of touch with one another and to go very slowly.

We made our way back to the machan and I decided not to let anyone go farther forward until the shikari and I had cleared the rock on which I had last seen the tiger alive. Anxiously the two of us approached the rock, climbed it and looked over. There, on the other side, was a truly ugly sight. The body of the tiger was there, or rather what was left of him. I had killed him outright and he was lying where he had fallen, but the jackals had been at their work and there was very little left.

Yes—I suddenly remembered those eerie howls during the night and the jungle law which holds that the jackal will follow the tiger to reap the benefit of its kills. In this instance, though, they had caught up with the slain tiger instead.

## Secunderabad

SOME months later I sailed again for India after an interesting home leave. This particular voyage was outstanding in that romance was in the air. The week previous to sailing I was invited to meet a young couple who had just married and were to sail on the same ship. He was a civilian and going to India for the first time. The voyage was to be their honeymoon trip. He was rather quiet and she was a pretty red-head—gay and full of life. I wondered how they would fit into Indian life. They were not going to a military station which was, I thought, perhaps just as well!

Before leaving the party we agreed to meet on the boat in a few days' time. When I arrived at the docks and went on board they were already there, leaning over the rails watching people come aboard. We greeted each other and, after going to my cabin to see that everything was in order, I rejoined them and we strolled around the deck together. They had never travelled before and asked me to initiate them into the life on board. I said I would be only too pleased.

It always appeared to me to be a strange thing that no matter how often one travelled P. & O. to India, very few people knew one another when they got on the ship at the commencement of a voyage.

It was so in this instance and I recognized few people whom I knew. The girl at once suggested that we should have a table in the dining-saloon for only the three of us. At first I resisted the idea as my experience of travelling on board ship was that one should keep as free as possible because one never knew what might develop.

They were obviously rather sensitive about being newly-wed and did not want to be conspicuous. With her persuasiveness and my weakness for a pretty face, I allowed myself to be talked over and agreed. I went down to the saloon and fixed things up with the chief steward.

Presently the hooters and sirens sounded and the big ship drifted slowly out of the docks heading for the open sea.

We continued our walk until it was time to dress for dinner and then went to our cabins which were on the same deck. We met a little later and as the dinner gong sounded we went into the dining-saloon together. The girl with her lovely red hair and emerald green evening gown looked beautiful. Her husband was fair and I was tall and dark so we made quite a trio as we entered. Being the first night the saloon was full and the usual air of excitement prevailed as dinner was served.

After dinner we went up on deck and again walked around together, not mixing with the other passengers as we agreed there was plenty of time.

The ship had now turned into the English Channel and the wind had freshened up considerably. The boat was rolling a little and after a while we retired to our cabins. It was usual for me, on the first night at sea, to go along to the bar and see who was around, and generally get acquainted with other officers going back from leave.

On this occasion, for some unknown reason, I decided to go to bed as it had been a long day.

The next morning I was up early but few people were around as the sea was rough and the boat was being tossed about. I went into breakfast alone as Bill and Reddy, as I called them, apparently were not yet up. I had just started when Reddy came in alone. We greeted each other.

‘Where’s Bill?’ I asked. ‘Is he coming?’

‘Afraid not,’ she answered. ‘He’s had a rough night and is not too well.’

I looked at her—she was radiant. ‘How do you feel? You look well—does the sea affect you?’

‘I’m simply marvellous,’ she said with a laugh. ‘That is—

I am at the moment but, strangely enough, I don't think I shall be seasick anyway.'

'Good,' I said with a grin. 'Poor Bill, I am sorry for him. It must be horrid to go sick, especially on one's honeymoon.' We both laughed.

We breakfasted together. When we finished I went along to their cabin with her to see how her husband was. He was very bad indeed and only wished to be left alone; there was little we could do so we went up on deck and made ourselves comfortable. In some strange way the other passengers left us to ourselves and we did not go out of our way to mix with them.

At lunch it was the same and we dined alone. Still no sign of Bill recovering. He was really ill and although we spent as much time with him as he wanted, we were always being thrown back on each other's company.

Naturally, I did not find this unpleasant and when, after two days, the dancing in the saloon lounge commenced, we danced together for a little while and then retired to see how Bill was progressing.

Sometimes we took rather longer than was absolutely necessary to get from the saloon to the cabin and spent hours together in nooks and crannies on the boat deck. The inevitable happened and we flirted outrageously.

After the fourth day as we rounded Gibraltar and entered the Mediterranean, Bill recovered and put in an appearance. Then to his and our astonishment various passengers came up to us and, when inquiring after his health, called him by my name instead of his own.

It appeared that because of my tender and intimate care of Reddy, everyone had taken it for granted that I was her husband. For that reason they thought we were on our honeymoon and wished to be left alone. The man who had been ill and had not put in an appearance since the night the ship sailed had been mistaken for me and naturally enough they called him by my name.

He quickly realized that things had grown more than a little complicated in his absence. Our relations became a little

strained for some days but we managed to patch things up for the remainder of the voyage.

I always knew that I should not have agreed to that separate table in the dining-saloon, but, yes, it was worth it.

As we now grew better acquainted with the other passengers we soon found out that we were not the only ones to cause complications. Among the passengers the news got around that there were no less than eleven girls on board who were engaged to men in India and were going out there with the intention of getting married as soon as they arrived. They hoped to be met at Bombay by their respective fiancés who would take them away to the various stations where the weddings would take place.

But the blue sea by day and the warm starry nights of the Mediterranean, Red Sea and Indian Ocean had taken effect. No fewer than nine girls out of the eleven became engaged to different men on the voyage and when the ship reached Bombay the complications were terrific. I had been saved by the fact that the husband had been on the ship, but only just!

When I arrived back in India it was the cold weather season—or so it was called. We wild young men had another name for it.

The annual influx of women usually descended upon us at this time. Stations everywhere in India changed their appearance almost overnight. Wives came down from the hills while others returned from England. Some came accompanied by unmarried daughters just finished school, some by nieces, friends, daughters' friends and daughters' daughters. In other words the marriage market was on and the poor bachelors of India were their prey! Tiger hunting was tame in comparison. There were exceptions, however, and we very young cavalry officers were among them.

In those days, as I have mentioned before, under no circumstances would a junior officer be allowed to marry under the age of twenty-eight. Was it any wonder that our reputations were such that we were anathema to designing mammas. Their pretty protégées were steered clear of us and paraded before the more eligible seniors; in other words, those who had managed to

struggle out of their debts and were in a position to contemplate the final plunge. Such was our plight that when on one occasion I chanced to dance with a newly arrived debutante, I was invited to tea the next afternoon and asked point blank what my intentions were. Judging by the glint in mamma's eye it was obvious that she did not think they could possibly be honourable.

Such a state of affairs naturally led to—well—a 'state of affairs'. We were forced to turn to young married women for female companionship, sometimes with disastrous results especially when the young were married to the not-so-young. Intrigues became the custom and scandal the byword—but what a lot of fun it was.

On one occasion a certain young lady was being protected by her mamma and I had been warned off. There was a fancy-dress ball at the club however, and I went dressed as harlequin and very heavily masked so that I was able to dance with my forbidden partner. Everything went well until late in the evening when rashness set in and caution no longer prevailed. Imagine our horror when mamma suddenly appeared and to our complete embarrassment chased me off the dance floor.

Then there was the celebrated occasion when, during another dance, the lights failed and the ballroom was plunged into darkness except for the light of the moon shining brightly through the fanlights around the roof. There, silhouetted against the skyline, was the unmistakable and well-known figure of a certain heavily married colonel, locked in the arms of the daughter of the station commander. There was a hush, a few nervous coughs and giggles and then a roar of laughter as the guilty couple suddenly scrambled for cover.

Again there was the more tragic case of the elderly judge who was married to a woman twenty-five or thirty years younger. She had that little tinge of Indian blood in her which added to her undoubted beauty. Within a year two young officers committed suicide over her. It was said of her that although she was not averse to falling in love, her high position came first and she was quite definite about it.

The highlight of the cool weather season was the Proclama-

tion Parade which took place every year on 1 January. In peacetime this was one of the most colourful ceremonial parades of the year as it was usually carried out in full dress by the Indian Army. On this occasion the proclamation was read by a senior civil or military officer taking the parade. This was followed by a march past of the troops which, in turn, was followed by the *feu de joie* (fire of joy).

The *feu de joie* was a ceremonial exercise carried out firstly with a salute of guns by the Royal Artillery and, secondly, by the infantry firing blanks in such a manner as to make it sound like a machine-gun, with the rattle fading away into the distance. This was done by each man in the front rank firing his rifle immediately after the man on his right had fired. When the firing reached the end of the line on the left, the rear rank carried on from there until it reached the right of the line from where it had started. It was very effective and extremely popular with soldiers and spectators alike for there was always a large gathering.

Full dress for the cavalry on these occasions was very colourful as each regiment had different facings. The British officers wore the same type of Indian dress as the men, which meant that they had to wear a lungi (turban) on their heads. Although a turban is a very spectacular form of head dress, it is not nearly so comfortable as it looks. In the first place it has to be put on very firmly which makes the head very hot and, secondly, it affords no cover or shade to the eyes from the blazing sun. The blue kurta (with shoulder chains) was reasonably comfortable but the long coloured cummerbund which went around the waist had to be tight to look really smart and again made one very hot. With these went white melton breeches and black knee-boots with glittering spurs two inches long. Altogether a fantastic and gorgeous array but quite exhausting in the heat of an Indian sun.

One particular proclamation parade stands out in my memory because of an unusual incident which occurred. A complete cavalry brigade, together with a full infantry brigade, was drawn up on parade. J Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery was right of the line, looking very grand with its horse-drawn

guns and limbers. One battery was out in front to fire the salute later. Next in line was the 18th Hussars (British) and then came three regiments of Indian cavalry in full dress with lances and pennons flying. The 7th Haryana Lancers with light-blue facings, the 8th Cavalry with red facings and the 29th Deccan Horse with yellow facings made a truly colourful and magnificent sight. Continuing the line after a little break was the Infantry Brigade which included one regiment of British infantry and three regiments of Indian infantry. The whole parade was most impressive.

Being in command of a squadron of the 8th Cavalry, I was out in front and had a good view of the parade and everything which was going on.

Owing to the size of the parade the saluting base on which the G.O.C. stood was quite a distance away from our immediate front. Behind this was the cordoned enclosure for the visitors and ladies of the station. Surrounding the whole parade ground were the Indian spectators in their thousands whose love of colourful ceremonial is renowned.

The most conspicuous cavalryman on parade that day was the G.O.C.'s A.D.C., a certain Captain Bell whose nickname, of course, was 'Tinkle'. He was seconded from one of the Indian cavalry regiments on parade which shall be nameless. His job was to dash about and liaise between the saluting base and the officers commanding regiments to ascertain when they were ready and report accordingly. This meant a great deal of galloping which was very tiring to both horse and rider, especially so as it had to be done with a drawn sword to enable him to make the numerous salutes which such a task entailed. With the critical eyes of a whole cavalry brigade on him he was riding at his best with his seat well down in the saddle and his sword and back very erect.

He was a good horseman and had been galloping about, to and fro, for some little time as we sat patiently in the boiling sun waiting for the orders to move. His final effort was to get his report from the gunners on the right to the last infantry battalion on the extreme left of the line, which was quite a considerable distance, receiving the 'all correct' from the

commanding officer as he galloped past. He was going at a really fast pace, with his 'lungi' fluttering in the wind behind him in grand style, when suddenly he appeared to be in trouble. He had lost a stirrup and was finding it difficult to get his big black boot into it again. The right thing to do under such circumstances is to slip the other foot out of the stirrup, to remain balanced and ease up and slip them in again. This is not a difficult thing to do in the ordinary way but it is not at all easy in full dress and knee-boots.

He must have been a little undecided and disaster overcame him very quickly as he became completely unbalanced and in the next second or two he came a most frightful purler before the whole parade. His sword and lungi flew in different directions and the horse galloped off to join the nearest horses. The result was quite startling as one heard smothered laughter from the whole line. The British officers just dared not look at one another. For a moment I thought I would explode in trying to suppress my laughter but quickly swung round and shouted my men to order.

The whole thing had happened in seconds but was quite unforgettable. Poor Tinkle picked himself up and his horse was quickly returned to him and the parade carried on as if nothing had happened. The march past, which was very spectacular, took place soon after. First the horse gunners galloped past with guns and limbers and then the cavalry galloped past in lines of squadrons. A really wonderful sight.

Naturally that evening the club bar buzzed with mirth over the incident and I fear Tinkle's dignity was a little shaken and it took him some time to live that one down.

One evening a particular friend of mine of another regiment in the station, at the time acting as personal assistant to the British Resident, asked me to dine with him at the club. His name was Ronald March but he answered to the name of Bud. He had just returned from a tour of the state with his chief, and, as we had not seen one another recently we decided to spend the evening together at the club as a change from the formality of dining in mess.

As sometimes happened, the club was rather deserted that

evening and we were the only two members actually 'dining in'. We stayed in the bar until most of the members had departed and then went to the changing rooms and, taking our time, slowly dressed for dinner.

We chatted away as we donned our white dinner jackets with black trousers and then made our way to the dining-room, where we proceeded to have our dinner. We were half way through our meal when suddenly the club kitmaghar rushed in to tell us that the Secunderabad bazaar, which was not far from the club, was on fire.

We immediately jumped up from the table, not troubling to finish our dinner, and hurried out to see what was happening. There, sure enough, not very far away, was the ominous glow of a big fire which lit up the whole area. Quickly we made our way to the seat of the trouble. As soon as we arrived on the scene the Indians ran towards us wringing their hands and crying out for us to help them. We were the first Europeans to reach the terrible and frightening spectacle. The fire had taken a firm grip of the bazaar and was driving through the small shops with alarming speed. The Indians were completely helpless and were so shocked at the awful tragedy that they appeared to be quite incapable of trying to do anything to help themselves. We quickly got them organized. I found the nearest water point and soon had a chain of buckets passing up a line to the fire where Marsh was trying to stop the fire from spreading by directing and making the best use of the water. We decided that to stop it we would have to make a gap in the line of shop buildings. They were, fortunately, only one storey high and, being built of mud, were not difficult to knock down. The trouble was to get them cleared of all the junk with which they were filled. When the Indians saw how we had set to work on getting something done they quickly rallied round and took their lead from us. The little fire-fighting equipment that was available had arrived by this time, but it did not consist of much more than one hose-pipe and half a dozen picks and shovels. Marsh took charge of the hose and soon got it directed on to the heart of the conflagration. In the meantime I had got a party smashing away and breaking down two shops,

which had been cleared of goods, with the object of making a gap to halt the flames which were roaring towards us. It was a question as to whether we could get the work done in time. I called to Bud to bring his hose over to where we were working and to try and hold the fire before it could reach me. It was a near thing, as suddenly I found myself alone in the ruins of the shop I was trying to smash with the flames licking around me.

