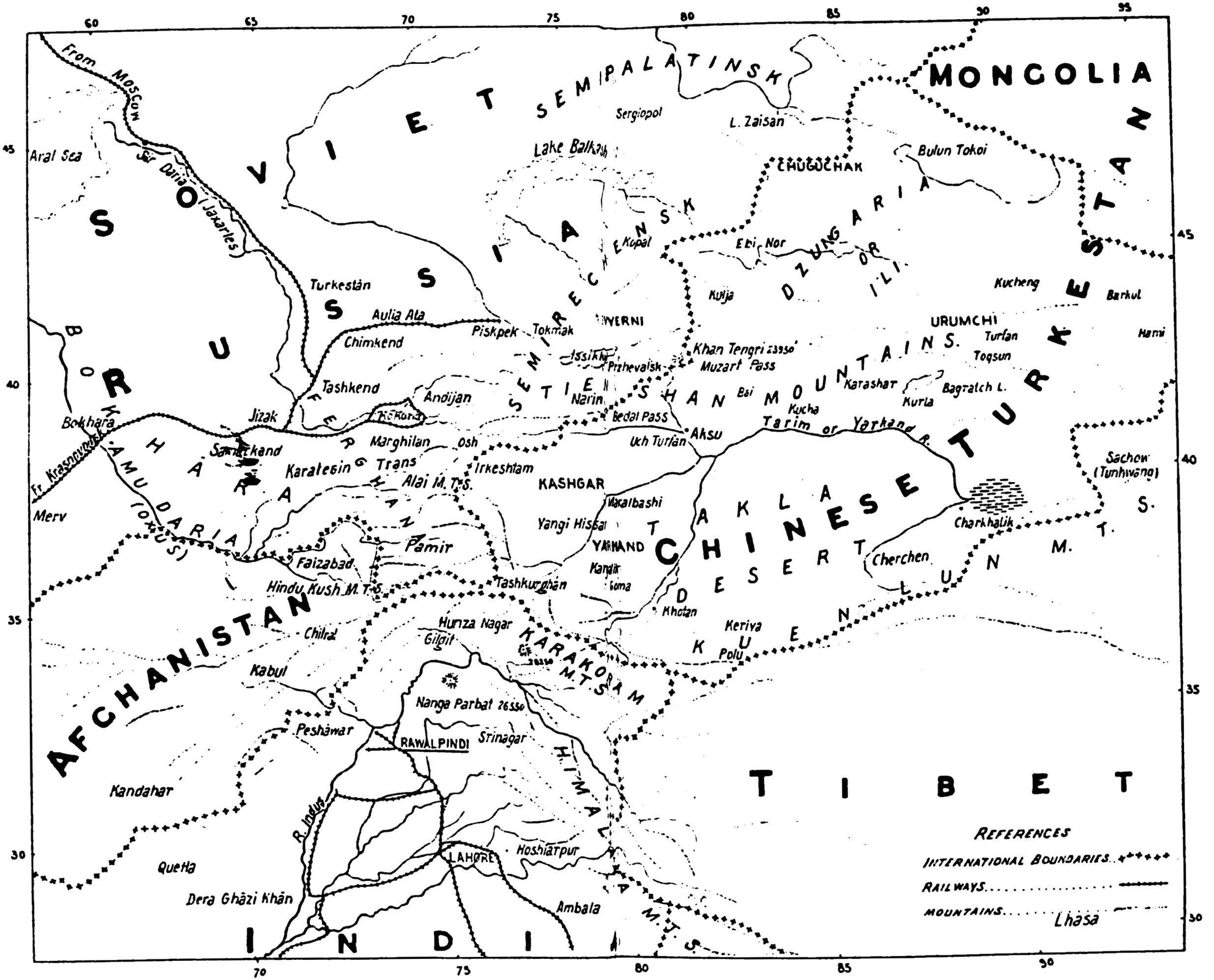
Envoy of the Raj

THE CAREER OF SIR CLARMONT SKRINE

JOHN STEWART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RAILWAYS
MOUNTAINS

Envoy of the Raj

The Career of Sir Clarmont Skrine, Indian Political Service

Family Group, Tournaig, 1925
Left to right: C.P.S. Nazaroff; Clarmont; Clarmont's mother; Jim Whitelaw; Clarmont's father

Envoy of the Raj

The Career of Sir Clarmont Skrine, Indian Political Service

by John Stewart

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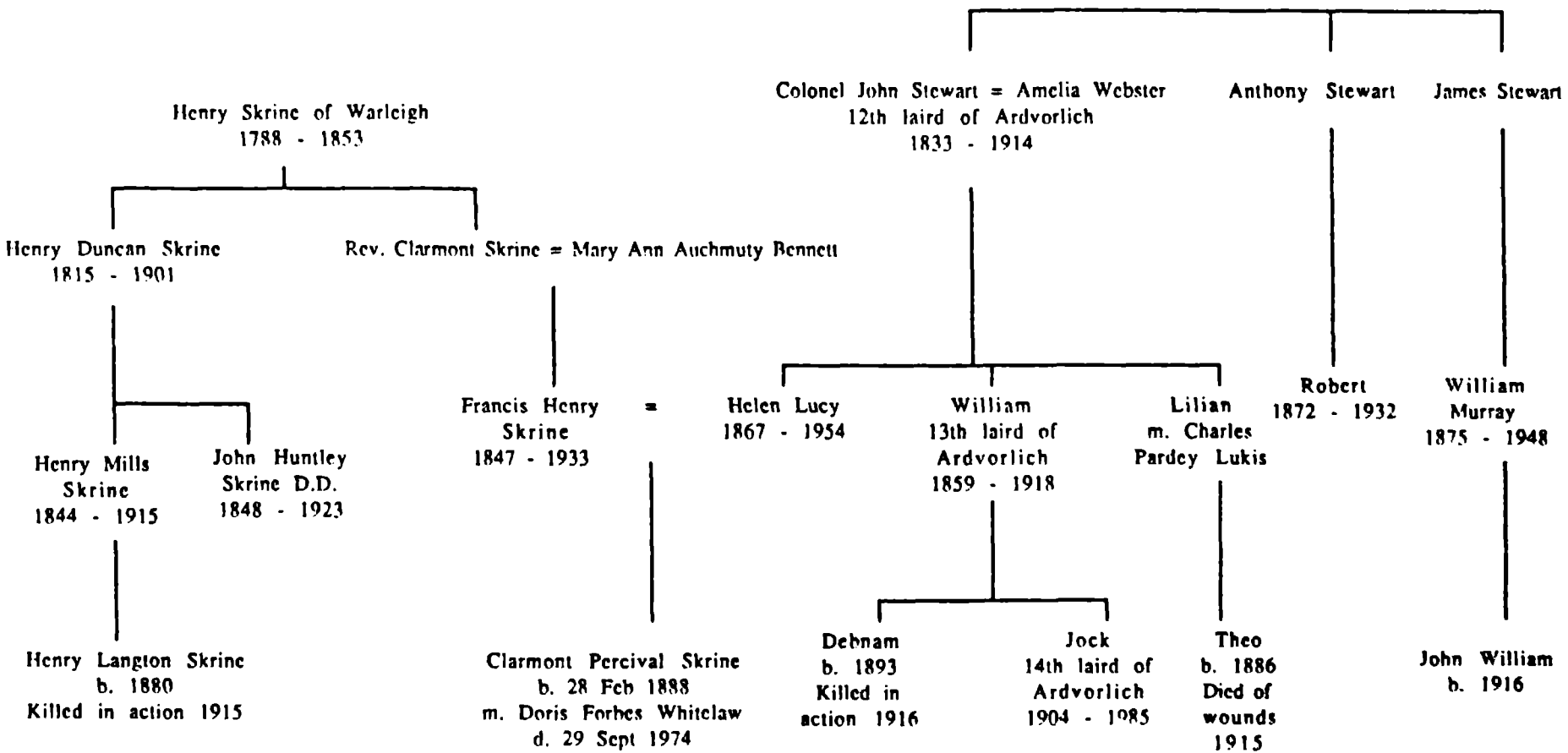
A Selective Family Tree



Introduction

There are three reasons for this book, the first one being that I was asked to write it. Clarmont Skrine's mother and my father were first cousins. Because he was so much abroad, he was only a name to me until shortly before he retired. From then on I saw him a great deal and became very close to him during his last years when he was grievously incapacitated by a series of strokes. A little before he died in 1974 he asked me if I would write his biography. Being due to retire myself in a couple of years, I willingly agreed.

He told me that all his papers dealing with his official career were to be lodged with the India Office Library on permanent loan. In addition, he left me several suitcases which I found to be packed with letters written before he went to India and after his retirement. His mother had apparently kept everything he wrote to her and he was in the habit of keeping carbon copies of the letters that he typed. Seldom can there have been a better documented life.

On reading the papers I quickly realized that my cousin's request to me was to prove a most enjoyable bequest. The historical interest of the letters was obvious – which is the second reason for the book. He had himself written about his time in Sinkiang ('Chinese Central Asia' published in 1926, republished 1971) and in Persia ('World War in Iran' published in 1962): the letters provide much new material. One of their most striking features is the intimacy of his relationship with his mother. Indeed, one may be surprised to think that he made his letters available for research knowing that they contained so many personal confidences.

'Skrino', as he was most widely known in India, was not ambitious for power and position: he was more concerned with outside interests such as exploration and photography. A friend who met him first when he was a Resident in South India wrote: 'He was so unlike the stereotyped I.C.S. dignitaries (the Heaven-born), he was so human and approachable'. These are qualities which may not lead to the top of the tree but they make for an interesting personality – which is the third reason for the book.

Since the above was written Mr John Skrine, a cousin three generations removed from Clarmont, has pointed out that the present day reader may not know much about the Indian Civil Service (ICS) or the political background during Clarmont's career. To attempt to supply this need in a few paragraphs is rash.

The ICS was always very small, consisting of about 1200 members. Entry was by means of competitive examination, as for the Home Civil Service. In 1939 the ICS was composed of 759 Europeans and 540 Indians. Most were employed in general administration; some went to the Judicial Department; a few to the Political Service which had only some 73 posts. Two-thirds of these Political Service posts were filled by Army officers, only one-third of them being filled by ICS men.

The need for a Political Service stemmed from the fact that two-fifths of India was not British but belonged to Native States which were in treaty with the British and acknowledged British paramountcy. Subject to the right of the paramount power to intervene in cases of gross mis-rule, the States enjoyed internal self-government. The Political Agent was at hand to advise the Ruler. Likewise in Frontier districts Political officers supervised the indirect rule which operated in tribal territory. Diplomatic posts in foreign countries (e.g. Persia) were staffed by the Political Service.

From the beginning some British statesmen had recognized that India should one day be self-governing. (In 1833 Macaulay had said that it would be 'the proudest day in English history'.) Dominion status, as in the Canadian example, was seen as the goal for a united India. By the early 1900s the expansion of education had produced more qualified Indians to take part in government than there were jobs for and this, in combination with Hindu revivalism, led to a nationalist campaign for independence.

Towards the end of the Great War when Lord Chelmsford was viceroy, the Secretary of State for India, E.S. Montagu, came to India and what became known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms resulted. These advocated parliamentary government for India which was what the nationalists had asked for – but of course the fears of minorities were not allayed because representative government would inevitably mean Hindu domination through the Congress party.

In the 1920s Gandhi came to the fore. He conceived the idea of passive resistance and fasting as weapons of protest and he appreciated that the place to wage the campaign of the Congress party was Westminster. For several years an anti-colonial doctrine had been preached by Fabian socialists; with the extension of the franchise in Britain and Britain's first Labour government a sizeable anti-colonial lobby had come into being. The majority of British voters no longer shared the sense of imperial mission which had belonged to the public school classes.

In 1935 the Government of India Act was passed which provided for popular responsible government to be set up in the provinces and for the organization of a federal structure. This appeared to offer a way round the abiding fear of Muslims and other minorities. Efforts had been made since 1921 when the Chamber of Princes was established for the States to combine on matters of common interest. It was hoped that a federation to include the Chamber of Princes would emerge so that the whole of India would become one

self-governing dominion. The Act provided that relations with the States should be transferred from the Governor-General in Council to the Crown Representative, thus emphasizing that paramountcy rested ultimately with the King Emperor. That it would never be transferred to an Indian Government was affirmed again and again, for the last time on the eve of partition in 1947 when the Secretary of State announced that the treaties which gave the Crown suzerainty would become void.

The outbreak of war in 1939 put an end to constitutional talks and in 1942 the Japanese over-ran Burma and threatened India. Once this threat had receded the 'quit India' campaign intensified. It was recognized on all sides that self-government would have to be granted when the war was over. The general election in 1945 returned a Labour administration with a massive majority, Japan was defeated and there could be no more delay. But how could self-government be brought about without a civil war? Communal violence between Hindus and Muslims was increasing all the time. Jinnah, the intransigent leader of the Muslim League, wished for a separate Muslim state. This was totally unacceptable to Nehru, the President of Congress. The British certainly never contemplated partition and in March 1947 sent Mountbatten as viceroy with terms of reference which spoke of 'the definite objective of His Majesty's Government to obtain a unitary Government of British India and the Indian States', going on to say that 1 June 1948 should be aimed at as the effective date for the transfer of power.

The sequel was tragic but might have been infinitely worse. The police were stretched to the utmost in the crescendo of violence between Hindus and Muslims. Mountbatten advised that partition would have to be accepted and that the date for the British withdrawal should be brought forward to August 1947. By great personal dexterity he secured the agreement of both Nehru and Jinnah, and the two self-governing countries of India and Pakistan came into being. He had not been able to 'assist the States in coming to fair and just arrangements with the leaders of British India as to their future relationships' – as had been piously hoped in the instructions issued to him in March.

One may think that Clarmont was fortunate to have been employed on the Foreign side of the Political Service ever since 1941. Those Political officers working with the States must have been haunted for long by a sense of having been parties to a betrayal.

J.W.S.
Comrie, Perthshire
1989

Chapter 1

Origins

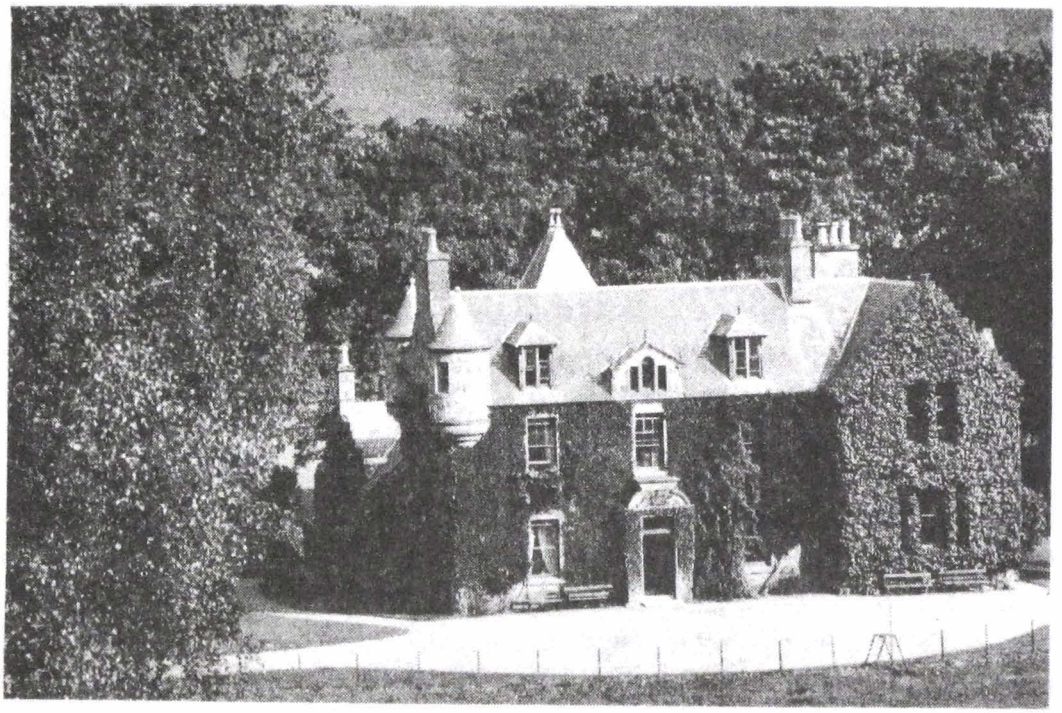
Clarmont Percival Skrine was born in London on 28th February 1888. His father, Francis Henry Bennett Skrine, belonged to an ancient Somersetshire family. The name (pronounced Screen) was in the past variously spelt Skryn, Skryne, etc. but had been most usually Skrine since the family settled at Warleigh near Bath during the reign of Henry VI. His mother was Helen Lucy Skrine (née Stewart).

The boy was christened Clarmont[1] after his grandfather who had been born at Warleigh in 1820. This grandfather had matriculated at Christ Church but instead of taking a degree had obtained an ensignship in the 78th Highlanders. He served with them in Ireland and India where he contracted cholera and 'Scinde fever'. This so affected his health that he was obliged to leave India and he contrived an exchange into the 47th Foot. He served as a captain with this regiment in Ireland during the famine of 1847-48. It was stationed in Cahir, Co. Tipperary, and was engaged in suppressing Smith O'Brien's rebellion. On the same day in 1847 that Captain Skrine's wife gave birth to her son Francis (Frank), Denis O'Callaghan was hanged in the square at Cahir outside the Skrine's house.

Meanwhile Captain Skrine was undergoing a deep conversion. In 1849 he resigned from the army and entered King's College London as a theological student. He was ordained in 1855. At the time of his death in 1886 he had been vicar of Emmanuel Church, Wimbledon, for thirteen years. The weekly evangelical newspaper 'The Christian' printed an effusive obituary notice. According to this, the Revd. Clarmont Skrine had been in the habit of preaching three extempore sermons every week. He had been a total abstainer for the last 20 years of his life and 'his warmest sympathies were with temperance work... He had been a deep student of prophecy, and it was a joy to him to confer with others, or to expound the deeper teachings of the prophets and the Apocalypse. Our Lord's Second Coming was a subject much in his thoughts, and he lived in constant waiting for His return... Never was there a more real link of love between pastor and people... His humility, simplicity, sympathy and reality, together with his plain and faithful teachings and exhortations, left a mark upon the hearts of numbers of persons which the longest life will not obliterate from their memories...'

Frank Skrine had been successful in the recently introduced open competition for the Indian Civil service in 1868 and had been appointed to Bengal. He was nearing 40 when he fell in love with Helen Stewart, a girl of 20. Helen had recently rejoined her parents in Cawnpore after schooling at home and on the continent. She was a pretty girl of diminutive figure, with

brown curls, wide-apart eyes and clear complexion. She was extremely vivacious and was a talented actress. During her first Simla season she attended a vice-regal ball. An A.D.C. approached her and said that His Excellency invited her to dance the next dance with him. Helen replied: 'Oh, but I can't - I'm already engaged!' to which the A.D.C., bowing, said 'Miss Stewart, when His Excellency invites it is a command'. The Viceroy was the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava and a type of friendship developed between him and Helen which warranted her writing to him many years later when Frank Skrine was gathering material for a book. The former Viceroy addressed Helen in his letters as 'My dear little friend'.



1 Ardvorlich

Frank Skrine married Helen in Cawnpore in 1887. Her father, Colonel John Stewart[2], was about to retire, having inherited his family estate of Ardvorlich in Perthshire. The Stewarts of Ardvorlich are descended from Robert II through Murdoch Duke of Albany and have been settled at Ardvorlich since 1586. The property extends about four miles along the south shore of Loch Earn and southwards up to the summit of Ben Vorlich. The house is at the foot of Ben Vorlich. The nearest village is Lochearnhead, three miles to the west. It is a beautiful part of the world, just in the highlands but - in the 1890's — newly accessible by train. Colonel Stewart was approaching 60 and had a stout figure. He is said to have been reluctant to go to the expense of having a new kilt made for himself, expecting few remaining years in which to wear it. In fact, he lived to celebrate his golden wedding and survived until 1914. He became a patriarchal figure at Ardvorlich, the house constantly filled with relations and friends. Here Clarmont was left when he was three.

According to Skrine family legend, Frank had reluctantly become a father, having encouraged Helen to jump off a table when they found that she was pregnant. When he knew paternity was inevitable, he set himself to be a model parent, determined that his son should become a model of civilised manhood. Twenty years later, Frank was to write to Clarmont, 'I would rather see you dead than undistinguished'. Helen, who adored her husband, shared with him the ambition that Clarmont should excel.

When he was seven he was sent to a small preparatory school called The Mount in St. Leonards, Sussex. Frank and Helen must have been delighted to receive from an old friend an account of meeting Clarmont in London at the end of his first term. Sir Henry Brackenbury[3] took Clarmont to the Earls Court exhibition and sent a full description — sightseeing, lunch, rides on the switchback and on a camel. He was also able to meet the headmaster who said that the boy was decidedly clever. Brackenbury concluded: 'Clarmont has a remarkably fine head, which evidently contains a fine big brain; and the intelligence of the eye is remarkable. The boy's society was quite delightful and I think it did me good'.

The 'fine head' was covered with auburn hair and was to remain Clarmont's outstanding physical characteristic. He was an affectionate small boy and a close bond had grown up between him and his maternal grandparents. He was no longer always the only child at Ardvorlich during the holidays. Both of his mother's sisters had married in India. The eldest, Lilian, was the wife of Charles Lukis, a doctor in the Indian Medical Service who was later to become Director-General[4]. Three of the Lukis cousins came to spend their holidays, two boys and one girl. Theo, the elder Lukis boy, and Clarmont became warm friends.

In the spring of 1897 Frank Skrine resigned from the I.C.S. He had throughout his career in India been involved in controversies. As the author of his obituary notice in The Times was later to write: 'His combative temperament brought about occasional difficulties with superior authorities. His criticism of the policy of Lord Elgin's Government on the question of the cotton import duties attracted official notice and Skrine retired'. One of the specially attractive features of the I.C.S. was the entitlement after 25 years' service to a pension of £1,000 a year. Frank Skrine intended to remain closely in touch with affairs in India for the rest of his life. Since London was the centre of power as well as the best place for a writer who needed access to libraries, he decided to take a flat in Westminster. At first he and Helen took rooms on the 11th floor of Queen Anne's Mansions — then the highest residential building in London. Later they rented a flat at 147 Victoria Street which Clarmont was to look upon as home for the next thirty years, wherever he might be.

Living in London, Frank Skrine was able to keep closely informed about Clarmont's progress at school. He sought, in addition to the usual termly reports, frequent comments from the headmaster, H.J. Graham. When

Clarmont was ten, Graham was asked for an account which would enable Frank to 'form his decision' about Clarmont's future. Graham replied patiently and at length. At the age of eleven, Clarmont was doing Euripides and Virgil. Frank cherished the notion of a scholarship at a leading public school. Graham spoke of a 'strain of obstinacy' in Clarmont's nature and perhaps this led Frank to suggest that the administration of *sors tertia*[5] might have been a good thing. Graham replied: 'I fancy that the *sors tertia* you mention would have been the remedy, but I have no heart for it, except for bullying, when I will resort to it *con amore*, or for immorality'.

In the autumn of 1900 Clarmont moved to the Dragon School at Oxford. This famous establishment had been going for just over 20 years under its headmaster C.C. Lynam, known to generations of Draconians as 'The Skipper'. Clarmont was very happy there although the work at first seemed strange. The Latin pronunciation was quite different from at Graham's and there was a great deal of *viva voce* work. The Oxford Preparatory School (to give it its formal name) provided unusually full weekly, mid-term and termly reports, so that even Frank Skrine had little need to ask for more. He himself gave Clarmont extra tuition in classics during the holidays and sent a report to Mr Lynam. 'The Skipper' commented: 'Clarmont is certainly not first rate at Latin verse but he has come on a good deal. It is true that he has much difficulty in concentrating his attention — but I think that perhaps he does better work at school than he would be likely to do in the holidays when small boys work somewhat grudgingly...'

At the end of the summer term he won prizes for Verses and for an essay on the Crimean War. He went to Winchester to sit for a scholarship but after two days of examinations was told that he had been unsuccessful.

Frank and Helen Skrine were adventurous travellers. Since his retirement from Bengal, Frank had visited Russia and Central Asia. During the summer of 1900, he and Helen took Clarmont to France. The detailed diary which Clarmont kept gives a picture of a very united family with a great appetite for sight-seeing and curiosities. In the summer of 1901 they went to Bavaria and Austria. Doubtless the keeping of a diary was part of a holiday task, but the habit of committing to paper an account of everything seen and done appears to have come quite readily to Clarmont. Indeed, his ability to express himself on paper was always to be a solace to him; in his long letters he found relief from misadventures of all sorts and even from petty irritations. The 1901 diary concludes with a list of resolutions, written by Clarmont but obviously paternally inspired:

> '(1) To show more affection to my parents, especially to Mother. I may have scores of friends; but I can have only one Mother.
> (2) To pause and reflect what I can do to please and help those around me. If I do not think of others, why should they think of me? Never to let a day pass without doing at least one good action.

(3) To fix my mind on what I have to do and do it with all my might, never allowing my thoughts to wander for a single instant from the task in hand.
(4) To think little of sweets and dainties, remembering that civilised man eats in order to live; to conquer my dislike for good food for which thousands pine in vain.
(5) No longer to be guided by the ideas current among a parcel of half-educated boys; but to follow the promptings of my own conscience, and my instincts as a gentleman.
(6) To be bold and self-reliant, determined to use every opportunity for self-improvement. The timid man is beaten in the race of life by one with half his brains who knows how to gain knowledge and display his powers.
(7) To reverence what is great and good in others and try to imitate it.'

There follows, in Frank Skrine's writing, 'Added Maxims -

(8) *Obedience* and *truthfulness* are the mainsprings of civilisation. Without these qualities the world would relapse to anarchy. I will always obey injunctions laid on me by my elders, and never conceal my faults from them.
(9) The evil lies *not* in being found out, but in committing a fault. If I should offend against any of these resolutions I will confess my offence and ask for forgiveness.

FINIS'

Chapter 2

The Wykehamical Stamp

1901 - 06

'Oh, if you had only known and realized, how different would be your position; but you gave no heed to our entreaties to work and strive for admittance to College..', wrote Frank Skrine to his son at Winchester. How often during his five years there must he have regretted that he had not arrived as a scholar. He was placed in Sergeant's, then located in a house called Culverlea. Its emphasis was on skill at games, not intellectual prowess. The housemaster was the Revd. G.M.A. Hewett, an experienced schoolmaster with an excellent understanding of boys. He was devoted to natural history in all its forms and was the author of a book called 'The Open-Air Boy'. This is full of good tips for boys on fishing, bird-nesting and butterflies and moths. It also gives designs for traps to catch sparrows and instructions on how to cook them. Mr Hewett was himself a keen fisherman and a good shot and he was a pioneer of winter sports in Switzerland.

Hewett soon became aware that Clarmont was not happy in the house and suggested to Frank that Clarmont should not be encouraged to aim at individuality for the present but should first 'get the Wykehamical stamp on him'. The reason why Clarmont was unhappy was in fact because he was being bullied. All juniors when they arrive at Winchester are assigned a 'tege' or instructor in 'notions' – the words and customs used by Winchester schoolboys. The wrong answers which Clarmont gave when he was first tested were a source of great amusement. He soon knew all the old words and customs and place-names but he had difficulty in learning the names of men in various elevens, fifteens, etc. and the 17 different kinds of colours in the school. So the reputation stuck to him, in the house, of being a despiser of traditions. 'The whole tendency of the kids is to sit upon any tendency to diverge', Hewett wrote. 'I often doubt whether your boy does not suffer a good deal of chaff. A good deal of quiet misery can be got out of chaff..'

Clarmont had been put into the Third Division and at half-term was promoted. His parents were pleased. 'You will now have a higher standard and more advanced competition; remember that to be low down in class is to be wanting in self-respect', wrote Frank. He believed in carrot as well as stick. All his sermons to Clarmont ended with something meant to entertain. Thus a letter for Clarmont's 14th birthday concludes: 'Last night I went to a huge tea-party given by a friend to the poor people of Fulham. There were 80 present and after tucking into tea, bread and butter, cakes and jelly, they drew their

benches up and listened to songs and recitations. I made them nearly roll off their seats with laughter. It was pleasant to see so many poor creatures happy for a few hours and forgetting the cold and wretchedness of their homes. There is no pleasure like that of causing pleasure to others..'

Frank was himself extremely active. Since retirement he had written in collaboration with Sir E. Denison Ross 'The Heart of Asia', the acknowledged classic on the history of Russian Turkestan and the Central Asian Khanates. His biography of Sir William Hunter[6] had just been published and he was already working on 'The Expansion of Russia'. He had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and gave frequent lectures. Helen too was busy, being greatly in demand as an actress for charity performances.

In the summer holidays of 1902 the family went to Finland and St. Petersburg and the next year they spent the winter holidays at Gotha. Clarmont had by this time caught up with some of the scholars who had entered the school the same term as he had. Frank urged him to improve in the subjects where he was said by Mr Rendall[7] to be weak: 'What, is *my* son weak in Elegiacs? How can that be, when I write them to this day with true Roman verve; and our ancestors were equally good, if not better? Then Latin prose. There is no surer test of scholarship than this, and like the art of verse-writing, it may be attained by studying good models and keeping a note-book, in which to record happy terms of expression. I write French as a Frenchman owing to my having done this; and how few Englishmen can say this! Looking at your class place, I see one boy, Toynbee, a year younger than you and second in the division. Make it your object in life to beat him..' Frank could not foresee the brilliant academic career which lay ahead for the redoubtable A.J.Toynbee. Clarmont gave an inkling of it when he later wrote: 'I have not been elected into the Sixteen Club, the other fellow, Toynbee, having been chosen on account of his enormous amount of historical knowledge. The amount that fellow has in his head is positively gigantic'. The attractions of Gotha in the winter included skating, sleighing, cycling in the Thuringian forest, a library and an opera. There was also Latin prose and verse every day.

Frank remained unsatisfied about Clarmont's development. Hewett continued to explain patiently 'You must not be in a hurry. You must remember that he came to me, to put it plainly, what the boys called a "freak" and they wanted to rag him. Now ragging may chuck a man onto his balance or may ruin him for ever and I did not care to risk it, so I took off the sharper edge of it. You have not yet got the finished product; I want a lot more self reliance and self confidence. He will have to be my senior prefect, I expect, in due course..'

Frank urged Clarmont to assert himself and make himself respected as well as liked: 'It is a curious fact that the world takes you at your own valuation, that the diffident go to the wall. I wonder what you would do if you were pitch-forked (as I was) into the government of a state bigger than Saxe Coburg-Gotha with twice the population at 22?' He interested himself in all

Clarmont's interests and went down to Winchester for the first day of the Eton match in June 1904. The final day of the match was most exciting. Winchester went in needing 130 runs in a failing light, the sky black with clouds. The rain held off and the Eton total was passed at 6 p.m. Half the school dashed out to the pitch and carried the two triumphant batsmen to the pavilion. The shouting lasted a quarter of an hour. Clarmont telegraphed the score to his father during the day and afterwards wrote him a graphic description. Frank replied: 'I wish now that I had come down for Saturday's cricket, though Mr Hewett wrote that there was a horrible struggle for lunch – 75 feeders! The result was indeed a surprise; I would have betted 10-1 that the match would have been a draw. Had I been there, I would have kicked my new straw hat to pieces!'

The next term Clarmont was to be in 'Sixth Book'. All commoners in it were school prefects as a matter of course. Clarmont was only 16 and foresaw that if he were suddenly made a prefect he would be much ragged. Hewett himself was in two minds and wrote: '... The boy is known as a good runner and not a bad oar. What he wants is a more assured manner. He has a flinching and unnatural eye at times, and turns his head. How do my dogs know at a glance what dogs to bite and which to treat with much respect? My own idea was to give him a study for a term and make him a prefect at Xmas; but I will do whatever you decide'. Hewett followed this up a few days later: 'I should postpone the time of responsibility. The boy is frightened and has plenty of time to settle down. It might mar his whole future. I have two prefects unexpectedly staying on for another year, so that I have no need to bring him to the front before his time.'