Luckily Bud came on the scene at this moment with his hose and was able to get the water squirting in my direction. Of course, he could not resist the temptation of giving me a thorough drenching which amused the crowds which had by now gathered in large numbers. However, I managed to get out just in time and our combined efforts were now taking effect. We had succeeded in making our gap large enough in time to stop the furnace from spreading and had now got the whole wretched calamity under control.

Only a few Europeans, including the Inspector of Police, had rolled up by this time. This was not surprising as the cantonment was quite a distance away from the bazaar. Being late at night they would not hear about it as most of the servants would have gone to bed.

By now we had got the situation completely under control but the damage done was quite considerable. No less than seven shops had been burnt out and the two I had knocked down added to the scene of desolation. We were both very touched when the Indians crowded around us and thanked us for what we had done. The shopkeepers of the stores that had been saved invited us to take anything we wanted from their stocks, but needless to say we declined their kind offers, much to their obvious surprise and astonishment. After satisfying ourselves that there was no further danger from the fire which had by now burnt itself out, we left the cheering Indians and returned to the club where we decided to spend the night.

The next day we reported the matter officially and were a little gratified when the brigadier sent for us and commended us for our good work. It appeared that the police had got in a word on our behalf.

A few mornings later my bearer came into the bungalow

in a very excited state. I asked him what the matter was and he exclaimed, 'Big snake, master, in my hut.'

'Why can't you kill it?' I asked him.

'No, master, he is in the roof. Very bad snake, a cobra.'

I hurried out of the bungalow over to the servants' quarters. All the women and children were standing outside in a very agitated state. I went into the hut which was not very big and which had a low ceiling. I looked around but could see nothing.

My bearer called out from outside, '*Ooper, ooper*, master,' which means 'look up'. This I did and there sure enough was a huge cobra entwined in the rafters of the ceiling. All one could see was the white belly of the snake winding in and out of the wooden slats. I estimated it to be six to seven feet long. Hurrying out I went back to the bungalow to get a revolver. I took my .45 from its holster and quickly returned to the hut. Everyone appeared very excited now. I peered up and could see that it had moved around a little but found it difficult to trace its body line for I was, of course, particularly anxious to find its head. This was a little difficult because of the apparent dimness inside after the bright sunshine.

I was still peering around when my bearer, who was standing at the doorway, called out, 'Look, master, look behind!' Swinging round I saw the big flanged head of the snake curling out and downwards towards the back of my head and swaying from side to side. It gave me quite a shock as I thought it looked as if it was about to strike. I went down on one knee, lifted my arm and quickly took careful aim at a point in the throat. I fired. The explosion of a .45 in a small room of that size was deafening and quite frightening but not so frightening as what happened in the next second. The roof of the hut just could not stand up to such a blast and the whole lot came down with an enormous bang and a cloud of dust.

For a moment I was petrified as I felt sure that the giant cobra was entwined around me. I was rooted to the ground but the light of the sun had burst in and in a few seconds the air had cleared and I could see. The little crowd outside screamed excitedly as they dashed out of harm's way, and as I looked round I could see no sign of the snake at all. Apparently,

as the roof caved in, the cobra had dropped to the floor and in a flash was out through the door, scattering the crowd and disappearing into the compound.

What had happened I was not sure, as I felt certain that at such a short range—not more than three feet—I could not have missed. The only thing I could think was that the bullet had passed right through the body of the snake but had missed the spine and was not sufficiently damaging to stop its movement. Everybody was very pleased that the snake had gone but I was now left with the job of finding alternative accommodation for my bearer and his family!

The days of horsed cavalry were numbered and rumours were rife in the Indian Cavalry as to which regiments were to be the first to make up the new Tank Corps or Armoured Car regiments. The idea of having to give up our horses and ceasing to be a lancer regiment in the strict sense of the word was difficult for many of us. Though realizing that it was inevitable, those of us who had spent so much of our time and training with horses did not relish making the change over to mechanization, especially men like myself who knew next to nothing about the internal combustion engine. In view of all the circumstances, I decided to transfer to the Regular Army Reserve of officers. It was in the 1930's and at that time World War II did not appear to be in the foreseeable future.

In 1937 I went to Germany to attend the Leipzig Fair. During this visit I noticed the amazing strides which had taken place in German rearmament. The Hitler Youth movement was conspicuous everywhere and large numbers of organized groups of both sexes were to be seen drilling in the squares of any large town. I had a feeling I was being watched the whole time I was in the country and was held up for hours while my papers were being scrutinized when I passed through Aachen on my way back to England. I was happy to see the white cliffs of Dover again.

The following year I took a villa in Montreux in Switzerland where I stayed for several months. Montreux and the nearby town of Vevey were a hotbed of foreign agents—especially Russian ones—in those days and at the International Club,

where everybody met in the evening for a game of bridge, the talk was always on politics. It was generally agreed that war was inevitable and that it was only a matter of time before it would break out.

One morning the Swiss police called on me at the villa and very politely advised me to leave the country.

When I returned to England I was surprised to notice the complete apathy on all sides towards German rearmament. However, I had seen and heard so much while on the Continent that I decided to apply to the War Office for a refresher course. To this suggestion they agreed on the condition that I drew no pay but paid all expenses out of my own pocket. I was so sure at the time that war was certain that I accepted their offer and, once again, found myself back in uniform on Salisbury Plain under canvas.

In February 1939 His Majesty, the late King George VI, held his last pre-war levee at Buckingham Palace which I was privileged to attend. This particular levee was noticeable for the fact that it was the last one on which full dress uniform and court dress was worn by all officers attending.

An interesting incident occurred just previous to my going to the palace. When I was getting dressed I discovered that my bootmakers had made a mistake and sent me the wrong size of Wellingtons. I was staying in Kensington at the time and my bootmakers were in the West End. There was only one thing to do and that was to get into the car and dash off to change them. Time was getting short so I had to take the risk and drive as fast as possible. I managed to get to the shop without trouble but, on the way back, I was stopped by a police car in Knightsbridge for speeding. I was in a sports coat and grey flannel trousers when I explained to them that I was due at Buckingham Palace in about twenty minutes. The police on this occasion were most co-operative. Instead of booking me they told me to jump in my car and follow them to my flat—they clearing the road for me. They then waited for me again and cleared the road for me back to Buckingham Palace and I arrived in time with a few minutes to spare. A nice gesture which I appreciated very much.

## Another Voyage to the East

**W**HEN the Second World war was declared, I was acting as training officer at the Tank Depot at Chilwell, Nottingham. This place had become important because of its being the supply and maintenance depot for the tank and armoured car regiments of the cavalry. It was obvious that should war break out this would be the first large depot to be hard pressed to maintain mechanical supplies. Under immediate mobilization it would be the first depot to be brought up to war strength and to start operating right away.

The troops stationed there consisted mostly of technicians, store-keepers and clerks and it was decided that they were to be trained also as soldiers capable of defending their own stores and workshops. Brigadier L. Williams, who later became chief Ordnance officer, as Lieut.-General Sir Leslie Williams, was in command of Chilwell when war broke out, and by the very nature of his command he was one of the first officers of the British Army to go over to France. His job was to site the depots for the mechanized Army which would shortly be landing in France.

He was called to Whitehall a few days before the war and the mobilization of the Chilwell Depot was left to Captain Carter and myself, the only two other officers there. What a harassing and exacting task it was. When general mobilization was ordered by the Government, regular reservists from every part of England, Scotland and Wales began to arrive at Chilwell Depot in ever-increasing numbers. Motor mechanics, engineers, fitters, carpenters and skilled craftsmen of every trade came pouring in by the hundred.

Our job was to get them sorted out into complete operational self-contained companies, ready to work as independent units within a matter of a few days. Our plan was to clear some of the bigger sheds of all stores and equipment and mark out in chalk large squares. Inside these, written on the store floor, was the composition of a complete workshop unit, or a field park company. These units would consist of a number of mechanics, engineers, fitters and so on and, as the jobs were filled and the company brought up to strength with its officers and N.C.O.s, then that unit would be complete and would organize itself within the chalked square.

As the men arrived, according to their occupations, so they would be detailed to their jobs in the various units. When a unit was completed then the men would draw their uniforms, kit and equipment. N.C.O.s would be appointed according to requirements. This was not so difficult as it may appear as many of the reservists reporting for duty had been N.C.O.s and, in some cases, had not long been out of the Army. In forty-eight hours it was gratifying to see that we had already established quite a number of completed units. This work of mobilizing was carried out by Carter and myself for three days and nights without sleep or rest which was pretty exhausting. By this time, some reserve officers had reported for duty and we were able to get them to relieve us for some much needed sleep.

Just after we had completed mobilization, which took all the week, Brigadier Williams returned from the War Office and made one of his important snap decisions which was to have far-reaching results throughout the Army. He had received an intimation from the Women's Voluntary Services that women and girls were coming forward in large numbers and that they were anxious to help in any way they could. Would he be prepared to employ them at the depot? They said they were not getting much co-operation from the Army authorities elsewhere. The offer came from Derby and, after discussing it for a few minutes, he decided right away to accept their offer. He immediately gave me instructions to go at once to Derby and bring back all the available women and girls they were prepared to let us have.

I drove over straight away and saw the lady commandant. She was thrilled with our enthusiasm and said she would arrange a party of a hundred girls for me to take back almost at once. Within two hours she had them paraded, complete with their kits and four motor-coaches ready to move off. I thanked her and in a few minutes I was in my car leading the first convoy of women recruits from Derby to Nottingham.

As we drove into the depot at Chilwell the troops turned out in their hundreds to welcome us. There was, of course, the usual good-natured humour and banter and I came in for more than my fair share. Remarks such as, 'Here comes the Rajah of Chilwell with his harem', 'Bluebeard the second', 'What's he going to do with them all?' and 'I bet he's dated for the rest of the war!' Even the brigadier was a little perturbed at the size of the party.

The next job was to get them billeted, and this caused us a bit of a headache; but by six o'clock that same evening we had them fixed up. The civilian population of Nottingham co-operated with me in helping to get them into billets in a truly magnificent manner. The following day they were on parade and had been posted to the various departments. The way those girls adapted themselves to their new lives has always been remembered with admiration by me, and I was immediately converted to the idea of women in the services from then on.

It turned out to be a master-stroke on the part of the brigadier and myself, as from that moment the demand was greater than the supply and we had managed to get in first.

I was at Chilwell for six weeks, three before the war started and three after. Without a doubt those last three weeks were the busiest I ever experienced in the whole of the war. I had the satisfaction, however, of feeling that I had done something towards getting the most important depot in England in running order to carry out the heavy work it was destined to do.

In spite of the efforts of Brigadier Williams to keep me on his staff, I received orders a few days later to join a machine-gun regiment—the Middlesex Regiment—which was shortly embarking for France. They were stationed at Gosport, Hants,

and I was to go immediately. I drove off by car and reported to the adjutant the following morning. The C.O. greeted me and said he was pleased to have an officer with war experience.

The regiment was under orders for France and was expected to embark in about six days. In the meantime, it had to become mechanized but had only six vehicles instead of a hundred and twenty. I was detailed, with one or two other officers, to get started on the job of finding the remainder as soon as possible. The idea was to go into the highways and byways of Gosport and Portsmouth commandeering any suitable vans and lorries. With a small staff of junior officers and N.C.O.s we proceeded to go through the shops and businesses in the High Street to find what we could. If the baker had three vans we took two, if the greengrocer had two vans we commandeered one and so on. In the incredibly short time of three days we had collected a hundred and twenty vehicles. As they were driven into the regimental lines they were immediately overhauled and painted grey and within a week they were lined up on parade in running order. Their road-worthiness was doubtful, but we had also fitted out a travelling workshop to carry out running repairs.

On 21 September, 1939, the first fully motorized machine-gun unit in England embarked for France.

Six weeks later I received orders to take a draft of men from England across France to Marseilles and embark on a troopship for the Far East. When I reported on board I found orders awaiting me to the effect that I was officer in charge of eight hundred men and forty women in drafts to join their various units throughout the East and Far East. The forty women were soon taken from us, much to our sorrow, as they were destined for Gibraltar, our first port of call, which we made in only a few hours. The troopship on this occasion was very different from the one mentioned in the opening chapter of this book, as this time it was a brand new one which went by the name of S.S. *Andes* and was to have sailed for South America on her maiden voyage in October 1939. The advent of the war had caused her to be commandeered and here she was, a troopship, on her maiden voyage to the Far East instead. There had not

even been time to convert her and she was still in the actual condition of a first-class passenger liner.

We were in no way crowded and started the voyage in the acme of comfort. There were comparatively few men to each mess deck and because the ship started from Marseilles and was already in the Mediterranean the threat of seasickness, which one always associates with troopships, did not arise.

The dining saloon, decorated in Tudor style, was left untouched and became the officers mess, complete with chefs, stewards and wine waiters; everything, in fact, needed for a luxury cruise. She was beautifully stocked with food and the wine list contained a wonderful selection. It was just what would be expected of a R.M.S.P. liner equipped for her maiden voyage to the Andes in peacetime. This was much more to my liking than any troopship on which I had ever been.

I have always been a great believer in having the best when it is available, especially in war time, because, from experience, I knew how quickly things can change. On looking through the wine list I soon discovered that there was a special vintage champagne for the maiden voyage—a 1929 Bollinger, specially bottled for their centenary year. One or two of us decided this might be better for us than morning coffee at eleven o'clock and we actually had this every morning for the entire voyage. It cost ten shillings a bottle which was cheap enough between the four of us. I have never regretted that little extravagance as I knew that opportunities such as that come only once in a lifetime.

The forty young nurses whom we had put off at Gib had been the only women aboard. When they had gone, which was probably just as well although we were sorry to see them leave us so soon, we were left a bachelor ship of just under a thousand men. There was a delightful swimming pool on the upper deck which became very popular. A timetable was posted and each regimental draft was allotted a specific time. Once again boat drill became the most important activity aboard and again we had the usual enemy submarine scares.

Our next call was at Malta where we landed a small draft but no mental cases this time! The difference between the two

troopships described in this book was vast indeed. Whereas the one was just about as bad as a troopship can be, the other was so luxurious as to be almost unbelievable. Being O.C. troops, I had a suite consisting of bedroom, bathroom and sitting-room, which I also used as my office. The bed was a real one and not a bunk, with the room furnished accordingly. The bathroom had everything and was done in beautiful green tiling. The suite was on the top deck and was as comfortable as could be. Some day I hope to occupy that same suite again—on a luxury cruise to South America perhaps?

We bathed and basked in the lovely sunshine of the beautiful Mediterranean and the war seemed very, very far away. Suddenly, however, the alarm sounded for boat stations and we were quickly brought back to reality. This time, though, it was only a precautionary measure because we were approaching the mouth of the Suez Canal. The entrance to it was naturally considered a danger spot as ships were forced to slow up and wait their turn to enter Port Said. Easy targets for enemy submarines should they be about.

Although I had passed through the Canal many times going to and from India between the wars, it was strange and interesting to see how history can be repeated. In each war I travelled through it within a few weeks of war starting. Once again the familiar sight of Australian troops greeted me stretched out along its banks.

We left a small draft behind at Port Said and sailed slowly through the Canal. Again came the humorous exchange of cat-calls, jokes and leg-pulling. I had heard them all before but it seemed only the other day instead of over twenty years ago. At first glance everything looked much the same—there were troops everywhere. Then suddenly I was struck with the striking difference between the two scenes spanning the twenty odd years. It was the mechanization of the armies. Gone were the lines of shackled horses of the cavalry regiments, the mule carts, the pack mules and our old friend of the East, the camel, the everlasting 'oont'. Their places had been taken by trucks, lorries, vans, motor-cars, armoured cars and tanks. I remember so well the strange mixed feelings which I experienced as I

surveyed the changed scene from the ship's rails. Yes, the adventure and romance of war had gone for ever, and from now on it would always be something grim and sinister.

But the job in hand soon demanded my whole attention. I landed drafts at Port Said, Suez and Aden and, except for the picking up of an odd body here and there we were gradually expending our load.

As we crossed the Indian Ocean we had one or two submarine scares but we soon picked up a naval escort from Aden which gave one that little extra feeling of security. The escort added interest by giving us something to watch and while away the time with on that watery stretch to Bombay. The sight of that wonderful port has always given me pleasure, while the coconut palms stretching along its coastline seem to wave a welcome to its visitors. I think the real reason for that feeling of friendly welcome which appeared more pronounced in Bombay than in any other Eastern port, was the crowd of beaming servants, bearers, cooks, kitmagahs and orderlies, which was always there to greet their sahibs and memsahibs of the Indian Army, Civil and other Services, as well as the civilians on their return from leave in England. Without a doubt the friendliest port in the world.

We did not stay long, however, but only allowed time for another large draft to be landed. It seemed strange for me to be staying on a ship after it had reached Bombay. I had never previously gone farther and I watched the port disappear with deep feelings.

Our next stop was Colombo in Ceylon and this time a small draft was put ashore but, as we were not sailing until the following morning, we were able to spend the evening in the port. What good use we made of the break, too! We went straight to that fine hotel of those days, the Gall Face, and had a jolly dinner party. In that strange way which always happens to me, we were soon surrounded by some cheerful company. Gaiety was the keynote and after dinner we got permission to take some English women and girls back to show them our lovely ship. The party was held in my suite and what a jolly one it was! Champagne was still available and what an

amazing drink it is to make parties go with a swing. The highlight of the evening, though, was when some wag took the girls into the bathroom to show them all the wonderful fittings and to demonstrate how the bidet worked. The result was that boiling water squirted up to the ceiling and the place became flooded very quickly because it was too hot to turn the taps off. Finally I had to go in myself dressed in oilskins to turn the wretched thing off. Finally the party came to an end in the early hours. The business of getting those women off the ship by rope ladder in the dead of night with a high sea running became too precarious to be even a joke. However, all ended well and we got them to shore safely. Getting back to the ship ourselves was equally precarious but we managed it without mishap.

Our next stop was Penang, where we deposited more troops and then we entered the wonderful Straits of Sumatra. What a fantastic sight this is! The lovely scenery of the hills with the jungles of Sumatra on our right and the equally amazing beauty of the Malayan Peninsula away to our left. Presently the island of Singapore began to show up in the distance with the sky-scrapers of Cathay Buildings and Raffles Hotel prominent on the skyline. As we sailed into the port the great difference between the East and the Far East was at once seen. The Chinese look of Singapore contrasted noticeably with the Indian look of Bombay. The ship soon docked and a large draft for the Argyle and Sutherland Regiment was put ashore. We were staying for two days and I was glad to be able to see Singapore for the first time.

What an amazing piece of foresight it was on the part of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles to buy this, one time almost uninhabited, island in 1819 and enable the British to build it into the great port that it is today—probably the most important centre of air and sea communication in the Far East, and a junction between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is about the size of the Isle of Wight and connected to the mainland at Johore Bahru by a causeway about a mile long. The town of Singapore lies on the south side of the island and has a large dock capable of taking fifty ships at anchor.

As I wandered through its Chinese streets I was impressed with its appearance of wealth and colour and the whole scene of bustling activity. It was strange to think that this energetic man, Raffles, died at the early age of forty-five, worn out, no doubt, by his arduous life in the tropics on behalf of his country. He gave much, as he lost four out of his five children who died of tropical diseases.

That evening we had a party at the Raffles Hotel and the next day visited the salt flats which are so important to the Far East. Altogether a most interesting and enjoyable interlude in a colourful voyage.

We continued our journey, first to Hong Kong, where we again landed several drafts. Then we went on to Shanghai, our final destination. Shanghai I found particularly interesting. Here was a large port which had developed much later than Singapore. It was not until 1842 that the Chinese agreed to open up a number of 'Treaty Ports' where foreign merchants could settle and live in their own way under their own laws. An admirable idea. Of these Treaty Ports Shanghai was the most important. Two foreign controlled areas, the International Settlement and the French Concession, grew up adjoining the old Chinese city until the port handled more than half the entire trade of China.

The International Settlement was an outstanding example of a self-governing and practically independent city. It seems a strange and deplorable thing that this great port has been allowed to cease functioning and that China has once again fallen back on its old way of excluding all foreigners from its territories. How any country in these enlightened days can hope to prosper without an international outlook generally is beyond comprehension, but only time will tell.

We sailed up the Whangpoo River, that tributary of the great river, the Yangtze, and docked. The panorama of those waters was indeed an unforgettable sight. We came in for a close-up view of the almost unbelievable Chinese junks with the red and brown sails, their high after-decks crowded with men, women and children and laden with their fabulous cargoes.

I handed over the last of my charges, a draft of the Seaforths, and, in a short time, we began the return journey. I was under the impression that I might be picking up various drafts returning to England but when the ship docked once more at Hong Kong I found a surprise awaiting me. I received orders to disembark and report for regimental duty to the machine-gun regiment, the Middlesex Regiment, which was stationed in Hong Kong. And so ended one of the most comfortable voyages I have ever experienced and certainly the most interesting.

## The Siege of Hong Kong

HONG KONG was another of those great Eastern ports which had sprung up during the last century. It was ceded to Great Britain in January 1841. It was then a desolate island and inhabited by a very small population of Chinese fishermen. After repeated efforts by Lord Napier, who was His Majesty's Chief Superintendent of Trade in Canton in 1834, to improve relations with the Chinese authorities it was left to a Captain Charles Elliot, R.N., who succeeded him, to carry on the difficult task. For five years he continued negotiations while the British merchants became more and more difficult. On 29 January, 1841, Captain Elliot finally concluded arrangements and the concession of the island and harbour of Hong Kong went to the British Crown. The most notable declaration was that, 'Her Majesty's Government has sought for no privilege in China exclusively for the advantage of the British flag to the exclusion of the subjects, citizens and ships of foreign Powers that may resort to Her Majesty's possession.'

Sir Henry Pottinger who replaced Captain Elliot finally concluded the cession of Hong Kong which was confirmed by the Treaty of Nanking on 29 August, 1842. The actual charter bore the date of 5 April, 1843. The work of building up the new colony then began in earnest. In particular, the colony was brought under its own laws, based on English law, which put an end to the informal arrangement made by Captain Elliot. The early colonists had many obstacles to overcome. The new settlement was ravaged by fires, the houses levelled by typhoons, which they had never previously experienced, and

the garrisoned troops struck down by fevers and cholera. In *The Times* of 17 December 1844 there appeared the following comment:

‘The place has nothing to recommend it if we except the excellent harbour. The site of the new town of Victoria—named after Queen Victoria the Good—is most objectionable, there being scarcely level ground enough for the requisite buildings and the high hills, which overhang the locality, shut out the southerly winds and render the place exceeding hot, close and unhealthy.’

The peninsula of Kowloon which is on the mainland opposite the island of Hong Kong and separated by only twelve hundred yards of water, was ceded to Great Britain in 1860 together with the surrounding islands, including Stonecutters, Aplichau, Round, Middle, Lan Tau and other islets. In 1898 an agreement with the Chinese Government was concluded for the extension to the area adjoining Kowloon and known as the New Territories. This also included Miss Bay and Deep Bay. These areas were leased for a period of ninety-nine years with a stipulation that the City of Kowloon should come under the jurisdiction of the Chinese officials. In 1899 this condition was abrogated and the area came under British rule. With the changing face of Chinese politics, it is difficult to see what will be the end of all treaties, but ‘sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof’ and in the meantime the colony presses on.

To the newcomer, the first sight of Hong Kong is most impressive. As ships approach the island from the south there, silhouetted against a northern sky with the sun shining full on its face, stands Victoria Peak. This is a mountain rising right out of the centre of the island which is only about half the size of the Isle of Wight. The harbour lies on the north side of the island facing the mainland. The ship enters the Lyemun Pass on the east side and as she turns sharply to the west into the harbour the full picture of a thriving, bustling port bursts upon her with a startling suddenness. There dashing to and fro are the hundreds of craft of every description—junks, sampans, yachts, motor-boats, full-size ocean-going liners from America

or Japan—and it is to all appearances the busiest port in the world. Should, however, the ship enter the harbour by night then the scene is almost unbelievable in its fantastic beauty, which is world renowned. The reason for this is that the whole mountain side of the Peak of Victoria is covered with houses, buildings, roads and streets, and the concentrated lights from all these, together with those of the water front, presents a fairyland scene which surpasses anything I have ever seen anywhere else in this world.

What makes this amazing scene so fantastic when compared with other ports is the enormous amount of traffic which goes on continuously night and day between the island of Hong Kong and the city of Kowloon on the mainland. Motor-boats, motor sampans and small boats of all descriptions with their lights blazing, rather like motor-cars, dash to and from the island leaving phosphorescent streaks to add to the colourful panorama. To my mind, Hong Kong by night is surely one of the great sights of the world.

Japan was not yet in the war and to outward appearances Hong Kong was not in the war either. During the 1914–18 war, Hong Kong enjoyed complete immunity as it was never attacked and remained throughout the headquarters of the Royal Navy's Far Eastern Command.

It was still only 1939, nearly two years before Japan decided to attack Pearl Harbour and so throw in her lot on the side of Germany. The result was that Hong Kong was rather like an ostrich with its head in the sand. The war in Europe appeared to be a long way off and one got the impression that here people were out of touch with modern warfare.

However, when I reported for duty, although I thought things a little unreal, I found life with a regiment very pleasant. Being stationed in Hong Kong was surely the soldier's dream of what an overseas garrison should be. It was a British colony with a large number of British people together with a Chinese population who were very definitely satisfied with the British way of life. They fitted into the life of the colony and this made things so much easier for the soldier. There was plenty of female companionship which helped to make the social life

gay and pleasant. Sport was undoubtedly the keynote of life in Hong Kong. I do not think there is another spot in the world where practically every form of sport is so cheap, close at hand and convenient to the indulger.

We played polo three days a week on quite good suitable walers and Chinese country-breds, in very lovely surroundings. Horse racing was easily the most comfortable I have ever experienced anywhere. Here was the only racecourse where one can sit down to lunch and watch the races without having to get up from the table—to my mind a very nice idea. It was a yachtsman's paradise, because the boats were fantastically cheap when compared with other places in the world. Besides this, the selection of bays to which one could sail were numerous and interesting. The golf club at Fanling was a most delightful course and, having been designed by Scots, was undoubtedly a fine test of the game.

The troops were well catered for with a fine football league and the standard of play was high. It was always amusing to see players straight out from home with big reputations get their first shock when playing against the Chinese teams for the first time. The Chinese are magnificent ball players and I have never seen their leading team beaten by a purely regimental side. It usually took the best combined British team to hold them. Life was very pleasant indeed.

I did not stay long with the regiment and was appointed to the staff of the G.O.C. at headquarters. In this important post one soon became aware that things were not all they appeared on the surface. There was an undercurrent of tension which was gradually coming to a head between Japan and Great Britain with America apparently still looking on.

About 7 a.m. on Monday, 8 December 1941, I was awakened with a cup of tea brought in by my Chinese servant. I was actually shaving when, just before eight o'clock, there was a loud explosion, followed by a number of others. Hurrying to the window, I looked out across the harbour. There, in the direction of Kai Tak Aerodrome, I could see fire and smoke rising from where the explosions were obviously taking place.

At that moment my servant rushed into the room in great

excitement. This was the first time I had ever seen an excited Chinese.

'Master,' he said. 'Japanese he make war.'

I looked round half surprised but, in the next moment, Captain Bird, who lived on the same floor, burst into my room and yelled, 'Freddie, the Japs have bombed Kai Tak Aerodrome. I'm off to H.Q. at once.'

'Right-ho, Dicky,' I said. 'I'll follow you as soon as I'm dressed.'

Tension in Hong Kong had been steadily mounting. The three or four days before had been hectic with preparations. Since midday on Sunday, the previous day, all troops, including the local volunteers, had been at their war stations.