Frank never had a moment's doubt. 'If you were passed over,' he wrote to Clarmont, 'the slight would burn deeply into your character and affect your whole future life. How could you doubt your fitness for the post of honour and responsibility passes my comprehension! If the Tsar were to offer me the Governor-Generalship of Finland, or ask me to take charge of the Manchurian Railway, I would accept at once – and do my best'.

Frank had his way and Clarmont returned from holidays in Scotland to take his place in the Junior Division of Sixth Book and his responsibilities as a prefect. His father wrote to him: 'We have been thinking of you in your new post. The sudden elevation to a position of responsibility is like a cold douche – it either stimulates or depresses'. He repeated his advice based on his own experiences as a young man in Bengal. 'I was just a little nervous; what was I that I should govern so many fellow creatures? But I reflected that my personality had been merged in that of the British Government. I had the prestige and authority of England behind me. Remember, as prefect you have Winchester with 500 years at your back.'

Clarmont's prefectorial duties did not begin straightaway. He made his study elegant, with a table cloth and pictures. The thirty shillings with which he had started the term had all gone after a month and he explained his straits to

his mother. Frank went into action: 'Mother has read me your last letter which shows that you are perennially "hard up"; and – worse than all – that you run into debt! Now the first thing that a man should decide to be is to be independent. This is a material and monetary world. Independence is impossible when we secretly feel that we are paupers, and when we are suppliants for pecuniary favours from other people. So, it is necessary to be a capitalist, in a small way to begin with: for the consciousness of a banker's balance gives us *aplomb* in dealing with others. Instead of spending every shilling in a fortnight, much of it on things which could be dispensed with (always ask yourself, not "Do I want this?" but "Can I do without it?"), it would be well to start a P.O. Savings Bank account. As to debt, all these remarks apply with double force to that *fatal* habit. "Owe no man anything, but to love one another".'

Clarmont was extremely resilient and was never crushed by his father's rebukes. He had inherited from him a facility in stating his case persuasively on paper – often at tedious length. There was a real bond of love between all three, father, mother and son. Clarmont wrote by return, thanking his father for 10/- and explaining that his debts had been quite harmless ones; he took care not to borrow money from anyone, however hard pressed, and he had not launched into any unnecessary expenditure. He was rather pleased to have made his study look nice with a minimum outlay.

His first week of duty as a prefect was the ordeal he had feared. Keeping order during 'toy-time' (preparation in the evening) was trying; it was not possible for him to do any of his own work, so he had to make up for the lost time in the afternoons or at night. Saying grace at lunch was perhaps an even worse ordeal: 'When the gong goes, everyone troops into the dining-hall and remains standing till Mr and Mrs Hewett come in. The moment Mr Hewett appears, the prefect in course starts off a long Latin grace. He has to say it as fast as he can and not stumble at all. You can't think how difficult it is when one is a bit nervous and everyone is looking at you and giggling and expectant.'

The Easter term ('Common Time' at Winchester) of 1905 passed without any reference by Clarmont to his anxieties as a prefect. He had very painful tooth-ache; he was to be troubled by his teeth all his life. Then, as in the future, he unloaded onto his mother full details of all the discomfort he suffered. 'Oh! I've got such a lot to tell you', he wrote in February, covering four sides of paper with an account of tooth-ache and visits to the dentist. His final visit was to be at 9.15 a.m. - 'Mr Hewett let me off going up to books that day (it was a half-holiday). Thinking about something for me to do, Mr Hewett suggested that as there was a meet of the Compton and Alresford Harriers at 11.30 at Twyford, and Mrs Hewett was going to it, would I like to run with the harriers? As it was a glorious day and I had never run with harriers before, I jumped at the idea. Mr Hewett fetched "the Missis" (as he always calls Mrs Hewett) and she was very kind and nice and told me exactly where the

meet was. I saw she rather expected I would not run far with the harriers, but give up owing to lack of "sporting enthusiasm" and perseverance; so that made me all the more anxious to go.' Clarmont then wrote a long and graphic description of how he biked to the meet and found himself the only foot-follower, the field of about 40 including several wives and daughters of masters. They had a splendid hunt, covering about 12 miles and Clarmont managed to keep up and was in at the death and was rewarded with one of the hare's pads.

This was not the end of the story for Frank who wrote for Clarmont's 17th birthday 'in a strain unusual on such happy occasions' a sermon about entering 'the great stage of active life'. He drew on his own experience and the need to make friends by associating one's self with the interests of others. 'Friends are even more necessary for you than for myself. For it is only commanding talent and genius that can force their way without friends... Your letters are full of minute information about yourself, your tooth-aches, sports and places, but never a word about your parents. Your mother loves you; she is a frail little thing and may not last many years, for her soul is too big for her tiny frame. Some day you will bitterly regret not showing your love for her more...' Frank went on to suggest that Clarmont appeared to have no friends among his school fellows. 'When I was a lad, I always brought a school fellow or two home for the holidays, and sometimes I was asked to stay at their homes.' He ended the sermon with one other criticism: 'A few weeks ago you told your mother a long story about a run with harriers, when you were in at the death and were rewarded by a gory pad. This gave me great pain for I hoped *my* son had learnt to love God's creatures, not to persecute them. There is something inexpressibly odious in a horde of overfed barbarians, full of the old hunting instinct bequeathed by remote ancestors, chivying a little clever innocent hare which probably does its duty in the scheme of nature far better than its savage pursuers. I abhor all sorts of "sport", hunting, shooting (when mangled birds and animals crawl into the wood to die with their wounds full of maggots), coursing, etc. etc. and I heartily despise them who are still under the influence of a barbarous survival.'

Clarmont replied with reasoned restraint, saying that he wrote about his own doings to his mother because he was under the impression that she would rather hear about himself than anything else – that had always been drummed into him, and he enjoyed her letters because they told him what she and his father were doing. As regards friends, he thought that he had as many as most people but 'what *would* Mother say if I asked if I could bring a school friend to stay in the flat! One schoolboy at a time is I should think quite enough, even in a house.' He ended: 'I must reassure you about that run of mine with the harriers. I haven't the least sympathy with the sporting tendencies of nearly all the rest of the house. On the other hand, I don't allow prejudices to interfere with the chance of getting a good run with people on horseback to keep me at it, and at the same time of getting into the good graces of not only the rest of the house but also of Mr and Mrs Hewett! As for the hunting instinct of over-

fed barbarians, I can confidently assert that the 40 ladies and gentlemen were out for the pleasure of galloping across country on a fine spring morning'.

The summer term was packed with activities. Clarmont had been lent his father's bicycle which was the means of many long outings in the Hampshire countryside. Frank Skrine's first cousin, the Revd. John Huntly Skrine D.D., was at this time Vicar of Itchen Stoke and Rector of Abbotstone. Dr Skrine was a well-known scholar. He had been a fellow of Merton and had taught classics at Uppingham; afterwards he had been warden of Trinity College, Glenalmond. He was married and had two daughters and Clarmont bicycled over to the Rectory quite often for lunch and tennis, sometimes taking a friend with him.

He obtained permission to go to the Public Schools Volunteers Camp at the end of term, having satisfied his parents that this would not call for much additional pocket-money. Clarmont had been in the Rifle Corps all his time at Winchester and was very keen. He enjoyed Field Days and had become a good rifle shot. The Public Schools Provisional Brigade went to camp at Aldershot where General French inspected them – his medals flashed in the sun so much that Clarmont said he could not see his face properly.

The holidays were spent in Belgium. Frank had begun to write his book on Fontenoy and wanted to visit the battlefield.

Unless Clarmont won a scholarship, his father had said that he would not be able to go to Oxford. On returning to Winchester, the main question was which Oxford scholarships he was to try for. Members of Senior Division took the papers for the New College Wykehamist scholarships in December at Winchester but Clarmont considered his chances of success to be slight in view of the number of College men who were above him. He thus had also to plan to take open scholarship examinations at Oxford directly afterwards. Some of these, notably the University College Exhibition, called for a statement showing the candidate to be 'in need of assistance'. Predictably Frank Skrine objected to completing a form about this and wrote to the head master to say so. Dr Burge[8] forwarded the letter to the Master of University College who agreed to accept Frank's declaration without further details.

Dr Burge thought that Clarmont should certainly take the New College papers: '... It would be excellent practice for him, and I believe myself that the New College people would be wise to elect him, his work is coming on so very fast'. Dr Burge was justified. On 19th December Clarmont sent off a telegram to his parents – 'Got third scholarship'.

Congratulations poured in from relations and friends. Hewett wrote: 'You may paint the town as red as Clarmont's hair – his scholarship, especially so high as third, is an enormous feather in his cap. Very many congratulations from my wife and myself'. Years later Clarmont recalled how Hewett who had a stammer and a lisp came to the Gallery at Culverlea enquiring 'Where is Th-th-thkrine?' to tell him of his success and Clarmont's first thoughts were 'How my "pitch-up" (family) will be "quilled" (pleased)!'

Clarmont had for some time wanted to leave Winchester in the spring of 1906, possibly spending the summer learning German. He had been over-ruled about this because his father and Dr Burge had thought that his classical studies would suffer. But in February he sent a *cri de coeur* to his mother: 'For some time I have been trying to make up my mind to ask you to reconsider your decision of keeping me here till midsummer, and to let me leave here at the end of this term. The reason is that I simply couldn't stand another term of this blanked hole to save my life. I get an absolutely wretched time of it, worse and worse as time goes on. It has been pretty bad ever since I came here, but this term, after getting that scholarship, it has become absolutely unbearable. Now not a soul in the house has a particle of respect for me. There are two reasons for this; one is that I don't live, think and speak down to their level. I don't take enough interest in games, or join in their sometimes disgusting and always vapid conversation enough; the other is that I make a splendid butt for jokes. I have the greatest difficulty in finding anyone to walk with "up to books" or to chapel; I am finding myself perpetually one too many, so to speak. So I want you to write to Mr Hewett and tell him that you think it advisable that I should leave at the end of this term. He has only to write to the parents of the boy who has next vacancy and it will be filled up like a shot...'

Frank Skrine replied: 'Your mother has read me your letter of yesterday. It is a pity you did not write to me, rather than to her, on such a subject: for women, who have not gone through the mill themselves, cannot understand the working of that little republic, a great school. Besides, the poor little mother is fearfully worried this week. She has to play the leading part in Pinero's "Hobby-Horse" three times. It is a fearfully long part and she ought not to have anything else on her mind. Had you written to me I would have said nothing to her till this ordeal was over. I am afraid that athleticism rather than scholarship is the dominant note at Hewett's. It is clear too that your extraordinary success in December has excited jealousy in others who have not got your brains or luck; and that this unworthy but very natural feeling is heightened by the favour shown you by some masters. This was what I had expected, but I hoped that you would have enough philosophy to bear these men's pinpricks with equanimity. If you were to leave Winchester prematurely, it would be an admission that you were unsuited to Wykehamist ideals and the stigma would be in your path through life. I do not speak of the folly of interrupting your classical work; there is confessedly much leeway to be made up there... My "Fontenoy and Great Britain's share in the war of the Austrian succession" is going through the press. Mother joins me in love'.

Frank had sent Clarmont's letter to the head master who wrote: 'I was very much distressed to read your boy's letter and much surprised. It expressed genuine pain and soreness of heart and I had always thought of him and known him as a lively, alert and happy – though serious – boy. I should have written at once, but I hoped to have had an opportunity of talking to him and

discovering whether it was a "fit of depression" or more than that: and so being able to make up my mind more clearly what I thought ought to be done. I *haven't* had a talk with him yet – I don't want him to conjecture that you have communicated his letter to me. But I shall see him naturally tomorrow.

'My own impression is that he is feeling rather the stress of competition in Senior Division and there is something of a reaction after his last half. In the competition he recognizes many of the advantages which College boys can get and it daunts him: but (between you and me) it is just that need of extra grit that so often makes our Commoners win later on in life. I have no fears of his ultimate success - but I don't want him to be unhappy or unnerved.

'Thank you very much for your kindness and generosity in offering your book to the School Library. We shall value and appreciate the gift'.

Clarmont did not again raise the possibility of leaving Winchester early and appears to have made the best of his lot. He still dreaded his weeks as a prefect 'in course', deploring the waste of so many hours in trying to keep order during 'toy-time'. But he was able to write: 'I am very much more popular just now owing to my representing the house to such a large extent in games and athletics. That appeals to the majority very much more than rotten scholarships...' He disliked Winchester football but he enjoyed soccer which he played for the house. He also rowed in the Challenge Fours and did quite well at cross-country running. The three-mile steeple-chase course was a stiff one, with a good uphill stretch of plough early on. The inter-house challenge cup was competed for on the basis of points scored by the first 75 runners, the first one in getting 75 points, the second 74, and so on, the 75th scoring one point. Handicaps were arranged according to age, the youngest entrant being given a start of 600 yards. Clarmont had obtained the remarkably good place of 20th in 1903 when he had had a start of 380 yards. He had however broken down in the race the following year and had not done well in 1905. Now in his last year at school he obtained 28th place which was quite creditable.

His last term was extremely full. He had more Latin and Greek to do than before the New College exam and there were Medal Tasks for French, Latin and English verse. The subject of the last was Letizia, the mother of Napoleon. Clarmont consulted his father who really was the 'mentor' he had set himself to be. Clarmont needed a rhyme for 'abyss': Frank replied that no rhyme for it was to be found in English – 'such rhymes as "as this", "amiss", are inadmissible – you must turn the idea'.

Both parents visited Winchester and Clarmont briefed his mother who was to lunch with the head master: 'I think you will like Burge. Don't be frightened at his laugh, which is not a light silvery one, and don't be slow to indulge in delighted cachinnations yourself at anything which might look like a joke on his part. Though Burge doesn't leave his guests in much doubt as to his jokes, he laughs so uproariously at them himself'.

The term ended in triumph – 'You will be glad to hear we won the rowing cup, amid tremendous excitement. Half the school must have been

there, running with us and shouting all the way. "Burne Cup" as it is called is one of the best cups to have, and we four are just now the most popular men in the house. Mr Hewett, according to the regular custom, supplied us with a bottle of champagne; it nearly filled the cup'.

On his last night he attended the Domum Dinner and he then went into camp at Aldershot with the Volunteers. From camp, he sent an account of the Domum Dinner: 'I hurriedly changed and with three others who had been invited went down to College. There we found Chamber Court half full of people, mostly Governing Body big-wigs, with a large proportion of old Wykehamists and masters. Also the whole of College, to whom Domum Dinner is by way of being a house supper, though they do not stay for the speeches. We who were in plain evening dress were distinctly in the minority, so many gowns were there, from the ordinary black College gown to the gorgeous robes of D.D. and Mus. Doc. The Mayor of Winchester was there, ex officio, so to speak. Then a move was made up the great stone stairs to College Dining Hall, the School Porter leading the way, bearing the great silver mace of William of Wykeham, and followed by the Sub-Warden, the Mayor, the Head Master and lesser lights. When all were assembled in the hall, the big-wigs at a long table on the dais, the masters at another table down the middle, College at two tables along one side, and men who were leaving, including myself, at two tables along the other side, Grace was sung by a small choir. The Grace is a long Latin one and the chant is rather pretty. The meal itself was more of a supper than a dinner, most of the viands being already on the groaning board. There was plenty of wine on the table; we had four bottles of sparkling Moselle and three of claret. You may imagine that towards the end of dinner our table was getting merry. The puddings were excellent, most of them being old English recipes such as "stuckling" which was especially popular. I forgot to mention a curious custom peculiar to Domum Dinner: in the middle of it, at a given signal, everyone put down their knives and forks and the Prefect of Hall got up and read a chapter of the New Testament! It was about the feeding of the five thousand, and peculiarly appropriate. After the usual toasts, the Sub-Warden, Parker Smith, made a longish speech, followed by the Mayor who was rather dull. Then the Head Master made a really brilliant speech, well worth coming a long way to hear. He alluded to School events in the loveliest way imaginable. Then there were one or two more speeches, more or less dull, during which the loving-cups go round. That is another old custom; two enormous, massive silver cups go round, filled with some strange old English brew. They are so big that one can hardly hold them full with both hands. The ceremonial is curious. As the cup goes down the table, each person as he receives it gets up and bows to the person on his further side and to the two persons opposite who also get up and bow. Then he drinks, while the other three remain standing. This is to guard the person drinking from being stabbed in the back. Having drunk, he hands it across to

the person diagonally opposite, and so on. It is extraordinarily interesting, and all done so solemnly and as a matter of course.

'Domum begins at 7 and we adjourned after an hour and went into Meads. I found I had drunk just not too much and could walk fairly straight, with an effort.

'Domum is rather a mournful affair for one who is leaving; saying good-bye to everyone, accompanied by strains from Carmen or the Mikado, varied by the School song "Domum" at intervals, played by the band of the 60th Rifles in a stand in the middle of Meads. I had a long talk with Rendall, and a short one with Burge. The latter hasn't much time to spare, as the whole time he is surrounded by people waiting to say good-bye.

'At a quarter to nine everyone adjourns to Chamber Court where 'Domum' is sung once more and three cheers given for various people, the Head Master, the Prefect of Hall, the Captain of Lords, the Captain of Six, etc. At a quarter past nine prayers up to House, followed by a large "gallery-ice" given by Bowers and myself. It is usual for prefects at least once in the half to "sport" large quantities of ice-cream to their "gallery" or dormitory and also to the other prefects. We ordered a 15/- ice, three kinds, as we were in different galleries. Needless to say, I left a very good impression this way...'

Chapter 3

Edwardian Oxford

Clarmont went up to New College in October 1906. He continued the habit of long weekly letters to his parents, not only during term-time but also in the vacs if he was absent from them. He spent at least part of every vac at Ardvorlich. The result is a self-portrait of a young man who is aware of his advantages, on the whole pleased with himself and a bit priggish. His parents were united in their ambitions for him, Helen's letters often echoing her husband's admonitions about the importance of achieving excellence. Helen was mid-way in age between husband and son and Clarmont enjoyed a relationship with her which enabled him to confide in her. Perhaps his acceptance of criticism from both parents saved him from being spoilt.

He loved Oxford from the outset – it was so different to beginning at a public school – 'Here seniors welcome freshmen and try to put them at their ease at once'. This comes from a long letter describing the matriculation ceremony and a New College function known as 'Common Room'. This was very convivial, ending with a loving-cup made of a fox's head mounted in silver: 'It goes round the table, being filled up by one of the butlers after each person empties it. All the time a chorus of Flup! Flup! Flup! is shouted, a shortened form of Fill up! Then everyone adjourned to Garden Quad and then to a room which had a piano in it... Though I could not help drinking a good deal, I did not feel the slightest effect. It was rather good fun and the best way of getting to know other men...'

His New College scholarship was worth £100 a year and he was awarded a leaving exhibition from Winchester of £20. His father made him an allowance of £100 a year and paid for his railway journeys to and from Scotland. £220 was just adequate for a fairly full but not extravagant Oxford life.

His rooms overlooked Holywell which was 'infested with barrel-organs, German bands, street singers, muffin-sellers, costermongers and cats'. He worked hard for Honour Mods and he rowed and played football. He did not think much of his Latin tutor who 'hadn't an ounce of poetry in him. Really, after being accustomed to men like Burge, Rendall, Nowell Smith[9] and even Carter[10], it is hopelessly dispiriting. Fortunately, however, I am extremely lucky in my Greek tutor, Gilbert Murray. There is a first-class man, if you like: there is a true poet: there is a man for whom one would work all night long at a composition. I can tell you, it is a positive pleasure (don't laugh incredulously) to do a copy of Greek Iambics for him. He inspires by appreciation and encourages by judicious praise. On the other hand, I am quite

sure that if I slacked he would soon let me know it, and drop on me too, though by nature an extremely mild and amiable man'.

Another tutor was Butler[11] who as a Liberal did not approve of Clarmont's 'socialist views' in an essay but said that he much preferred something with a lot of ideas, even though overstated, to a more orthodox production. The 'socialist views' no doubt stemmed from his father who had once ticked Clarmont off for using the word 'aristocratic'. Frank explained that far from meaning, as it should, the rule of the best, in England, 'burdened with privilege, hereditary titles and other figments of feudalism', it often meant something quite different: Clarmont should learn that 'the only true aristocracies are those of the heart and brain; and that a dustman who does his duty is far more to be respected than a duke who does not'.

The stratification of society was however a fact which had to be accepted and Clarmont sometimes made remarks which would be incompatible with 'socialist views' in a more egalitarian period. When he was looking at the results of the Civil Service exams, he noted with satisfaction that 15 of the successful Oxford men had read Greats – but he was disgusted to find that only 20 men out of 89 came from 'respectable public schools'. And he was later to speak of 'the thrifty Board School types' who were changing – for the worse – the image of the Indian Civil Service. As an Edwardian undergraduate he was thoroughly conventional. He was most embarrassed when he went to the wedding of a Skrine cousin at Warleigh and found himself the only man not wearing a morning coat. Again, later when he returned to Aberdeen from the Shetlands his cap blew into the sea and he felt horribly self-conscious walking through the streets of Aberdeen on a Sunday bare-headed.

The Skrine family went to Chateau d'Oex at Christmas and Clarmont had his introduction to ski-ing. He had skated throughout his boyhood and had passed the National Skating Association 3rd test. E. F. Benson gave him some instruction in figure-skating at Chateau d'Oex. Of course it was all English-style. Clarmont who continued to skate whenever there was an opportunity – and in remote places in Central Asia where skates had never been seen – was to regret in middle-age that he had not been taught the Continental style. Now at Oxford he was a keen disciple of the experts who could sail round a circle of 100 yards diameter with mathematical correctness.

He took plenty of other forms of exercise. In the vacs at Ardvorlich he was acquiring a growing intimacy with mountains. His grandparents were most hospitable to their grandson's friends and he often invited a companion to stay, to combine an opportunity for reading with a holiday in the highlands. He described an April ascent of Ben Vorlich when the upper half of the ben was covered with hard crisp snow and was perfect for glissading on the way down. His companion was no mountaineer; Clarmont had had to wait long for him scrambling up the cliff side of Stuca'chroin. 'The fact is', wrote Clarmont, 'I have been skipping up and down these hill-sides since childhood'.

In his second year Clarmont moved into splendid rooms on the first floor of the front quad. He had two disappointments: he obtained a third in Mods and he was not chosen to row in Eights. He tried to comfort his father over the former by assuring him that New College had awarded him his scholarship in the hope that he would obtain a good degree in Greats, not for his chances of a high class in Mods.

He was certainly conforming with a dictum of Frank's – 'Man is a social animal'. Dinner with the Warden and Mrs Spooner was generally held to be rather a solemn function. Clarmont liked all the family. The youngest Miss Spooner was quite 'a good sort' and not bad looking. At one dinner-party 'rather an amusing *faux pas* was perpetrated. There being seven of us, two bridge-tables were brought out and the four good players, including the Warden himself, went to one while Mrs Spooner, myself and one of the guests who knew practically nothing of the game, went to the other. At our last hand, this beginner, whose name is Burrows, while looking at his dummy, happened to say colloquially 'Let's see, Clubs is trumps'; it so happened that Mrs Spooner also said 'Clubs is trumps' at almost exactly the same moment. Burrows, correcting himself the next instant, said emphatically 'Clubs *are* trumps, rather'. It sounded exactly as if he were correcting Mrs Spooner. The Warden and the rest of the party were standing round and everyone, including Mrs Spooner after she recovered from her first confusion, burst into fits of laughter. Mrs Spooner is a large, dignified, awe-inspiring personage and the idea of her being corrected in an obvious point of grammar was too funny for words'.

During his second long vac he had a tutoring post with people called Johnson. Mrs Johnson treated Clarmont as one of the family, paying for him at the Aviemore Station Hotel until they all moved into a rented house. Clarmont coached young Johnson in classics for a couple of hours each day and was paid £3 a week. They played golf and fished and climbed in the Cairngorms and then made an expedition to Shetland. Clarmont had had instilled into him at Winchester the desirability of striking out 'purple passages' from his essays and his descriptive writing was now extremely good. Their first port of call in Shetland was Spiggie 'where two enormous rowing boats met us from a cove among the cliffs. It was very amusing watching the boats being loaded, especially when the various parts of a vast machine were shipped; the Shetlanders greeted each queer-looking part as the crane swung it down to them with laughter and raillery in their funny accent. It is a kind of mixture of Scotch and Scandinavian accents: the words are unmistakeably Scotch, yet the accent is continental and the effect is very pleasing...' They first stayed in Scalloway and then bicycled over to Lerwick which was a very busy place just then, the fishing season about to end. 'The whole harbour is ringed with enormous piles of barrels of herrings ready for shipping. The smoke from the "rousing" sheds rather spoils the aspect of the place but the part not obscured by smoke appears quaint and picturesque. The streets are full of interesting figures: old women peat carriers, with their loads on their backs,

knitting as they trudge along: rough jersey'd sailors, lanky, hairy Norwegians, jolly round-faced Danes, good-looking Shetland women with their shawls round their heads, sturdy fisher-folk smelling of "rouse" and an occasional Edinburgh shopkeeper and his womenfolk out for a holiday. Overhead the grey northern sky, and over the bay the green croft-dotted island of Bressay...' Clarmont had fallen in love with the Shetland Islands and he hoped that his parents would go there with him the following year. Good plain board and lodging could be had for £2 a week and the cost of getting there and back, with bicycle, from London was only £5.

Aviemore in August was a very social place and Clarmont found that he had many acquaintances in the neighbourhood. Helen heard from a friend that Clarmont was 'doing things in style'. She was able to criticize him with some substance when she heard that he had left his pupil for a quick trip to John O'Groats. It came about through a well-to-do visitor called Thompson taking a fancy to Clarmont. Thompson had a Darracq car and invited Clarmont to accompany him. He wrote his mother a 20-page description of the adventure – for such indeed it was in 1908, a drive of about 320 miles in 24 hours. They had a burst tyre near Wick and continued to John O'Groats on a Stepney attachable wheel. At John O'Groats they walked to see Duncansby Head and the cliffs and had supper before setting out on the return journey. 'Our two head-lamps, 5,000 candle power, seemed bright enough to light up the whole countryside. As we sped further into the night, lights became fewer and fewer and by midnight we might have been journeying through a dead and sunless universe. At Golspie, while we recharged our lamps, it began to get light, also to rain. We had to put up the hood but it was only a temporary drizzle. When we got down to the flat road along the Cromarty Firth, Mr Thompson let the car go; there was not a soul on the roads and we fairly moved. At Inverness people were beginning to get frequent, though wheeled traffic was still almost nil...' Back at Aviemore in time for an hour's rest before breakfast, Clarmont went through an ordinary day including two hours' Virgil with young Johnson.

Clarmont was gaining a good acquaintanceship with the highlands. The excellent railway system, supplemented by bicycles, made all manner of expeditions possible. He had become interested in photographing mountains and in taking panoramic views from mountain tops.

In February 1909 he became twenty-one. After telling his mother about his birthday presents, he continued: 'Just returned from a meeting at the Town Hall at which Keir Hardie has been trying to speak. We stayed from 8 till 9.15 and heard about three words. Enormous crowds; even though the whole front of the hall was packed with Radicals and Socialists, the audience made it impossible to carry on the meeting: continual disturbances of people being chucked out, squibs and other fireworks, and a continuous chorus of groans and songs and shouts of "Traitor!", "Sedition!", "King's Garden Party!", "India!", etc. etc. At Cambridge last year he never even got to the hall and the only

speeches were by the proctors. They do things more thoroughly at Cambridge...'

He rowed in Torpids and was given a place in the second New College eight. Training began a few days before the summer term. '...We are a childish lot in our boat: we make a dickens of a noise in the evenings. The other night I was giving dessert, when suddenly a Carlsbad plum came hurtling through the window and hit No 2 in the eye. It was the first Eight who had just come out from dinner and were bombarding us from the quad. We replied with all the rest of the dessert and soon the air was thick with oranges, bananas, figs, etc.' Clarmont was No 5 in the boat, rowing at 11 stone 6 lb.

At the beginning of his fourth year, Michaelmas term 1909, he moved into digs at 14 Merton Street. The rooms cost 28/- a week and were comfortable. His mother was a trifle anxious about the expense. He tried to calm her by saying that the landlord, who did the cooking himself, provided adequate meals reasonably - breakfast 1/6, lunch 1/-, tea 6d, plain dinner 2/-. For the Christmas vac the parents decided on travelling in Greece and Turkey. Clarmont was enthusiastic: 'What a splendid idea! And how like you, always sacrificing yourself for the benefit of Father and me! It really will be a magnificent Christmas present for both of us. Athens! The Isles of Greece! Constantinople! I shall be a sorry dunce indeed if I don't get good marks in my Greek History papers'.

When June arrived he thought that he did himself justice in Schools – but he told his parents that he did not think that he had got a first. He was right; he took a second.

Some form of public service – probably in India – had for long been the tacit goal of his Oxford career. Most successful candidates in the Civil Service exams seemed to have studied at crammers, the foremost of which was Wren's in London. Clarmont wanted to attend a course given in Oxford by Sturt[12] of Queen's. He had obtained permission from Spooner to stay at Oxford for a fifth year and at the beginning of the Michaelmas term 1910 returned as a graduate and went into rooms at 5 Manor Road. He attended Sturt's private courses and also some 'varsity lectures. He was able too to go to a New College class in Constitutional History given by H.A.L. Fisher – 'generally admitted to be the cleverest man we have. I simply went and asked him if I might join his class and he said Yes delighted'. The Manor Road digs were splendid for work. It was a cul-de-sac and very quiet.

The parents had not fully agreed with Clarmont's returning to Oxford, not only on grounds of expense but believing that too long there might be narrowing to his views. In March 1911 he had to submit to their decision that he should leave and spend the summer term cramming at Wren's. He was infuriated, saying that it would mean falling between two stools – 'I disclaim all responsibility as to my place in the Civil; if I don't get in, it will not be my fault but *yours*...'

Wren's was located in Powis Square and Clarmont wondered where he should live. Living in the flat with his parents would of course be pleasanter and cheaper, but not so conducive to work as rooms somewhere near Wren's. 'What I will not do,' he wrote, 'will be to go into one of the big boarding-houses near Powis Square that men at Wren's frequent; they are such a set of outsiders, most of them, and will probably make curious noises when they eat'.

He began at Wren's at the end of April, paying 39 guineas for tuition. He had rooms in Leamington Road Villas for £1.12.6 a week, board and lodging. As preparation for the Civil Service exam Wren's was excellent.

A break came at the end of May with a weekend in Oxford and a short visit to Perthshire and another break at the end of June to attend the New College Commemoration Ball. It was Coronation year and Clarmont was able to watch the processions from a seat in the Mall. The weather was suffocatingly hot when the Civil Service exams took place in Burlington House in 1911. Clarmont went straight to Scotland after the ordeal and at the end of September was able to wire his mother that he had secured a place in the Indian Civil Service. He followed this up with a letter: 'I expected to be higher on the list, but the marks I guessed are within 100 of what I got. I find I am 47th out of 53 Indian appointments. I think if Father uses his influence they will give me United Provinces or Bengal. I fear he will compare my place unfavourably with his own! The fact is, I haven't got his memory for book-work. Let us hope that a life of action is more my line'.

Clarmont did his year's training for the I.C.S. in London, living with his parents in Victoria Street. He was given language lessons by a close friend of his parents, the Maharaja of Jhalawar[13]. The end of course examinations, including medical, riding test and viva, took place in September 1912 and in November he sailed for India in the S.S. Arcadia.

Chapter 4

Cub Civilian

1912 - 14

'Well, this is the first part of a long, only too long, series of letters. It is difficult to realize that the dreaded moment has indeed come, where England and home and you are things of the past... The only way to look at the matter is – India has got to be governed, and as one wants it to be done well, one had better go and do it one's self! But I'm afraid the hardest part to play is always the part of those who stay behind, just as it is more mentally painful to run along the bank than to row in the race, so I offer you what small consolation I can, namely that in 147 Victoria Street Flat 5 remains and always will remain the heart of Your loving Clarmont'.

The Gazette brought on board at Bombay showed the Provinces to which the new ICS officers were being posted but they had to go to the Secretariat to find out their stations. Clarmont found that he was being sent to Azamgarh in the United Provinces. This was a very small station. The official population comprised the Collector, the Joint-Collector, the Judge who was a Parsee, the doctor, the policeman and the padre. The railway superintendent of the junction at Mau, 30 miles away, came into Azamgarh for parties. The district was as flat as a pancake, stretches of well-wooded cultivated land alternating with wide wastes of practically desert maidan – the result of poisonous salts in the soil, the entire district being part of the vast Gangetic alluvium. The Collector spent the greater part of the cold weather in camp where Clarmont joined him. Describing a morning's work given to him by the Collector – to make a précis of complicated police records, to go through Indian newspapers, to prepare comments on draft legislation – Clarmont concluded: 'It was all very good for me, but of remarkably little use to anybody else'.

Azamgarh had few distractions but this did not trouble Clarmont who said that he could well do without amusements and dances – everything that his father loved to call 'childish things'. 'If they *are* there', wrote Clarmont, 'I enjoy 'em hugely and I thank God I can: but I also enjoy anything that interests me, and if my work interests me I enjoy it most of all'. He had however to convey to his parents that things were now very different from their day: work had become less responsible and more redtapy, prices had doubled and the respect with which the Service was regarded had waned. There was a huge promotion block but some hope was placed on the Public Service Commission which had recently been appointed: H.A.L. Fisher was a member. Despite all, Clarmont felt that he had settled down very quickly – 'I feel as if I'd lived here all my life. At the present moment I'm camping for the night in the waiting-

room at Fyzabad, with my bed made on a divan in the corner. At 5 a.m. tomorrow I will remove myself, in my pyjamas, into the Lucknow train, finish my night in that, and tomorrow night sleep in the trains between Lucknow and Azamgarh again, finishing up with 25 miles on bicycle out to the Collector's camp'.

Christmas was spent in camp with the Collector and (for Azamgarh) a large party. The camp had 18 tents and the transport included ten elephants. There was excellent duck-shooting on the nearby jhils and the seven guns got quite a good bag. Not a bird was wasted – 'the best-eating kinds, such as gadwall, pintail, teal, we have *"baut-lo'd"* eaten ourselves or sent into Azamgarh for the people left in the station; the less good-eating kinds, such as pochard, white-eye, shoveller, we have *"baut-lo'd"* each evening among the army of camp servants. Only the Hindus, of course, ought to eat them as they aren't "inhilal", but what the Mohammedan servants do is to tip the wink to some Mohammedan chaprassi who is to be in one of the boats during the shooting, and he just draws a knife across the throat of the duck he picks up, and these the Muslim servants can eat'.

On Christmas night there were illuminations but what Clarmont most enjoyed were the servants' sports: 'There was a flat race for the syces, a chota-hazri preparing race for the khits, a blindfold race carrying "gurries" full of water for the bhisties, one in which the various bearers had to run to a bag, fish their own sahib's boots out of it and run to their sahib and give him the boots, a pillow-fight on a beam for the khansamas, a greasy-pole climbing race for the whole countryside – 2 rupees in a bag 20 ft up a thick greasy mast – and, best of all, an elephant race. This was an extraordinarily sporting event. There were five entries and a course of about a quarter-mile across the maidan. It resulted in a dead-heat. The dead-heaters raced again and were neck and neck 100 yards from home when suddenly the Joint's fox-terrier ran out and pursued the nearest elephant, barking furiously. The elephant in terror made a wild spurt and just won by a trunk!'

After Christmas Clarmont shared a camp with the subdivisional officer and found that work was beginning to press because his colleague had far more Revenue cases than he could deal with and was glad to pass on as many petty criminal cases as he could. He usually started the day with an inspection of some kind, either a patwari or a school, or a liquor shop, or a firework seller. The patwari inspection was often complicated and he had to have his Court secretary with him. It was good training for the departmental examinations.

He went to Lucknow for the Civil Service week and enjoyed it all the more from the presence at Government House of his mother's sister, Lilian Lukis, whose husband was now Surgeon-General Sir Charles Lukis. As the junior man present, he had to reply to the toast of the Service at the ICS dinner. The Durbar was a splendid occasion and there were several dances. In March 1913 he was transferred to Cawnpore. ('It will be funny, being stationed

at the place where you "came out" and got married and which is always identified in my mind with you and the grandparents.')

Cawnpore was a great contrast to Azamgarh – electric light, electric punkahs, trams, numerous Europeans and a well-appointed club. Tyler[14], the Collector, struck Clarmont as an extremely capable energetic fellow. He put Clarmont up until the exams took place and arranged for him thereafter to live at the mess of the 36th Jacob's Horse. The exams were held in Lucknow where the Public Service Commission happened to be sitting and Clarmont came across H.A.L. Fisher – 'he said he was feeling the heat very much, and he looked it, like Pagett M.P. Unlike Pagett M.P. however neither he nor any other member of the Commission underestimates the disadvantages of service in this country. Some of them speak of a compulsory month's holiday every year, without prejudice to three months leave at home every fourth year – too Utopian, I fear'. Though Clarmont did well in conversation and reading, he failed in the written exams in Urdu and Hindi. He achieved Higher standard in Judicial and in Civil Law and Lower standard in Revenue.

Tyler was a keen polo player and hinted to Clarmont that it was advisable to take up either polo or pig-sticking 'because a man who has an opportunity of doing either and doesn't take it is considered rather a mug – people say he funks them and prefers ladies' games like tennis and badminton. Personally, I should prefer polo, as pig-sticking appears to be rather a brutal sport but polo ponies are so ruinously long-priced that polo is out of the question'. Clarmont had bought his first horse just before he was transferred from Azamgarh. His pay was only Rs 247 a month, less deductions. He had hoped that the simple life of Azamgarh would improve his finances. The sudden transfer to Cawnpore had removed this prospect. He joined the Cawnpore Tent Club and was able to write: 'You will be glad to hear I am getting on all right in the Mess, a matter not by any means to be taken for granted. The British subaltern is a little bit – well, you have to know his ways and point of view. The two things that have established me are my installing my gramophone in the mess and my pig-sticking with enthusiasm'.

His chief means of transport to and from cutcherry (three miles from the mess) was a bicycle. The weather became very hot in May, the thermometer standing at about 105° in court. Clarmont was busy with an increasing cause list and he was in charge of three departments of the Collector's office. He came to the conclusion that the outstanding feature of Indian life was *ennui*. 'The sameness is awful. During eight months of the year the routine is far worse than that of a London office, because there you can do a different thing *out* of office every day. It is useless to pretend that my world is or ever will be primarily India. In course of time, no doubt, I will get up a secondary interest in this country: but I am first of all an Englishman – about two-thirds Highlander and one-third Londoner, I should say'. His home-sickness was relieved by obtaining permission for a week's change of air holiday at Mussoorie at a time when his parents were to be at Mürren – 'Just as Matthew

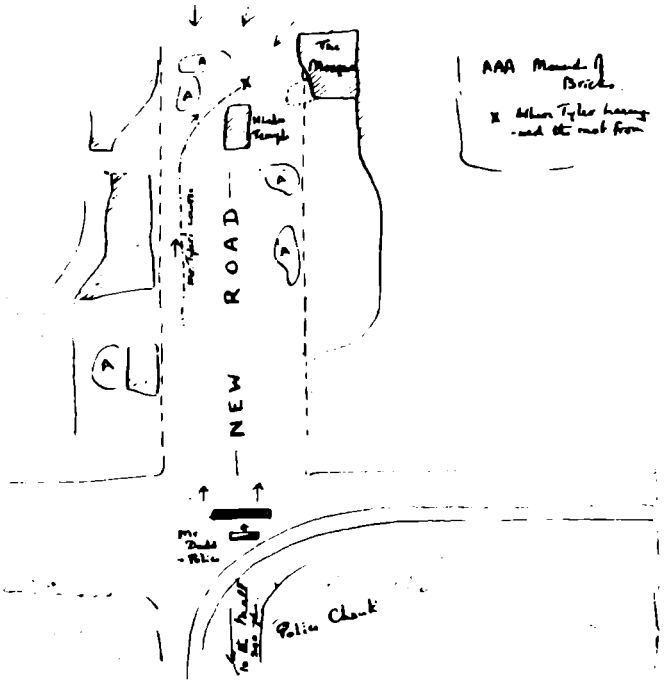
Arnold stood on the tower of Lichfield Cathedral and realized that nothing intervened between him and the Ural Mountains, so I shall stand on the top of some peak and gaze westward and say to myself perhaps that cloud far away into the sunset can see from its 10 mile high view point another cloud which in its turn might dimly descry the snowy summit of the Jungfrau which you look at'.

Often before breakfast in Cawnpore he explored among the cliffs of the Ganges. He was not always free to do this – 'I have had two executions to look at in ten days, which is rather bad luck. This morning's gentleman took it badly, very badly until he was on the way up to the gallows, when it suddenly struck him that it would be an exceedingly good idea to talk loudly and rapidly all the time. So he began to talk very fast about his deed and the trial and his early life, and whenever he was at a loss for something to say he filled the gap with invocations "SitaRamSitaRamSitaRamSitaRamSitaRamSita Ram..." While the cap was on his head he still went on talking loud, until the drop was released, and then there was a catch in his voice... I wish some people who declare that hanging is a more merciful punishment than penal servitude for life could have a taste of it themselves'.

Frank hoped that the need to pass exams in Urdu and Hindi would not lead Clarmont to give up Persian which he had begun to learn in London. Clarmont reassured him; he regarded Persian as a beautiful language and as such a mental possession not to be thrown away. Moreover, 'anyone with half an eye can see that the Persian-speaking East is going to be the theatre of big events... I have been seriously thinking of trying for the Political; one has to make one's choice in one's first three years so there is not much time to lose. It is a career which appeals to me more than a life of office work and routine'.

Serious riots broke out in Cawnpore in August 1913 over the demolition of the projecting corner of a mosque in the interests of street re-aligning. The projecting corner was a walled-in area used for washing the feet of worshippers and was not part of the sacred building: 'It was therefore decided by the Municipal Board, including most of the Mohammedan members, to pull it down, giving the mosque in exchange a space about twice the area and building them a brand-new washing place free. The chairman of the Board is an ICS man, a Scotchman called Sim, and the new road, though not his own idea, was a favourite project of his, and it is probable that he overbore opposition a bit too much, but the majority of the Board agreed to the demolition. When it came to doing it, however, there was a fearful outcry. In June Cawnpore was full of secret agitators, stirring up the Mohammedans to oppose the demolition; however, the latter was carried out successfully, chiefly owing to the cool and restrained behaviour of Tyler who directed operations backed by a not over-large force of police. He was abused in the vilest terms by the mob the whole time, and once the fanatic "mutawalli" of the mosque actually snatched his cane out of his hand as he was pointing with it. Tyler, instead of losing his temper and bringing on a probably fatal riot, just said "Take it", and went on coolly

directing operations. The thing was done, but a huge meeting was held next day and it was decided to telegraph protests to the Viceroy and the Lieutenant-Governor. The Viceroy left the matter alone and the LG enquired into it and after a lot of correspondence decided to uphold the Cawnpore authorities. He did this chiefly on the strength of Sim's representations which were to the effect that the part pulled down was *not* sacred, a fact proved by Sim's own experience when he first went over the mosque. He was accompanied on to the washing-place by scores of Mohammedans, not one of whom took off his shoes! The LG's decision raised a storm in the native press and in the shape of meetings all over India: the discontent was augmented by the Moslem feeling against the British Government for not actively backing up Turkey in the war. Until Sunday last the Cawnpore Mohammedans appeared to be the least agitated of the large Mohammedan communities of India: this taunt was indeed levelled at them by the press and was probably the cause of the riot. Well, last Sunday a mass meeting was held... about a thousand fanatics led the way from it to the mosque where they started to build up the washing-place again. Hearing of this, Mr Dodd[15] the DSP and Tyler proceeded to the spot with a force of about 50 unmounted and 14 mounted police. They halted about 200 yards away and Tyler went forward alone, going quite close up to the mosque. Here is a plan.



2 The Cawnpore Riots, 1914

A mob of about 30,000 was swarming in and around the mosque, yelling at the tops of their voices and Tyler could only shout "Stop, stop!" Then a big fat maulavi on the mosque wall shouted "Mil gaya, maro, maro!" and the mob rushed Tyler: he got knocked about a bit but escaped lightly on the whole, retreating back to the police. The mob, now inflamed with success, determined

to overpower the police and go for Sim's bungalow which was only two or three hundred yards away on the Mall and thence to the Bank of Bengal and the jail. Tyler gave the order to fire but the police buck-shot was totally ineffective against the mob – they shouted "Jhunta goli" and were on the point of rolling over the Police when Mr Dodd collected the sowars in a compact body and charged the mob at the gallop; then they broke and fled. 180 arrests were made, Tyler acting in a way which has brought a lot of native opinion round to his side by ordering that no indiscriminate arresting was to be done and that the dead and wounded be immediately cared for. There were found to be 16 killed and 50 badly wounded on the mob side, and 2 killed and 30 wounded (including Dodd himself) on the police side. There is no doubt that it was a very near thing. It would have taken the British troops three-quarters of an hour to arrive on the spot, if the police had been overwhelmed; in that time the most awful things might have happened, Civil Lines is, as you know, at the mercy of the city the whole of its length. The next day the LG came early in the morning and stayed the whole day enquiring into everything. There has been no further trouble'.

Clarmont was given dispensation from his Treasury work to attend the trial. The accused numbered 120 and 26 Mohammedan barristers appeared on their behalf. These included Mahsood who was an old New College friend of Clarmont's – 'He is an excellent fellow, widely travelled, an athlete too. Yet such is the patriotism for Islam that he, like all the other 26, has come here from all over India to defend the rioters gratis. Mahsood is coming to tea with me today. I know he will try hard to win me round to his side against the European authorities: but I have seen it all coming on the spot'. Clarmont's report of the trial – every word of the evidence and accused's statements, as well as notes on the counsels' speeches and the Court's orders – finished when the Crown, much against its will, was forced to press the charge of causing grievous hurt to a public servant in the exercise of his duty, thus making it a sessions case. 'It is dispiriting', he wrote, 'that after a succession of Lieutenant Governors well-known for their sympathy with the Mohammedan community, after all the Government has done for the Mohammedans, rebuilding and beautifying their mosques and mausoleums, endowing their schools, etc. etc. there should suddenly break out such a conflagration of enmity and disaffection. I am sure it is mainly due to the Turco-Bulgarian war, which has fanned Moslem patriotism all over the East: but even allowing for that, it looks as if we were on the wrong tack somehow in dealing with Islam in India, and I wish I knew how!'

Helen passed on to Clarmont a hint of criticism she had heard on the subject of civilians staying in regimental messes. She supposed that civilians earned good pay and could be expected to do a regiment credit. Clarmont disabused her: 'I am much the least well off at the 36th Mess, none of the unmarried officers of which keep less than five horses. The truth is, most of the cub civilians who come out here want licking into shape and getting

something of the military discipline, which is the atmosphere of Indian society, rubbed into them: and a good regiment is the very school for this – *if* the good regiment will take on the job. It is a great compliment that the Army pays to the ICS, when you think that CS men are the only civilians regiments ever ask to stay with them...'

Frank was still actively in touch with Indian affairs and Clarmont reported that his evidence before the Public Service Commission (now sitting in London) was given three and a half columns in the 'Pioneer', which said that the views of 'the well-known Bengal Civilian had the advantage of being more entertaining than most'. Clarmont commented: 'Father got in a splendid dig at the public school and university system, but I fear it is rather tilting at windmills. I fear too that the scheme for a modernized Haileybury is now impracticable'.

In September he was invited by Lady Butler, wife of Sir Harcourt Butler[16], to stay at The Retreat, Simla. He paid all the necessary social calls and had a very active week. W. M. Hailey (later Lord Hailey[17]) who was at this time Chief Commissioner Delhi was also a guest at The Retreat but was laid up with a 'Delhi boil'. This accounted for a meeting about New Delhi taking place in Hailey's room, and the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge of Penshurst[18], walked in. He struck Clarmont as 'a fine-looking man, quite of the commanding type, but very pleasant and sociable in a drawing-room'. There was a children's play got up by the Vicereine for her 'Cottage Homes' charity, dancing and roulette parties and gavotte rehearsals and a dance at Viceregal Lodge. This had not been built in his parents' time (when Peterhof had been the Lodge) and Clarmont thought it very fine – 'It is a huge castle, absolutely English both inside and out, which is exactly as it should be. The dance was perfect of its kind. Lady Hardinge, who was a Lady of the Bedchamber, is imbued with the old Queen's ideas, and we all had to be careful not to one-step or boston at all. As a flippant A.D.C. put it, "One waggle and you're out!" After one of the dances I heard two or three people clapping slightly for an encore – more by force of habit than anything else probably: next day Sir Harcourt told me that Lady Hardinge was furious at this and set one of the A.D.C.'s to admonish the errers'.

Rain upset plans for tennis but Clarmont managed some mountain expeditions and some photographs. Lady Butler took a party to the theatre: it was a Simla composition, a mixture of comedy and revue. Clarmont regretted that it was not a real play by the Amateur Dramatic Club, the theatre being hallowed for him by thoughts of his mother. On Sunday came off the 'Mashobra lunch party, the road in all its seven miles of length like the Mall on Sunday mornings. I escorted Lady Butler, she in rickshaw, I on pony back'. Clarmont concluded: 'Simla quite came up to expectations. Its atmosphere is that of a capital town and being a Londoner I appreciated that. Mussoorie is very jolly, heaps of young people and no"shop" to think about; but Simla can't help being the centre from which the strings of a large chunk of Asia are

pulled. More ceremony, no doubt; but what I like about it is the frivolous manner in which big subjects are treated in society – you get Members of Council talking about Imperial matters after a noisy lunch-party in the same strain as the men of an English country-house party would discuss shooting prospects'.

Social life in Cawnpore picked up in the autumn with the return from leave of many married couples. The Club tennis courts were always in use and there were frequent dances. Clarmont was roped in to act in a one-act play.

The Viceroy came unexpectedly on a one-day visit. He made a speech on the Mosque riots and let off the prisoners. Clarmont was highly critical. The Sessions trial was shortly to begin, the defence was thought certain to crumple up and the police had enough evidence for the accused to be sent to the Andamans for a long time. 'If Hardinge had known anything about Orientals (or is it the Home Government?) he would have known that the thing to do is to find them guilty first, condemn them, and then pardon them – to get your enemies in your hands and then refrain from taking any steps means that you are afraid of doing anything to them'. The 40 or 50 Moslems who submitted an address to the Viceroy were a small minority of educated men, far from representative of the Mohammedan community – 'In their address they ate humble pie all right, begged pardon for throwing brickbats, etc. – and the Viceroy's speech was an excellent answer to it. He called himself their father and them his children, who had erred and should be chastised, and *would* be if papa hadn't been such a kind person... But it was *not* an answer to the mass of Moslems who have been saying, We're too strong for the Government to interfere with us even when we riot and kill policemen – evidently the way to get what we want...'

Frank had expressed relief that Clarmont had not been personally mixed up in the riots. Clarmont had at first thought that he had missed an opportunity 'of showing coolness, resource and that sort of thing; but, as you say, men who keep their heads and show pluck in an emergency are far less rare than men who have a deep-rooted sympathy and understanding of alien races and sentiments. If I had helped to suppress the riots I might have proved what I hope is taken for granted, but I should have probably forfeited any hope of being considered by Indians to belong to the second category... I was very interested at Simla to hear the Supreme Government's point of view. Here in Cawnpore an undertaking such as the New Road through the city seems of overwhelming importance – a magnificent new artery straight through the most congested bazaar in Northern India, an arrow from the bow of progress piercing the heart of vice, misery and squalor. This is the light in which you look at it from the Chair of the Municipal Board, and when a set of ignorant fanatics puts an obstacle in your way you want to brush them aside. But from the Chair of the Viceroy's Council the matter is viewed in quite a different light. Here is a vast problem, the growing disaffection of Moslems. Little wonder that the central Government though ostensibly upholding the U.P. Government really

curse them for sacrificing the wider issue of Mohammedan "entente" for the sake of a straight bit of road. They blame Sir James Meston[19] for not stopping the whole thing at an early stage. They blame the police for "chalaning" the accused in too great numbers. Tyler gets off the lightest because (I think) they consider him to have acted with the utmost restraint all through'.

The half-yearly exams took place in Lucknow in October. Clarmont had to take four subjects: Revenue, Police, Language and Treasury. He had had an excellent munshi giving him Hindi lessons and he succeeded in obtaining Lower Standard. After the exams he attended a survey course in a camp near Nawabganj. Seven other junior Civilians were on the course and they were sent out in pairs with plane-table and sight-rule making a survey of the cultivated land. Clarmont enjoyed making maps.

Frank and Helen Skrine had renewed the lease of their flat and were going to spend Christmas at Ardvorlich. Both pieces of news pleased Clarmont. He thought that London was the only place 'for civilized people with less than £3,000 a year – If you can keep a big car, the country's all right'. As for Christmas at Ardvorlich, it seemed 'terribly probable that it will be the last under the present régime'. News of Colonel Stewart's death in fact reached Clarmont early in the new year.

He himself had nine days leave over Christmas and began it with a visit to Jhalarapatan where he was a guest of his parents' friend the Maharajah of Jhalawar. Jhalarapatan lies in a valley surrounded by lakes and low hills. Clarmont was put up in the Residency Bungalow where two English couples were also guests: 'We had a never-to-be-forgotten dinner in the Palace. Getting into the State carriage, rumbling through the quaint streets of the bazaar, passing through the huge portals of the Palace guarded by horsemen, lance-in-rest, drawing up at the door of the many-cupola'd building – it was all like a bit of the Arabian Nights. We were received by H.H. and his young son the Maharaj Kumar in a large room whose profusion of decoration bespoke the taste of H.H's predecessors rather than his own. We dined in a large hall with balconies and wide windows looking onto the big square inside the palace walls into which the public were admitted and their murmuring floated in, giving a medieval king-and-populace tinge to the proceedings. After dinner which was excellent and two-fold (as *chez lui* in London) so as to suit both East and West – the worst of it is, the West generally eats the East's courses as well as its own – there were fireworks in front of the Palace'.

Clarmont then conceived the idea of a rushed visit to Chitore and Udaipur. This involved spending three-quarters of the remaining time travelling but it was well worth it. He spent six hours wandering all over the great rock of Chitore, raised 500 ft above the plain, its city of the dead containing ruined palaces and exquisite sculptures. But the beauties of Chitore were a little obscured for Clarmont by his seeing Udaipur the following day: 'I simply can't describe its wonder and beauty. It was just fairy-land come true, the land of blue skies and laughing waters, of islands swimming in light with marble

palaces resting on them; the streets and landing-places vivid with vermilion-robed graceful women and curiously-draped men and, above all, the most glorious, mighty castle-palace that ever figured in antique legend!' He sustained his spirits with the prospect of his mother being able to spend the winter of 1914-15 in India when he could take her to Udaipur.

He could express his affection for his parents without any inhibition but the volubility of his letters often made him vulnerable to their criticism. They suggested that he was having too many distractions and he laid himself open to charges of extravagance. He countered at great length, explaining that the cost of living had more than doubled since his parents were in India. He sent them accounts showing the monthly commitments of a single man living at a cavalry mess as at least Rs 432. If he were extravagant and played polo and smoked and drank it would be much more. 'But I don't', he concluded, 'and then you tell me that you're thankful you aren't a widow dependent on me for you'd certainly starve. I know you don't really think so but it's not a matter for joking. Heavens! I'd live cheaper than the poorest British subaltern if it was necessary for your sake'.

Clarmont certainly had good reason to resent his father's interference. A letter from home enclosed a letter to Frank from the Lieutenant Governor saying that Clarmont was to be transferred on famine duty. It was the first that Clarmont had heard of it – 'Father tells me that he applied to Meston not to put me on famine duty, so I suppose that is it. I think it is rather a pity Father is interfering in this matter. For one thing, he doesn't realize that the famine duty I should be put on is a very different matter to that which he had. Then they had famines with people dying like flies... Now we have "scarcity" and famine relief is simply large works, canal and tank-digging, etc. at which anybody who wants a living comes and gets his two-and-a-half annas a day. I'm sure the authorities don't like their plans for the posting of juniors upset by representations on the part of the said juniors' relations. There is a suspicion of coddling about it'. He also corrected his father in supposing that because his case-work had been proved good – his judgments had been upheld in several appeals – his 'bent' lay towards the judicial rather than the executive – 'The judicial is the one thing which I earnestly hope to avoid'.

He succeeded in getting his Higher Standard exams behind him and Tyler recommended that he should be granted 1st class powers. It was inconvenient to be in charge of a sub-division without power to try cases summarily. The work was very exacting. Clarmont had to spend five or six hours in court every day.

He managed to attend Tent Club meets at least once a week and he wrote an account of a day's pig-sticking which appeared in The Field. At a Sunday meet in June 1914 he had his best pig-sticking day yet, with quite unexpected consequences: 'Generally my poor old horse is very much outclassed by the other men's mounts, consequently I hardly ever get a "1st spear". On Saturday

however they had a record meet, getting 12 pigs and doing for nearly all their horses in the effort. I wasn't out, as I had a lot of work. My horse being fresh was for once a match for the wrecks which were all the other men had left. There were a splendid lot of pig and I got two "1st spears ". The second pig was a very fine one. I put him up in some grass and the latest joined subaltern of the 36th, one Dallas, and I hunted him. He was too fast and clever for us in the open country and got into some not very thick grass and babool jungle – stuff you could ride in and keep him in view. Seeing this, the pig changed his fleeing tactics and began to fight. He must have charged us a dozen times each, with a wough! wough! and flashing tushes that struck terror into the heart. Dallas couldn't keep the pig off; his pony got rather badly cut. I prevented the pig getting more than one or two cuts in but the old beast scored off me once, for with a terrific grunt he leapt up and caught me by the left foot, crushing my toes in his powerful jaws. Luckily my boot was of good stout leather and a bit too big for me, otherwise he would have got hold of more than he did. I had to get right forward over my horse's neck to prevent myself being pulled off! A 180lb brute worrying with all his weight on your foot takes some holding up. Meanwhile another contretemps occurred: in getting my spear over to the near side, I had to hold it horizontally for a moment during which Dallas who was plunging about much too close received the point in the fleshy part of his thigh. It wasn't much, the point only going in about half an inch. Truly it is a comic picture – the pig hanging on to my toe and me spearing Dallas in an effort to get rid of it! Everyone who sees Dallas and me talking together pretends to be amazed at our still being on speaking terms and I am congratulated on my "5 ft 11 in pig!" To return; the pig finding he couldn't pull me off let go and the fight went on. Finally I succeeded in pinning the brute down and then it was only a question of time. I haven't been able to put my left foot on the ground since, nor can I get anything but a bedroom slipper on it; but it's worth it for the tushes of such a magnificent pig. They are very worn, showing how many fights the owner has weathered, but they make a fine trophy'.

Three weeks later Clarmont was afflicted by what he thought was a cold in the face. He felt no pain, but extreme stiffness and lack of control over his face and jaw muscles. He could not open his mouth without great difficulty and could not eat anything solid. The Civil Surgeon in Cawnpore ordered him to bed and when his jaw became rather worse, he was sent up to Simla. Clarmont thought that bad teeth might have been the cause but the dentist found nothing wrong. In Simla he stayed with his aunt Lilian Lukis and her husband, the Surgeon-General. This was very fortunate for Clarmont. Lady Lukis wrote to Helen: 'I begin my letter to you quite joyfully this week. I am sure you must have felt uneasy at the very vague accounts you received, but I didn't want to say anything to cause alarm until I could report excellent progress, which I can now do. Clarmont is almost himself again. He gave us a horrid fright, arriving with all the symptoms of lockjaw coming on. Car (Sir

Charles Lukis) was fearfully worried as soon as he set eyes on him and sent off for the doctor and anti-tetanus serum that instant. Fortunately a fresh stock had just come in. Car ordered him to bed at once. Poor boy, he travelled up even without a servant because he hoped that a three-day visit to the dentist might clear up the trouble. The alarming symptoms were the almost rigid jaws, the twitching of the face, want of control over the eyes and acute jerks, all pointing to poison at work on the nervous centres. Of course his is a very mild case, they rarely recover otherwise, the doctor here has never seen one do so. But Car has had so much experience of this infection in Calcutta and had actually seen a few cases yielding to treatment. We can only think a microbe got into the wound in his foot and set up all this mischief... I don't know if he knew how anxious we were. He asked me what the injections were for and I said that even colds were treated in this way now, but the Cawnpore doctor let the cat out of the bag by writing that "he could see that he was being treated for tetanus". Neither Car nor the Civil Surgeon here have much opinion of the Cawnpore man's powers of diagnosis or tact!'

Clarmont responded well to the treatment and was up and about after a week. He was disgusted to find that the month's leave 'on medical certificate' was to be accounted against his allowances of privilege leave. His hopes of two months at home in 1915 were thus dashed. But before his return to duty in Cawnpore any prospect of home leave in 1915 had been doomed by the outbreak of war.

Chapter 5

Dulce et decorum est...

War news and speculations filled pages of Clarmont's letters. Frank Skrine complained. Understandably, Clarmont's comments on events in Europe tended to be stale by the time they reached home. It now took seven weeks, instead of five, to receive a reply to a letter.

Jacob's Horse was ordered to the front. Clarmont was delighted for their sake but very fed up at being himself stuck – 'To have just one chance, to go through just one vital war – what a thing to have behind you in after life...' He had joined the United Provinces Light Horse in 1913 and the volunteers were enthusiastic. Parades and musketry practice and lectures every other day saw a good turn-out. The commanding officer of Jacob's Horse invited Clarmont to join the regiment as a galloper. He was disgusted at having to tell him that no Government servant was allowed to leave the country on any pretext. He was not even allowed to join the Reserve of Officers.

The parents were immersed in war work – meals to out-of-work shop girls, hospitality to Belgian refugees, soups and jellies for invalids, etc. Frank published a pamphlet 'Wanted, a Citizen Army' on the need for conscription. He himself was in uniform as a special constable at Buckingham Palace. 'It's a simply glorious idea,' Clarmont commented, 'Father, the democratic, officiating as Yeoman of the Guard'.

Jacob's Horse left after a touching farewell scene at the open wayside platform, the Colonel and officers all garlanded with roses by a deputation from the Municipal Board. The Middlesex Regiment was remaining in Cawnpore until relieved by a territorial battalion from home. The internal security threat would be increased by the declaration of war with Turkey. The Delhi 'Comrade' and the 'Hamdard' Press had come out with seditious articles. Clarmont was irritated by the idea fostered in English newspapers that the Indian troops in the Expeditionary Force were a gift, the spontaneous expression of Indian loyalty to the Empire – 'Of course they're nothing of the sort; they're as much a part of England's regular army as the six divisions which crossed the Channel in August. The offers of help from the Ruling Chiefs is a different matter: a good deal of it is Oriental bombast and enthusiasm caught by infection and rivalry, but there's a real feeling and spontaneity underneath which augurs well for our future in India'.

He thought that there might yet be a chance of being allowed to join the newly-forming Indian Army Reserve of Officers. There was talk of allowing 150 policemen to join: 'Of course, if they do take us it would be at least nine months before we got to the front – but it's only too probable that the war will last long enough to give us all a chance. Won't it be glorious? Haven't you

been secretly a little ashamed of having a son who is not fighting for his country? As for me, you may have been able to detect from my letters how the ignoble role of non-combatant suits me'.