I was a staff officer in Fortress Headquarters, the nerve centre from which General Maltby and his staff controlled operations, and had been hard at it for the past week. From intelligence information received, we had been expecting things to happen at any moment. Strangely enough, however, one is usually surprised when they actually do! We had been continually on the alert, even when not on duty, so it was only a matter of minutes before we reported back to the battle box, as G.H.Q. was generally known. Our immediate job was to see that all and sundry were at their respective posts, for we expected things to happen now that the balloon really had gone up. In the next few hours staff officers had covered practically the whole island, checking that everyone was on his particular job and knew exactly what to do.

At eight o'clock that Monday morning, we had our baptism of fire from thirty-two aircraft which came in suddenly without warning and raided the airport, causing considerable damage. Our complete complement of planes was damaged and put out of action.

At half-past ten on that same morning, the forward troops of three Japanese divisions crossed the New Territories frontier and by midday were advancing on a broad front towards Kowloon.

For two days the forward troops of the Royal Scots and the 14th Punjab Regiment delayed that advance by covering the

Royal Engineers who were blowing up prepared demolitions on the only two roads which led southward towards Kowloon.

A little later when I visited Taipo I saw the effectiveness of the engineers' work. Huge masses of hillside had been hurled on to the railway line which runs from Canton to Kowloon and lengths of rail were twisted into fantastic shapes. The Shatin Tunnel and some nearby bridges had also been blown up. The tunnel had completely caved in and we hoped that it would be out of use for some considerable time, in spite of what the Japs might accomplish with Chinese labour.

After inflicting severe losses on the enemy by ambush and patrol action, our forward elements withdrew to our main defence line which ran along the hills north of Kowloon from Gindrunkers Bay to Port Shelter.

On this line we had hoped to be able to hold the enemy but, unfortunately, the odds against us were too great. We were never quite certain that an enemy attack would not be made by seaborne troops against the Island of Hong Kong so we had to keep at least half the garrison on the island to guard against this threat. For two days on end the Japanese consolidated by bringing up fresh troops and artillery.

All this time, however, the Jap columns, as they advanced, had been excellent targets for our gunners. In several cases I heard of enemy troops being caught in close formation and the fire of our heavy and medium artillery had taken a big toll. These guns were manned mostly by Indian soldiers who did splendid work under the most difficult of conditions, being continually under intense artillery and air bombardment. In one particular case a 4.5 howitzer battery went into action over open sights against machine-guns at a range of three hundred yards or less. The Indian gunners gave a great show and displayed the coolness of veteran campaigners.

The battle was moving with a speed which was difficult for even us to follow and then, with startling suddenness, our left flank collapsed. The Royal Scots were overrun by the enemy, apparently completely surprised by the new methods of infiltration which the Japanese had adopted. This they did mostly at night with devastating results to the Scots.

Two or three days of absolute nightmare followed as bad news poured in from all positions. It was difficult for the general and his staff to keep pace with the changing situations. Certain localities were taken and retaken but it was always the Japs who seemed finally to hold the disputed position. They pushed on remorselessly and there were always plenty of them to follow up. The Indian regiment, the Rajputs, were doing a fine job of work near the Shing Mun Reservoir, where they beat off repeated attacks by the enemy who rightly considered this one of the vital points of the battle.

The mainland brigade were in real danger of being isolated as the only road through to Kowloon was threatened with being cut. The general now had to make his most important decision; should he continue fighting with the idea of defending his main line or should he try to save the troops and guns from this obvious disaster. He rightly decided on the latter course and so gave the order for the total withdrawal from Kowloon to the island of Hong Kong to be carried out immediately. First, under cover of a reserve line held by companies of Punjabi Rajputs, Royal Scots and Canadians, and then by a very gallant rearguard action by the Punjabis, the evacuation of Kowloon to the island was accomplished. The R.N.V.R. manned launches of all descriptions, including those used for stores carried by the R.A.S.C. and the Navy helped with a couple of destroyers and motor torpedo-boats.

All night long we laboured at the ferry pier point assisting the Rajputs, Punjabis, Mule Corps, gunners and Royal Scots to get across to the island. They had fought their way back to a certain point where the Japs thought we would hold the line but, after putting on a false front of defensive action, we slipped out without the Japanese actually following up. A certain amount of credit must go to the Chinese admiral, Chan Chak, who, as soon as he heard what was happening, went out among the Chinese on the waterfront and quickly organized a fleet of motor-sampans, those Chinese flat-bottomed river boats which are used for all purposes, and soon had his fleet scurrying backwards and forwards with stores, guns, ammunition and equipment. It is a significant thing that only two guns were

lost in the whole of that withdrawal. The evacuation was completed by dawn.

When the troops were back in Hong Kong there was no real complication as this was all part of the plan—the only thing was that we had to carry it out in more of a hurry than we had hoped. They all had their respective stations to go to and, owing to the smallness of the island, it did not take them long to get there.

After four more days, from 13 to 17 December, the Japanese set to work to try to crush the resistance of the garrison in a methodical way. This was done by both high and low level dive bombing and artillery bombardment from Kowloon, which was now in their hands, and Hong Kong island was completely cut off from the mainland of China. The civilian morale on the island was admirable. Civil Defence Services functioned well under the most difficult circumstances. The air raid precaution tunnels and shelters were used with common sense, and civilian casualties were far fewer than we had dared to hope. There is no doubt in my mind that there are few civilian populations in the whole world who are less likely to panic under such conditions than the Chinese. Their famed non-chalance and fantastic demeanour stood them in good stead.

The first unusual happening was that the Japanese sent over a peace mission asking the Governor (who, on the commencement of war, automatically became commander-in-chief of the garrison) to surrender the colony. On receiving a reply in the negative, the Japanese once more resumed the offensive by hammering at the Hong Kong defences. Armour piercing guns knocked out concrete machine-gun positions. Artillery positions were shelled and dive bombed.

The next unusual happening occurred when a huge fire was started on the oil installations and, choosing a fine moonless night with a high tide, the Japs started landing in large numbers. This they were able to do under cover of the great pall of black smoke which had descended on the island from the fire of the oil tanks. They chose the highly industrial district of Tackoo from which they could be only moderately shelled by our guns.

They came across in ever-increasing numbers and went

straight for the line of mountains which formed the central spine of the island. Successful motor torpedo-boat attacks and accurate shelling claimed a heavy toll, but still they came in their hundreds.

The fighting continued for another seven or eight days against an impossible situation which deteriorated rapidly. Finally the Japanese split the unfortunate garrison right through the centre of the island. Several units were completely isolated and fought with outstanding bravery till all were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. Valuable magazines, ordnance depots, food stores and the main water reservoir and pumping stations were lost or access to them was cut off. There were countless acts of gallantry which came to light later: one when a major of the Middlesex Regiment held the top of a hill for a whole week with a mixed force of only twenty men; another when a gunner subaltern engaged the enemy over open sights when the rest of the battery were casualties, and again when a Punjabi havildar continued to engage the enemy with his light automatic while severely wounded and bleeding to death, his arm having been blown off above the elbow.

During the battle one was continually coming up against surprises of all kinds. In my duties as Staff Officer there were times when, because of varying reports of certain episodes, I would be sent out to find exactly what was happening and report accordingly. On one occasion there had been some heavy shelling at a certain road on the Peak. I went along to find out just how bad things were and to see what could be done. When I arrived on the scene it was just one of those ghastly spectacles of war. Japanese shells from one of the largest guns on the mainland firing across the harbour to the island had fallen directly on a group of houses occupied by Chinese servants. The sight of the terrible carnage was too bad to describe in detail. Suffice to say that pieces of dead and wounded men, women and children were everywhere, owing to the tremendous blast from those large shells, but there, right among the debris of the dead and dying, were two young English girls who had quickly hurried to the spot and had got down to a wonderful job of work. They were tending the

wounded with all the calm and efficiency of experienced nurses. Imagine my surprise when I recognized them as two well-known bright young girls who had never been known to do very much except attend parties most days of the week for the past two years. They were two very pretty sisters of around twenty years of age and were to be seen most evenings in the various hotels and restaurants dining and dancing with groups of officers of a particular British regiment.

As I appeared on the horrific scene, they greeted me in their usual bright and cheery way and, although they were covered from head to foot in blood-stained clothing, quickly asked me to get what medical supplies I could. They had formed a casual ward in a nearby house and had everything under control. They knew it was no good trying to get the wounded to the already overcrowded hospitals and had organized their own casualty station. It was a wonderful thing to see such pluck and determination but those of us who have travelled far and wide know how we can rely on our British women folk in emergencies. I never saw Mitze and Lena again during those tragic days and often wondered how they fared during the years of their internment.

For seven more days fighting under these terrible and disastrous conditions took place all over the island. The main centres of resistance were in the heart of the City of Victoria, and in the peninsula of Stanley.

At last, on Christmas Day 1941, the Japanese broke through the centre of the town of Victoria and poured into the city from all sides. At this point, the Governor, mindful of his responsibilities to the Chinese population who had remained comparatively calm through this one-sided battle, gave the order to cease fire.

At 3.15 p.m. that afternoon, the order went out from Fortress Headquarters to all commands at Hong Kong that the Governor was surrendering the island colony to the Japanese.

## Escape

SOME time before and during the battle of Hong Kong I had given thought to the possibility of trying to make an escape after the island had actually fallen to the Japanese. That this was the inevitable outcome there was unhappily little doubt. I had discussed the idea with the G.S.O. 1 and it was decided that three of us should make an attempt to get away in order to try to assist in the escape of the one-legged Chinese Admiral Chan Chak and a Chinese colonel, S. K. Yee, who had been lent to us from the Chinese Government for certain intelligence work. It was hoped at one time that they could be got out by plane, but as we had none from the moment the Japanese attacked this was quite obviously out of the question.

After the surrender of Hong Kong on Christmas Day 1941, all officers and men of the entire garrison had been ordered to report in to Murray Barracks which were situated in the centre of the island and to consider themselves prisoners of war of the Japanese. The orders went that should any officer or man fail to put down his arms or try to effect an escape, he would be shot on sight.

The Japanese soldiers had been closing in on all sides. They were making their way to the centre of the town and in an incredibly short time the place was flooded with them. They had taken over G.H.Q. and the general and all staff officers were now prisoners of war. The Japs were rounding up British and Indian troops as prisoners and the collapse was complete. It was under these circumstances that Captain Peter Mac-Millan, a staff officer like myself, and I decided to take our

chance and contact the Chinese admiral, Chan Chak, with the object of trying to make an escape.

After some difficulty we managed to find him with his A.D.C. Henry Hsu and told them that although we had no set plans we were prepared to try to escape with them to the Chinese mainland. They quickly agreed in their calm way and we set off by car for the other side of the island. There was the admiral, the Chinese colonel, S. K. Yee, Henry Hsu, Peter MacMillan and myself, with Henry driving the car. It was a hazardous journey as Japanese patrols were everywhere but, owing to the nerve and ingenuity of Henry Hsu, who just shouted 'banzai' and loudly sounded his hooter at any Japs who attempted to stop us we managed to get through. We were sniped at continually on the way but luck was on our side and nobody was hit.

Our immediate idea was to get to the small harbour of Aberdeen which is on the other side of the island. Here we hoped to find some kind of boat or even to contact a Chinese junk with the aim of getting away quickly to the open sea. When we arrived at Aberdeen the scene was one of complete hopelessness as everything in the way of craft had been sunk and the Chinese junks appeared deserted. The harbour had been shelled heavily and was, in fact, still under spasmodic fire as the Japs were taking no chances. However, after a search among the derelict boats we were able to find a small motor-boat which was undamaged. It was about twenty-five feet long with a small engine capable of doing not more than six knots an hour. We decided to try our luck with this small vessel.

We were able to collect a volunteer crew of Chinese and one or two odd naval ratings from a store which had been completely overlooked by the Japanese owing to its obscure situation. In a very short time we had filled the boat with rifles, ammunition, food, water and petrol. During the time we were loading it we had to keep watch for Japanese patrols which were continually passing to and fro on motor-cycles and forced us to run for cover in a precarious but exciting manner.

During the time this was going on we were joined by five others who had suddenly decided to try their luck. They were

another British officer, a police officer, an Air Force officer and two civilians. We formed a party and hurriedly discussed plans. We would keep in hiding until darkness and then try to sneak out to sea and make for some deserted part of the China coast on the mainland. From then on we would trust to luck to get into an unoccupied part of China.

Owing to the increase in the number of Jap patrols we began to get worried about our chances of getting away. Finally we decided to try to make the break now although it was still light, and would remain so for at least thirty to forty minutes. Altogether fourteen of us crowded into the motor boat and, awaiting our opportunity, we suddenly started up the motor, which seemed to make a dreadful noise, and were at last away. We had cleared the harbour and had been going only about twenty minutes when we were spotted by a Jap sentry who immediately opened fire. This drew the attention of a Japanese machine-gun post which in turn opened fire at us from about twelve hundred yards. Their first burst was just short of the target which caused the water to splash only a few yards away, thereby giving them their range. With the second burst they succeeded in hitting the petrol tank which made the engine give out immediately. The boat stopped and we were now in serious trouble as we had become a sitting target. The next burst was disastrous as several of the crew were hit and the Norwegian engineer who was actually steering the boat was killed outright. There was little we could do now and the only chance left to us was to jump over the side of the boat and hope that a few of us might survive and reach the small island on the other side of the channel.

To all appearances this was not occupied by Japanese or, in fact, by anybody or anything. Not everybody had decided to leave the boat and swim for it but among those who had were the one-legged admiral, his henchman, Henry Hsu, MacMillan, Goring, Robinson the police officer, Max Oxford the Air Force officer and myself. There we were in the water swimming away for dear life with two machine-guns firing at us for all they were worth. Some of us were hit as we swam. The admiral who had unscrewed his wooden leg and left it in the

boat, was hit in the arm and, as he swam, left a trail of blood behind him. I was hit in the nose by a ricochet off the water, luckily causing a flesh wound only, but making it bleed profusely. Some others of the crew were hit and never reached the island.

Colonel Yee and one or two others had stayed in the boat, apparently because they could not swim.

However, a party of us at last reached the island and I was thankful to be able to pull myself out of the water on to the rocks where I flopped down completely exhausted. We lay about trying to recover but just when things seemed to quieten down a little and the everlasting rattle of the machine-guns petered out, the Japanese suddenly decided to shell our island with a field gun as they had no doubt observed us through their glasses. Luckily we were able to take shelter behind some large rocks. Darkness had quickly fallen, the guns stopped firing and in a few minutes we had all fallen asleep from sheer exhaustion.

There was no firing when I awoke about two hours later. It was dark and I was feeling very much revived after the rest and called the others. There were now only eight of us left. We gathered around to discuss the situation and make our plans for the immediate future. It was decided to look around and find out what the position was, also to see if the Japs were making any move to come after us. We came to the decision that there was not much fear of that as apparently they thought we had been accounted for by the shelling and were no longer worth considering. As can be imagined, we were truly thankful for this!

It was decided to leave the Chinese admiral in the care of Henry Hsu under cover of the rocks, while we spread ourselves out and explored the island. It appeared to be quite deserted but on our way over the top of the hill to the other side we spotted in the darkness a naval craft of some description lying off the far end of the island. It was under cover of some rocks and apparently waiting for orders. Hurriedly I called to the others and in a few moments we gathered together on the hillside. We quickly came to the conclusion it was a British boat and decided to try and attract their attention. We pulled off

our shirts and waved to them, at the same time letting out a series of shouts and yells to try and attract their attention.

This we finally succeeded in doing, but not in the way we expected. In the eerie darkness they apparently mistook us for Japanese and with a mighty burst opened fire at us with a machine-gun! We dropped down under cover immediately and luckily none of us was hit.

Keeping under cover we crawled down to the shore and at last were able to make them understand who we were. They called to us that they could not get the boat in any nearer to the shore and that we would have to swim out to them.

So once again into the dark waters of the China seas we went and it was with a great sense of relief that I felt the strong arms of two British sailors heave me on to the deck of a motor torpedo-boat.

After a change of clothes and a drink of rum supplied by the Navy, Bill Robinson and I borrowed the dinghy and went off to collect the Chinese admiral and to see if any of the others from the motor-boat had survived the swim. It was now about four hours since we had left him, but there he was, just lying propped up against a rock, still slowly bleeding from the wound in his arm. He greeted us with a wan smile and with not a word of complaint about the hours we had been away. We picked him up and carried him to the dinghy and rowed him to the M.T.B. This little job had taken about two hours and by this time the other Naval motor torpedo-boats had come out of their respective hiding places and come up alongside.

Our party, together with the Naval officers from the M.T.B.s, foregathered on one of the boats and discussed our future plans. After the talk it was decided to make a dash just after midnight for the Chinese mainland about a hundred miles away to the east.

At the appointed time the boats all started up with the loudest roar I have ever heard and with a bound we were away like the start of a regatta boat race. Lights appeared as if from nowhere and soon the sound of a field gun from the land opened up and the sky blazed with star shells and lights of all descriptions. It was a fine black starry night and we were travelling

very fast and no immediate harm came to us. The place we were heading for was about three hours away and, after about an hour when everything seemed to be going well for us, there appeared out of the darkness a large black shape on our starboard side, and in a flash one of the Naval officers had identified it and yelled out that it was a Japanese destroyer. Its searchlights suddenly swept around and in a few minutes they had picked us up. A moment later their guns opened fire on us. They were about three miles away and luckily for us were going in the opposite direction. Their shells fell short and because of our speed, we were quickly out of range. They decided we were not worth bothering about because they did not turn or send some smaller craft after us, for which we were thankful; and so that incident passed.

Our flotilla was now approaching the small inhabited island of Ping Chan, which was just off the mainland. We slowed up and it was decided that we should send a party ashore to find out if this part of the coast was occupied by Japs. The way we got our information was interesting. Bill Robinson and I volunteered for the task of trying to kidnap a Chinese and bring him back for the admiral to question. We were taken by a couple of sailors in the dinghy to the shore on the mainland in the dead of night. We told them to hold on and be prepared for any emergency while Robinson and I walked up the beach. We saw what appeared to be a fisherman's hut and quietly went up to it. We stood on either side of the door and as Robinson knocked on it I stood ready. Presently the door opened a little way and a Chinaman's head peered out. In a flash I hit him under the jaw and as he dropped we grabbed his body and rushed it down to the waiting dinghy. The sailors were ready and away we went with our prize to the M.T.B. on which was the admiral.

We took our Chinese aboard, gave him a drink and the admiral soon put him at ease and apologized for our rough treatment. The information we got from him was of particular consequence, for he was able to tell us that the Japanese were in occupation about sixty miles inland. At this good news we decided to make a landing. After much discussion and a certain

amount of disagreement with the Naval officers, we finally came to the conclusion that our best plan was to strip the boats of everything, including guns, ammunition, food, petrol and so on and then sink them.

By the time this prodigious task was over, dawn was upon us and our immediate move was to get away from the coast as soon as possible. We estimated that if we marched inland we would have to cross the Jap lines on about the third night, as we proposed only to move during the night and to rest by day.

After two eventful days and nights we came to the road on which the Japanese were travelling to and fro. We hid up until about two o'clock in the morning and managed to get the whole party—which now numbered, with Naval personnel, some fifty to sixty men—across the road without undue incident. From this point we kept going until we had two large rivers between us and the Japanese. We had now walked a hundred miles in three nights but with the Japanese well behind us for the time being, we decided to rest for two days, to take stock of our supplies and the situation in general.

At last we reached Waichow, the first important point of our journey. The main object in making this place our destination was that here we hoped to pick up certain contacts which would give us valuable information and would enable us to make our plans accordingly.

It was here that we met a British Army intelligence officer dressed and living the complete life of a Chinese. He was an Englishman but spoke and understood everything about the Chinese and was undoubtedly doing a masterly piece of intelligence work. Later on I heard that he had established a secret line of communication between the prisoner of war camps in Hong Kong and the British Military Mission in Chungking. A very noble effort.

From Waichow our next move was by two large rice barges known as tunks. These were similar to ordinary barges but with a hutted top so that we were able to keep under cover all the time we were moving, which was by a small petrol engine. The speed was not more than two knots an hour and as both

sides of the East River along which we were travelling was occupied with Japanese soldiers in great numbers, it became a thoroughly nerve-racking journey. During the journey of four or five days many exciting and alarming things happened but never once did the Japanese discover what was actually going on under their very noses. To think that fifty to sixty British Naval officers and men and our own party of three Army officers, together with our beloved one-legged admiral and his escort of armed guerillas, were for the best part of a week right in their midst without their knowing it was almost unbelievable.

We finally reached Wuchow and from now on our journey became a lot easier as we were in the interior of China and with little chance of being run to earth by Japs. They were already occupying all the important coastal ports and would have to consolidate their positions before attempting to occupy the interior or consider the capture of the war-time capital Chungking.

We continued on our way but progress was slow owing to a number of factors. Most people were suffering from stomach trouble including the Chinese admiral. Food was scarce and we were having trouble with our footwear owing to the rough going. The admiral was also feeling the effects of his wounded arm as we had not been able to remove the bullet and inflammation had set in.

When we reached Shiukwan, however, we were lucky enough to find a Welsh mission which was still intact and in first-class order with all their staff in full attendance. Dr. Martin, who was in charge, took the whole party in hand and, with his wonderful staff, looked after our immediate wants. It was decided to leave the Chinese admiral in his care while the party moved on. Henry Hsu stayed with him.

The Royal Navy party had decided to try to make their way to Rangoon with the idea of contacting their own people there. This was a great relief to us, and with our original party now reduced to four we at last reached Kweiling.

This was indeed an important town to reach as it was well into the interior of China and so out of reach of the Japanese

for the time being. After we had got fixed up at a Chinese guest house and had cleaned ourselves, we went down to the Chinese restaurant and had a good feed. Bill Robinson soon excused himself and said he was off to find out all he could. Peter MacMillan and Max Oxford went out to see about an American plane which had just touched down close by. I decided to take a walk round the town to see what was doing. Once again I came in contact with the British Intelligence Service and my introduction to the S.O.E. (Security Operations Executive) was well in keeping with the cloak and dagger business. I was walking in the busy shopping part of the town and looking at the curious merchandise in the shops when a Chinese man came close and murmured in English, 'Follow me, sar.' I was at once suspicious and took no notice. I thought it might be some attempt to rob me as I still had some American dollar notes around my waist. I continued slowly on my way but had not gone far when a most attractive Chinese girl moved up alongside me and said in English, 'Please follow. It is most important.' I glanced at her and thought she looked as if she was from Hong Kong, being rather better turned out than most of the women I had seen in Kweiling. I gave her a nod and decided to take a chance.

We went on a little way until we reached one of the larger shops under the main building in the town. She turned into a soft goods store and I followed. There were a certain number of people in the shop but they were all engrossed in bargaining and nobody appeared to notice us. After looking at some of the articles on the counters she passed through a swing door at the other end of the shop. I waited for a minute or two and then followed. I found her a little way up a dark passage. She came forward with a sweet smile and said, 'Come along, Captain Guest, the Doctor is waiting to see you.'

When I heard her mention my name I was really staggered. Here I was in the heart of China, right off the European beaten track and within two hours of being in the strange town I was being addressed by my own name by a strange Chinese woman. Immediately I pulled myself together and thought quickly.

'Ah yes! This is some of Bill Robinson's tricky work,' I said aloud, 'Is Robinson here?' She shook her head and said, 'Please come.'

She opened a door which led into a workroom and there on the floor were a group of Chinese radio mechanics working away at wireless sets of all shapes and sizes. They barely glanced up as we passed through. Another door was opened which led into a small office, still in Chinese style. There were two or three Chinese men working away at their desks on the floor, but one, who looked rather larger than the others, lifted his head as we entered. He rose from the floor, smiled and held out his hand. In a flash I knew I was before an Englishman.

'So you would not swallow my first bait, Guest!' he said, with a smile.

'No, sir,' I rejoined, 'but I fell hook, line and sinker for your second,' and I turned to my Chinese decoy with a sheepish grin.

'May I introduce you to Mimi,' continued the doctor. 'She is, indeed, a great help to me.'

We bowed to one another.

I sensed at once that I was before an intriguing section of our intelligence system. The doctor asked me to sit down and Mimi left us. He informed me that his department had been told to contact our party as soon as we arrived in Kweiling and, for obvious reasons, had done it the way they thought safest from their point of view. He asked me to tell him everything I knew about the Hong Kong and Mainland P.O.W. Camps which I was only too pleased to do. It was not until some time later I actually found out what a wonderful job the S.O.E. did from this particular focal point. This was the small beginning of an important unit, later known as the B.A.A.G. (British Army Aid Group) and commanded by the doctor, known as 'Doc', who, of course, was actually a British Army colonel. Their principle role was to get in touch with the various P.O.W. camps and organize 'Escape and Evasion' operations from anywhere in China and Hong Kong. From this same building, which became known as the 'Governor's Palace', the doctor ran a wireless network, together with a secret factory for the

manufacture and building of transmitters and receivers for the Chinese Intelligence Organization.

This factory, which quickly developed and had to be extended to the outskirts of Kweiling, was under the managing director who was none other than my lovely decoy, 'Mimi'. It appeared that she and her husband had run a radio business in Hong Kong but had got away as refugees during the fighting. With the help of B.A.A.G. they had managed to smuggle out of their factory in Hong Kong, equipment, tools, transformers and so on and had quickly got the secret factory going in Kweiling, the beginnings of which I had seen. The smuggling operations had been carried out right under the very noses of the Japanese. Among the many coolies working on the large road building and repairs were a number in the service of B.A.A.G. and the parts were passed on from gang to gang until they were safely through the various barriers. As invariably happens on jobs of this kind, a certain amount of failure is experienced and the Japanese only had one way of dealing with smugglers and that was death. As the danger mounted so the price demanded by the smugglers went up and up, but, mainly owing to the brilliant organizing ability of Mimi, the scheme never got out of hand and the supply was kept going. The Royal Corps of Signals, who were well in on this particular project, did a wonderful job by finally establishing a complete wireless network throughout the length and breadth of China, including every prisoner of war camp under the Japanese.

I never met the lovely Mimi again but I heard later how she enjoyed telling the story of how she successfully decoyed the 'tough Freddie Guest'.

Bill Robinson apparently had had nothing to do with the above incident but he mysteriously disappeared on receipt of special orders. MacMillan and Oxford came back to the guest house just after I returned, very excited and in a desperate hurry. It appeared that the American plane had just room for the two of them, although it was only a two-seater, and they decided to take advantage of this offer and fly on to Chungking.

I was left alone with five hundred miles still to go, but, as my health was better than that of the others, I did not worry and

continued on my way. By this time I had contacted a Chinese force which was on its way to Chungking so I joined up with them. I eventually reached Chungking.

After staying there for two or three weeks, working with the British Military Mission, I received orders to report to G.H.Q. Delhi, India. An American plane was flying out that night and my instructions were to be at the aerodrome at 3 a.m. In the dead of night the overloaded plane took off and, after an eventful journey, we landed at Dum Dum Aerodrome in Calcutta, at six o'clock that same day—a distance of twelve hundred miles.

It was grand to be back in India once again after the insecurity of China and especially the nervous tension which was so evident in Chungking. I was pleased to see India again as it had been a few years since I was there. It had changed very little in general appearances but I soon sensed an undercurrent of feeling which was not quite so apparent when I was last in India. The Japanese successes were undoubtedly taking effect.

It was, however, good to see the Indian Army around and one could not help but feel more secure in every way.

## Americans Come to India

**M**y first thought on arriving in Calcutta was to go shopping. I possessed nothing more than the clothes I was wearing. So I went along to the field cashier and obtained from him the princely sum of one thousand rupees. I then made my way to Chowringhee, the Calcutta shopping centre, and spent a considerable amount on such things as shirts, shorts, shoes and stockings, hair-brushes, shaving tackle and a wrist watch. I next visited the ordnance stores and drew a refitment of officer's equipment which made me feel that I was back in circulation once more—a very comforting feeling.

A room had already been booked for me at the Great Eastern Hotel and when I arrived I met Peter MacMillan who was already installed there. We talked a little and decided to meet again later and dine together at Firpos. One of the great joys of my life has always been to live for the moment and if the contrasts have been extreme, so much the better! If one has been living rough then the change to high life is so much more appreciated and *vice versa*. It is no use counting the cost.

The scene in Firpos that evening was one of gaiety and the place was full of people of all races. Parties of Naval officers were there with their girl friends of every nation, Army officers were with their ladies, Air Force officers with their popies and European civilians with their wives. What a range they covered and all so different and true to type. My first impression, having so recently come from the poverty and sordidness of China, not to mention the grimness of the war in Hong Kong, was that the scene was unreal and forced. However, true to

my inclination, I quickly changed and was soon in the spirit and mood of the East.