Clarmont had taken over his sub-division from a temporary Native Deputy who had left great arrears of work. He had cleared all these by the time he was due to go into camp. The sub-division, being a central one, was harder work than some others because many more cases were defended. Even in camp, he had to sit in his office in front of his tent till 8 or 9 p.m. and all inspections had to be done before breakfast. He sent his father a copy of a report he had sent to Tyler covering matters on which he was unsure. Tyler had minuted: 'This is just the sort of thing I want – but if you will put your notes dealing with different points on separate pieces of paper and leave a margin it saves copying. I have sent your reports to the people concerned - some will go back to you. You have got of course to keep your diary'. The matters raised concerned roads, schools, sanitation, petitions and the outbreak of plague.

Clarmont managed a weekend visit to Dinapore to stay with his Oxford friend Len Evans[20]. He was forcibly struck by how much more smooth-running things were in Bihar than in a district like Cawnpore. There was far less revenue work because the land was under permanent settlement; they did not need the complicated Tenancy and Rent Acts of the U.P. A sub-division in which the magistrate did not have to try ejectment suits, enhancement of rent suits, partition cases, etc. seemed to Clarmont paradisal. Moreover, there were far fewer criminal cases – 'They've got none of the quarrelsome Thakurs and Mahratta Brahmans and Gangaputras we're cursed with'.

He camped at Bithur for the great annual Mela and it was a wonderful experience. The Mela takes place on the river-bank and Clarmont occupied the Inspection Bungalow on a bluff over-looking it: 'Imagine having 80,000 people camping out within half a mile of you all round! The noise was extraordinary, a kind of high-pitched, pervading murmur. It is worth the noise to be right in the middle of such a gathering; to watch the myriads bathing in the Ganges at dawn, the laughing groups... Truly the East is the land of the pilgrim... My one regret has been that I had too much to do to appreciate the full flavour of the Mela'.

He heard that he was to be transferred to Gorakhpur. He would have preferred some place at the other end of the province – the north and west were the directions to which he felt attracted. Gorakhpur would have certain compensations, one of them good shooting. His father had asked to be spared details of Clarmont's shooting exploits. 'Tell Father', he had written, 'that my total bag this season has been 2 cobras, 1 pie-dog and 6 pigeon'. Instead of joining a big duck-shoot at Christmas, he persuaded Len Evans to accompany him to Rajputana to enjoy again the beauties of Udaipur.

His first impressions of Gorakhpur as a station were favourable. There was more good fellowship than at Cawnpore where social life had recently been non-existent. At Gorakhpur people dined with each other informally by

preference to dining alone. Clarmont had the good fortune of sharing a bungalow with Wahl[21] ('English of the English in spite of his name'), a civilian of 11 years service. Wahl was universally liked, an all-round sportsman and also a first-class pianist who could play Beethoven and Chopin magnificently. Clarmont took over the 'sudder tahsil' from Wahl, finding a reasonably light file with no arrears. The Collector, Silberrad[22], did not strike Clarmont as so sharp and energetic a man as Tyler had been.

Clarmont's uppermost thoughts were still on how he could take an active part in the war, preferably at the front. He was very envious of his first cousin, Debnam Stewart younger of Ardvorlich, who had just joined the Black Watch at Bareilly when war broke out – 'Some fellows have all the luck. There's Deb has a rattling good time and near as possible fails to get into the Army, and then when he does he comes in for this colossal show'. Clarmont spent a weekend in the Black Watch mess at Bareilly just before the regiment left for France. At the same time, his mother's first cousin Willie Murray Stewart who was in the Cameron Highlanders at Poona, had left for France with the Indian Expeditionary Force. But a much closer involvement arose from the decision of his favourite cousin, Theo Lukis, to serve in an infantry battalion despite the fact that he was a qualified doctor. Theo had spent many school holidays at Ardvorlich and had also been a pupil at The Mount, St. Leonards. Thereafter his and Clarmont's paths had diverged but they had remained in touch, collaborating over the production of a literary journal in the holidays and exchanging visits when Clarmont was at Oxford and Theo a medical student at Barts. They were the brainiest two of the old laird's grandchildren. Early in 1915 Theo died of wounds and as soon as the news reached Clarmont he wrote to his aunt in Delhi expressing his admiration and envy of Theo's enthusiastic sacrifice of his life for his country's sake. Lady Lukis told Helen that she prized Clarmont's letter best of all the sympathy she received, knowing he wrote from the heart and was the only person in India who really knew and loved Theo. Theo's death was a great personal blow to the Skrine parents too; Helen had been something of a vice-mother while the Lukis parents were in India. The first notification reported Theo as very seriously wounded and Frank had crossed to Boulogne to see him in hospital, but he was too late. 'Behind all my grief', Clarmont commented, 'is a passionate regret that I too have not the opportunity of making the same sacrifice if necessary. Nothing else is worth living for these days. But what a waste! To think of Theo's surgical skill and brilliant future! Why did he not go to the front as a doctor? There is risk enough if he wanted that, as I suppose we all do...'

Clarmont's hopes of being allowed to join the Indian Army Special Reserve were revived by the relaxing of the prohibition on the appointment of Government officers. There were still many restrictions but he thought that his chance of being selected had been improved by his successes at the Light Horse sports. He won in two of the competitions, tent-pegging and half-section jumping. However, on a visit to Lucknow to take the Proficiency exam in

Urdu, the Chief Secretary told him that his application had been refused. Clarmont obtained an interview with Sir James Meston who told him that 18 men from the U.P. were going to be allowed to join and that Clarmont should resubmit his application to the Chief Secretary, setting out all the military experience he had had. But the Government of India did not agree with the proposal to release 18 officers from the U.P. and in the end only seven, of whom Wahl was one, were allowed to go.

This disappointment determined Clarmont to try for the Political Service where he thought the prospect of greater variety would be to his taste. He consulted his father who was not enthusiastic, hoping apparently for a Secretariat career for Clarmont. Clarmont replied saying that he did not know how things had been in the old days but nowadays nearly everyone was given a stint in the Secretariat, spending perhaps five years out of 25 at headquarters. There was no such thing as a Secretariat career – everyone in the province not in the Judicial line had a definitely executive career: 'What I want is pioneer work; I should like to have a hand in the new Persia, for instance...'

In June Clarmont went to Simla to be re-inoculated against typhoid. He stayed with the Lukis's, his uncle warning him not to mention Theo whose name was likely to send Lady Lukis into paroxysms of crying. He had an introduction from his uncle to J.B. Wood[23], the Political Secretary, and also saw Tony Grant[24], the Foreign Secretary. They both promised support with the U.P. Government for his candidature for the Political Department – 'I did not realize what an opportune moment I had chosen, until Wood told me that Sir Percy Cox[25] in Mesopotamia is "shouting for men" for the administration of the newly-acquired Persian territories: the Foreign Office simply haven't the men to send. Wood asked me if I was ready to go to Persia. I said nothing would suit me better, and after a bit more talk in which I made the most of my French and of the year's Persian I studied before coming out, the Secretary was very affable and optimistic and said that he'd guarantee I should be asked for. So now it only depends on the U.P. Government. Imagine my joy and excitement'.

Helen objected to the prospect of Persia on the grounds of the climate being unhealthy. 'But, my darling Mum,' Clarmont replied, 'do you think it is healthier or less healthy than the trenches?' Frank accused Clarmont of being a sensationalist and quoted what Sir James Meston had written to him about the need there would be in India after the war for the best men. Clarmont answered: 'It is not fair to call me a sensationalist because I feel strongly that I ought to do the work for which I am best fitted. It is perfectly true that things will be very difficult after the war when "advanced" India will howl for constitutional liberty as a reward for the part which not they but the soldiers from Rajputana, the Punjab and the Frontier have played. It will be largely the fault of our own ultra-Liberal theorists. I cannot include myself among the men we shall want, I so detest, despise and loathe the modern "advanced" Bengali and his U.P. equivalent, the arrogant, shallow, cowardly selfish specimens who run the

"Swadeshi" movement... They owe everything to the English, their money, their safety, the safety of their women folk and they repay it by back-biting and underhand intrigue of every kind. No, the Political's the job for me. I like the idea of the Frontier. I like the idea of Persia, climate and all'.

Clarmont applied for ten days' casual leave in September and the Commissioner authorised it in a telegram, adding 'unless transfer to Political Department prevents'. On arrival at the Lukis's in Simla he found a telegram ordering him to report at Quetta. He returned to Gorakhpur, packed up, finished work and handed over all in two and a half days, including a 50 mile journey to see Silberrad in camp. 'At present I'm too happy to articulate', he wrote. 'One thing, Persia is off until this Viceroy goes. He won't let Percy Cox have anybody from India. The old story – he's in a deadly funk of anything happening out here and marring the end of his reign'.

Chapter 6

...Next best, the Political Service[26]

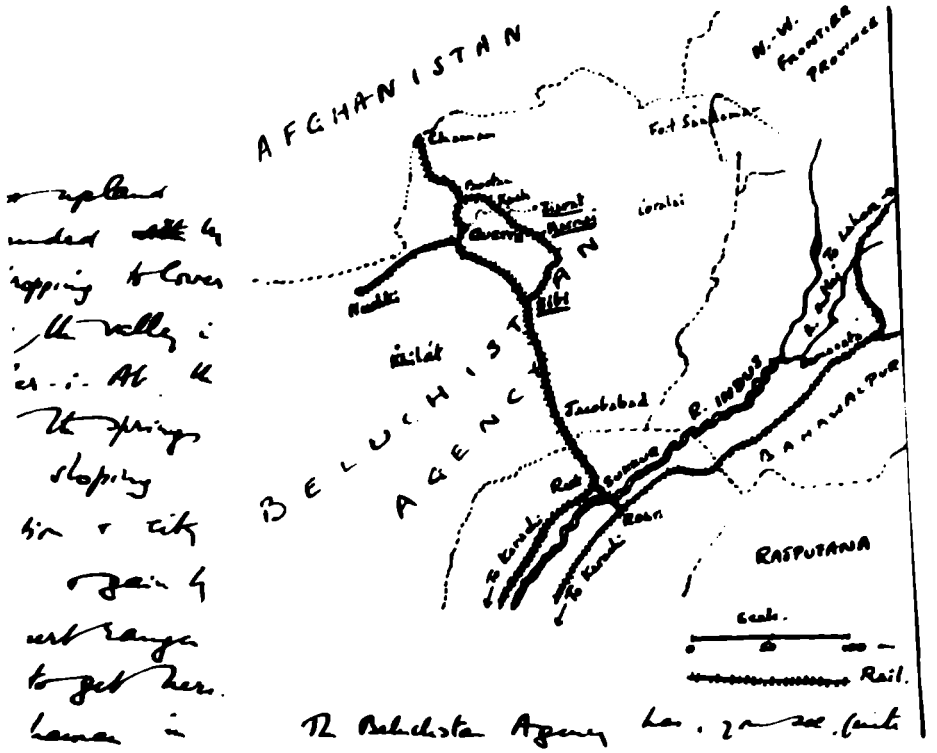
The Political Service was recruited two-thirds from the Indian Army and one-third from the ICS. Although it was one department, it had two different types of work known as 'Political' and 'Foreign'. The 'Political' side consisted of service in the Indian States. (Roughly two-fifths of India was not British but was contained in these Native States). Such service was very different to that of a district officer in British India. The Political Officer did not administer; his role was to be a watchdog on behalf of the Central Government and to advise the Ruler. The 'Foreign' side was concerned with law and order in the North-West Frontier and Baluchistan, and with staffing Government of India posts outside India.

Frank Skrine's objection to Clarmont joining the Political Service was his belief that many political officers were loafers, with no real hard work comparable to the heat and burden of life in a district of British India. Clarmont had no such misgivings. 'What inspirits me most', he wrote from the train en route to Quetta, 'is the thought of all there is to learn about these new regions – Baluchistan, Afghanistan, the Frontier, Persia, Central Asia – regions supremely interesting to me. I jump out of the carriage at every station and study the types. What fine, straight, hardy fellows they are – we shall get on well, they and I. Or if not, then let me get back on to my office-stool and drive a quill all the rest of my time'.

The approach by railway to Quetta was most impressive, climbing 5,000 ft, the gradient in many places 1 in 25. Quetta itself was in a flat valley or upland plateau. The railway station Sar-i-ab ('head of the waters') was at the top of the valley, the springs there making the whole sloping plain fertile. The city and station appeared pleasantly green in contrast with the desert ranges which the railway had crossed. The line continued to Chaman in Afghanistan and a branch line went west to Nushki, right in the desert. The railway system was broad-gauge and double-lined most of the way for strategic reasons.

Clarmont found he was to be Assistant Political Agent, Sibi district, his chief, the Political Agent, being Major McConaghey[27]. He was most favourably impressed by the friendliness of all the Political men – there was none of 'the angularity and even arrogance (sometimes) that one's apt to find among I.C.S. men'.

The A.P.A. Sibi spent some months during the hot weather at Ziarat, a hill-station, and was responsible for its maintenance. McConaghey took Clarmont to Ziarat in his Ford car. The first 28 miles were fairly good, then the Ziarat road wound 32 miles over a col to the head of a long winding valley, shut in by a magnificent range of cliffs and covered with junipers.



3 The Baluchistan Agency

They arrived at sunset: 'A small crowd of hairy, fierce-looking stalwarts were there to welcome the P.A. and I was introduced to them – all insisted on shaking me by the hand. What a delightful difference from the obsequious, salaaming Hindus I've left so gloriously far behind me! Ziarat only contains 14 or 15 bungalows, situated among trees and flowering shrubs on the steep hill-side. A noisy burn tumbles merrily down through the gardens. The Residency is a wooden and stone chalet of two storeys. My house is a delightful one, with a nice garden and a separate building for offices. It is my duty to "run" the Station, which contains in an ordinary season as many as 15-20 camps as well as the 14 or 15 households. The place pays its own way, by taxation and the produce of its garden and orchards. The work is very light compared with the U.P. There is little or no casework: most of it is "political" work, ie settling disputes between the tribesmen. Nearly all crime is due to tribal enmity: the Sarangzais in one valley organize a raid on the Panizais of the next valley, four or five are killed, the matter is reported to me and I, after preliminary investigation, refer the matter to a "jirga" who come and sit in my compound until they have settled the matter. The tariff for murder is Rs 800 for a man, Rs 400 for a woman, except in the case of big men when it may be as high as Rs 1600. If I think the finding a bad one, I disallow it and insist on further arbitration. A strange land and a strange system, but it works well'.

The headquarters of the sub-division were at Harnai, a village at 3,000 ft – much lower than Quetta but cold by comparison with Sibi itself. Harnai contained a bungalow for the use of the Political officer, the office building (tahsil) and a dak bungalow and post office. One train passed through each way

daily. The scenery was pleasing, a beautiful clear stream wound down the valley and the green and rich browns of the fields contrasted pleasantly with the gray and pale brown of the mountains. The Khalifat group – 11,000 ft – dominated the landscape on the north. Clarmont almost felt himself to be on leave: if his parents could come out and stay with him they would be able to have picnics every day, just like on former holidays in Bavaria and Finland.

Clarmont's delight in his new job may have been the reason for Frank to express renewed concern at the effect the Political department might have on him. Clarmont was quite open about the difference in methods of the Baluchistan Agency and districts in the U.P. – things were not nearly so efficiently and economically run. He conceded also 'my chief, Major McConaghey, is exceptionally easy-going and averse to real work; he is a typical soldier of the old school, rather run to seed. In the Sibi Agency the clerks of the P.A's office absolutely rule the roost. I don't say the district is misgoverned – far from it. I have not heard a whisper against the justice of the administration. Again, though slow-witted and lazy, McConaghey is a strong man in his way and the tribesmen respect him. The most important consideration, however, is the total absence here of (a) vakils (b) the vernacular press... I don't know what old "Conics", as my chief is called, would do if he were planked down in Silberrad's or Tyler's place. In a month he'd have lost 7 of his 17 stone and a month later he would pass away quietly with a puzzled, protesting expression on his erstwhile chubby countenance...

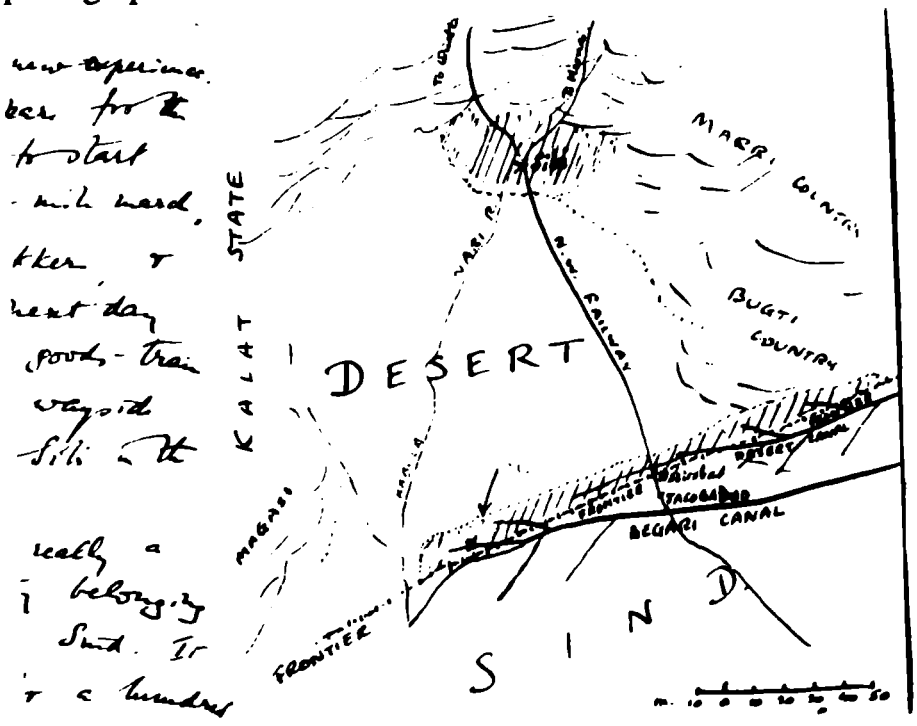
'This district contains a large number of small tribes and two large and powerful ones, the Marris and Bugtis. These are of wilder stock than the rest: the men are very fine indeed, huge tall fellows with flowing locks, beards and moustaches and voluminous garments: the old men are incredibly patriarchal. The tribes are practically self-governing: our writ does not run there, for whenever we want a man caught in Marri or Bugti country we ask the Nawab to catch him. Jurisdiction is in the hands of the tribal jirgah, and pressure is only exerted on the elders in really big cases such as tribal raids. Though inefficient judged by U.P. standards, the administration is admirably suited to and in touch with the people. I understand now why the Political men I have met are all so pleasant and genial. It's because pleasantness and geniality are exactly what is wanted in these parts...

'It is quite true that there is much less imperative routine work but I don't think you'll find an instance of an ICS Political turning out a loafer. There are three Army men to one ICS man in the Department and I daresay the Army men are apt to loaf sometimes because they haven't been through the mill. I notice that the Secretariat posts, both locally and at Simla, are almost entirely in the hands of Civilians. This speaks for itself.

'Again, you must allow for the voice of envy. Nearly everyone tries for the Political and there's a certain amount of sour-grapes feeling. Thus it may be that the work of the Department is belittled, but it is the buffer between British India and all the independent and semi-independent forces of the East.

Think of all the peoples British India marches with! from Mysore to China, from Assam to Persia, and the Department is the Warden of the Marches, so to speak – as well as being the Diplomatic Service of the Indian Empire. I think one may be permitted to be proud of belonging to it'.

In December the A.P.A. moved to Sibi where he had a bungalow of palatial size compared to anything Clarmont had had before. The house was on a mound and had views across country on all sides. He wished he had twice as many pictures and books to furnish it with. He had been perfectly comfortable living in his tent but when living in a house he liked to have civilized decoration round him. His favourite picture was a photograph of his mother as a young woman. He had had it mounted in a silver frame holding the tushes of the big pig that had bitten his foot. He also had some framed enlargements of good photographs he had taken.



4 Nasirabad Tahsil

Soon after moving to Sibi he was sent off for a week's tour in the western lands of Nasirabad tahsil, McConaghey being unable ('or too lazy') to undertake the tour himself. This territory was a narrow strip belonging to Baluchistan bordering Sind. It ran east and west for a hundred miles, bisected by the railway which ran more or less north and south. To the south lay Sind, to the north the most terrible desert hemmed in by hills. The only settled areas were those round Sibi watered by perennial hill-streams and the frontier strip near Sind cultivable only because it was the last outpost of the Indus Canal system. The inspection was necessary because the maliks (headmen) had been complaining that they could not make the staple crop – millet – pay. They wanted to be allowed to cultivate more rice. However, rice required three times

as much water as other crops and unfitted the soil for anything else. The desert being large and Indus water limited, the Canal Department allowed the cultivation of rice in only very restricted quantities. The problem had been going on since 1905 and during the intervening 11 years only one officer had been to see the state of affairs with his own eyes. Clarmont sent his parents a sketch-map – 'As you will see, I am quite close to the fringe of the desert – nothing but a billiard-table waste of caked mud. In the hot weather the only living things on it are vipers that live in the cracks and take a heavy toll of the wretched cultivators who live in miserable hovels on the verge of the cultivation. They simply can't go out after dark in the hot weather – imagine the sanitary state of the huts! Appalling fiery winds sweep over the plain. If it were not for the canal water, life would be as impossible as it is a few miles away northwards; but the canal water only flows from May till November and in the cold weather they have to drink the foul soup-like liquid remaining in the bottom of the distributaries. The maliks are a well spoken upstanding lot of the Jamali tribe. They were given the land mostly revenue-free by the Khan of Kalat. There are no occupancy tenants, only year-to-year, hence the lack of enterprise in cultivation. Over the border in Sind things are far more prosperous and settled – more like what I am accustomed to in the U.P. It is extremely interesting to compare and contrast the conditions prevailing under the three different systems – Trans-Frontier, Upper Sind Frontier and Upper India'.

Clarmont was back in Sibi just before the Horse Show week when the place became packed. Baluchis, Brahuis, Kurds and Pathan tribesmen swarmed everywhere. The Horse Show was run by the Army Remount Department and the chief classes were mares with foals got by Government stallions. Besides the Show, there were races for the tribesmen, tent-pegging competitions, wrestling, etc. and exhibitions of carpets and saddlery. Sir John Ramsay[28], the Agent to the Governor General and Chief Commissioner (A.G.G.), held a formal Durbar. It ended with a garden-party given to the sardars at the Residency at which at least 300 of the tribal headmen of Baluchistan were present. It was an impressive sight, the whole crowd coming up the Residency garden in a procession to where the A.G.G. was standing to receive them – 'At a given signal the whole lot made a dash for the tea-marquee and in an amazingly short time every seat at every table was occupied, and the whole chattering, cheery crowd were occupied too, in wolfing sweet tea and cakes. Nearly all the male European sahibs were present, but no ladies. We political officers sit at one table or another with the tribesmen and eat with them. I did my duty nobly, making my way to a group of tables occupied by the Sarangzai maliks of my ilaqa and having an uproarious tea with them. It amused me vastly to see them, bearded veterans all, enjoying themselves like a pack of schoolboys, shouting Pushtoo jokes to each other, throwing bread about, popping off lemonade bottles and all the while steadily munching cakes and biscuits. After tea, most of those present went out into the open, spread their

carpets and performed the evening prayer'. Clarmont felt great relief in getting away directly afterwards to Mangi, 5,500 ft up in snow-capped mountains.

The biggest outstanding problem in the district had arisen from the age-old feud between the Marris and Bugtis. Several incidents had occurred in 1915; one was a raid on the Sibi bazaar when eight Marri headmen were killed; another was the murder of the Marri Nawab followed by a raid by Marris on a valley in the Bugti country. Each side had collected a force of three or four thousand armed tribesmen before the able Extra Assistant Commissioner of Sibi, Diwan Jamiat Rai, had managed to persuade both tribes to submit to arbitration. An award had been arrived at just when Clarmont had first come to Quetta. Seven Bugtis were given terms of imprisonment and the tribe was fined Rs 20,000. Six Marris were also given terms of jail. Now a breakout from Sibi Jail had occurred. The police had intercepted some, of whom seven were killed, including the very four Bugtis who had murdered the Marri Nawab's nephew. As a result, the Bugtis were convinced that the whole thing was a put-up job on the part of the Marris in collusion with the police. There was great unrest in the Bugti country and 160 Bugti sowars with rifles had quietly collected in Sibi, but finding too many odd detachments of regular troops in the vicinity had dispersed. 'If only', wrote Clarmont, 'we could whisk the whole lot of the fighting men of both sides off to Egypt and start training them there to fight the Germans! Magnificent fellows they are. But alas, they only know two motives for fighting, (1) plunder, (2) revenge. They don't want pay and it never enters their heads to go and fight for the British Empire. Why should they? 40 years ago they'd never heard of it, and all it means to them is a stern power that interferes with their predatory raids on the plains and their blood-feuds with each other'.

The A.P.A. should have closed down at Sibi in mid-March but the re-opened Marri-Bugti dispute kept the P.A. at Sibi and one of McConaghey's characteristics was to like having his A.P.A. 'sitting in his pocket'. Sibi became very uncomfortable, specially at night when the tin-roofed bungalows, with no punkahs, were invaded by sand-flies. The compensation for Clarmont was that he had an excellent opportunity of becoming acquainted with the tortuousness of negotiations between Marris and Bugtis. The case dragged on until the end of March when at last the Marri chief agreed to sign. McConaghey had a tea-party in his garden 'attended by three Bugti sardars, two Marris sardars and 4,000,000 flies. I must say I was struck by the behaviour of the sardars. Though their tribes were ancestral enemies and feeling had for many months been extra strong, yet they sat there at tea quite amicably as if they had been good friends all their lives. After tea according to the custom they all embraced, but without any pretence or dramatic air. It was all quiet and natural and *bon goût*. They're aristocrats'.

Clarmont escaped with relief from Sibi and soon had occasion to move to Ziarat. He climbed up from Sharig, the next station but one up the line from Harnai. The way led to the foot of the Khalifat range. Some migrating

herdsmen were taking their flocks up from the now parching Harnai valley to the higher pastures. The cliffs soared up four or five thousand feet in all directions, on the north side Shinsobin, 10,200 ft, its Matterhorn-like top streaked with snow. A scramble up a narrow chimney led to a beautiful little plateau, well-wooded with juniper, ash, olive and wild almonds and the grass carpeted with daffodils, irises and tulips. At this altitude it was bitterly cold and Clarmont almost ran down the last three miles to Ziarat.

He had kept for reading at Ziarat a recently received copy of Rupert Brooke's '1914' – 'I love some of the things, especially Grantchester and the sonnet One Day. The critics are right, and the world's opinion is not unduly influenced by the sadness of his end. He *was* a poet, and not a minor one either. The breath of Keats and Shelley breathed in him. If only he had lived a little longer. Brooke had humour, bless him, thereby differing from his prototypes. Don't you love his poem about Heaven as imagined by fish?'

A peculiar feature of the life of a political officer in the Sibi district was the abrupt changes of altitude and the frequent extremes of climate. In one month Clarmont twice spent a couple of days at 8,000 ft and twice made two-day visits to the plains. He acquired a motor bicycle which was invaluable for getting down to the railway line at Kach. There were only about 60 miles of road in 10,000 square miles but the frequency of journeys to and from Ziarat amply justified it. He had just got back to Ziarat after three days of cases and inspections in the Kach area when he received an urgent order to go at once to Sibi to investigate the escape from jail of seven more Bugti prisoners. He was also to try five of them who had been recaptured by a havildar of Levies. This was the third serious escape from Sibi jail. There was nothing for it but to dash down to Kach and take the mid-day train to Sibi. It was overpoweringly hot even at Kach – 6250 ft – so Clarmont knew what to expect at Sibi. Fortunately a storm broke soon after his arrival and the temperature dropped. All the witnesses and prisoners were brought to the station and the case went on through the night, finishing at 5.30 am. Clarmont then went off to the jail and saw the hole made by the escaping prisoners – 'Owing solely to bad management, they had been able to procure two large cooking spoons, two knives and a heavy iron pestle, and, choosing a point from which the watchman in the central tower could not see them, they dug out a drainpipe and made a hole large enough to get through between the hours of 12 noon and 2 pm. Everybody in the jail, warders, prisoners and all, were asleep then except these seven'. Clarmont returned to the station in time to have a bath before the return train was due. The water from the cold tap in the waiting room bathroom was so hot that the bath had to be left for a bit before it could be used.

At Kach it was drizzling and the sky was black but Clarmont did not have bedding with him and wanted to get back to Ziarat. He was making good time on his motor bike at about the half-way mark when he heard a tremendous roaring sound – 'I looked and saw a wonderful sight; a huge mass of brown

water sweeping down the middle of the valley, the head of a huge flood. One second there was an ordinary little stream meandering down, next there was a raging torrent 50 yards broad. The water went like a wall at about 15 miles an hour, followed by shouting Pathan cultivators who tried to keep up with it to see what it was going to do in the way of breaking bunds and flooding crops'.

War news of course was uppermost in Clarmont's letters. Quetta felt much closer to the war than the U.P. had been, so many families had their men with the army in Mesopotamia, and whenever he was in Quetta Clarmont was able to see the Reuter messages as they arrived. Helen expressed the fear that British reverses at Gallipoli and in Mesopotamia would damage our prestige: Clarmont considered that greater tension would ensue when we began to win victories over Turkey. Though much safer than life in the trenches, Baluchistan was not without some danger. The A.P.A. Mekran and his companion were murdered. They were out for an evening walk and the 'ghazis' came up, pretending to present a petition, and shot them both dead. 'The one bright spot', commented Clarmont, 'is the behaviour of the Mekran Levy Corps, thus bereft of its only two British officers. They sallied forth, hunted down the ghazis and killed them in cold blood'.

Clarmont passed with ease the language exam in Baluchi and proposed taking Persian. He foresaw that the Harnai sub-division of Sibi District would soon begin to pall. The job of A.P.A. was a curious one, apart from the contrasts it offered in altitudes and climate. For three quarters of the year the A.P.A. was more or less in the wilds, but in February at Sibi and in July and August at Ziarat he filled an extremely social role. Clarmont made the best of both worlds and enjoyed having guests to stay. A first cousin of Helen's, Robin Stewart, was in the Supply and Transport in Quetta and came to stay. This gave Clarmont the chance to repay kindnesses he had received in Quetta and with Robin Stewart's help he gave a children's party. Seven children came, no mothers or nurses; it was a great success: 'The gramaphone justified itself as never before. Within two minutes of the last child's arrival (on donkeyback as usual) we were all dancing about and shouting to its strains. Tea was laid on the verandah. Such a tea! Scones, new bread, honey, apricot, cherry and red currant jam (all home-made), chocolate cake, seed-cake, shortbread, what not. After tea we had more dancing followed by a splendid game of hide and seek for which the garden is ideal. Then I hid the toys I had got for the children in different wily places in the house. They weren't much in the way of toys but the excitement of the treasure hunt was worth lakhs. The seventh toy could not be found anywhere and the little girl whose it was to be was nearly crying with anxiety, so I seized up a toy drum and organized a procession à la Pied Piper. Round we marched, through all the house and half the garden, me beating the drum and seven tiny tots marching behind beating drums and blowing bugles till we came to the place – which was merely the fold of a muslin curtain in which a white woollen terrier nestled. Never had resolute mammas and nurses more difficulty in dragging their respective imps away from a party!'

In September Clarmont took three weeks' privilege leave and went to the Lukis's in Simla. He took with him a large quantity of fresh fruit from Ziarat and sent a basket of it round to Mrs Tony Grant, wife of the Foreign Secretary. Result, a telephone invitation to dinner. A fellow-guest was Colonel O'Connor[29] who had been Consul at Shiraz. In 1915 the Swedish Gendarmerie in Persia, as a consequence of German intrigue, had surrounded the consulate with machine guns and taken O'Connor into captivity. He had only recently been released and allowed to return to India. Two days after the Grants' dinner-party there was a telephone call for Clarmont and the Under Secretary at the Foreign Office asked him if he would go to Kerman as Vice-Consul. Clarmont could hardly believe his ears but said 'Yes, rather' as quick as possible. The A.G.G. in Baluchistan was reluctant to let Clarmont go unless a relief could be provided and some anxious waiting ensued. An express wire to Quetta at last elicited the A.G.G's permission. Some strenuous days followed so that on 7th October Clarmont was able to board the Karachi train, seen off by a few Quetta friends. 'I had had such a happy time in Baluchistan and had made such a lot of pleasant acquaintances. It came over me all of a sudden that I was going very much into the wilds, and for an indefinite period. It wasn't that I felt lonely; my natural buoyancy asserted itself and I thought that at last I was really "starting" – much more so than when I left England for India. My opportunity has come and it is up to me to make good. As for success, I am not ambitious and it matters little so long as I have scope for my energies and powers...'

Chapter 7

Vice-Consul Kerman

1916-17

The situation in Persia which led to a vice consul being so urgently required in Kerman was lucidly set out in the introduction which Clarmont wrote for his *World War in Iran* published in 1962. On the outbreak of war Shah Ahmad (last of the Qajar dynasty) had proclaimed Persian neutrality, but there was no army competent to maintain that neutrality; the only effective armed forces were the 'Cossack Brigade' in the north and the 'Swedish Gendarmerie' in the south. These had been established as part of the Anglo-Russian 'spheres of influence' agreement of 1907 whereunder the northern provinces of Persia were recognized as the Russian zone. The Swedish Gendarmerie was controlled by the Persian Government and consisted of about 7,000 Persians trained and officered by Swedish advisers. The zenith of German ambition was the conquest of India and in 1915 its achievement seemed within the bounds of possibility. Turkey was in the war on Germany's side; if Persia could be persuaded out of her neutrality the way would be clear for Germans to make contact with the Amir of Afghanistan and the Indian Princes, urging them to rise against the British. The leaders of a German secret mission – holding diplomatic and consular posts for cover – nearly succeeded in jockeying Persia into the war in 1915 on the side of the Central Powers. They were well provided with money and, having undermined the loyalty of the Swedish Gendarmerie, persuaded the Democrat (nationalist) party that the Germans would win the war. The Russian Vice Consul at Isfahan was murdered and British posts on the Bushire peninsula and at Shiraz were attacked. Only the appearance of a Russian force in the north prevented rioting in Teheran and a *coup* by the Democrat party. In south Persia, not a single Briton remained in the key towns – Isfahan, Shiraz, Yezd and Kerman. At Kerman a party of 30 Germans and Austrians were in control. The British had received a reverse at Ctesiphon and no troops could be spared for Persia from all the available reinforcements and supplies required for Mesopotamia. As a substitute, it was decided to send a mission to South Persia with the object of raising a Persian force, 11,000 strong, to take the place of the Swedish Gendarmerie. Sir Percy Sykes[30] was appointed to recruit and train this new internal security force. Sykes had done a great deal of travelling in Central Asia and had held several Government of India posts in Persia. He had founded the Consulates at both Kerman and Sistan before the turn of the century. Clarmont inserted in his book this footnote:

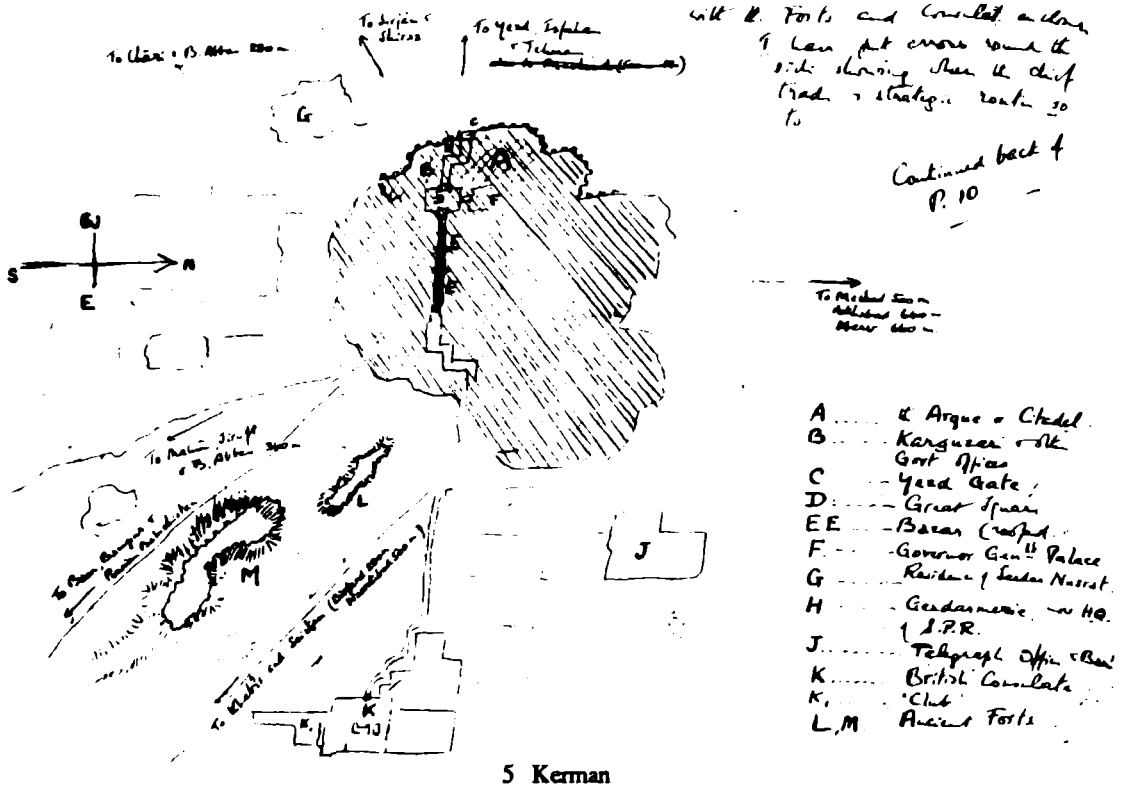
'The choice of an officer who had done no soldiering since the Boer War to raise a new corps in hostile country was a bold one, but it was justified by the result. It must be admitted that contemporary opinion was divided as to his work and merits; his naive egotism made some of his colleagues take him less seriously than he deserved. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and he cannot be denied the credit for exploiting British prestige, bluffing enemy agents and Persian hostiles alike, and thus, with quite inadequate resources, keeping south Persia comparatively quiet during a long and critical phase in the war'

At the time of Sykes's appointment in early 1915 the British campaign in Mesopotamia was still going badly and in April came the fall of Kut-al-Amara – at that time the gravest disaster ever suffered by British arms in Asia. Yet Sykes, with a mountain battery, a squadron of Bengal Lancers and a battalion of Baluch Infantry, marched inland from Bandar Abbas by a little-known route and succeeded in re-opening the Consulate at Kerman in June. Rumour during the long march had multiplied his forces. The Germans fled from Kerman, seeking refuge among friendly tribes in the mountains, and the Democrats and the Swedish Gendarmerie had virtually collapsed. Leaving Major D.L.R. Lorimer[31] in Kerman as Consul, Sykes continued his march to Yezd and Isfahan. It was the ever-increasing spate of cypher telegrams at Kerman which forced Lorimer to ask for a vice-consul to help him.

Clarmont travelled from Bandar Abbas by the same Daulatabad route which Sykes's column had used, the reason being that a telegraph construction party was starting a connection along it between Bandar Abbas and Kerman for the benefit of the South Persia Rifles – the name by which the new internal security force was to be known. The distance was 280 miles, slightly shorter than by the less rugged more easterly route. The journey took three weeks, marching being mainly at night and in the early morning so that the camels, for whom no fodder was taken, could graze for themselves during day-light. Their rate of march was one and three-quarter miles an hour. The caravan had an escort commanded by a duffedar of four Indian Cavalry N.C.O.s and ten Persian recruits for the South Persia Rifles. This was barely adequate for protection from marauders – the way led across territory of disaffected tribes believed to be sheltering Germans. The three weeks of travelling were full of dangerous incidents and the whole of the first chapter of *World War in Iran* was taken up with it. Clarmont enjoyed the life. As he wrote to his mother from 'Where my caravan is resting': '...One feels one is doing something and undergoing some hardship comparable with though far less than what nearly all the rest of the nation's manhood are undergoing. To tell the truth, I wasn't morally comfortable in my last job. It was too soft a billet for wartime'.

The march ended punctually at an agreed rendezvous outside Kerman where Lorimer arrived in a carriage and pair, escorted by 15 Lancers in full dress. Clarmont wrote: 'I dismounted, shook hands and got in beside him, thus making my triumphal entry. Lorimer told me that I was lucky to arrive

during Mohurrum because I thus avoided the long and trying ceremonies which are otherwise *de rigueur*. As it was, we merely drove through the bazaar and out the other side to the Consulate where certain notables were waiting. I had no idea there was so much pomp and circumstance attached to my presumably humble post: the fact is, of course, Persia is a great place for show and our business is to uphold the dignity of the British lion'.



5 Kerman

The Consulate was situated in a spacious compound outside the town. The beauty of Kerman – which contained no distinguished buildings – derived from the magnificent sweep of plain on which it stood. The cliffs to the south-east were crowned with crumbling bastions of ancient forts and the horizon was bounded with mountain ranges.

Clarmont described Lorimer as being 'of the light-haired, slightly under-physiqued Lowland type' and his first impression of him was disappointing. He soon revised his views, recognizing a most efficient and hard-working officer who had spent many years in out-of-the-way places. His chief hobby was studying little-known languages and he was at work on Gabr, the language of the Zoroastrians of whom a few still survived in Kerman and Yezd.

Life in the Consulate was fairly austere; breakfast at 8 o'clock sharp, lunch at 1; plain fare and no strong drink in the house. In the evenings the two men usually went for a walk and after dinner they often read poetry to each other. Clarmont's office work consisted chiefly of cyphering and de-cyphering telegrams. Whenever there was not much of this, he studied Persian; he was fortunate in his *mirza*, an elderly but very keen coach. Lorimer could read a

Persian letter as easily as one in English and Clarmont determined to be able to do the same.

He had arrived in Kerman at a quiet time. The Indian Army officers and N.C.O.s with the South Persia Rifles were training 800 or so recruits, thus laying the foundation of a strong British position, but enemy agents were still at large and there was a sense of living on a volcano. Sykes's German and Austrian prisoners had managed to escape in Sirjan when on their way to Bandar Abbas with an inadequate escort; much depended on the behaviour of the tribes with whom they were hiding. Lorimer and Clarmont felt critical of Sykes for having allowed the prisoners to escape but years later Sykes claimed that his forced march to Isfahan had been made under instructions – it may have prevented a Turkish advance on Isfahan and Teheran. The work of the Consulate had been lightened by the departure of the Swedish Gendarmerie who had perpetually quarrelled among themselves and the absence of the Russian Consul. He had not had the same standing as the British Consul but he had made many difficulties by his intrigues against British interests.

The Governor-General was a royal prince, uncle of the Shah. He was a young man, entirely in the hands of a ring of self-seeking advisers. The foremost of these was the Deputy Governor, Sardar Nusrat, who fortunately was well-disposed. Lorimer took Clarmont to make a first ceremonial call on both of them, Lorimer wearing Political uniform, Clarmont in morning dress. They went in a carriage and pair with four farrashes and an escort of 20 Lancers in full dress. Clarmont described the Prince as 'a manly young fellow, quite all right in good hands. He has been to Europe and spent some time as a boy both at Paris and Petrograd. He shows much of the polish of a European prince and is as white as you or me: slightly curved nose, otherwise very good-looking'. Sardar Nusrat lived in a large house outside the city walls. He impressed Clarmont as 'a clever, strong man – dark bushy eyebrows, strong chin, probably not more trustworthy than most Persian grandees. One thing that I liked about him was that he did not go in for flattery and soft words'. A third ceremonial call was paid on the Karguzar, the official under the Governor responsible for all business with foreigners.

The only other Europeans in Kerman were two officers of the South Persia Rifles and the regiment's medical officer, Husband, seconded from the I.M.S., Taylor, of the Imperial Bank of Iran, and May of the Indo-European Telegraph Department. May's wife was with him, the only white woman in Kerman. She had been allowed to come up with Sykes's column by mistake. Lorimer's wife was in Basra, editing most successfully, according to all reports, the 'Basra Times'. She had been before marriage a tutor at Somerville and was an excellent linguist.

Clarmont did not miss the society of a bigger European population. Most of the Persians on whom he called were thoroughly civilised, almost western in their interest and conversation, although the ceremonial was most formal. He sent his mother a description of a call: 'One has to stay at least

three-quarters of an hour at each house. One rides solemnly through the city preceded by two Lancer outriders and followed by two more. Immediately in front of one's horse walk two Consulate farrashes. At the corner of the street in which is situated the house at which one is to call, two servants from it meet the caller and lead him to the door. Passing through the gateway and a crowd of servants and hangers-on, one walks in procession to the *Mihman Khana* or reception room, in which the host is waiting. The room is generally quite small, its floors covered with carpets and sometimes its walls too. The ceilings and dadoes in most Persian rooms are moulded and scalloped into the most elaborate geometric designs, very beautiful. How on earth the masons produce them without geometrical instruments, I can't imagine. The room contains nothing but a table and some ordinary chairs. On the table are piled masses of fruit, biscuits and sweetmeats.

'Directly the caller meets his host he says "Salaam alaikum" and is answered by "Wa alaikum salaam". He is then led to a chair and made to sit down. Often the host's sons or other relations are in the room. Having sat down, the caller bows first to the host and then to each of the other people in the room in turn, saying "Ahwai-i sharif?" (The noble state?) and the person addressed says "Alhamdu 'l illah, az iltifat i janab-i-ali" (Praise be to God, by the favour of the lofty doorstep). Having gone the round, each of the other persons in the room says "Ahwal-i-sharif?" to the caller and is answered in the same manner. Often other questions are passed, such as "In sha allah, khastagi-i-hazrat i-mubarak na shud?" (I pray God the to-be-congratulated Presence is not tired?) answered by "Alhamd u'l illah, bandeh khasta na shud" (your slave is not tired). These formalities over, the host calls for tea, which is brought in on pretty little filigree trays. The tea is of course without milk; lemon is very occasionally provided. You take a biscuit or a sweet with your tea. That finished, your host offers you a cigarette, which you must allow him to light for you. Before (not after) he lights it, you must bow slightly to him Conversation then becomes general. Persians are excellent company and the time usually passes quickly. One must always be very careful to address a good-class Persian as "janab-i-ali" in the third person, except a Prince of the blood (such as the Governor General here) whom one addresses as "Hazrat-i-wala" or "Hazrat-i-aqdas" (the mighty or sacred presence). We Europeans do not usually refer to ourselves as "bandeh" (slave) but Persians speaking to us (except the Prince) invariably do, at any rate at ceremonial calls.

'One's teacup is taken out as soon as emptied and brought back again full perhaps three or four times. Sooner or later, coffee is brought in. This is a sign on the part of the host that he won't be offended if the visitor goes. When the latter wants to depart, he says deprecatingly to the host "Khaili muzahim shudam murakhkas bi-tarmaid" (I have caused much weariness, please give me leave to depart). The host bows and murmurs "Khaili khush amadid" (You have been very welcome). As you go out, you shake hands with your host and others of his party, saying "Iltifat-i-janab-i-ali ziyad azt" (The favour

of the lofty doorstep is too great). Both sides murmur this at the same time while shaking hands.

'The people one calls on nearly always have something amusing to tell you, if it's only town gossip. It's better than sitting in an office, and one learns one's Persian all the quicker'.

But Clarmont was aware of an undercurrent of horror in Persian life. Quite an ordinary form of capital punishment was known as 'gaching up'. A casing of clay was built round the victim and 'gach' – plaster of Paris – poured into it. When the 'gach' cools it solidifies and expands slightly, crushing the man so that he cannot breathe. This was an alternative to hanging which consisted merely of hitching a rope over a branch of a tree and swinging the wretched man off the ground by a loop round his neck. 'Curious', Clarmont commented, 'that a people should be so callous and cruel in some matters and yet so sentimental and soft-hearted in others. They are very fond of children, and cats are treated very kindly. They seem to be of quick and ready sympathy too – their elaborate code of manners is merely an extension of an almost excessive regard for other people's feelings. And yet...'

Persian 'justice' was another anomaly. Criminals caught by the police and unable to buy themselves off were usually dealt with by the executive but crimes with political significance were tried by a *majliss* consisting of the Prince's adviser, the Chief of Police (Rais-i-Nazmia) and the Chief Clerk (Munshi-Bashi). An assassination attempt had been made against a protégé of the Russians. There being no Russian Consul, Lorimer and Clarmont had to attend to see fair play. The evidence was heard very thoroughly, the proceedings lasting for nine hours. The *majliss* was convinced beforehand that the accused had been one of the would-be assassins and he was not given the chance of cross-examining the witnesses. He was known to have been a paid agent of the Germans and Clarmont supposed that it would be an excellent example for him to be hanged – 'but I wouldn't like to be accused of a crime in Persia and unable to buy myself off!'

Mail was supposed to come up from Bandar Abbas once a week but delays in the donkey-service were frequent, the postman waiting for a week at a time in one place if there were rumours of robbers ahead. The pleasure brought by his first batch of letters from home was sadly eclipsed: his cousin Deb Stewart had been killed on the Somme. He was thankful that he had managed to see Deb at Bareilly – almost all the Black Watch officers he had met that week-end were either wounded or killed. Clarmont's senior Skrine cousin Henry, an Oxford contemporary and last of a line which had succeeded to Warleigh for thirteen generations in direct descent, had been killed at Hooge. The casualties among his relations and friends made him all the more thankful to have got away from Baluchistan. The situation in Kerman was again not without danger: Sykes and his column were blockaded in Shiraz by Tangistani forces with German leaders.

Letters from his parents showed misgivings about Clarmont having left India, his father accusing him of seeking change for its own sake. He repudiated this charge with great patience, regretting to have to say to Frank who had such affection for India that Persia was far more interesting than the U.P. In Clarmont's view Persia would be likely to remain a centre of interest politically for a long time. Would the country continue in its present state of Gilbertian autonomy? Would the Russians always be agreeable to the British hold on the Gulf? And as to liking change, a Political officer was constantly liable to transfer and had to be ready to learn a new language and a new kind of work. Clarmont had not asked for the job he was holding; he believed in the maxim 'Never ask for a job and never refuse one that's offered'. Helen's misgivings took the form of hoping that his exalted position at Kerman would not give him a swollen head. He explained that she was under a complete delusion about the importance of his post; he was merely the assistant to the Consul, a less responsible position than he had held in Baluchistan in some ways. Of course his job at Kerman had possibilities, Lorimer might leave and Clarmont have the opportunity of officiating. But Clarmont was not ambitious in the sense of desiring high place and power for its own sake: he was ambitious to travel and explore. Many parts of Persia had not been surveyed and he thought that one day he might be put on to gazeteer work. Such route-books as existed were lamentably deficient.

This had been made obvious by an exciting event at the end of 1916. Two motor cars arrived in Kerman from Quetta. They were Hupmobiles driven by a Sergeant Cox of the Royal Engineers and an Indian subordinate. The journey of 700 miles over little-known country had sometimes involved cutting a track through rock and bridge-building. Most of the Baluch tribes through whose country they had passed were hostile and Clarmont ascribed the drivers' success to the rapidity of their travel which would have preceded news about them. Presumably the cars had been intended for Sykes's 'army' but there was no possibility of being able to drive over the country between Kerman and Shiraz.

When Clarmont was able to take a few days' leave he did some touring. He camped at Simk where the Russian Consul had had a summer resort. In mid-winter, a 'jolly little burn tumbling down in an icicle-fringed cascade' reminded him of Ardvorlich. The Lut desert stretched away like an ocean. At Easter he explored more of the Kuh-i-Jupar range. He saw no ibex, ascribing their absence to all villagers having guns and there being no restrictions – a sad contrast to the Khalifat range in Baluchistan where markhor survived in fair numbers thanks to British measures for controlled shooting. He made two climbs to 11,000 ft and drew a sketch-map of part of the range which had never been surveyed. He camped in the garden belonging to the Sardar Nusrat near Mahun, a place renowned for the beautiful mosque of Shah Niamat Ullah. Here he experienced a very old-fashioned custom. He had been invited to call on the wealthy agent of an Armenian carpet firm. He was met outside by his host and

as they crossed the threshold Clarmont nearly trod on a newly-decapitated sheep which had been sacrificed in his honour.

General Maude's entry into Baghdad gave the British Consulate an opportunity for celebrations and bunting was hung from the gateway. At last there was something concrete with which to counter the anti-British propaganda which the Democrats had been spreading, even alleging that Basra had fallen to the Turks. The handful of officers and N.C.O.s with the S.P.R. were making good progress in their training of now about 1,000 men. German officers in a similar situation might have got their recruits a little more disciplined, Clarmont reflected, but they would not have done it without getting themselves thoroughly disliked both by their own men and the civilian population. The S.P.R. officers, by contrast, were liked and respected by everybody and had kept on excellent terms with the Prince's party and Sardar Nusrat's. News of the revolution in Russia was in some ways welcome – if only one could have been certain that the prosecution of the war would not be affected.

Then Clarmont had a piece of bad luck. His left eye developed an infection which the I.M.S. doctor diagnosed as posterior synechia. Not being an oculist himself, he could not risk operating but advised Clarmont to go as soon as possible to India to be seen by an eye specialist. It was the last thing Clarmont wanted to do. However, it was essential that he should be fit in order to act as Consul later on in the year when Lorimer was expected to go on leave. Wives were about to be allowed to join the grass-widowers in Kerman; Mrs Lorimer was fully competent to do cypher work. It was accordingly arranged that Clarmont should travel to India as soon as she had arrived. He telegraphed his uncle in Simla to find the name of the best eye-surgeon and was recommended to see one in Calcutta. Reluctantly he set out on a round trip which he reckoned would be 6,870 miles: from Kerman by donkey-caravan to Bandar Abbas; thence by steamer to Bombay; on to Calcutta by train, and back via Simla and Karachi.

The caravan journey to Bandar Abbas in June was appalling. After Daulatabad they were mostly near sea-level and there was a constant hot moisture-laden wind. The temperature was between 140 and 150 and anything of metal became too hot to touch. Clarmont contracted malaria and went down with fever on board the steamer. The R.A.M.C. doctor on board wrongly diagnosed it as sand-fly fever and it was not until Bombay that he was properly treated with quinine. However, by good luck there was a well-known eye-specialist in Bombay who having given Clarmont's eye a thorough examination told him that the 'synechia' was no such thing, but a congenital condition of the eye which had been there since birth and would not get any worse nor cause the least trouble. Clarmont's relief at knowing this was outweighed by his annoyance at having had to make the journey, but he enjoyed a short stay in Simla with his aunt and uncle. When he made his farewell call at the Foreign Office he was told that he would have to officiate as Consul for a month or so at Kerman and asked if he felt equal to it – 'I said of

course I did, but I went on to say what strikes me very forcibly, namely that at Kerman the Consul *must* be someone the Persians can look up to – someone of years and wisdom and character. If he isn't all that, they simply won't come to him, as they do to Lorimer, with their quarrels and jealousies and problems to settle; and if they don't do that, British prestige sinks'.

Clarmont returned to Persia on a transport from Karachi which dropped him off at Henjam, an island coaling-station in the Strait of Hormuz. This meant an eight hour journey by launch in a very rough sea. After landing in heavy surf at Bandar Abbas, he had to press on at once to catch up a big S.P.R. caravan bound for Shiraz with stores. He was to travel with this as far as Sirjan; the two officers with the convoy having no Persian experience would be glad of his help. Clarmont would be glad of their company and welcomed the opportunity of seeing new country along the westernmost of the three caravan-routes to Kerman. His party marched at night. The second stage was a place named Ginau; Clarmont thought this should not have been marked in the route-book as a stage, there never being more than a little rain-water there. He accordingly pushed on, having a powerful fear of being caught in the desert by the full heat of the day. He overtook the big S.P.R. caravan at Sarzeh, the so-called third stage. Here he found that disaster had struck. The caravan consisted of 426 donkeys and 356 camels. They had arrived at Ginau very strung out. Finding no water, the young lieutenant in command had given the order for the caravan to start at 4.30 am. At dawn it was impossible to collect all the donkey-men and the donkeys who were all scattered and they did not get started until about 7.30. The camels got through all right with their escort without a drop of water, but the remainder collapsed. One after another, the S.P.R. and caravan-men dropped out and sat exhausted under the tamarisk bushes (which gave hardly any shade) and six died on the spot. When news came to Sarzeh that the men were dying the lieutenant sent back as many camels as he could with water and during the night and the morning of the following day all were brought in. Clarmont held an immediate enquiry at the lieutenant's request. He himself thought that the S.P.R. arrangements had been woefully inadequate – it was preposterous to send such a large convoy without an officer who had experience of travelling in Persia. The contractors at Bandar Abbas were also culpable for having hired many useless transport animals.

The adventures of this journey were the subject of a talk given by Clarmont on the BBC in 1955. The whole caravan narrowly escaped disaster in the Tang-i-Zagh which means Gorge of the Crows. Clarmont wrote: 'At midnight on my sixth night out from Bandar we arrived at Kalakun at the head of the Tang-i-Zagh. The pass is much dreaded as being a favourite venue of the Baharlus. There are some difficult places, but nothing dangerous except in flood. I must say, I didn't expect the latter. During the afternoon a thunderstorm came over, but there was no rain where we were near the top of the pass. I had given orders that the caravan was not to move till 6 when it would probably be known whether the water was coming or not. However, in

their usual way the donkey and camel charvadars disregarded our orders and pushed off at half past three because they wanted to get through the Tang as quickly as possible. We started off with the camels at 6, going down a small glen before we joined the Tang-i-Zagh which is fairly wide open at that point. Another half-mile down, just as the head of the caravan reached a narrow point where the cliffs began to tower, we heard a noise of shouting from further back, and excited voices passed up the words in Persian and Hindustani "Ab mi-ayad", "Pani a raha" (The water is coming). I at once sent a galloper flying on down the Tangi to warn first Roy (the doctor), then our own donkeys and lastly the main body of donkeys which we calculated must still be in the Tang. Meanwhile the camels, horses and men were all huddled on the stony banks lining the watercourse. At the point where we were the bank was not very high; further back the watercourse crossed over from one cliff to the other, cutting us off from the rest. I thanked my stars it was not a big flood; it was quite impressive seeing it sweeping down the gorge in the fading light, like a flood of molten silver against the grim blackness of the mountains. Down it surged, whirling in a chocolate-coloured mass past where we stood and on round the corner.

'An hour later the water had subsided a few inches and the lieutenant and I climbed along the rocks to see how far we could get down the Tang and find the doctor if possible. We were held up pretty soon by the water crossing over to our side and flowing 10 ft deep under over-hanging cliffs. Casting back, we found a place where the stream was broad and shallow. My two Persian servants appeared on the opposite bank. They shouted that they and the doctor with his horse were quite all right on a level bit of ground close by... At dawn we went down the Tang and were much relieved to find the baggage-caravans had found safe ground. The horseman we had sent down to warn them had arrived about three minutes before the water'.

Clarmont heard afterwards that there had been Baharlus lurking behind the hills at Tang-i-Zagh but not enough to attack a caravan which included three British officers and an escort. For the last stages of the march an additional escort from the Burma Mounted Infantry met them and they reached Saidabad without further incident. Here to his great joy Clarmont found that Colonel Farran, Commander of the S.P.R. Brigade, had brought the Hupmobiles and was about to return to Kerman. 'It was quite an experience, motoring 120 miles in one day over country which six months ago was innocent of any attempt at road-making. We got the bumping of our lives, but it was a blessing getting that lift!'

At Kerman, Clarmont found that the Lorimers were in full preparation for their departure.

Chapter 8

Consul, Kerman

1917-19

Clarmont described himself as immensely bucked at being in such a responsible position but thought the authorities rather rash to leave Kerman pretty well denuded of troops. The Consul's escort had been reduced from 26 to 12 and most of the S.P.R. in Kerman had had to be moved to the Shiraz neighbourhood where the S.P.R. had mutinied. And a first-class political crisis was brewing in Kerman itself. Clarmont explained that the Prince and Sardar Nusrat had always been bitter enemies and the Prince had been intriguing at Teheran to get the Sardar Nusrat removed. Orders had now come from the Shah summoning the Sardar to Teheran to answer charges of misappropriation of revenue. Clarmont went on: 'Now for every *kran* the Sardar has misappropriated, the Prince and his satellites have snaffled ten, so there's not much in *that*. And the Sardar Nusrat is the biggest man in the province, and an old and fairly loyal friend to the British – has helped the S.P.R. a lot and carefully kept in with the Consulate. So it would never do to let him be defeated and discredited at the behest of the anti-British Democrats – for the Prince, though he hates the Democrats and is afraid of them, has not hesitated to use them against the Sardar. Last year the Prince (who is entirely run by his *âme damnée*, the Ihtisham-ud-Daula) got his nephew the young Shah to order the removal of the Sardar, but Lorimer and the Minister at Teheran squashed that all right. A fortnight after Lorimer's departure the Prince started again, this time by suspending the Sardar from his office of Deputy Governor. For the next ten days I received visits from both sides almost daily, each urging me to move the British Minister on their behalf.

'Last week I was hopeful of a reconciliation until came news that the new cabinet had been formed with an anti-British Prime Minister and a pro-British Minister of the Interior, which is better than it might be. But at the same time came telegrams summoning the Sardar to Teheran, which of course meant victory for the Prince. From that day forward neither the Prince nor any of his party have been near the Consulate – rather amusing. Having, as they wrongly imagine, defeated the Consulate and pro-Sardar party, they don't bother about the Consulate any more. I can't tell you what I'm doing, but you may rest assured that the Sardar won't go to Teheran if I can help it. I'm sorry the Prince has made a fool of himself in this matter, but personal considerations have to be put aside and British interests alone studied'.

The month of Mohurrum began and Clarmont more or less invited himself to watch one day's processions from the Governor-General's house.

These processions are the passion-play which re-enacts the tragedy of Kerbela and take place annually from the 6th to the 10th Mohurrum throughout Asia where there are Shia Moslems. In Kerman sixteen *rauza-khuns* or preachers were selected by the Governor-General – 'They are exceedingly eloquent and play upon the feelings of their audience wonderfully. Sometimes the speaker's voice can't be heard for the weeping and wailing. Each *rauza-khun* preaches, intones hymns and recites blood-curdling narratives concerned with the last days and murder of Hussain and then gets down when his place is immediately taken by another. I listened to this while sipping tea and smoking an occasional cigarette. The only other guest was the ancient and decrepit Imam Juma (the dignity of Imam Juma is an official one – in return for a salary from the government he conducts the prayers for the Shah at festivals). I noticed that at first he attended solely to the cakes on the tea-table, of which he ate three with much senile gusto. As the Prince remarked to me *sotto voce* "bien qu'il a quatre-vingt cinq ans, il aime beaucoup les gâteaux". As soon as he had finished his tea, the old man turned to the *rauza-khun* and in two minutes he was shaking with sobs of religious emotion'.