I have always thought that the Duke of Wellington's Ball on the eve of Waterloo was the right idea for a soldier—in other words, 'Let's eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die!' How right! I could never understand the mentality of men who took their wars so seriously that any idea of relaxation was just anathema to them. I always made a point of avoiding them! However, we can't all be the same and there is no truer proverb than that of 'birds of a feather,' etc., especially when it comes to pleasure. If it is gaiety one is seeking, then go to the gay places where the gay and light-hearted foregather. Firpos that night was just such a place. I knew from past experience that if there were any gay friends of mine who might be in Calcutta, then it would be at Firpos we would be most likely to meet.

Sure enough, within a few minutes of our arrival several appeared on the scene. We soon got together and as I thought the occasion called for a celebration I quickly called for champagne and the party was on! In some strange way our hilarity soon spread around and Firpos became a gay and wild place that evening. We enjoyed every minute of it.

The following day I reported to command H.Q. at Fort William and found MacMillan already there. The first person to contact us was the first woman officer I had seen. She was A.D.C. to the G.O.C. Major-General Hayward. The A.T.S. had not, at this time, been sent to Hong Kong. I don't remember her name, except that she was known throughout command as 'Tuppence'. She was very charming and efficient, and came to inform us that the G.O.C. would see us immediately.

We were taken into his office and he greeted us warmly, congratulated us on our escape from Hong Kong. He said he would like to hear our story but thought it would be better told over lunch to which he invited us. We thanked him and left.

MacMillan said he was off to the chief gunner officer and with a 'cheerio, see you at lunch', was gone. 'Tuppence' told me to hang on a moment as I was to see the G.S.O. 1. A few minutes later I was shown into his office. He asked me for a

brief account of my experiences and then handed me over to his G.S.O. 2, who took down my report. This took up the rest of the morning. Then I went and got ready for lunch.

There were twelve of us in the party and after introductions by the general, we had a drink and went into lunch. It was a great success as everyone wanted to hear our story. During lunch 'Tuppence' mentioned that the G.S.O. 1 wished to see me in the afternoon as he had a job for me. I was a little perturbed because she would not tell me what it was but from what I had gathered from MacMillan it sounded as if I was to do some lecturing. MacMillan had already received orders to go on to G.H.Q. Delhi and was leaving the next day.

It was as I feared. The G.S.O. 1 informed me that the general wanted me to stay in Calcutta for a few days and give a talk to various groups of his command on my experiences and that a further programme was already arranged. He handed me the list, which read as follows:

The Calcutta Light Horse,  
The Bengal Club,  
Command H.Q.,  
An Indian audience.

'Rather like shooting a line, isn't it, sir?' I exclaimed.

'Don't worry, Guest,' he said. 'You have a good story and everyone wants to hear you.'

'I'll do my best, sir,' I promised.

My first talk, to the Calcutta Light Horse, was a great success, but they were rather shaken when I told them of the Japanese successes and that I thought there were more to come.

That evening they entertained me to dinner at Firpos. In those early days the food was still very good indeed and we had a jolly party.

The following evening I gave a talk to the Bengal Club after being entertained to dinner by the chairman and members of the club. This also was a great success and they rounded it off by making me an honorary member for the remainder of my stay in Calcutta which I greatly appreciated.

My other two talks were equally successful although the

one to the Indian audience was followed by some very knotty questions which called for some thoughtful answers. There was no doubt that they had been greatly influenced and affected by the successful advances made by the Japanese. They did not under-estimate the Japanese at that time in quite the same way as the Europeans were apt to do.

I left Calcutta the next day after an eventful week and boarded the mail train for Delhi. This was my original destination from the time I left Hong Kong, a distance of no less than three thousand five hundred miles. It had taken the best part of three months and I had travelled by motor torpedo-boat, junk, tunk, truck, railway hand-cart, aeroplane, and, by no means the least, my own two feet!

On my arrival I was lucky enough to be able to get fixed up at the Imperial Hotel which was the leading hotel in Delhi. The first man I ran into was none other than Bill Robinson. He was dressed once again in the uniform of a superintendent of the Indian police, looking fit and well and as cheerful as ever. He told me the news; that Peter MacMillan had gone places; that my old friend, the one-legged Chinese admiral, Chan Chak, had arrived safely in Chungking with Henry Hsu and that they were being fêted in a big way by the Chinese generals, and that Major Arthur Goring had reached Chungking and was expected in India any moment.

After reporting to G.H.Q., I was again the centre of interest as everyone wanted to hear my story. I lunched with the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, and, of course, the conversation was about my escape. I was invited to tea with the commander-in-chief, General Wavell, who was particularly interested in all that I had to say and asked many questions about the Japanese.

There was a lot of excitement in Delhi about this time as the news was that the Americans were coming to India in a big way, and were expected in Delhi shortly. Sure enough, their planes began to land in large numbers and in an amazingly short time they had established their Indian H.Q. They were given the Imperial Hotel as their temporary H.Q., and British personnel staying there had to leave within the week.

This move was not popular and caused quite an upset with the British residents. These consisted without exception of senior officers, and their wives, of the general headquarters' staff. They were mostly of high rank and had been going backward and forward from Delhi to Simla (in the hot weather) for years on end—in some cases ten to fifteen years. Personally, I was glad to see it as one got the impression that they were a little too smug and remote, far removed from the war, and they did not appear to realize just how very serious things were.

News of more Japanese successes were now coming in continually and I was asked to report to the intelligence branch at H.Q. for special duty. My orders were to go at once to Chittagong and along the coast beyond to Cox's Bazaar, to find out what was happening there. It appeared that communications from that part of the country had stopped. I was to take with me an American special duties officer who was on the staff of General Bradley, the American G.O.C. in Delhi. He had flown into India with the first batch of American officers and was anxious to get first-hand information about the Japanese. He was a Major C. V. Whitney of the American Air Force, keen as mustard and terribly eager to get on the job. We arranged to meet at the railway station the following morning as we were going by mail train to Calcutta, there being no planes available. He was not perturbed at the idea of the long train journey. He said this would give him a better opportunity of getting the feel of India and the East, as everything was moving a little too quickly, even for Americans!

I arrived at the station in good time with just my one bundled holdall, packed as lightly as possible and, as I expected to find myself in some out of the way places, I decided not to take my Indian servant. Looking around for Whitney I saw that he had not arrived yet. I had not long to wait, however, as the next minute he appeared on the scene, followed by a host of Indian coolies. They proceeded to dump his luggage alongside mine as he came over to join me.

He must have seen the look of amazement on my face as the pile of cases got bigger and bigger. I asked him what on earth they were for and did he realize where we were going? It

was his turn to look amazed as he said that as we would be away for over a week surely we would be wanting something to eat during that time and 'Well—here it is.'

I burst out laughing as I explained that we could get all we wanted on the mail train and could pick up rations in Calcutta for our journey. His next remark was amusing as he said he had heard bad reports about Indian food and drink and was taking no chances!

The train came in with a roar and saved us from any further discussion on the matter. Luckily we found an empty compartment and the cases of food were piled in. Goodness knows where we would have put them if the train had been full.

It is strange how quickly two people get to know one another when they have to travel together for two or three days on end. We hit it off very well indeed and got on famously. He was more than interested in all I could tell him about India and the Far East, as my years of life and experiences in the East were, as he expressed it, an eye-opener. He had no idea about the British way of life in these parts of the world. He was particularly intrigued with the Indian Army and appeared agreeably surprised when I told him of its strength and efficiency.

I, on the other hand, got my surprises when it came to meal times. It was amazing to see what was in those cases. There were tinned hams and meats of different kinds and every vegetable one could think of. There were creamed sauces, cheeses, biscuits, pickles, tinned fruits of the most luscious varieties, such as melons, pineapples, peaches and apricots and, added to all this, was a complete cooking stove and utensils for making anything in double quick time especially coffee with the best tinned milk I had ever tasted. We even had tinned bread and the butter was unbelievably good. As for drinks—we had the lot! Whisky, gin, beer (in tins) and soft drinks of all kinds. In fact, it was the best array of canned food I had ever eaten—or even seen!

After my scathing remarks at the station I am afraid the laugh was on me. As Whitney pointed out later, why go short or be uncomfortable before one is forced to. How right he was! It

can always be dumped at any moment so why bother? It certainly was the best food I ever had on an Indian train, although, mind you, meals on the mail trains in India in peacetime could be very good.

We thoroughly enjoyed our journey and arrived in Calcutta after two days travelling. My plans were that we would go on by another train to Dacca, but Whitney had other ideas and he soon got to work. He contacted the American H.Q. in Calcutta and in no time at all had got a jeep from them which was put at our disposal. This made things very much easier for us besides saving a great deal of time. It must have been one of the first of those very useful and practical vehicles to be put into service in India. The Americans had only been in India a few days but they were quick to see that these little motors had real value and could be put to good use. We piled our holdalls into it and, as before, a wonderful stock of food and drink. This time I knew the food was going to be much more important to us during the next few days.

Our destination was the small ferry port of Chandpur on the other side of the Brahmaputra, that fast-flowing river which divides India from Burma. Owing to the many tributaries at the mouth of the great Ganges, it was a difficult and roundabout journey which took us to Dacca. This is one of those places in Bengal which had caused the British much trouble in the past and I was particularly interested to see it.

We arrived late in the afternoon and decided to stay the night, before going on to the ferry which was still some distance away. Our first difficulty, however, was to find a place to stay. This was not easy as there were no military camps nearby, no hotels and no dak bungalows. However, we found the old British club which was no longer used and decided to pitch our camp on its verandas.

Having put the club chokidah in charge of our kits we went for a walk around what remained of the little cantonment. We found the English church and I suggested to Whitney that we might have a look inside. It did not look much from the outside and he looked a little surprised at my suggestion. However, we went in and it was typical of small English churches

which are to be found all over India. There was not much to see except for three small curtains on the walls which were obviously covering three brass plaques. Whitney was about to go when I drew his attention to them and pulled back the curtains for him to read the inscriptions. A look of surprise came over his face as he read the epitaphs of three separate British officials of the Indian Civil Service who had been murdered within the last twenty years in Dacca. One told the story of the police commissioner who was shot dead by an Indian girl who asked to see him on some faked up subject and, when admitted into his office, just drew a revolver from under her sari and shot him dead.

As we walked out Whitney expressed his surprise that he had not heard about any of these incidents and how little one heard of such cases in America. Even I, who knew about these things and had heard of Dacca's reputation, was a little shaken. We appeared to be the only Europeans in Dacca that night. There had been a certain amount of unrest and anti-British feeling and we took the precaution of loading our pistols and tucking them under our pillows.

The night passed off without incident, however, and immediately after breakfast, which the club kitmaghar prepared for us, we packed our things into the jeep and were on our way.

We reached Nargangany in good time. From here we were to cross the Brahmaputra to Chandpur by ferry boat. The river at this point is very wide and, because of its fast running, the ferry goes some two or three miles downstream. The boat was alongside the pier and due to depart in an hour's time. A surprise was in store for us when we went on board. On the first-class deck we found everything spotlessly white with a number of small cabins and a fair-sized dining-room where a good lunch was being served. There were a number of other first-class passengers, including half-a-dozen British officers. The lower decks for the third-class passengers were indeed an amazing sight. They were packed with hundreds of Indian men, women and children and, at first sight, I wondered why all these people were travelling across, especially that way. I was told

that this was nothing unusual and happened every day. It appeared that the Indians just loved to go on the ferry as it was probably the cheapest way of having a boat trip! Another interesting thing I was able to find out about this ferry service was that the Brahmaputra Steamship Company was actually owned by two dear old ladies living very quietly, but I should imagine very well, in some nice country house down in Devonshire. It had been left to them by their father and they had decided to hold on to it. I should imagine it had paid some very handsome dividends over the years. I remember seeing the date of 1906 on a brass plate showing the year the ferry boat was built in Glasgow.

The crossing was quite an event as it took a full hour to go down the river from west to east, but apparently it took over two hours to do the journey from east to west owing to the strong current. All kinds of flotsam and jetsam came down that river such as large masses of tangled vegetation, great trunks of trees, bodies of big game, such as tigers and panthers, and even elephants were not considered an uncommon sight. Mugger, which is the name given to small crocodiles, were the most usual sight and these would be seen floating down the river on large lumps of earth just basking in the sun.

A little group of us got together and discussed the war and it was plain for me to see and hear that these officers had little idea of what they would be up against when they met the Japs in the near future.

Whitney was particularly interested in the discussion as he wanted to learn all he could about what was happening. These officers were on their way up to Manipur Road.

We had of course, managed to get our jeep on to the ferry and so when at last the landing stage at Chandpur was reached, we quickly got it off and made our way along the road to Chittagong. It soon became evident that the pattern of Indian life had changed completely in the last couple of weeks on this side of the Brahmaputra. Very few people were about and it was obvious that everyone was on the run and getting out as fast as they could. We called in at the various police posts as we approached Chittagong but they had been deserted and there

was now no doubt that the population were scared of the Japanese advance and were leaving while there was time.

We reached Chittagong and realized at once that we were in a ghost town, as not a soul was to be seen anywhere. All the houses were empty with little left in them; the shops had been cleared of all their goods and the whole place had that air of desolation which indicates pending disaster. Whitney was, by this time, definitely concerned and turning to me asked, 'Well, Freddie, where do we go from here? I think we should get out of here quickly.'

'No, we can't do that, C.V.,' I replied. 'We haven't found out where the Japs actually are, and that is what we came here to discover.'

'O.K.,' he said. 'But how do we go about it?'

'I think if we look around a bit we shall find some Army store depot and there is bound to be someone there,' I answered. 'Come on, let's go!'

And with that we clambered back into the jeep.

We drove up and down the roads and after a little while, sure enough, came upon a small depot of the R.A.S.C. There was a young officer in charge with a few Indian soldiers and we tried to get as much information as possible from him. He did not know much except that the Japs were reported to be about one hundred miles to the south and that they were coming north pretty fast. He had received orders to move his depot up to Mymensingh, about two miles north, and on the main road to Manipur Road. We asked him if he would be clear that night but he said he could not get out by then and so we decided to stay at the depot for that night, much to Whitney's disgust. I think he was still thinking of my stories of how the Japanese moved mostly by night and he had visions of us being in the way. I assured him that there was no fear of this happening as they could not make the distance in the time, but I could see he was not happy about it.

However, we passed an uneventful night and were up at the crack of dawn. My idea now was to get the jeep down on to the sands by the shore and drive along towards Cox's Bazaar and Elephant Point to see if we could get any information there.

It was a grand morning as we drove along the big stretch of silvery sands with the sea only a few yards away on our right and jungle scrub and bushes some distance away on our left. We had been lucky in finding a supply of petrol at the depot and we had a number of full tins with us.

As we drove along I could see that Whitney was beginning to wonder what I was up to. We had not seen a sign of anybody, not even fishermen. As we neared Cox's Bazaar, I saw one or two Indians in the distance but, as we approached in the fast travelling jeep, they looked up suddenly and were away into the jungle before we could get up to them.

Whitney looked a little disconcerted at this turn of events, but I reassured him that the Japs could not be around or these folk would not be here at all. On this assumption I decided to continue along the sands to Elephant Point. We had not gone far, however, when suddenly we heard the sound of firing away towards some hills which we could see on our left across the scrub country.

'What's that?' said Whitney, looking a little startled. 'What the hell's that?'

I said, 'I think I will just go across and find out. I am sure it sounded pretty far away.'

Just at this moment we heard the unmistakable sound of a machine-gun.

'That,' I exclaimed, 'sounds to me like Japs, and that is the information I wanted.'

I was standing by the jeep which we had stopped to listen to the firing but my remark seemed to startle Whitney and with a yell of 'You goddamned idiot! For God's sake let's get to hell out of here!' he started up the jeep, swung her round, and it was as much as I could do to hold on to it as it was already beginning to roar.

In went the clutch and away we went like mad. There was no mistake about his intentions. His foot was right down on the accelerator and we were speeding to the limit of the jeep's capacity.

I yelled to him to take it easy as I felt that the jeep might overturn at any moment, and laughed as I said it seemed to

me to be more dangerous than the rifle fire. With that he slowed down and burst out laughing.

'Gee,' he said. 'You're a casual kind of a guy. Just you remember I haven't been shot at yet and I'm in no hurry for it to begin.'

'All right, C.V.—don't worry. I'm not all that keen on it myself,' and we both chuckled.

We duly arrived back in Chittagong without further incidents, and called in at the depot only to find that this was now cleared of stores and quite deserted. We drove around the town but could not find a soul anywhere. It was obvious that news had travelled fast and that the people were of the opinion that the Japs were likely to be in the town at any moment.

As a matter of fact the Japanese never got any farther than the place where I had reported the machine-gun fire and their advance into Burma was much farther north of this point. The reason was, of course, that the coastline along which we had driven was very vulnerable to attack by torpedo-boats and raiding parties from Calcutta. On the other hand, if the Japanese had been able to occupy Chittagong in force, Calcutta would have been threatened and a very serious battle would have had to be fought for the supremacy of the Bay of Bengal.

When we reached Chandpur this time things had changed considerably and were very different from what they were a few days previously. Refugees were massing in their thousands, all trying to get on the ferry boat to cross over to India proper. Military police had taken over to try to control the crowds. Canteens had been organized and were attended by the British women of Calcutta who were doing a wonderful job. Large camps had been laid out with the idea of marshalling the refugees, who were increasing in numbers every minute. They were coming in from all directions. Added to this was the coming and going of military personnel on their way up to Manipur Road, which was the end of the railway line to Northern Burma, through Assam, and was the main base for the 14th Army.

The ferries were working to capacity and had to be controlled by the police who decided the priorities by which people were allowed to travel.

I was able to get Whitney on to the ferry right away. After getting in touch with Calcutta H.Q., they informed me that I was to stay where I was and await further orders. I got my report through to Delhi and they, in turn, gave me a further consignment; I was to take up certain documents to the 14th Army Headquarters which was camped in the jungle somewhere up by Manipur Road. Whitney and I said our hurried farewells as he was off post haste to report to his general in Delhi.

When I reached the railway junction which connected the Assam and Burma lines, the scene I came upon was terrible. Refugees in the most shocking state of distress were everywhere—men, women and children were lying huddled together in thousands and were still pouring in from the railway track along which they had come. The trains from Burma had ceased to run and these refugees had walked hundreds of miles along the lines in their endeavour to escape from the oncoming Japanese.

They were starving, sick and completely destitute. Children were there in hundreds and many had lost their parents who had died by the roadside in the long trek. Others had left their mothers or fathers who could not keep up with the surging masses as they struggled along. The women voluntary workers from Calcutta were there in numbers doing their utmost to help them with food and clothing, and organizing transit camps until they could be got to India.

As I waited for my train on the Assam line, which was still functioning, I joined the workers to do what I could. I decided to try and round up the lost children. Going in and out of the huddled masses on the platform, most of them stretched out asleep from sheer exhaustion, I picked up no less than five dead children. In one case a boy and girl of not more than six or seven years of age were locked in one another's arms quite dead—a terribly moving sight even to one who had seen so much death and destruction in the last few months.

From the refugees we heard grim stories of the Japanese atrocities in their advance into Burma. It was difficult to separate the truth from exaggeration but the fact remained that a very real refugee problem had suddenly appeared on our

hands that would take a lot of work to solve. The voluntary workers were indeed doing a wonderful job. Soup kitchens had been organized, emergency hospitals formed, clothing distributing centres arranged and extra ferry services put on to relieve the awful congestion which was focused at this point. There was so much to be done and I found it difficult to tear myself away from such a catastrophe where so much help was wanted.

However, I had to take my place on the single line train bound for Manipur Road. Luckily the refugees were not going this way and so we were spared the terrible over-crowding that would have resulted. The passengers consisted only of military and Air Force personnel and, of course, the train was full to capacity. Being a single line the journey was slow and tedious as we had to wait for down line trains every so often. The journey, however, had its compensations as the scenery through the jungle was magnificent and colourful. On one occasion I saw what appeared to be a white cloud pass by the carriage window and it took seconds to realize that it was an enormous cluster of white butterflies! I have never seen anything like it in any other part of the world.

At last the train arrived at Manipur Road, which was the terminus of the Assam Railway. The scene here was one of exceptional military activity. It had quickly become the base for the Burma operation, and stores were pouring in by the ton. From here I made my way down to Imphal where I contacted the 7th Armoured Brigade and gave them their instructions to get to the rail head at Manipur Road. When I returned to the terminus myself the congestion was beginning to be really serious. The refugees added to the already difficult supply problem and although a road was being cut through with all speed, the heavy rains did not help to make things any easier. In fact, it was as near absolute chaos as it was possible to be. However, I managed to get out eventually and make my way back to Calcutta, and thence to Delhi.

When I returned to H.Q. Delhi, the Director of Training informed me I was to go on a lecture tour of every command in India. The subject was my experiences in Hong Kong and

Burma and to give the troops who were now in training some idea of the methods of the Japanese and what they were up against. It was obvious that the word 'infiltration' had not yet become known or understood in military parlance. Few had heard of it and even fewer knew what it really meant. The Japanese had indeed brought in a new conception of modern warfare which had changed the old ideas almost overnight. The programme and timetable of my intended tour took a few days to prepare, because of the complicated nature of the journey, as it was expected to cover India, Assam and Burma.

Eventually the arrangements were completed and I travelled by all manner of ways to the various commands, firstly to those of northern India, then to Assam as far as Shillong and then back again to central and southern India. Everywhere I was listened to with considerable interest and appreciation by those concerned. From my point of view it was indeed an interesting and unforgettable experience. I stayed in most of the Government houses throughout India and received the hospitality of the various Governors. In some instances it was difficult to realize there really was a war going on, as in India tradition and custom dies hard. In one State I visited the old peacetime formalities were carried out to the letter. The A.D.C. informed me that I would be expected to dress in mess kit for dinner—I had to borrow this!—and that I was to be in the ante-room at an exact time each evening. When dinner was announced I would be expected to escort the Governor's wife into the dining-room. I thought this was a little unreal at the time but then I had seen so much more of the war and was probably a little prejudiced.

At Shillong in Assam, I stayed at the most delightful English style country house, the home of the Governor. During my stay I was invited to play polo in a special game arranged for me. Although I appreciated the gesture I was not really in the mood for such pleasantries and felt the occasion hardly warranted it. In Ranchi I stayed with the G.O.C. His daughter, who acted as hostess, was extremely kind and placed her horses at my disposal. This I appreciated very much as it gave me a chance to get some much needed exercise by having a good

gallop before breakfast. In Madras I was entertained by the Governor who gave several parties in my honour. There was no doubt that the war was very far removed from southern India.

Once again I found myself in Bangalore where I was listened to with considerable interest in the officers' cadet school. Here was the nucleus of the young officers-to-be, who would and did play a large part in the second and more successful campaign in Burma.

The tour took two months altogether and on my return to H.Q. in Delhi I was thoroughly worn out. I had not stopped travelling since the escape from Hong Kong eight months earlier that year. I applied for leave. The military secretary realized that I needed a rest and granted me twenty-one days leave to Kashmir. When I arrived in Gulmurg the place was full of visitors and very much the same as one would expect to find it in peacetime. It was crowded with people from all the services, as well as with Americans and civilians from all over India.

The American Air Force had already established an airport and a fair-sized leave camp. I was lucky enough to find a room in the Naidus Hotel and, within a few hours, became absorbed into the life of gaiety which prevailed.

On the second day I was quickly spotted as the man who had escaped from Hong Kong and was asked to give a talk. In the dining-room after lunch I was called upon to speak, which I did there and then. I just stood on my table and gave a spontaneous talk about my experiences. It was a great success and from that moment everyone was very hospitable, and I was invited to practically every party in the station.

The very beauty of Gulmurg goes to the head and is quite unbelievable. It is a small green hamlet perched on a little plateau cut right in the heart of the mighty Himalayas. A golf course takes up most of the flat ground in the centre and is completely surrounded by thick woods of pines and firs. English style bungalows are tucked away in the woods very effectively and looking down on this lovely setting are the stupendous snow-capped peaks of the highest mountains in the world.

Undoubtedly in some strange way one feels the remoteness of this paradise in spite of its English setting with a Swiss flavour. It is nine thousand feet high which I consider is a little too high to be comfortable. It is difficult to breathe with absolute comfort at that great height and this is very noticeable when one arrives there for the first time. It takes two or three days really to become acclimatized. It is quite impossible to play tennis or squash or take any form of strenuous exercise. Even golf has to be played very gently. It was strange trying to carry out a simple thing like putting, feeling as if you had just finished a hundred-yard sprint! The social centre of Gulmurg was the club from which radiated most activities. The building of the new premises had just been completed and was generally voted a great improvement on the old. There were dance and card rooms and also a small but pleasant dining-room. Most of the days seemed to be spent in playing golf or trekking in the mountains. There were cocktail parties somewhere every evening, then dinner and dancing every night, either at the Naidus Hotel or the club. Life was about as hectic as one could want or take it. It was a great tonic to the war-weary.

Srinagar, the Venice of the East, was a thousand feet below Gulmurg, but it was quite an expedition to go there and back in a day. The journey was by ponies and very tiring, especially for the unfortunate but game little mountain ponies. It was wonderful and incredible to see them pick their way up and down those steep mountain sides with ten, twelve or even fourteen stones on their backs. Although I was very taken with Srinagar I preferred Gulmurg because I liked to live in a bungalow rather than in a houseboat. I spent two or three days there, however, which were very enjoyable. Another two days were spent trekking in the mountains visiting the famous lakes (including Vishansar, 12,200 feet high) which are formed by the melting snows. The blackness of the mountains is reflected in the water and looks very sinister but the lakes are seen for one or two months only, being frozen over for most of the year.

It was indeed a wonderful leave which came at a time when I needed it most.

## Bangalore and Farewell to India

**T**HE time came for me to report back to H.Q. however. During my leave the war in the East had deteriorated, and the military secretary's office was being pressed to find officers for the many appointments which had to be filled because of the emergency. The officer training cadet's school had been called upon to increase its intake of cadets by large numbers with the result that more instructing staff had to be found for them. I received orders to join the staff at the O.T.C. School in Bangalore.

Naturally, I queried this appointment because, with my experience, I felt I could be of more use on active service. I had now recovered completely and was fit again. The M.S. was good enough to see me and explain the reason for the appointment, which was interesting. It appeared that the campaign in Burma was going very badly and that the cause of this was, largely, the failure of our mechanized Army. In the difficult mountain country of Burma with its almost uncrossable rivers, mechanization did not function, as I had seen for myself. It was decided that a changeover to the old animal transport had got to be brought about immediately. This meant the return of mules and all the training which is associated with our old friend, the pack mule. The difficulty, of course, was to find an officer experienced and capable of instructing in this bygone subject. Owing to the complete mechanization of the British and Indian Armies over the past few years, there were few available cavalry officers versed in this, now out of date, skill.

It was pointed out that the matter was extremely urgent and with my previous experience on the frontier I was an

automatic choice. The appointment was for one year and it was hoped I would be relieved after that time. It was, however, twenty months later before a relief was found for me; not, in fact, until after the second Burma campaign had been successful. During that time I trained no less than three thousand young officers in animal transport. A considerable number of these were Indians and are the senior officers of the Indian and Pakistan Armies of today.

It was grand getting back again to the wonderful climate of Bangalore after the heat of northern India and Burma. It seems strange that during my many years in India I returned to Bangalore again and again. It was considered a good station because of its admirable climate but many people who have spent years in India never managed to get anywhere near it. After serving in northern India it certainly appeared rather remote and out of touch.

My first job on reporting for duty on the instruction staff at the O.T.C. was to prepare my lessons for the teaching of animal transport. I had to collect my animals from remounts, get my stables ready, draw harness and saddlery from stores and finally arrange my programme.

As this subject had not been taught previously in this war, the whole thing had to be started from scratch. It had become completely outdated owing to mechanization. From the remount depot at Almanagar came twenty-four mules and twenty horses. These were soon settled in the stables which had been prepared for their reception. This was not difficult because the cadet school was actually situated in the old cavalry barracks and the stables and riding school were still in evidence. These were quickly renovated and the animals were put into training for the work ahead. The cadets were to be given the simple rudiments of riding but the main object was to instruct them in mule and pack transport. It did not take long to get organized.