The preaching and the weeping of the crowd stopped abruptly and gendarmes and S.P.R. riflemen forced the people back to make way for the processions. 'First came crowds of dervishes, closely followed by a remarkable camel band, consisting mainly of quaint kettle-drums. The main features of the processions are partly symbolical and partly theatrical, representing scenes in and after the battle between the "martyred" Imam Hussain and his Arab enemy Yazid. There is a whole mass of legend about what happened to the Imam and the various scenes are enacted on platforms carried along by sturdy enthusiasts. On some of the platforms are miniature tents in which sit the actors representing the wives and children of Hussain, who were all (to the number of 72) massacred by Yazid after the battle except one, a boy who was afterwards the Imam Zain-ul Abidin. Some of the representations are excruciatingly funny. For instance, the legend is that when the headless corpse of Hussain was lying out in the desert after the battle, riddled with arrows, a lion came and took pity on it and picked with its teeth the arrows out of the body. In the processions, the lion is represented by a most active pantomime lion, dressed in shaggy tawny sheep-skins with an enormous tail made of springy wire. He leaps about on one of the platforms on which is a dummy corpse, blood-stained and headless. The lion spends most of his time picking arrows out of the dummy's body with his teeth. As each is drawn forth he raises his head triumphantly and tosses the arrow among the crowd.

'Then there are the Farangis. You may remember that in the Kerbela legend two Christians from Europe (Greeks from Byzantium) are supposed to have been visiting Yazid and to have interceded for the lives of Hussain's family. These Farangis have lived in Shia tradition as popular figures. Each procession boasts one or two young men dressed up ludicrously as European tourists in seedy coat and trousers, topi, gloves, dark spectacles and black

umbrella, or, funnier still, as ladies! The "ladies" wear comic broad-brimmed hats and long veils. Both sexes of "Europeans" smoke cigarettes all the time and do nothing but sit in chairs and look round with the absurdest "swank" possible.

'There are separate biers carrying the corpse of Hussain in state and those of his brothers. The corpses are always headless but there are boys inside the dummies whose feet and hands are visible; the hands open and close at regular intervals as if demanding pity.

'The number of horses and camels covered with rich Kerman carpets and embroidery was astonishing and a pretty feature was the number of children who go riding by, their relations holding them on if necessary. These represent the children of Hussain. As he had 72 in his family and couldn't have had more than four wives he must have had 68 children.

'I was much amused by the Prince who had his handkerchief up to his face all the time, not because he was crying, but in order to conceal the fact that he was not crying. It wouldn't do for the Governor-General up there in sight of all to seem unaffected by the general grief. Moreover, he asked me to do the same – probably afraid lest I should laugh openly. However, I had been warned previously and preserved the gravest demeanour'.

The climax of religious ecstasy was reached on the 10th Mohurrum, the Ashura, the day of the murder. Clarmont watched these processions from the Sardar Nusrat's town house in the middle of the city. This was normally used as a school but during Mohurrum the Sardar used it for the daily preachings and for the feeding of the poor. The most striking feature of Ashura day was the *tigh-zani* or cutting with swords – 'Hundreds of men and boys came along dressed in white, covered with blood. They held swords in front of them in their right hand and regularly struck themselves on the top of the head. Blood streamed down their faces and backs. Each held the man on his left closely round the waist and each string of 30 or 40 men danced along shouting. The forest of swords and the shouting, swaying blood-bespattered fanatics made a terrifying spectacle. Every now and again one of the tigh-zans would fall out and appear to faint, and no wonder, for the more enthusiastic must lose pints of blood'.

Things remained quiet on the surface and did not disturb the mild Christmas festivities which took place at the Consulate and the S.P.R. Mess. Clarmont had a party for the four small European children in the station, having had the foresight to obtain a small present for each one. However, the political crisis was simmering, as Clarmont found out from the Prince himself. He was sitting between the Prince and his secretary – 'the fat Machiavelli Ihtisham ud Daula' – at a dinner-party given by Taylor of the Telegraph Office: 'Over the fish I heard all about the new campaign against the Sardar Nusrat; over the pudding the Prince informed me exactly why he had made up his mind to stay on here, and what a sacrifice it was to him to refrain from returning to royal *otium cum dignitate*; over the liqueurs it was impressed upon me how

important it was for the Consulate to back the Prince up... It was quite amusing. I tried to ride H.H. off politics which he insisted in talking *sotto voce* in inferior French which our hosts do not speak, but it was no good.

'I sometimes wish I could plump for one side or the other and clear the air – but to do so is always fatal in an oriental country. The side you plump for invariably abuses your help and confidence. Irritating game, diplomacy!'

The climax came early in January of 1918. The Prince declared the Sardar Nusrat and three other leading Anglophils to be rebels. Some firing took place between the Citadel and the Bagh-i-Nishat where the Sardar lived. Clarmont galloped the three miles in the dark to the Bagh-i-Nishat, to find the S.P.R. in charge. Colonel Farran and the other S.P.R. officers with him had really believed that the Sardar had rebelled. Clarmont succeeded in convincing Farran that the Sardar and his friends were quite innocent, the whole thing being a put-up job. What had happened was that a feint was made of attacking the Sardar's house and his men lost their heads and loosed off their rifles wildly. This noise led to the S.P.R. being called out – 'the wretched Sardar, thinking they were going to strafe him, nearly died of fright. The Prince, hugely delighted, telegraphed at once to the Shah that the Sardar was in revolt, and if I hadn't intervened and got Colonel Farran to take the Sardar's side and protect him from the Prince, the poor old Sardar and his whole family and the two or three leading mullahs who are openly pro-British would have been done for. I had to take a firm line with the Prince and make it clear that I saw through his game, and if he remains Governor-General of Kerman more than a few days longer it won't be *my* fault'.

The Prince sent in his resignation and asked for an escort of S.P.R. to accompany him as far as Yezd. But the Democrats were still plotting; Clarmont wrote that they were trying to get up a 'bast' (collective taking of sanctuary) at the Telegraph Office in protest at the resignation of the Prince. Clarmont was able to frustrate that move; only two days earlier he had at the Prince's request induced the friends of the Sardar to prevent a big 'bast' in favour of the Prince's resignation. With all respect to Kipling, the East and West did meet in Persia, Clarmont suggested: 'The idea of sanctuary is so very Persian and mediaeval but they combine it with the very modern idea of collective petitions by telegraph! That's why they take "bast" at the Telegraph Office and not at the Consulate – in order to be able to wire their petitions to Teheran[32]'.

Clarmont's firm handling of the crisis certainly increased the prestige of the Consulate and his own reputation. An army officer of the Indian Political Service had been nominated to take over as Consul and should have arrived in Kerman early in the year. However, he fell ill on reaching Bandar Abbas and was invalided back to India. No officer of the right seniority being available. Clarmont was told to continue to act and in May he had the great satisfaction of being appointed substantively 'His Britannic Majesty's Consul for Kerman and

Persian Baluchistan and *ex officio* Assistant to the Resident in the Persian Gulf' with retrospective effect from December 1917.

The malaria which he had contracted in Bandar Abbas had recurred at intervals. After a particularly nasty attack, Hance[33], the Medical Officer then with the S.P.R. had the brainwave of trying Salvarsan, a recently developed specific for VD, as an anti-malarial drug. Clarmont's bedroom was rigged up as a hospital and a large dose of Salvarsan was injected intra-venously. The treatment was completely successful.

The following week Sir Percy Sykes arrived in Kerman, having been driven by motor from Saidabad. The *istiqbal* (official meeting on the road a mile out of town) over, Clarmont rode in procession with Sykes and the Acting Governor-General of Kerman right through the town to the S.P.R. Mess. In many of his letters written in 1917 Clarmont had expressed strong criticism of Sykes whom he described as 'a big man in no one's estimation but his own'. Now Clarmont could write, 'I like him, as I expected I should. He's convinced he's one of the big men of the age, and views himself theatrically as a second Alexander with a dash of Kitchener. He has a remarkable capacity for self-deception which makes him liable to appalling mistakes, but he's a good hand at bluff and manages to carry off his mistakes. I know well enough why he irritated Lorimer. Like most hard-headed fiercely-tried men who know their job thoroughly, Lorimer loathes a humbug, especially a successful one'.

Clarmont knew that he had reason to be grateful to Sykes for his having the appointment of Consul. Sykes had realised that Clarmont fitted in well with the S.P.R.; Lorimer had not done so. Clarmont was under no illusions – 'Government would send a senior Consul here if there was one going. There are dangers and drawbacks about the simultaneous presence in Kerman of an O.C.S.P.R. and a consul of about the same seniority. Farran of course is one in a thousand – nobody could get at loggerheads with him except a born fool: but a C.O. might come who wouldn't get on with the Consulate so well... It's just as well to be aware of these wheels within wheels and not cherish illusions about one's own superhuman ability...' Clarmont found that he got on personally very well with Sykes – 'I'm one of "his young men" (`a la Cecil Rhodes) though I doubt if he had ever heard of me before last autumn. A thing that raises him in my estimation is his interest in and respect for Father, whose "Heart of Asia" has been one of his text-books since its appearance'.

The whole Kerman Brigade of the S.P.R., by this time about 1800 strong, marched past the General and there was a military display. Clarmont watched this with Sykes and the Acting Governor-General from the Colonel's 'balakhana' (upper storey of a pavilion, whence 'balcony'). A sham but quite solid fort had been built beyond the polo ground. First the field artillery opened fire on it, then the machine guns were brought to bear, then the infantry went into the attack and finally there was a cavalry charge. 'Afterwards', wrote Clarmont, 'we all walked across and inspected what remained of the fort. A large crowd of Kermanis who had witnessed the show marvelled much –

nothing of its kind had been known here before. It really was excellently done and says a tremendous lot for the work the S.P.R. officers have put in'.

When all the junketings in Kerman were over, Clarmont accompanied Sykes and Farran to Bam for discussions with the Khans about the raising of a camel-corps among the wild Baluch of Narmashir and Rigan. It was then decided that Farran and Clarmont should take two of the cars and reconnoitre the desert route east of Bam as far as Nasratabad Sipi and, if possible, Dehana-i-Baghi. Cars had now twice got through from Dehana-i-Baghi to Kerman, but no car had ever been through the other way. There were formidable obstacles but except for a few places of bad sand the Lut desert was good going. Clarmont made copious notes, with speedometer readings and altitudes, and was able to append a longitudinal section to his road-report. They reached Dehana-i-Baghi – 'one of the loneliest most desolate spots on God's earth that white men ever had to live in'. There were two Indian Army officers here with a small force: 'I can't tell you what they have been up to but we heard some very interesting news, about the Nushki Extension railway, the East Persia Cordon Frontier Force, Birjand, Turbat-i-Haidari, Meshed!' Also at Dehana-i-Baghi was the grave of Bruno Wahl, Clarmont's former colleague with whom he had shared a bungalow at Gorakhpur. Wahl, greatly to Clarmont's envy, had been released to join the Indian Army Emergency Reserve. He had been killed in 1916 in a fight with a gun-running caravan. 'There is no stone or cross to the grave', Clarmont wrote, 'they subscribed for one in India and it was sent to Nushki but was then found to be too heavy to be carried by camel the 450 miles to Dehana-i-Baghi. Rather pathetic'.

Soon after returning to Kerman Clarmont went down with para-typhoid. He was out of action for about a month. Fortunately his assistant, Khan Sahib, was very capable; he carried on all the current duties of the Consulate so well that he was recommended for the Khan Bahaduri in the next Honours List. Meanwhile the war situation had become extremely grave. Anti-British propaganda was being spread throughout Persia at a tempo much increased since the German successes on the Western Front in March. The Russian revolution had allowed the Turks to invade Azerbaijan and only the British troops in Mesopotamia prevented a Turkish capture of Teheran. In Kerman's neighbouring province, Fars, Shiraz was invested by the Kashgais and Kerman itself had again to be almost denuded of troops. A detailed account of the campaign in Fars and of the ultimate defeat of the Kashgais was included in the Second Edition of Sir Percy Sykes's History of Persia (1921). Sykes wrote: 'Throughout the investment, the position at Kerman constituted one of our chief anxieties. Farran had no British troops in the town, but, thanks to his efforts and those of Mr C.P. Skrine, the consul, the province remained quiet and the brigade loyal'.

In fact, just at this time, Clarmont's main preoccupation was with another calamity. Cholera came to Kerman. He did his best to stimulate the local government into helping the S.P.R. medical authorities over quarantine

measures but with only partial success – 'The failure of any sort of quarantine was a foregone conclusion. Apart from the filth and abject poverty of most of the people and the incredibly insanitary conditions under which they live, a Persian town is an absolute paradise for a water-borne disease. The entire water-supply of the town comes in channels from the distant hills and flows through the town from house to house and from "payab" to "payab". (A payab is a watering-place on a "jub" (channel) and is generally approached from the street by a downward flight of steps, the "jubs" being mostly at a low level in the town). All the better class of houses outside the actual bazaars and slums have gardens watered from the "jubs". The average Persian never hesitates to use a water channel as a latrine if no other place is handy, so jub-water (though drunk unboiled by many) is never to be recommended. Add to this that when a person dies of cholera his clothes and all his belongings and the corpse itself are washed in the nearest jub...'

Clarmont took the most rigorous precautions to ensure that infection was not brought into the Consulate. A big tin of cresol solution was put in front of the office and every servant on coming from his house had to dip his hands in it for a minute or two. And jub-water, which had been used for washing kitchen-utensils and for bath-water, was altogether avoided. Fortunately there was an excellent well in the garden. There was a falling-off in the pressure of official work, so many of the chief Kermanis having fled from Kerman and the new Governor-General postponing his arrival until the outbreak of cholera had subsided.

Clarmont did not consider that he should take a holiday until the danger was past. He then managed a short tour in the Jupar range, taking with him a young S.P.R. officer. They made several climbs together from a camp in the heart of the range. Clarmont had seen nothing quite so awe-inspiring in Baluchistan, Jupar being 2,000 ft higher than Khalifat.

There was no printing press in Kerman, so Clarmont had made use of a lithographer to reproduce news bulletins. Now, in the late summer and autumn of 1918, he was issuing 'I'lans' (proclamations) all the time and the flags were constantly flying. Servants from the Consulate were busy distributing the bulletins, Early in November four were published in one week, the most important in Kermani eyes being the one about the removal of restrictions on pilgrimages to Kerbela and Nejef. Then at last came the Armistice. A proclamation giving the terms was issued in huge letters, the local notables being greatly impressed.

There was a week of celebrations. The arrangements for the official reception at the Consulate had to be made by Clarmont himself, there being no major-domo. He obtained approval to spend Rs 3000 for a feeding of the poor in the fore-court. 'I bought a ton of wheat', he wrote, '5 cwt or more of meat and about 2 cwt of vegetables. At two days' notice we had the wheat ground and turned into bread and 12 huge cauldrons of soup prepared. The Khan Sahib and the rest of the Consulate staff including the sowars distributed the food:

from the religious point of view it was a "sawab" (merit-acquiring action) for them to do so. The crowds of beggars, ragged children, innumerable women, halt, maimed, blind fakirs, etc. were a most picturesque sight. They were sat down in rows: after feeding they were pushed through into the garden so as to prevent the same people getting two feeds!'

Dinner at the Cavalry Barracks of the S.P.R. was also unforgettable. About 600 were feasted – 'It was pleasant seeing British, Persian and Indians larking about together and singing and dancing after the feast. The S.P.R. band was there and is wonderful considering that the bandsmen are all ordinary Persian soldiers who a year ago had never heard a European tune. Dining there with the buzz of conversation and laughter and the band playing "Destiny" I could shut my eyes and imagine myself at the Savoy!'

Much to his chagrin, Clarmont heard that his old chief in Baluchistan, Lt Col Frank McConaghey, had been appointed Consul in Kerman. This news was very disappointing, coming so soon after Clarmont's own substantive appointment. The Deputy Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, J.H. Bill, thought the change would be a pity but was informed that service considerations made the appointment inevitable. What had in fact happened was a serious disturbance in Sibi district where 'Old Conaghs' had been very comfortable as Political Agent for half-a-dozen years. The Marris had attacked Gumbaz Fort – a hundred miles from anywhere – and McConaghey with 3,000 men had beaten them off, both inflicting and sustaining casualties. Meanwhile bands of Marris threatened Sibi itself and a whole brigade from Quetta had to be moved into Marri country. When Clarmont had heard of these events he had written 'I'm afraid it will be the end of Old Conaghs... He certainly is the laziest old humbug. Fancy the P.A. of a huge district populated by Baluch and Pathans not being able to speak either Baluchi or Pushtu!'

Clarmont was asked by Sir Percy Cox if he would consider going to Bandar Abbas as Consul but having so recently had the particularly bad Bandar Abbas malaria he was advised to decline the offer on medical grounds. He did not wish to stay as assistant to McConaghey for very long but continuity was important and he wanted to be able to say that he was staying on as Vice-Consul to make the new Consul *masbuq* (acquainted with conditions).

Spanish influenza reached Kerman towards the end of November and was widespread. The S.P.R. suffered many deaths and all the Consulate staff went down, Clarmont last of all. He was prostrated with it when McConaghey inopportunely arrived, by car from Aliabad. As Clarmont had surmised, McConaghey had not wanted to come to Kerman and was not going to interest himself in local affairs more than he could help. And he could not be expected to take Clarmont's advice much – it would be humiliating to feel that his work and opinions were being dictated to him by a junior. Clarmont would be sad to leave so much of the country unexplored but knew that with McConaghey as Consul he would get no touring alone.

He decided to apply for leave and hoped to be in India when the deliberations of the Peace Conference concerning the future of Persia would be known. The Persian delegates to the Conference left Teheran at the beginning of 1919 – 'I'm afraid they *may*, being clever, pleasant, plausible, smooth-tongued Persians, get round the Powers and induce the League of Nations to give *no* mandate about Persia. It is a fact that anyone who doesn't know Persia, hearing a Persian diplomat talking, would be likely to belive the Persians to be perfectly capable of running their own show. What we hope is that the League requests England, or rather India, to "assist and advise" Persia with a view to lifting the country out of the Slough of Despond into which it has sunk since the "Constitution" of 1907. It will also I hope mean being diplomatically paramount at Teheran, which will be an improvement on the bad old days when we were always up against Russia. The alternative is for us to withdraw altogether from Persia and for America to be the mandatory power. Persians would like this because they find the Americans much easier to bamboozle than us. My hope is that Curzon, Hardinge and Sykes, all of whom will have a say in the matter, will persuade the League that it will be far better in the long run for us to look after Persia and keep up the S.P.R. on the same lines as at present. Only – if we do – I do pray our Government will take a stronger and more consistent line than it has done in the past'.

As regards his own future if Persia were handed over to America or left to stew in its own juice, he hoped for something remote and mountainous: 'The place I've got my eye on for some future date is Kashgar, in Central Asia. I shall die happy if I get two or three years there'.

His application for leave was sanctioned and, what was more, he was allowed to travel to the coast with McConaghey who was going to meet his family. They went by the Jiruft road, a more easterly route than any of Clarmont's earlier journeys between Kerman and Bandar Abbas. Moreover, the travelling was much more comfortable. They went as far as Mahun in a carriage lent by Sardar Nusrat. Then the track led past the end of the Jamel Barez range which has a much higher rainfall than the mountains near Kerman and was consequently quite well-wooded; holm-oaks mostly, but masses of wild almond just coming into flower. They camped beneath Kuh-i-Hazar, the highest mountain in the province. The two Englishmen received much hospitality from all the notables through whose districts they passed. Sardar Mujallah at Bam, where Clarmont had been with Sykes, sent out his carriage to meet them and entertained them royally. 'Two days of it was quite as much as was good for our over-strained tummies', Clarmont wrote: 'You don't know what a pilau is until you've tasted one prepared by a Persian nobleman's cook'. The most difficult march was across the Murghiak Pass, the last 12 miles being a stony waste, a vast flooded area when the Jiruft water is in spate. After this, their camping-ground was a delicious surprise, a little date-grove entirely carpeted with real meadow grass. They passed the site of a ruined city near the head of the Jiruft valley – Marco Polo's Camadi. Clarmont wrote: 'It is called

by the Persians "Dakianus" which sounds as if it was founded by some Roman or Greek general. It must have been an enormous place; the site covers at least 18 square miles. It is one mass of broken earthenware and fragments of brick. One of our sowars found a small copper coin with what might be a Kufic inscription'.

The Deputy Governor of Jiruft was the eldest son of Sardar Nusrat and he entertained the two travellers nobly. There was good chikor-shooting before reaching their camp – the Deputy Governor had of course met them with his retinue at the *istiqbal* ceremony a mile away. The Deputy Governor insisted on supplying them with everything free, including the feed for eight horses, no small item. Clarmont got on very well with him and undertook to try to arrange for the settlement on his land of a few Indian cultivators who would demonstrate the method of sugar cultivation as practised in the Harnai valley. The climate and soil seemed similar. Persians consumed enormous quantities of sugar which was all imported.

McConaghey and Clarmont made a small diversion from the shortest route to visit the Zargham-us-Saltana, Chief and Deputy Governor of Rudbar, a wild and little-known district to the south of the Jiruft valley. Clarmont wrote: 'The Zargham is a remarkable man. He is all-powerful in his own country, but had always kept just on the right side of the Persian Government. At present he pays 5,000 out of the 30,000 tomans (£12,000) annual revenue for which he is assessed, and the Kerman Government has to accept this much thankfully... The Zargham is half Baluch, half Persian by birth, and he was brought up a Sunni in Baluchistan, his mother being the daughter of a Nami chief belonging to a Sunni tribe. When he came to Rudbar as chief he turned Shia. We must have been as interesting to him as he was to us, for I don't suppose he has European guests twice in ten years. The Zargham's retainers conducted us the whole day's march to Kahun, headed by an energetic and very excitable "Vakil-Bashi" with his silver stick, the ceremonial baton always carried by the major-domo of a Persian official. Kahun is a wide-scattered collection of date-groves with numerous reed-huts and practically no houses except the Zargham's which is a bare solidly built structure at the foot of two small hills crowned with watch-towers. We noticed two big tents pitched behind the house and found that the Zargham always lives in them when at his headquarters as he doesn't like to trust himself to houses. We noticed that our camp had been carefully tucked away behind a hill – obviously with a view to the safety of the Governor's womenfolk!'

Four more marches brought them into the coastal plain and they reached Bandar Abbas just over three weeks after setting out.

Clarmont stayed at Bandar Abbas to meet J.H. Bill who was coming there from Bushire. Bill's current preoccupation was finding landing-grounds on the coast of the Gulf. Two big Handley-Pages had already landed at Bandar, causing the natives to scatter like rabbits. Bill's approval of Clarmont's work

at Kerman was evident – he offered Clarmont the post of First Assistant at Bushire when it would become vacant in the autumn.

In the meantime Clarmont managed a trip to Mesopotamia. He wanted just one sight of one of the theatres of war, but it was not simply a joy-ride; he supposed that he might have to choose between the Middle East and India at some future date. His Oxford friend Len Evans was Assistant Revenue Secretary in Baghdad and Clarmont was able to put up his camp-bed in Evans's bathroom. Clarmont met other friends from India too. He was very disappointed to miss meeting the legendary A.T. Wilson[34] – a captain in the Political Department before the war, now High Commissioner designate. Wilson had gone home *by air* to attend the Peace Conference.

Clarmont was not disappointed by Baghdad, having had no illusions about what to expect. He loved the Tigris and the river-front. He took many photos and made a trip with a young Political officer to Kerbela across the Euphrates. He described Kerbela as practically a Persian town, except for the Arab tribesmen who frequented the bazaars. Unfortunately the inhabitants were so fanatical that no unbeliever was allowed even in the courtyards of the mosques. Clarmont climbed neighbouring roofs to take photographs.

Having returned to Baghdad via Hillah and the ruins of Babylon, he took the train to Kut and thence the mail-boat down the Tigris to Basra where he boarded a transport for Bombay.

Chapter 9

Love and Marriage

1919 - 1920

Clarmont no longer had relations to stay with at the seat of government in India. Sir Charles Lukis having died in harness in October 1918, Clarmont's aunt had of course gone home. Happily he did not need to stay long in India; to his immense delight, he was granted three months home leave.

He would never forget his home-coming after six and a half years' absence. Frank who had travelled down to meet him at Gravesend was extremely agitated. Clarmont at first thought his father much aged – an impression which soon wore off. Helen had remained at home and was also 'somewhat agitated'. Clarmont had persuaded them to keep on the flat at 147 Victoria Street and had been sending them £40 a quarter towards the rent. It was an ecstatically happy day for the whole family: Clarmont was to say later that he would give five years off the end of his life to be back at 26th May 1919.

He soon went to Scotland. Ardvorlich was a sad house, the family having suffered so many bereavements since he had set out for India. He had friends to visit too, among them the Whitelaws who had lived in Perthshire before the war and were now living in North Berwick. The two daughters, Iris and Doris, were both unmarried. Clarmont found them both charming.

He had been in love before and his relationship with his mother had habituated him to confiding everything to her. The first time had been during his probationary year in London when he had assiduously courted a girl who rejected him. Helen had comforted him, saying that the girl was not the right person for him. In 1914 he wrote to his mother saying how right she had been – he had become engaged to a girl called Eugénie Perfect. He had first met Eugénie at Gorakhpur and she had been his best dancing partner at Mussoorie. Her father was a planter at Barabanki, near Lucknow. He had fought hard against admitting to himself that he was in love with her, having been told so often of the inadvisability of marrying early in one's service. He had in fact gone to Agra to see the Taj Mahal at Easter instead of accepting an invitation to stay at Barabanki. When he heard that Eugénie was about to go home with her mother he suddenly decided that the future would be impossible without her and he rushed to Barabanki for the last day of his holiday and proposed to her. He found that his love was reciprocated with an intesnity he had not believed possible. He sent his mother a full account, arranging too for Mrs Perfect and Eugénie to call on the Skrine parents when they reached London. The engagement was to be kept secret until their return to India in October.

The parents lost no time in letting Clarmont know their emphatic disapproval. Frank wrote a long and lucid letter, setting out the objections to the engagement. Clarmont filled in ten sides of foolscap in countering his father's arguments. He demanded credit for clear-headedness and self-knowledge, and for always having listened to his father's advice. He had remembered every word his father had said 'against early marrying in the service, against marrying poverty, against marrying out of one's caste'. He refuted the suggestion that Eugénie's parentage and upbringing would hinder his career – 'I know well what a prejudice there is against families long domiciled in India. But this prejudice is due entirely to the suspicion usually attaching in such cases of a "dip of the tar-brush". Both Mr and Mrs Perfect are pukka English and everybody knows it'. He contended that Eugénie would be an excellent wife socially and would enhance his prospects. Moreover, a large number of men of between three and eight years service were nowadays married. He fully appreciated the folly of marrying on insufficient means: Frank had said that a joint magistrate should not marry a girl with less than Rs 500 a month of her own. Clarmont declared that this was absurd – 'Nothing would induce me to marry money so long as I was badly off myself. Any such idea is repugnant'. Frank had also contended that a man should be at least ten years older than his wife, saying that in twenty years time Clarmont would still be in full vigour whereas Eugénie would be middle-aged. Clarmont replied: 'Just because you got through 25 years of India without loss of vigour (though not by any means unscathed) it does not follow that I shall... I hope I never shall be a slave of the senses, and even if I am fit at 50 I shall be happy enough without a young wife to make me so...'

Helen reported fully to Clarmont on the meeting with Mrs Perfect and Eugénie. She found Eugénie as good a character as Clarmont had painted and, in addition, attributed to her sound common sense. However, these qualities in no way changed the parental opposition. Clarmont heard their views with deep distress – 'It is the fact of your opposition, rather than the grounds upon which it is based, that has weight with me. I could not possibly do anything which hurt you so very deeply...' A week later he wrote to his father: 'Every mail has been rendering me more and more hopeless about Eugénie. I have broken my quasi-engagement off and am not going to write to her any more, or see her on her return. I am not at all proud of myself. If Mr Perfect comes here with a horse-whip to know why I have played fast and loose with his daughter, I shall take my licking without a word'. To his mother he wrote: 'Last mail brought long letters from you both in answer to what I wrote when I heard of your attitude to my engagement. I want the whole affair to be closed and consigned to oblivion. I can't make myself forget, of course. One thing only: you are quite mistaken in saying that my word was not pledged to Eugénie. All the talk about six months probation is mere words: the only difference it makes is that Eugénie's shame and humiliation will not be a public affair – not the less on my conscience on that account. You will never persuade me that when a

man asks a girl to be his wife and kisses her and swears eternal love and fidelity, and then three months later throws her over, he isn't doing a thoroughly rotten, selfish, cowardly thing – and there's an end of it'.

The subject was never referred to again in letters from home. Four years later he wrote from Kerman: 'Eugénie Perfect is married. I saw today in the Pioneer the announcement I have looked for in every number during the last three years. She became on 14th May Mrs Penrose Welstead, he being a captain in the 4th Rajputs and adjutant of that regiment; sounds pretty satisfactory. I am sending her a good carpet. I was anxious lest she was not going to marry...'

Both parents had continued to worry from time to time about the possibility of his marrying unwisely but there were no objections in 1919, when Clarmont, aged 31, proposed to Doris Whitelaw. The Whitelaw parents approved too. Clarmont had written to Mr Whitelaw seeking permission, explaining his circumstances and the inevitability of some delay before marriage could take place. Mr Whitelaw replied: 'The whole matter as far as I am concerned is the question of whom Doris feels and continues, in this case, to feel to be the only man: that overtops everything and really there is little else to be considered to my mind in these cases; but when I say that, I mean that she must feel, and in your case she will have ample time to feel, that all other things which time may have in store for her be they ever so hard, are unworthy of worrying about if only she has you beside her. When she can say that, not now, but henceforward, truthfully, as I know she speaks to me, be assured I shall have no objections to your marriage with her. Let me say this, that I honestly believe you would always be kind to her, and altho' I am slow perhaps at arriving at what usually prove my truest friendships, I am very pleased to contemplate the possibility of the straight man I believe you to be, becoming my son-in-law... I thank you for what you say as regards your position financially: all I am able to give her she shall have and between you, you would be comfortably off, unless a universal appropriation of capital and levelling financially of all classes in this country to the bare necessities of existence is imposed by some future Soviet Republic of Britain!! I thank you for not pressing for a formal engagement which I agree is best: if either of you ever find that you are not so sure of yourselves as you are now I ask you both to be brave and fair enough to say so. That I think is the last word, unless it be goodbye, as I know you go off East soon. Good luck go with you and bring you back safe whether you come for her or not'.

The Skrine parents took quickly to Doris. She responded to Helen's affectionate nature and both women saw Clarmont off by the boat-train. Doris was well able to parry Frank's teasing. On returning to North Berwick she wrote to him: 'Please don't think that I shall ever be a "doormat"! And, as for having ideas of my own, when I gave Clarmont my answer I made two or three conditions which he promised to keep to!! First of these were that he would never ask me to play cards for money or bet at race-meetings! This sounds

priggish, but it isn't really, it's the shade of John Whitelaw, Oliver Cromwell's crop-eared secretary, rising up in me and disapproving!! He must have been a man of terribly violent principles (or prejudices!) because he's handed them down through the ages, although the Whitelaw-ness is diluted by the Graham ancestress who danced on a tight-rope in Dundee!! I'm doing two days a week at the Edinburgh Art School and we're hunting round for some old person who will teach me Hindustani. I'm going to apply myself tremendously – and then I'll write you a Hindustani letter!!! I wish I'd learnt it before the war, instead of wasting months on German, which will be no use to me now, except for dealing with any German missionaries who are probably trying to sneak back to India already!...'

Just before the end of his leave, Clarmont had received word that instead of going as First Assistant to Bushire he was to be appointed to Chilas in Kashmir. Though not such a senior post as Bushire, the prospect pleased him very much. It was a one-man job in wonderful country. On arrival in Delhi, he heard to his astonishment that instead of going to Chilas he was to be Under Secretary in the Foreign and Political Department. This was a job usually held by men with from ten to fifteen years' service. He had hoped to get into the Secretariat sometime but had not dreamed of such an early chance.

This appointment made an earlier marriage possible and the Whitelaw parents agreed to a formal engagement being announced. Mrs Whitelaw during a visit to London had become most friendly with Helen to whom she wrote: 'My husband has climbed down about the present stupid position and since Doris came home seems quite satisfied that she knows her own mind... And now, dear Helen, I should like to tell you and Monsieur François about our private affairs and Doris's prospects...' What these amounted to was substantial. Doris would receive an allowance from her father and on her parents' death would inherit about £4,000 a year. Mrs Whitelaw did not expect to 'hold out very long', her heart was bothering her. (She in fact died by suicide 18 years later).