From the moment the animals arrived and right from the start, the riding classes quickly became very popular. The real fun commenced, however, when cadets and mules met for the first time in their lives. Neither trusted the other from the word

go, for the cadets were scared stiff and this in turn made the mules nervous and timid. The distrust was mutual. The result was terribly funny but frightfully alarming. The first few lessons would go quietly enough. In these, one or two mules would be brought into the arena where the instruction took place. I explained the history of the animals, how they were fed and watered, how they should be groomed and generally treated. Later came lessons showing how the packs were made up and how they were hooked on to the harness. There were twelve lectures in the series but in these early lessons only one or two mules were used.

It was in the final lesson that the real fun began. In this lesson the cadets actually had to load the heavy packs on to the mules. The packs were made ready and as twelve mules were used it would mean there would be twenty-four packs, that is two to each mule. The loads were full-weight and when ready were laid on the ground in two lines at sufficient intervals to allow space for loading. When everything was ready the mules were brought in and quietly led to their places between their respective loads. Two cadets were detailed for each pack so there were twenty-four cadets on either side of the line of animals, making in all forty-eight cadets and twelve mules. Much emphasis had been laid on the fact that quiet confidence in knowing exactly what to do was the keynote of success in the operation.

When satisfied that everything was ready and correct I would give the order to load. All they had to do was to bend down, lift up the packs quietly, slip up to the mule and hook the loads on to the harness.

But it seldom happened as simply as that. Suddenly there would be the most terrific commotion. Mules and cadets would be flying in all directions in a most disconcerting manner. The mules lashed out right and left and forty-eight cadets stampeded for cover. They disappeared up trees, over walls, round corners, in fact, anywhere to get away from the flying hooves of those terrifying mules. It was an astonishing sight. In a few moments it was over as quickly as it had begun, except that there was not a mule or cadet to be seen anywhere and the only person left

in the arena was myself. The twelve mules, after their little joke, were back in their stables which were not far away, and the cadets had gone to cover in time which would have made a trained soldier under fire jealous!

The cause of these regular disasters was that somewhere in the line a mule had flicked his ear or gently batted an eyelid or he may even have given a playful little kick. But this was quite enough for some damned nervous cadet to step back hurriedly, miss the hook or drop his share of the load. This in turn would cause the pack to swing down between the legs of the mule and from that instant the hullabaloo started.

The extraordinary thing about that particular lesson was that it became almost a certainty that things would happen; so much so that I came to believe that the mules thought it was part of the training. Possibly they may have looked forward to a change from the routine and boredom of what was otherwise rather a tame life for them.

My big surprise came, however, when during a school entertainment one evening there was a discussion as to which was the most popular class in the training programme. It was decided to put it to the vote. There were roars of laughter and approval when it was announced that the final lesson of the pack mules easily topped the poll. Personally I doubted the authenticity of this announcement.

The cadet school was undoubtedly a very lively and striving community at this time. I would go so far as to say that of all the academies where knowledge is taught, there is no finer spirit to be found than among officer cadet students. The reason for this is that for energy, keenness and enthusiasm they have no equal. To these qualities are added the teaching of leadership, initiation, discipline, courage and gentlemanly behaviour, surely the best subjects for the education and training of young men.

The officers' cadet school was the largest in India. Officers were being trained in hundreds and although the training was hard I did not think it compared with cadet schools of the past. Certainly more subjects were taught but from the physical angle it was not so hard and strenuous. The flow of cadets through the school was tremendous as no fewer than a thousand

every four months were expected to pass out as officers, and the work of the instructors was quite exhausting. At the peak of a course I was actually scheduled to give as many as thirty-two lectures in one week which is a considerable number and requires a lot of preparation. However, everyone was terribly keen and time passed at an amazing speed.

Bangalore at this time was a very different place from anything it had been previously. Because of its climate it had been a station in which there were always a considerable number of English women. But never before in its long history had there been quite so many. This had come about through the evacuation of the women from Singapore just before its fall. They were able to get out just in time and when they reached India were allotted to various stations. Bangalore, because of its suitability both as regards climate and accommodation, came in for a larger contingent than most, and no less than two hundred women were sent there. These were mostly the wives of Singapore Civil Servants and civilians. The men had stayed behind to fight with the voluntary services and, of course, became prisoners of war when this great port was captured by the Japanese. Most of the wives of the service personnel had been evacuated to Australia much earlier but those remaining were the women who had decided to stay on in Singapore until it had become almost too late to get them away.

The tragedy of war now began to show itself from an entirely new angle. This was the separation of great numbers of young married couples all over the world. The repercussions from this general break-up of family life was far greater than anyone could possibly anticipate. The married state suddenly became very flimsy and started to crumble almost overnight. We, as a race, did not come out of this severe test as well as might be expected. It struck one very forcibly how little it takes to undermine and destroy the contract of marriages. There is no doubt about the truth of the old saying 'When the cat's away, the mice will play'. What I like about this quotation is that it is so fair because it does not specify the gender of either the cats or the mice. The truth of it applied in both cases as was seen in Bangalore at this time.

Because of its suitable climate it attracted a large number of men on leave and they were not slow to make the best of their holiday by entertaining the lonely wives from Singapore. They, in their turn, had to do their bit by looking after the war-weary soldiers on leave. Their combined efforts were disastrous from the moral point of view. Complications began to mount up in alarming proportions. Few seemed to escape from the vortex into which, through circumstance, they had been thrown. The number of broken marriages which resulted from those associations was extremely high. India has always been renowned for its intrigues and affairs but in all my experience of life abroad I had never seen anything quite so devastating in so short a time. Only the more experienced seemed to be able to keep their heads, the others were like chaff in the wind. Bangalore appeared to be worse than most places in India but then there were no other stations with quite so many evacuated wives. In the towns in England it would not be so easy to observe what was going on around one but I am sure that elsewhere the proportion of broken marriages was never so high.

I often wonder how these remarried romances fared after the war and whether their new-found bliss was all they thought it would be. The most unfortunate case, in which I knew the people concerned, was that of a young married woman with two delightful children who threw over an apparently worthy husband for a very doubtful character who finally refused to marry her. In her distraught frame of mind she committed suicide by shooting herself. A most tragic affair.

On the lighter side was the case of a certain husband and wife who were both having an affair unbeknown to each other. They gave a dinner party one evening to which their respective lovers were invited. These two were introduced to each other for the first time. As a result of this meeting the affairs of the husband and wife came to an abrupt end; their lovers had fallen for one another and the married couple were left to console each other as best they could!

Life in Bangalore during these months was very hectic. We worked hard and played hard. Besides having the largest cadet school in India it was also the headquarters of Southern

Command and it was here that most of the evacuated women were able to help with their services. Then the American Air Force decided to make Bangalore their aircraft repair establishment, from which sprang up a wonderful aircraft factory. This same factory, I believe, is the main centre of the Indian aircraft industry today. It was a wise choice as the Madras Indian is undoubtedly one of the best craftsmen in India, and takes to aircraft engineering very easily. Bangalore having been the home of the sappers and miners for so many years, gave the industry a fine start with the thousands of sappers who had been trained by that fine corps. Although it was said of their British officers that they were either mad, married or Methodists, the sappers certainly trained their men to a high standard of proficiency.

With the invasion of the American Air Force, the United Services Club became rather congested. The Americans decided, therefore, to build their own club premises and it was one of the most impressive pieces of quick work I ever saw carried out. From the moment they decided to lay the first brick until they held their opening dance it took only ten days. Apparently the club house sections were flown in and assembled on the site. Admittedly Indian labour was plentiful, but it was a wonderful performance.

On the opening night I was amazed to see a fine building with a well-appointed restaurant and a bright and colourful bar, with swinging glass doors, artistically decorated. The club was packed full of the youth and beauty of Bangalore. Where they all came from was a mystery. The whole place was fairly bubbling over with gaiety and excitement. I was very much impressed and did not stint my praise for this superb effort. It seemed to create an air of confidence and optimism as to the final outcome of the war which was indeed a tonic to people like myself who had seen so much of the other side of the struggle.

Bangalore at this time was a full and busy station. The headquarters of Southern Command, which extended from Bombay to Madras and right down to Ceylon, occupied a large slice of the cantonment. The Americans had established a large

aircraft factory which quickly became their most important repair base while the cadet school was the largest in India, and with its barracks and training grounds covered another large area.

Because of its wonderful climate Bangalore had rapidly developed into one of the largest leave centres, both for the sick and the wounded from the Burma campaign which was then at its height. It was also the headquarters depot of the sappers and miners who were responsible for the invention of that world-famous weapon the Bangalore Torpedo which was playing such a momentous part on the Burma front. Altogether Bangalore had reached an importance far greater than it had ever previously experienced in its long history.

Those of us who were permanently stationed there decided to get the local hunt going as the hounds were still in kennels and being maintained by the hunt funds which were in the possession of the sappers and miners depot mess. Sergeant Mounter, who was in charge of the hounds and an exceptionally keen huntsman, was only too ready to get things going. Colonel Vigors of the Mysore Lancers undertook the key position of field master and I took over the job of whip. The number of horses available in the station was quite considerable and we soon had some surprisingly good fields. The news spread and keen followers of hounds appeared from all over India and Burma and leave to Bangalore became very popular.

One or two hunts stand out in my memory because of unusual happenings in the day's sport. There was the morning when we were drawing a rather large cover and the hounds put up a small herd of buck on the blind side. Before we could get control they had gone after the deer at a great pace leaving the hunt staff and field far behind. The deer were, of course, much too fast for hounds and disappeared into the blue. It took us about three days to recover all the hounds and some returned in a very sorry condition.

Then there was the day when we were riding across some light scrub country with very little cover and, to our amazement and consternation, the hounds disturbed a fully-grown panther. It just turned and snarled at them and then was off with a

bound. The older hounds stood transfixed but one or two of the younger ones made an attempt to follow. We had no difficulty in whipping them off. Although some of the less experienced of the field, particularly some of our American friends, looked a bit startled, we reassured them that we would not see the panther again.

There was no doubt in my mind that the Bangalore hunt was a real tonic to the war weary on leave.

About this time I organized riding breakfast parties on Sunday mornings. These were an immediate success and I feel sure they will not be easily forgotten by those who came to them. The idea was to pick some suitable shady palm grove about six or eight miles away out in the country around Bangalore and which could only be reached on horseback. This was to prevent gate crashing by non-riders in motor-cars. The time for serving breakfast had to be early because the sun later became too hot for the horses. The riders had to get there in their own time and with whom they liked. I arranged for the food and servants to have the breakfast all ready when the riders arrived. It was surprising how the youth and beauty of the station managed to obtain horses to get them there. Our numbers ranged from never less than twelve to as many as twenty-two and it was more often nearer the twenty than the twelve mark. There were always as many young women as men and what grand fun it was. Those breakfasts became very popular and were the talk of the station and even farther afield.

Food was not at all short in Bangalore and we had plenty. There was fried bacon, ham, eggs, tomatoes, toast, honey, jams, marmalade and luscious fruits such as fresh mangoes, peaches, bananas and oranges, while to drink we had fresh coconuts with their milk, just waiting to be cracked and drunk or hot coffee and tea for the more conventional! The whole meal was laid out on the ground with white tablecloths, knives, forks, china cups and saucers and half a dozen Indian servants to serve us. It gave me a great kick when we invited American guests, both men and women, to see their faces and listen to their surprised exclamations.

As one amusingly said one morning when the party was a

really good show, 'I just don't believe you guys are British—especially that joker at the end of the table!' and pointed at me. I certainly think we surprised them.

After breakfast we would have some jumping, trick riding, or musical chairs on horseback, which is wonderful fun, and then, when it was over, we made our way back in our own time.

It was on one of these mornings, when I was riding out alone to the rendezvous, that I saw one of the strangest sights imaginable. I had started early as I wanted to see that everything was in order because the party was larger than usual. I was passing on the outskirts of a small village when I heard the mooing of a cow which sounded rather distressed. I turned my horse and continued over to the animal and there in the early morning light—the dawn had just broken—I saw a cow in milk transfixed to the ground by the efforts of a full-sized cobra which had wound its body around the two hind legs of the cow making it completely immobile and, with one of the udders in its mouth, was suckling the cow of its milk. My horse suddenly became aware of the snake and immediately went into the most awful fit of trembling and I could feel its knees sagging beneath me. If ever a horse was near fainting this was the time. I always carried a stock whip with lash when riding. As soon as I recovered from my astonishment I gave a crack of the whip which went off like a pistol shot. It startled the snake which unwound itself in a second and was away in a flash. The cow ran off towards the village but, strangely enough, I had a feeling that it was not the first time this kind of thing had happened to her. I was quite certain by the size of the cobra that it was not its first milk feed.

It took me some time to pacify my horse and I had a rough ride for the remainder of the morning as it shied at everything and anything which even resembled a snake, such as twigs, branches or cracks in the hard ground.

The story certainly enlivened the breakfast party that morning, at which there were some Americans. Everyone thought it a tall story which I put on especially for visitors but I can vouch for the truth of it.

Towards the latter part of 1944 the news from the Burma

front began to brighten up and things improved tremendously. It was generally accepted that we had the Japs on the run. The changeover from mechanization to mules and animal transport, with which I had been so involved, had met with great success. The cadet school was continually being praised for the excellent young officers it was turning out who were playing such a big part in the success of the Chindits in Burma.

I was particularly gratified when General Sir Claude Auchinleck, the commander in chief of India, visited the cadet school and personally thanked me for my special work in connexion with the teaching of animal transport, and we discussed the important part it was playing in Burma.

About this time the influx of Indian students as cadets considerably increased and there was little doubt that the Indian Army was rapidly becoming an army for Indians. I, who had seen so many changes over the years, was now witnessing the greatest change of all: the end of the finest volunteer Army within the British Empire. However, I have the satisfaction of knowing that many of the officers who are commanding the Indian Cavalry regiments of today passed through my hands.

A few weeks later a special Indian Army order was issued to the effect that officers and men who had served overseas for a continuous period of five years were to be repatriated to England. I came under this instruction as I had been abroad practically the whole of the war. I received orders to proceed to Bombay and thence to sail for England. This was to be my 'Farewell to India'. I felt I had served her well.

The following day I took my last parade in the riding school. It was with a certain amount of trepidation and emotion that I gave that final order which signifies the end of a parade with horses and is universally understood by cavalrymen throughout the armies of the world:

'Make much of your horses!'