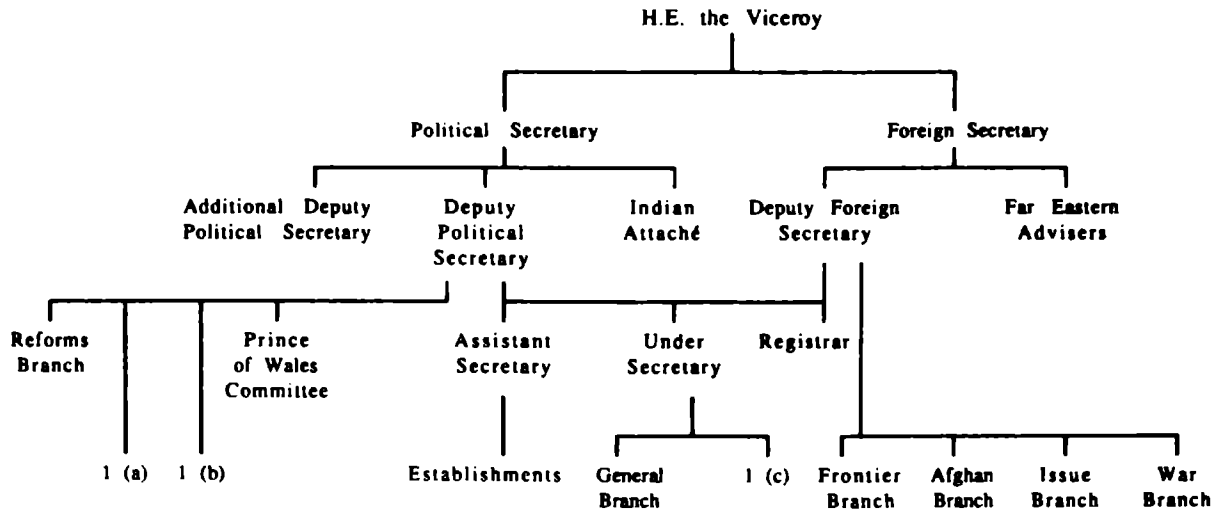
Doris paid a happy visit to the Skrines in Victoria Street. Frank celebrated her arrival in a Latin epigram, Clarmont commenting that he could not have written such a good one, though 40 years nearer school than his father. Doris was bored by trousseau buying. Clarmont regretted hearing this, thinking that her lack of interest in clothes and jewellery was unnatural.

He tried to persuade his parents to come out to Bombay for the wedding. His father was well-remembered by many – a senior Indian politician had told Clarmont that if the ICS had contained more men like F.H. Skrine there would be no anti-ICS feeling in India. He warned that things had changed very much for the worse. The cloven hoof which Clarmont found showed itself most in Indian politicians was their obvious racial antipathy – 'You can't blame them for it – it's there. We would feel just the same in their place. But it vitiates all discussion. Out trot all the old clichés, which it is very difficult to answer without hurting their feelings in a way which the "unsympathetic" British

official (or responsible non-official) would die rather than do. You can't tell them the truth without seeming impossibly rude'

The Government's treatment of General Dyer[35] after the Amritsar incident was deplored by Clarmont. He had believed the firing on the crowd at Jalianwala Bagh to have been the bare minimum of severity necessary, any hesitation having resulted in appalling consequences. Clarmont knew from an official in the Home Department that Miss Sherwood, who according to the papers and official accounts was 'beaten and left for dead' had in fact been raped by seven different Indians. 'Of course' he wrote, 'this is absolutely confidential and mustn't be breathed for the poor woman's sake, but it's hard on Dyer that it can't be known. Government offered Miss Sherwood Rs 50,000 compensation. She refused it, and the vernacular press said that Government had no business to have offered so large a sum and that it ought to be devoted to the families of the men killed in the affair. Every Indian knows what happened, but they trade on the necessity for secrecy. It is particularly painful to us who have no shadow of racial antipathy against Indians, who sincerely regard them as men and fellow-citizens and want to do our best for them, to note the rising tide of racial hatred'. In an earlier letter he had said that only his invincible optimism and his typically English inability to face future and problematical dangers made it possible for him to contemplate married life in India with equanimity.

Certainly no forebodings affected the extremely full life in Simla. The Foreign and Political Department did not have a Member of Council, the theory being that the Viceory himself was the department's Honourable Member, as Clarmont illustrated in a chart:



The two branches for which the Under Secretary was responsible were quite different. 1(c) concerned Honours, salutes and ceremonial and were put up to the Deputy Secretary Political. General Branch dealt with foreign consults, treaties, passports, the Arms Act and minor relations with foreign countries and came under the Deputy Secretary Foreign.

Clarmont's knowledge of Persian brought him some extra-departmental work when Wusuq-ud-Daula, ex-Prime Minister of Persia, visited Simla and sometimes he was required at Army headquarters to translate cypher interceptions of Afghan wireless. No one at Army headquarters had the requisite knowledge of colloquial Persian.

He described himself as one of those lucky people who could slave away at files for hours and then forget all about them for a spell. He was getting quite good at polo and often finding himself the only ICS man on the polo-field was a source of 'secret swank'. Then there were dances and amateur dramatics. He thought of his mother every time he passed the Gaiety Theatre – her acting was still remembered by the man who ran it. Clarmont took part in 'The Pirates of Penzance' and wrote some topical verses for the Major-General to use in encores. And there were numerous dances – at Viceregal Lodge, Peterhof, the Cecil Hotel, the Chalet, and so on. Many of these were fancy dress affairs and hospitality was lavish, such as one given by the Viceroy's A.D.C.s – '150 of us dined in the big room below the court and danced from 10 till 4. It was real carnival, hardly a single plain evening dress, bar the Viceroy, the C. in C. and the Lieutenant-Governers of the Punjab and U.P. who didn't dress up. The floor was in grand condition and the Viceroy's band in great form. Our hosts, the A.D.C.s, were in the costume of the A.D.C.s of the Governor-General in the '30s and '40s – a Georgian kit, scarlet tail coat, white knee-breeches and stockings, lace jabot and ruffles. Lady Chelmsford rather sportingly dressed up in a George IV ancestor's dress'.

Clarmont loved being host himself – 'There's no joy to compare with that of seeing others made happy by one's self. That's why I spend such a lot of money (comparatively speaking) on entertaining – the money that other men spend on drink and tobacco. It's not altruism – it's pure hedonism!'

He was quite pleased when he heard that he was to go back to Baluchistan when the substantive holder of the Under Secretary post returned from leave. His mother characteristically supposed it would be demotion for Clarmont to be A.P.A. Quetta. He corrected her: 'It's one of the most sought after junior jobs in the Department. And it's a jolly good thing getting into the Baluchistan Administration, they're rather a close borough'. He had very much enjoyed his time in Simla – 'one of the happiest of my life, but I wouldn't care to make my debut as a married man there'.

The plan finally decided for the wedding was that Mr Whitelaw would travel out to Bombay with Doris in November, then he would himself return on the steamer by which he had come out. The marriage would take place in

Bombay where the Whitelaws had Graham cousins. Frank sent Clarmont a book by Dr Marie Stopes. Clarmont commented that it seemed very sound, adding that there was not much in it that was new to him. Frank also sent Clarmont advice based on his own personal experience of the early days of married life[36]. Clarmont accepted it with good grace: 'Being blessed with a certain amount of imagination I had already decided in advance to do practically what you advise – separate rooms during honeymoon, gradual breaking to Doris of the physical side of marriage, etc. etc. It depends how things pan out, but I fancy we shall be "brother and sister" for a considerable time. Luckily I'm not a "strongly-sexed" person, as the physiologists say, and it will not matter to me how long the above state of things lasts. Sooner or later, as you say, the girl will desire complete union'.

The Whitelaws belonged to the Church of Scotland and Clarmont had arranged for the wedding to take place in St. Andrew's Church, Apollo Road. (For his own part, he would have been content with a registry office ceremony). Len Evans arrived by train from Central India to be best man and all the arrangements worked without a hitch. The afternoon following Doris's arrival in Bombay, she was on her way with Clarmont to Rajputana. This had been a fairly obvious choice for a honeymoon, Clarmont having revelled in its beauties so much in 1912 and 1913.

Doris's enjoyment almost exceeded Clarmont's expectations. She had an artist's eye and appreciated intensely the colours and the people and the animals. They stayed first at Chitorgarh in the dak bungalow, Clarmont sleeping on the veranda. Then they went onto Udaipur to stay in the State Guest House for a week. It was a solid brown stone building, standing on a little hill clothed with green tamarisk and acacia. Below the hill, an exquisite blue lake mirrored the surrounding crags, on one of which perched a castle of white marble. They were the guests of the Maharana of Mewar whose servants waited perfectly though unobtrusively on the newly married couple. Clarmont called by appointment on the old Maharana – 'a smallish, kindly-looking, gray-bearded old veteran, obviously a fighter. He has no English and speaks Urdu as a foreign language'. The Maharana did not allow motors to be brought to Udaipur but kept one or two for the use of guests. Clarmont and Doris made a memorable trip through mountains full of game to Jai Samand. This, like all Rajput lakes, is man-made but a bund only a quarter of a mile long held back a vast expanse of water totalling about 100 square miles. The bund itself, faced with marble and ornamented with temples and cupolas, was a thing of great beauty.

The week at Udaipur was a great success; Doris nearly cried at leaving. They went on to Jodhpur for a few days, then to Agra and Delhi. Here Clarmont heard to his delight that he was to be P.A. Chagai – infinitely preferable from his point of view to being in Quetta, since Chagai was an enormous district and the work involved a great deal of touring.

Marriage made no difference to the intimacy between Clarmont and his mother. He told her in detail about Doris – how she was admired by his colleagues and their wives in Delhi and how she had improved in looks. She also had some shortcomings; she was obstinate about taking care of herself and was very liable to colds. But Doris was immensely excited by the prospect of touring in the Chagai district. 'Like me', Clarmont wrote, 'she's one of the minority of people who are more interested in *things* and *places* than in people'.

Chapter 10

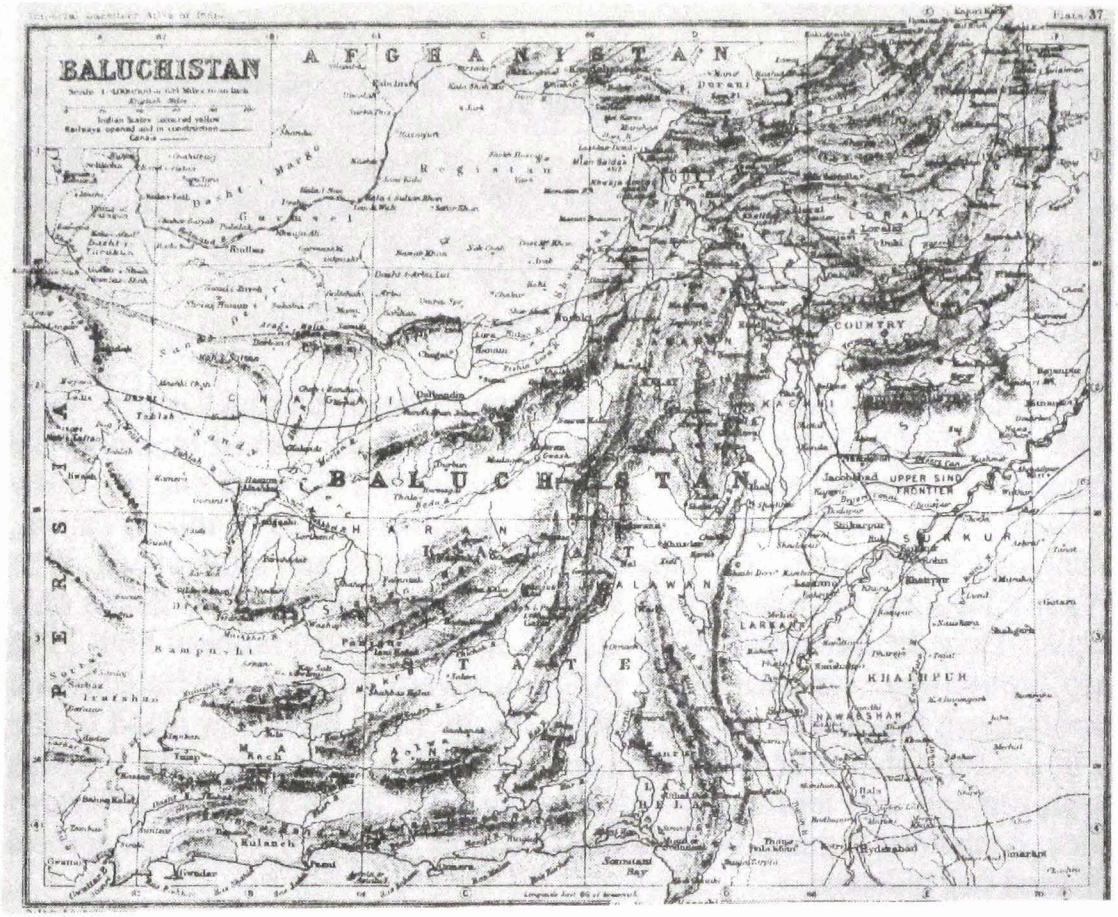
Baluchistan

1921 - 1922

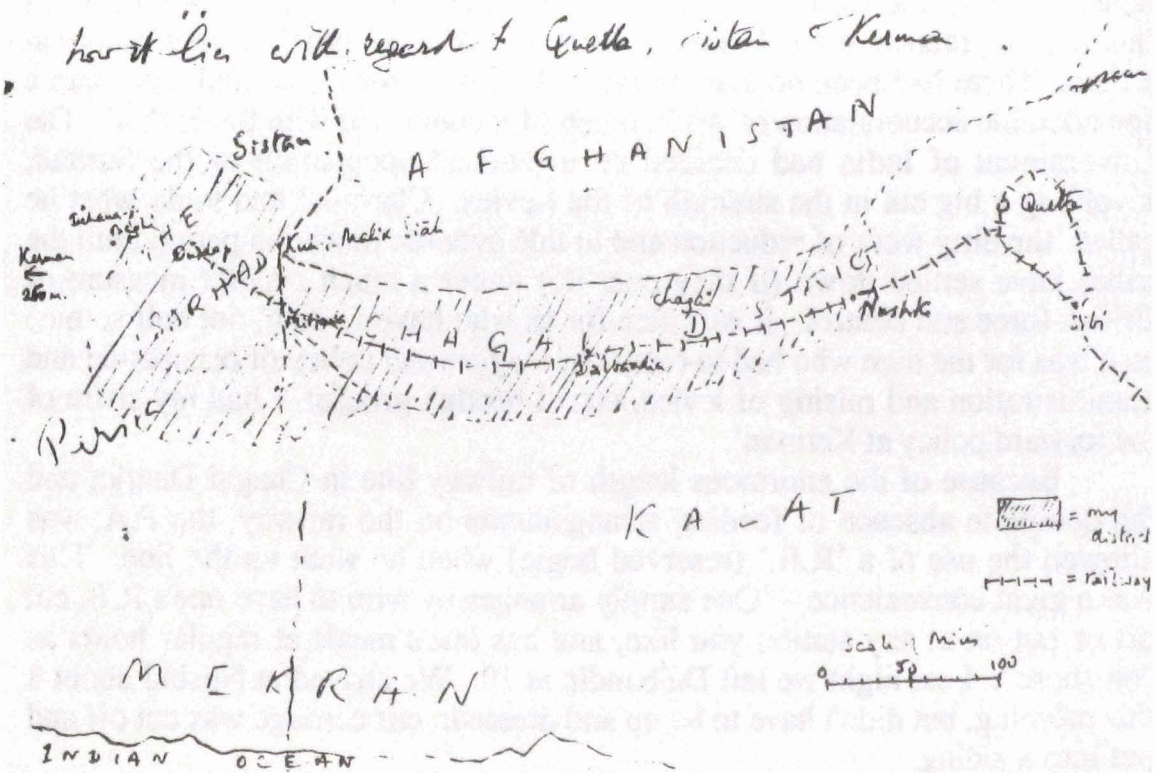
The Political Agent, Chagai, had two charges, Chagai District itself which was tribal country in British Baluchistan and the Sarhad (meaning the Marches). The Sarhad was within the nominal borders of Persia but was really a no-man's land ruled by wild nomad or semi-nomad tribes of mixed Pathan, Baluch and Brahui race. It contained high mountains and wide plains. The P.A's headquarters were at Nushki, a tiny town on the edge of the desert only 14 miles from the frontier of Afghanistan. It had been the railhead until 1916 when the railway was pushed 400 miles westward into Persian Baluchistan. Clarmont sent his mother a sketch-map. The Political Bungalow stood on the top of a steep-sided little hill with a stream running at its foot. The hill was flat-topped and was thoroughly defended by wire, the area, about 100 yards square, containing a guard-house and kitchen for the sepoy guard and several little sand-bag redoubts.

Doris had been so keen to get to Nushki and set up house that Clarmont had had to cut short any stay in Quetta. She was thrilled to be beginning her house-keeping and from the outset regarded the little bungalow at Nushki as 'home'. In practice, the P.A. was never at Nushki for more than three weeks at a time. There had been no substantive P.A. Chagai for a year and there was a considerable accumulation of work, much of it connected with the Sarhad. The Government of India had decided on a reduced occupation of the Sarhad, involving a big cut in the strength of the Levies. Clarmont had to do what he called 'the dirty work of reduction and to tide over the transition period until the tribes have settled down (if they ever do) under a much smaller measure of British force and control. It isn't nice for us who have to do it, not half so nice as it was for the men who had to carry out the *forward* policy of occupation and administration and raising of levies, etc. I needn't grouse: I had my share of the forward policy at Kerman'.

Because of the enormous length of railway line in Chagai District and the complete absence of feeding arrangements on the railway, the P.A. was allowed the use of a 'R.B.' (reserved bogie) when he went up the line. This was a great convenience – 'One simply arranges by wire to have one's R.B. cut off or put on at any station you like, and has one's meals at regular hours as "on shore". Last night we left Dalbandin at 10. We arrived at Nushki about 8 this morning, but didn't have to be up and dressed: our carriage was cut off and put into a siding.



6 Map of Baluchistan



7 The Political Agency, Chagai

This was written on return from railhead – Duzdap[37], a mushroom town in existence only since 1918. The Persian and Indian merchants were naturally taking advantage of the railway to pour Indian goods into east Persia and Persian wool and carpets and pistachios into India. Side-routes to the railway line had also sprung up, bringing caravans from Afghanistan and Mekran. There was plenty of work for the P.A. B.J. Gould[38], the Consul in Sistan, was at Duzdap and – an unexpected pleasure – two acquaintances from Kerman. Clarmont also had much business to transact with Captain Milne who came directly under the P.A. as commandant of the Sarhad Levies. There was some danger of an outbreak among the Damani tribe. Doris loved travelling in the R.B. and was a splendid hostess. She enjoyed talking to men who, as she put, were 'doing things'.

She was dismayed at the prospect of having to move to Quetta where the P.A. Chagai had his summer quarters. When during an evening walk Clarmont pointed out some wild crocuses, saying 'Spring!', Doris replied, 'the first toll of the bell that rings the knell of Nushki!' In the meantime, Horse Show Week in Sibi had to be attended – a busy time for the P.A. Chagai. Several cases from the district were to be discussed by the Shahi Jirga (council of elders of all Baluchistan), two of them arising from riots in Nushki. Doris loved the Durbar at Sibi. She took a great interest in the tribesmen, knowing several of those from Chagai District by sight. 'I must say', wrote Clarmont, 'I find the men of the bigger tribes most impressive. The ruling classes of the Marris, Bugtis, Dumkis, Raisanis, etc. are vast men with tremendously voluminous white robes of a quite peculiar type – they wear a sort of smock with an Empire waist, the pleats falling away from below the arms so that when on horseback the wind bulges them out with the effect of a ship in full sail. They wear also white turbans of great length, but not entirely wound round the head: two or three yards of the puggaree is kept draped round the shoulders; when they go into battle they tie it round their waists as a cummerbund. When you see a Baluch in the bazaar with his turban like that, you must look out, because it means he's going to run amok ('ghazi').

'The item that Doris liked best was the raid. This is a sham fight performed by large numbers of the Marri and Dumki tribes, at night with torches, every year at the Show. One side comes on with a herd of camels and the other attacks it in force with swords. There is a tremendous mix-up and the noise is extraordinary. Of course the fighting is stage fighting and the swords are kept carefully in the air, but the light is so flickering that with a little imagination you can easily belive it's a real raid'.

Clarmont was glad of the opportunity at Sibi to see all the notables of the province – British, Baluchi, Pathan and Brahui. He had made a good start as P.A. Chagai 'by effecting (more by good luck than good guidance) a very favourable settlement with an entire Afghan tribe from across the border. It took two whole mornings' wrangling at Nushki with a crowd of venerable and

hoary old ruffians and was distinctly a bore at the time, but not only have we got all we wanted but the big tribe in question are (for the time being at any rate) our firm friends'. He had been congratulated for this settlement by the A.G.G., Colonel Armine Dew[39], whom Clarmont described as 'an enormous fierce bearded man of the Gascon type, toned down for British consumption; masterful but tactful and just, and unmistakeably of the old school of frontier administrators like Sandeman[40]'.

Soon after returning to Nushki came an opportunity of a tour in the Sarhad with Doris. This was to Khwash, about 100 miles south of the railway line at Mirjawa. Clarmont was considered quite mad by his clerks and the two British Levy officers to march to Khwash when the whole journey could have been done in the office Ford but he much preferred trekking with a caravan when time allowed. Doris was thrilled by the crowds of wild-looking tribesmen, some on camels, others on ponies, but mostly on foot, who met them a few miles out of Khwash and processed with them over the dust-swept plain. Khwash itself consisted of a low ruined fort of stone and mud with a biggish garden and a few trees close to it on one side, and on the other a barbed-wire enclosure of about 100 acres containing mud barracks and lines for a squadron of cavalry, a few offices and mess buildings with room for three or four British officers. The Levies, under the direction of Hazara Pioneers, were building a new bit of road near the lower slopes of the Kuh-i-Taftan and after inspecting this, Clarmont and Doris walked down the green valley from their camp and found a most exquisite little bit of country – 'rich meadows and a bubbling stream among thickets, an orchard with every conceivable fruit-tree, an enormous chinar, little patches of cultivation enclosed by cliffs and an ancient ruined castle in the middle'. In a postscript, Clarmont added, 'Doris is simply splendid on tour – doesn't care a scrap about discomfort, stands the longest marches without turning a hair and loves it all. She's awfully sick at finding that she's not the first Englishwoman to ride to Khwash. Ella Sykes did it years ago!'

At the beginning of April 1921 the P.A. Chagai had to move to Quetta. Clarmont was very busy; his predecessor had been easy-going. Not only had the affairs of the district become complicated but it had acquired the reputation of being a light one because headquarters did not get many files or cases from it. Just when he was planning to set out on a further Sarhad tour, he was suddenly told to take over as Political Agent, Quetta and Pishin. The substantive holder of this post was acting as Revenue Commissioner, the substantive Revenue Commissioner being tied up indefinitely with the British Mission at Kabul. Clarmont disliked the prospect of being a stop-gap, but the post was the most senior Agency in the province after that of Kalat. It corresponded to a Collectorship such as Cawnpore or Allahabad, plus an important section of the Afghan frontier. But there was no real touring – 'only dashes out by rail or car to the limited number of much-visited places you can get to by rail or car'. Pishin was a townlet 30 miles north of Quetta and

contained a Political bungalow situated in the middle of a beautiful and large garden. It was a good place to go for weekends, taking office files from Quetta. There was also a Political bungalow at Chaman on the Afghan frontier. The Skrines motored there with the Dennyses. Dennys[41] was the Intelligence Officer in Baluchistan and Doris got on well with his wife. For nearly 60 miles the road lay over the great pale-brown dust-devil-ridden plateau of Baluchistan, leaving the massif of Takatu (11,000 ft) on the right. Then the road rose up into the blue mountains by a glen dotted with pistachio trees, passing the entrance to the Khojak Tunnel whereby the railway went to the Afghan side. Just below the top of this age-old invasion route was something of more recent historical interest – 'a path about 8 ft wide cut out of the solid rock straight up a steep face for about 1,000 ft. This was cut by Lord Roberts for hauling his guns up when he crossed the Khojak in '79. It's an astonishing sight. It seems fit for nothing but a funicular railway and yet they manhandled the guns up it and smashed the Afghans on the other side. I almost involuntarily took off my hat to the great little soldier who did it'. Chaman itself was two miles from the Afghan frontier, the boundary being marked by a line of pillars half a mile apart across the empty desert.

A week or two later Clarmont had to take Dennys out with him to another part of the frontier district because of a raid by Afghan outlaws on the village of Malizai. The villagers had put up a good show, wounding and taking prisoner one of the raiders and driving the rest off with only a small amount of loot. After examination of the wounded prisoner and the maliks of the raided village, Clarmont and Dennys rode on local ponies to find the route taken by the raiders.

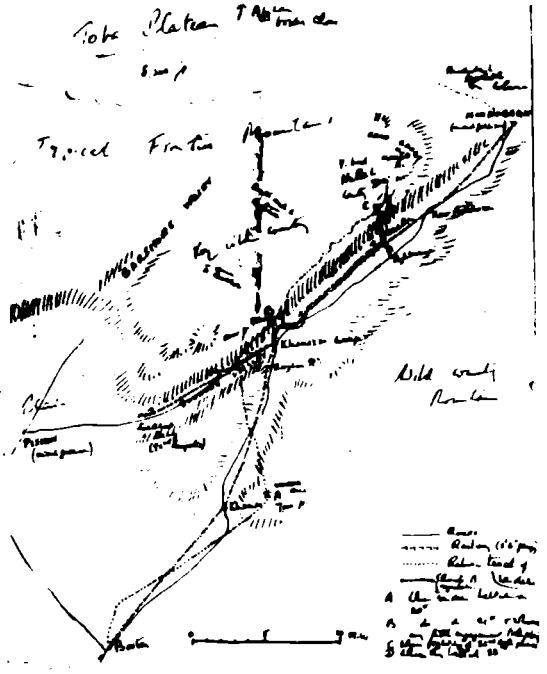
His primary purpose in touring the Toba Plateau was to plan famine-relief road-making. The Achakzais, a wild powerful tribe living on both sides of the border, were in great difficulties and it had been decided to spend some of the exiguous provincial famine relief grant on making a 'fair weather' road over the Plateau with Achakzai labour. The country was a regular thoroughfare for raiders and Clarmont hoped to kill two birds with one stone by making a useful anti-raiders road and relieving the Achakzais. Dennys told Clarmont afterwards that the Kandahar Government had been kept informed of all his movements on Toba – his 'force of cavalry' (10 trooopers and a few mounted Levies) having been watched throughout from an Afghan post half a mile over the border. Sir Armine Dew (made KCIE in the Birthday Honours) was very reassured by the outcome of the tour, since with peace about to be signed in Kabul it would have been an embarrassing time for the Achakzais to raid into Afghanistan.

Meanwhile there was a flood of work in Quetta – jirgas, municipal affairs, dacoities, military versus civil squabbles; all in addition to ordinary magisterial work on the frontier. 'I'm not one of those officials', he wrote, 'who can be rude to people, even to subordinates, and the result is I have a reputation for accessibility, which is inconvenient'.

Cholera broke out in a big suburban village called Hudda in the summer and after a great deal of persuasion Clarmont had been successful in setting up a properly disinfected cholera camp. The next outbreak was at Chaman where it had been brought from Afghanistan. The Levy Lines were turned into a hospital, the Levies being moved into tents, and guards put over the entrances into Chaman town. Then, on the way back to Quetta, news reached Clarmont of an outbreak at Gulistan on the Quetta side of the Khojak Pass. There had been six deaths in the 24 hours before his arrival. He found that all the Levies, police and schoolboys had been inoculated but not a single local Mussalman. 'I directed', he wrote, 'the maliks and shopkeepers to be collected while I made myself tea. After tea I came out and talked to them all, telling them about my experiences in Persia with cholera, how we had 300 deaths a day in Kerman but that of all the thousands of persons who were inoculated only ten got cholera: that it was a sawab (merit-acquiring action) to set the example in being inoculated, etc. Their spokesman raised all kinds of objections. The rest of the tribe would say they had brought cholera into their villages by being poisoned by the British; they couldn't be done without the consent of their headmen, and so on and so on. Finally I seized the old man by the shoulder and ragged him so much that he sheepishly consented – little thinking that I had the native doctor round the corner with the serum and syringe ready! I pulled up the man's sleeve and he was inoculated then and there amid roars of laughter from the crowd – and the whole of the rest of them followed suit! It just shows that if you rag them and make a joke of a thing, these simple-minded hairy cheerful frontier men will do anything for you'. In September there was an outbreak in the Quetta slums and more persuasion had to be exercised as well as placing police guards on water-channels and condemning stocks of rotten melons, etc.

Quite the most stimulating activity was raider-chasing – 'far superior to deer-stalking, though the latter is excellent practice for the former'. When a well-armed body of transborder raiders looted Bostan, a small town 18 miles from Quetta, Clarmont rushed to Pishin by car and organised counter-measures. The raiders had been led by militia deserters armed with .303 rifles; they were thus strong enough to move slowly with their loot... Having sent for as many troops as possible from the 92nd Punjabis in camp in the Surkhab Valley, he pushed on with a small party and found the raiders in a strong position, a hill-village masked by foothills: 'Our party were very nearly ambushed, in that we didn't know that the enemy were holding the lowest foothills till our levies on the right warned us by starting firing, whereupon the raiders' pickets replied by potting at us. Things looked unpleasant as there was absolutely no cover, so we retired about 100 yards and lay down. It was essential to keep an eye on the enemy so we stayed where we were exchanging desultory shots – the nearest they got to us was a shot which struck the ground about ten yards behind. At about 6.30 from the village (Zamistan) on which I had my binoculars glued, appeared a large column of white and khaki-clad warriors with six donkeys and wound slowly up the hill path behind the foothills and out of sight'. Having

sent scouts to watch the route taken by the gang, Clarmont arranged successfully for troop movements the next day. A new light railway existed between Khanai and Hindubagh. A telegram to the Executive Engineer at Quetta caused the train to be at Khanosai at daybreak to pick up troops. At the same time Clarmont had alerted the Officer Commanding at Hindubagh to cooperate with the moveable column. A little engagement took place in very broken country before the raiders slipped away to the border.



8 Afghan Raiders' Route, 1921

A few weeks later news was flashed to Quetta that large groups of raiders were in the neighbourhood of Barshore and expected to raid a bazaar or railway station. After a conference with the A.G.G., the General and the Police Commissioner, Clarmont and Dennys drove out as far as the road would take them with 36 police and 30 rifles of the 27th Punjabis. Messages were sent to detachments of Levies at points where the P.A. had previously posted them. Clarmont's idea was to get the raiders on the run by threatening movements and then cut across their line of retreat and catch them in ambush. But they were too cautious – they split up into batches of two and three and escaped back to Afghanistan without raiding anywhere. For Clarmont this operation had been most useful. He had a good eye for country and imprinted on his memory the view he obtained from a high peak at dawn. As a consequence, he was able to contribute to the establishment of a chain of signalling stations 200 miles long, right round that section of robber country.

In Quetta itself, the one effective antidote to over-work was polo. His game had greatly improved. He played for a team called modestly 'The

Leftovers'. They were beaten in the Junior Tournament by the Rifle Brigade. The Pioneer reported the match, saying: 'The Rifle Brigade conceded three goals on their handicap, but their ponies appeared to be far superior. "The Leftovers" nevertheless played a fine game and were unfortunate not to score on more than one occasion. Mr Skrine was prominent throughout for hard and straight hitting...'

What really made Clarmont long to relinquish the Quetta Agency was his official superiors. 'Except for Law[42], the Secretary', he confided to his mother, 'I am the only Civilian in the whole Province, and Sir Armine Dew and Colonel Stewart[43], the officiating Revenue Commissioner, are both particularly difficult soldiers to work under. The A.G.G. is a far more able man than Stewart, but he has a vile temper and is swayed by impulse and his personal likes and dislikes. His methods as far as office work is concerned are antiquated. As P.A. Quetta I am the scapegoat, the object upon which the vials of his wrath are poured every time anything annoys him. I get petulant, sometimes positively rude, chits from him two or three times a day, often about perfectly trivial things which have to be seen to at once to the detriment of more important work. He lends an ear to everything his favourites (and he has many) tell him and the chits are mostly written as a result of tittle-tattle of the most absurd type. Mind you, with all his faults old Dew is in some ways a first-class A.G.G. He's a ruler of men in his generation...'

Clarmont was in fact himself a 'favourite' of Dew. When Law went on leave at the end of October Clarmont had to act as Secretary. In this capacity he saw a complimentary paragraph which Dew had put at the end of his report about the Bostan raid, saying that Skrine had acted 'with energy and resource as well as personal courage'. He quite liked the post of Secretary, as a short-term appointment. The negotiations in Afghanistan were at last drawing to a close – Dobbs[44] had been stuck there for 11 months – and the signing of a treaty would allow him to return to Quetta and Clarmont would be able to return to Chagai.

Almost at once he and Doris set out for the Sarhad. Clarmont's new Indian Assistant at Khwash was a delightful young man who was a Sayid of Quetta district and as such much respected by the Sarhad tribes. Thanks to him, a notable event took place. Jiand, the patriarch of the Yarmohammedzai Damanis, came half-way to Mirjawa to meet the P.A. No P.A. had set eyes on him since 1916. In that year he had led the opposition to General Dyer and had been captured, being subsequently rescued by his followers who had escaped from Khwash without any clothes, marched 25 miles to their camp, equipped themselves and ridden another 25 miles before ambushing the column of Indian Infantry and effecting Jiand's escape. Clarmont was not disappointed by Jiand's looks. He had a white moustache and short thick beard and stood as straight as an arrow. He was taciturn at first and Clarmont wondered what went on 'in his wicked old head'. The old man gradually thawed after a good tea and Clarmont provided a sack of meal and a couple of sheep for his guests. The next day Sardar Jiand was taken for a joy-ride in the Ford. He was delighted; he had seen

motors before but never been in one – 'when we went fast he got thoroughly excited and shouted "Bar'kallah! Zudtar!" (faster) and waved his arms about'.

During his tour Clarmont also made friends with the powerful independent Chief of Bazman who had not had anything to do with any British officer for many years – 'his wild mountain district is so remote that he can afford to snap his fingers at Persian and British alike'. And the tour had some permanent results too. The extreme south-west of the Sarhad was very little known and the Ordnance map was quite wrong in many places – 'high ranges of hills shown where none existed and no hills marked in an area covered with them, halting-places and water-holes mislocated, and so on'. In addition to providing corrections for the Survey of India, Clarmont could now contemplate the possibility of giving a lecture at the Royal Geographical Society on Perso-Baluchistan routes. He had excellent photographs and now knew both sides.

Doris, despite having dreaded the thought of Quetta, had been very busy when there. The A.G.G's wife had roped her in to start Girl Guides. She had taken this on most successfully. She had a strong dramatic sense – Clarmont said that plays were like strong drink to her – and she could infect children with enthusiasm. She was a leading figure in the Purdah Club which provided an opportunity for Indian ladies to meet Englishwomen. She was not so good at the social activities of her own kind. Games bored her and she seldom watched Clarmont playing polo. She did not like ball-room dancing and was not very good at it despite the fact that she had learned Russian dancing well enough to be able to give an exhibition at a variety show during Spring Week. This took place every May and included racing, dances and a torchlight tattoo. The first dance was a fancy dress affair and Doris – 'as wilful as a little mule when she likes' – had insisted on going with her face blacked as a woman of the Nushki district. Clarmont was embarrassed when people he knew asked 'Who on earth is the woman who has blacked her face? Isn't it awf-' before he could chip in hurriedly to say that it was his wife.

Doris was passionately fond of animals – 'zoo animals' as opposed to animals in the wild. The Skrines' garden contained quite a menagerie, with tent accommodation for ponies and gazelles. Clarmont's Kerman friend, Sardar Nusrat, had sent him some Persian cats. Doris did not at first care for the newcomers, lavishing affection instead on an underbred lanky white cat she had acquired at Dalbandin.

He wished, he confided to his mother, that Doris was not so dependent on his society – not only because he found that married life did not allow him to do as much reading as he had formerly done but because a Political officer had quite often to leave his wife. Doris had wanted to accompany him on a raider-hunting trip but Clarmont had said firmly that ladies were not in place on such occasions – 'it gives too much the impression of making a picnic of it'. The A.G.G. had himself opposed a suggestion that Doris should accompany Clarmont on tour of the Toba Plateau. He persuaded her to take a holiday from her Quetta activities and visit Ziarat: 'It will do her no end of good and

between you and me it will do me a lot of good too', he wrote to Helen. Doris went to Ziarat with a bad grace but she was well aware of Clarmont's devotion. He wrote to her every day and she wrote from Ziarat to her mother:

'Mum – I have never written much to you about Clarmont because of my stupid Scotch reserve but I feel I must write to you now about him. I knew before I married him he was a very splendid, delightful, clever, honourable and lovable man but *now* I know that there is no-one like him *anywhere*. His goodness to me is absolutely extraordinary. I had the idea before I married that in marrying anyone with such a strong personality I would have to suppress any personality of my own but instead of blotting me out he seems only to have "gardened" in my mind and made *flowers* grow in it and has uprooted the weeds so gently that I did not know it was being done. He is so interested in his work, so keen and just and able and concentrates so on everything that comes before him that I marvel that he can like anything so vague and ordinary as I am. I just wanted you – who care so much – to know that never, never, never was anyone so wonderfully happy as I am with him'.

She was glad to get back to Quetta and he was then able to take a long-deferred week's casual leave. They camped in glens behind the Khalifat massif and picnicked in the Mir Kasim tangi. This gorge, though its sides nearly touched hundreds of feet up, was deep and wide at the bottom where a clear stream splashed over white beaches. Oleanders with brilliant red blossom grew there, the extra colour caused by the fact of the sun never reaching them. They caught a glimpse of a herd of gadh (mountain sheep) and tackled the inmost sanctuaries of the markhor. When resting in the shade of a juniper tree, Clarmont had an unnerving experience. He found curled up under his knee a big snake – 'a particularly unpleasant vipery-looking one. You can imagine how I jumped. Doris was wildly excited and insisted on shooting at it with her .22 Winchester rifle. She hit it too; the snake wriggled away in great agitation until I got it through the head. Doris was extraordinary – she told me afterwards that she was far more excited and pleased at having something to shoot with her Winchester than alarmed at the narrow escape I had had!'

He had to tell his mother repeatedly to be careful about what she passed on to the Whitelaws in North Berwick. The account of the local leave and Clarmont's photographs of the scenery had caused alarm. Doris wrote from tour to her parents-in-law – whom she addressed as 'Dearest Helen and Mr Frank' – 'I promise you that it was all quite safe. We are both much too happy to take any risks. All the climbing was done very slowly... The last day, I longed and begged and implored to be allowed to go up to the top with him, after the markhor, but Clarmont was very stern and sent me back by an easy route, which will show you how very fussy he is!' Doris enclosed a sketch of an old Sarhadi lady – 'one of the two who live beneath the Sacred Tree at Sangun, reputed to be over 100. They come creeping out of their black tents and whimper and croak for just one thing – warm clothes. It is really heart-rending to see them, with their old bones sticking through their ragged

dresses, when the air is sharp and wintry and I myself am dressed in a thick jersey and a coat... I have written a frantic appeal to Lady Dew, asking if the rich ladies of the Purdah Club in Quetta would like to contribute towards some cloth for the very poor and aged... It is so difficult to do anything of this sort, the Government being so against "charity". Poor Sarhadis, they have a pretty hard life. All day long the women seem to be working, either carrying water, collecting wood, spinning, weaving the stuff for their black tents, cooking, hustling the goats and sheep and somehow managing to look after several naughty children! And yet, they are marvellously cheerful and love to have something to laugh at. Often I have heard them singing away, as they grind the wheat in stone hand-mills, which I know is very hard work, having tried it'.

But consternation was really caused among both Skrine and Whitelaw parents by a cable which reached them from Clarmont in January 1922. It read: 'Appointed officiating Consul General Kashgar one year leaving Srinagar across Pamirs about 20th May Doris has been allowed accompany me both overjoyed inform Whitelaws'. Clarmont had known for some weeks of the appointment but in order to spare the parents the anxiety of not knowing what Doris's fate would be he had not informed them of the posting until word had come from the Consul-General in Kashgar that there was no reason why a wife should not come – 'so long as she could stand the journey'. Clarmont and Doris had no qualms on this score. She had suffered painful suspense while waiting to know the Government's verdict: now she was desolated by the reaction of her parents to the news – 'The poor child has been crying and raving ever since her parents' letters came. I don't suppose she will sleep a wink tonight; I am going to sleep with her and continue my efforts to comfort her'. Both the Skrines and Whitelaws thought that Clarmont should take a woman of some sort with medical training with them, and if anything happened to Doris it would be Clarmont's fault. They had expressed this view after a tea-party with Sir Percy Sykes and Miss Ella Sykes who had said that it would be 'grotesque folly' for Clarmont to take Doris to Kashgar without a trained nurse. The idea of taking a nurse was not really practicable; apart from the difficulty of finding someone suitable, the expense would be prohibitive and Doris loathed the idea, saying it would spoil everything for her. She longed to be the only Englishwoman in Kashgar. And Clarmont could discount the views of Sir Percy Sykes – 'He regards it as every wife's duty to have a child once a year and acted on this theory. He took the nurse to attend to Lady S. on the occasions of additions to the Sykes family. Needless to say there will be no such eventualities in our case, on the journey either way or at Kashgar itself. Such an elementary consideration as this could hardly have escaped our attention!'

The office staff at Chagai gave a farewell tea-party. All the sardars and motobars of the Nushki subdivision were present and to Clarmont's horror he had to reply to two laudatory speeches. But he was very touched; the party must have cost the givers much money and showed that their regret at his

departure was sincere. No such farewell feast had been given when his predecessor had left after being in the district for four years.

Chapter 11

Across the Pamirs

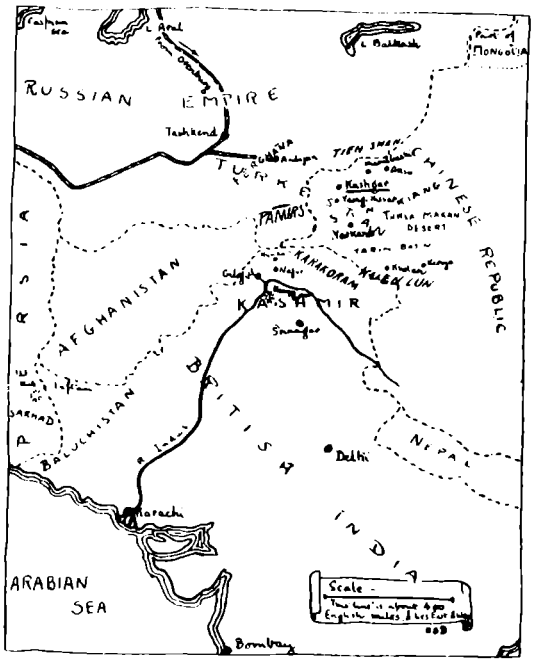
An official British presence had existed in Kashgar since 1890, the year when Captain Francis Younghusband[45] headed a mission to Sinkiang. The Chinese had reconquered that country in 1877, naming it Sinkiang, the New Dominion. This was the era when the khanates of Central Asia were falling like ninepins, bringing the Russians in contact with Afghanistan. Younghusband's mission had been to try to persuade the Chinese to establish themselves across the Pamirs to a frontier with Afghanistan, thus sealing off from the Russians the passes into India across the Hindu Kush. Younghusband's Chinese interpreter, George Macartney, had remained behind in Kashgar, occupying a house called Chini Bagh (Chinese Garden) allotted to the British by the Chinese authorities. Macartney was however to wait until 1903 before the Chinese Government gave him recognition as Consul. He continued in the post for the rest of his official career, retiring as Consul-General in 1918. This was soon after the Russian Revolution and the situation in the area between the Caspian Sea and Sinkiang was still in flux. Tashkent was under Bolshevik rule and agents from there were being sent all over the Middle and Far East to preach Bolshevism. The Government of India required accurate information: it might be possible not only to start effective propaganda against Bolshevism but at the same time to foster the autonomous sentiments believed still to be strong in Russian Turkestan. Macartney's last job was to travel to Tashkent as guide and intermediary for two British officers sent on a secret mission to explore possibilities. A third officer remained behind in Kashgar, later taking over as Consul-General. This was Major P.T. Etherton[46] and it was because Etherton was overdue for relief that Clarmont got the chance to officiate as Consul-General in 1922.

In Macartney's days, the normal route to and from Kashgar had been via Europe and the Transcaspian Railway, then twelve marches by pony caravan across the Tien Shan. Apart from the impossibility of travelling in Russia, the frontier with Sinkiang was now closed. The route most generally used from India was that from Srinagar to Leh and thence across the Karakoram to Yarkand. A shorter route, but one not practicable for trade and regular traffic because of the difficulty of supplies, was one via Gilgit and the Chinese Pamirs. Because Clarmont was travelling on duty, the Political Agent at Gilgit and the Kashmir Durbar authorities undertook to make arrangements for his party to travel by this route. The date of its opening was governed by the melting of the snows and the Burzil Pass was not usually declared open until

June. This was accordingly the month when Clarmont planned to set out from Srinagar.

Before this he had met Sir Aurel Stein[47] in Delhi and had spent some time at Dehra Dun with the Survey of India. The new Survey of India's 4 miles to the inch maps of Chinese Turkestan had been compiled chiefly from Sir Aurel Stein's explorations and there were still large tracts within reach of Kashgar which had not been traversed. Stein drew Clarmont's attention particularly to the east side of the Kongur massif. The Survey people were most helpful and lent Clarmont a light plane-table and instruments.

As soon as Etherton had arrived in Srinagar and had had a brief handing-over meeting with Clarmont the Skrines' party set out for Gilgit. Clarmont kept a diary of the whole journey to Kashgar which took 49 days and the first four chapters of 'Chinese Central Asia' give a fairly full account. The first stage was by water down the Jhelum and across the Wular Lake. Then the march began, with riding ponies and 25 baggage ponies. For the sake of the animals, it was necessary to cross the passes before midday while the snow was still fairly firm. After a night at the Burzil rest-house set in an array of pink primulas and looking out over a panorama of jagged snow-peaks, the pass was negotiated without difficulty and on the other side they made a rendezvous with a small party Etherton had left with his horses. But these were a sad disappointment and very nearly the cause of a tragedy. They were both stallions and very wild. On a narrow path high above the torrent of the Astore River, a terrific fight took place between them owing to the presence of mares in the caravan. Clarmont and a groom were fortunate to crawl out alive from the struggling snorting pair. They were glad to reach Gilgit where the Political

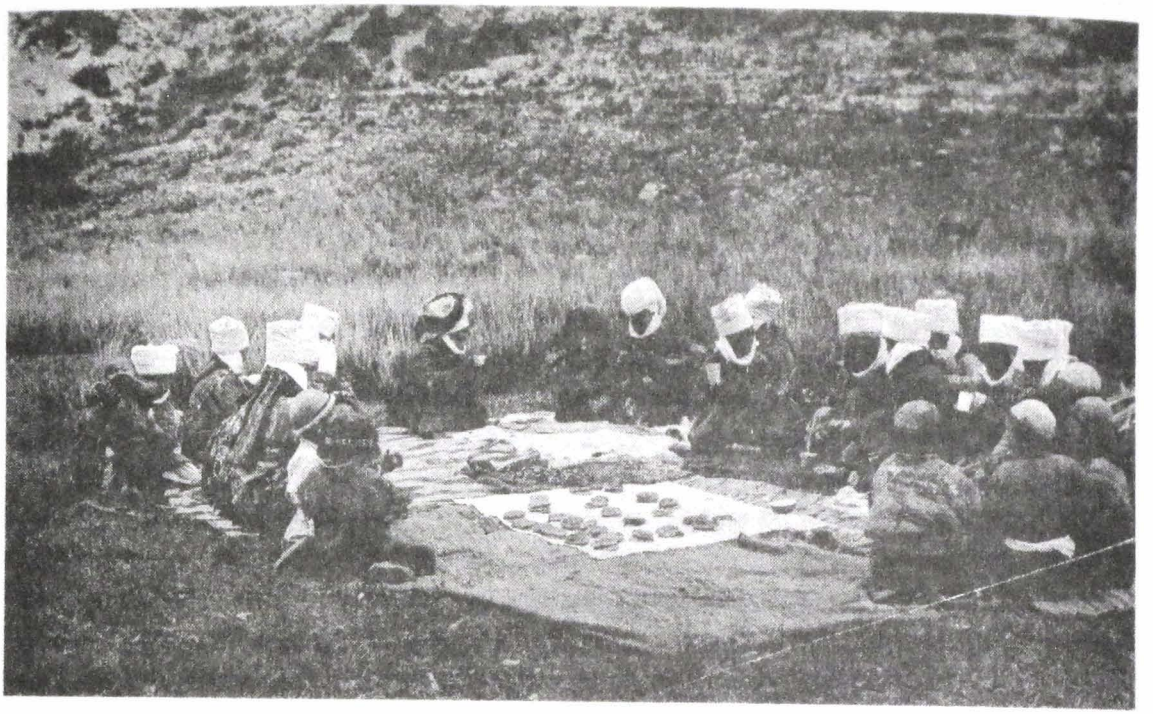


9 Across the Pamirs, 1921-22

Agent was Lorimer whom Clarmont had not seen since Kerman. The Lorimers were delightful people to stay with – they had wide interests and could talk on any subject, a contrast after the society of Quetta and Srinagar 'where the talk never varied from games, people and shop'.

Three marches out of Gilgit brought the travellers to what Clarmont unhesitatingly pronounced to be one of the finest countries of the world – Hunza. The scenery certainly surpassed that of Kashmir, the most dramatic place being the Baltit valley. From here the whole height of Rakaposhi (25,600 ft) was visible, the top only seven miles away. The valley itself was richly cultivated and terraced with neat stone-walls. Opposite the clover-carpeted orchard where they camped was an ancient castle of wood, on a steep hill crowned with glaciers and ice-cliffs. 'The castle', Clarmont wrote, 'is the 660-year old stronghold of the Mirs of Hunza, whose dynasty was founded by one Aiyash in the 11th century and who have been there ever since: Aryans of the purest; ruddy-complexioned, magnificent upstanding men. The people of Nagar, who live on the other side of the valley, are much the same type'. Several pages of 'Chinese Central Asia' are taken up with accounts of Hunza, the Mir's hospitality and the entertainments, also some superb photographs.

They left Baltit on foot with a baggage caravan of donkeys and ponies, the Mir of Hunza having lent them riding yaks for crossing the Mintaka Pass. The yaks were wonderful on a hill, going up a 45 degree slope with a heavy load and, for such bulky low-clearance animals, they were extraordinarily sure-footed. The weather over the Mintaka was glorious which was fortunate as the summit was 15,450 ft. The first sight of the Pamirs on the other side was a thrilling moment. The name 'pamir' properly belongs to the chain of valleys running between the lofty mountains which form the watershed between the Oxus and the Tarim basins. Clarmont was much struck by their mildness compared with the tremendous scenery now left behind and with their greenness. The shapes of the hills and moss-hags were reminiscent of Scotland. Instead of sleeping in tents, the travellers found that portable huts of felt on a wooden frame ('ak-ois') were put up for them at each stage and, after leaving the first Chinese post at Tashkurgan, they had an unexpectedly early opportunity for exploring. The usual route was by a place called Gez to the north of Kongur. The Skrine party took a southern route from the Chichiklik plain (the name means 'flowery' and it was indeed covered with flowers). They climbed out of it over the Yangi Dawan pass and came into an unknown valley inhabited in the summer by most friendly Kirghiz. They remembered no European travellers coming that way and it was not mentioned in the General Staff route-book. They discovered a large lake at the head of the valley and when Clarmont climbed a ridge to reconnoitre a pass leading into the Karatash valley he saw some hitherto unknown smaller lakes.



10 Picnicking: Doris Skrine's Entertainment for Kirghiz Women and Children

Doris revelled in the society of the Kirghiz women. The chief's son and his family had turned out of their ak-ois for the Skrines and were most hospitable with fresh yaks' cream, milk, sheep and bread. The delightful women were as interested in Doris as she was in them. Their costume was quaint and picturesque: enormous white turban-like head-dress with long strips of embroidery hanging down their backs, hair in long pigtails, garments like dressing-gowns of striped silk and stubby-toed Mongolian boots. When the time came for the Skrines to leave, two of the ladies walked down the glen at Doris's stirrup and almost cried at the farewell.

The last three stages to Kashgar were not so comfortable. Sleeping in hot cramped houses, eaten by fleas and stifled by heat was a sad change, but the rich cultivation and greenery of Kashgaria was a pleasant surprise. The ceremonial welcoming began at Yangi Hissar, a big town with an Amban (District Magistrate) and a British Aksakal. Aksakal means literally 'white beard' and was the title given to the Consul's agent (unpaid) in each locality, the Aksakal being appointed by the Consul as leading representative of the local British subjects. Calls were made and had to be returned and here they had their first experience of a Chinese dinner. From Yangi Hissar they drove the last two stages in an old victoria which had been sent out for them by the Tao Tai (Governor) of Kashgaria. Welcoming deputations met them at different points – 'Loyal British Subjects', Chinese officials, representatives of the Swedish Mission, the Russian community and Turki merchants. There was even lunch served in a pavilion two miles from the town. At long last, in the afternoon, they reached Chini Bagh.

Clarmont found that in addition to the expected exchange of calls, he and Doris were to be plunged into an arduous programme of parties. The Vice-Consul, N. Fitzmaurice, who had been holding the fort since Etherton left was himself about to leave. He had been very popular in Kashgar and all communities were taking the opportunity of giving parties to say adieu to Fitzmaurice as well as to welcome the Skrines. And what dinners! – 'The Chinese ones consisted of 30 or 40 courses – we were expecting that – but the Swedish and Russian ones were nearly as long and much solider!' The same people were present at each feast and as the Chinese, with two exceptions, spoke no language than their own and the Russians and the Swedes were not much better, sitting through the meals was an ordeal.

Clarmont was in no doubt that the spirit beneath this hospitality was sincere – genuine regret at the departure of Fitzmaurice and friendliness towards the newcomers. He was struck by the friendliness – not only towards the consulate but among all the people towards each other. He liked the Chinese, the nicest being the old Tao Tai. The Hsieh Tai (Commanding Officer) was a quiet well-mannered youth who owed his position to his powerful unscrupulous old father, the Titai, or G.O.C. Kashgaria. The Tungshan, or Secretary to the Tao Tai for Foreign Affairs, spoke some English. With Fitzmaurice and Harding to interpret also, Clarmont was able to exchange ideas with the Chinese quite fully.

Alas for the Skrines, Fitzmaurice was not available to interpret for long; he left almost at once. Harding was to be a thorn in the flesh. He was a member of the China Consular Service and had been Second Secretary at the Legation in Peking for several years. He had given up home-leave in order to go to Kashgar, albeit in the comparatively lowly post of Vice-Consul. He made little attempt to disguise his scorn for the Indian Government in general and for Clarmont as Consul-General in particular. 'I can understand, putting myself in his position', Clarmont wrote, 'that it must be irksome, when you've been 20 years in the Consular Service and have often acted as Consul, to have to defer to and take orders from a man of another service with no experience of China and five years younger than yourself: but he came here with his eyes open'.

The Russian community in Kashgar were quite an asset socially – 'They are all staunch Nicolaists and loathe the Bolsheviks, with good personal reason most of them'. Clarmont and Doris both made a close personal friend of Nazaroff, a 'delightful, courteous though sad-looking middle-aged man: poor devil, he has reason to look sad – he was a geologist of note in Russian Turkestan before the Revolution. Then the Bolsheviks came and looted his collection and burnt his life's work'. He managed to slip over the frontier and thanks to Macartney's intercession with the Chinese authorities had been allowed to stay in Kashgar, despite orders from the Provincial Governor at Urumchi to deport him.

Chini Bagh was just outside the great walls of the city. On the other side stretched closely cultivated fields, houses, gardens and canals. The house was a large bungalow-type building standing on a bluff, with big rooms opening on to a veranda and terraces. The garden was at three different levels and had been badly neglected by Etherton.

Clarmont had grounds for being very angry with Etherton. The office work and the finances had been left in chaos; in particular, almost the whole year's allocation of Secret Service money had been spent. Etherton had been thoroughly inconsiderate to arrange things so that both he and his experienced Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice should have been on leave at the same time and to have insisted that the pretence of handing-over should have been done at Srinagar. But far worse was Clarmont's discovery now of a fraud on the Government which Etherton had perpetrated. Clarmont tried to clear up the accounts and at the same time reported on the situation to E.B. Howell[48], the Deputy Foreign Secretary. Howell replied: 'The course which I am endeavouring to shape is to pull some of the Kashgar loose ends with the Accountant General in such a way as to bar the door to Etherton's return without disclosing your share in bringing the state of affairs to light. I quite appreciate the altogether creditable motives which prompted you to write'.

Clarmont also wrote a very long confidential letter to his father. Etherton was in England and was quite likely to be taken at his own valuation – in a letter to Clarmont Etherton had written: 'Have had a busy time and seen most of the great men who help to make history and are controlling the destinies of Empire. I have seen Lord Peel and he has been very good in inviting me to his place; Earl Winterton, Lord Curzon, and now the Prime Minister who is back from struggling with Reparations and wants to hear all about Central Asia...' Clarmont thought that Frank should be warned, 'so as not to play Etherton's game by cracking him up and introducing him to useful people', but he asked his father to keep his letter confidential. The only people he would not mind knowing what he had said would be Macartney and Sykes, both of whom, owing to their connection with Kashgar, having some right to know what had been going on. Clarmont's letter recounted at length the swindles which Etherton had operated, the worst being over the rupee-tengeh exchange. The practice was for the Consulate to finance itself locally by means of Supply Bills – cheques on the Indian Exchequer – sold in the open market for the best rate procurable. There was not usually much demand in Kashgar for drafts on India and the rupee-tengeh rate was mostly unfavourable, working out at about 6.5 tengehs per rupee. The Consulate Treasury had formerly sold Supply Bills as necessary, keeping enough Kashgar currency in the Treasury to finance the office for about six months. Clarmont had found that Rs 76,000 worth of Supply Bills had been sold in Etherton's last eight months and had been bought by Etherton and Fitzmaurice: 'I at once smelt a large rat and found out that there is an interesting little circular tour on which one can send one's

money, with the unwitting assistance of the Government, and make a profit of 25% on every penny. You keep a banking account in China proper, say at Shanghai, in taels. The Chinese Post Office here are always wanting to remit to China and they will always buy cheques on China at a premium. You therefore draw cheques on your Chinese account and sell them to the Post Office. The problem then is to get the proceeds to India. No one has any bills or cheques to sell on India because the balance of trade is the other way: only the Consulate General has Supply Bills to sell on India. If you happen to be C.G. therefore you can sell yourself Supply Bills in exchange for Kashgar currency at any rate you like to fix. Having thus got money in India, you transfer it to China in the ordinary way, draw cheques in Kashgar, and so *ad infinitum* making 25% profit every time. The only loser is the Consulate which gets stuffed up with Kashgar money far in excess of its requirements, can't cash any more Supply Bills and therefore take advantage of a rise in exchange...'

Before describing this racket and other financial misdoings he had given as his first reason for regarding Etherton as unsuitable for the Kashgar post the fact that he was 'a lecher of a most pronounced type' 'In this country', he wrote, 'more even than in Persia, morals are extremely lax and the virtue of the women, who are remarkably pretty, is a minus quantity. All the more reason why the representative of the British Empire should keep himself and the Consulate unspotted before the world. The effect of this on British prestige is enormous; during 25 years of consuls at Kerman, only one had brought women into the consulate and he was still talked about when I was there 15 years later. Sir George Macartney for 28 years upheld British honour at this place and our moral reputation was as high as it could be when he left. What did Etherton do directly he found himself alone here? He started bringing prostitutes into the Consulate and he kept it up the whole time he was here, until our name stank and the Swedish Missionary ladies, as one of them hinted to Doris, were ashamed to be classed as Europeans with him! If he had contracted a temporary marriage with a girl, according to the local custom, it wouldn't have been so bad, but he had different bazaar women in every week or so... Imagine the effect on the clerks and other staff! Imagine the effect on the city!'

Frank replied in the form of a summary: 'Etherton is evidently a scoundrel, who cares for nought but satisfaction of his lust, greed and ambition. But the situation at Kashgar is abnormal.

(a) It is contrary to official etiquette for a junior officer and *locum tenens* to bring charges against the *pucca* (sic) man: and he who does so incurs suspicion that he has "his own axe to grind" and a black mark is put against his name.

(b) No enquiry could take place by a third party till May. It is your bounden duty to bring E. to justice, *coûte que coûte*, so:-

(1) Make sure that the information given you at Kashgar is not prompted by dislike and a wish to prevent his return:

(2) Take subordinates' statements down in writing and prepare balance sheets showing expenditure of secret service, etc. moneys:

(3) From the material draw up a Report showing E's misdoings under each head:

(4) Send to me, under registered cover, about Jan 1st: I will call at the India Office and lay all facts before the proper official:

(5) It is highly important that E should not return to Kashgar: but that you should be relieved by a senior man, with orders to report on E's conduct:

(6) Meantime there can be no harm in your applying for a supplementary grant of secret service etc. money...

(7) *Profound secrecy*!!!'

Of course Clarmont had not asked his father to intervene at the India Office and no such intervention was needed. The facts reported to the Government of India were eloquent enough but the Foreign and Political Department were faced with great difficulty in finding someone suitable to take over in Kashgar in mid-1923 when Etherton would have been due to return. Before any successor had been found, however, Howell wrote to Clarmont: 'We have told the Secretary of State that it is not proposed to reappoint Etherton to Kashgar. This decision has been taken solely on the grounds of his dealings in exchange. The other points in the count are being separately dealt with. It is a sordid and disgusting business, of a kind which tends very much to inflame one's anger and warp one's judgment. A man who does not play the game at the outposts is a traitor to our order...'

Meanwhile in Kashgar Clarmont was finding that entertaining and being entertained was taking up an inordinate amount of time. 'So much for your fears about Doris being lonely here for want of society!', he wrote: 'the society compares favourably with that of an Indian station containing the same number of Europeans – not that that's saying much'. He described a lunch-party given for the Titai (Commander-in-Chief) – 'rather like a toothless Lord Roberts to look at, an appalling old scoundrel who lives literally on a fiery sort of Chinese arrack and who has people executed and their noses and ears cut off for nothing in particular every week'. The Tao Tai arrived at the Consulate first and was accorded the three-gun salute due to him 'and there was a good deal of noise and people running about and excitement. But when the Titai came it was deafening. Not only does he get six guns, not only does he bring with him about 100 soldiers and footmen all armed to the teeth, not only does he come in an enormous troika at full gallop through the narrow streets, but he comes with an entire band which dashes into the Consulate inner court-yard at the double, falls into line with lightning rapidity and strikes up an ear-splitting "See the Conquering Hero comes" sort of tune as he steps from his carriage... The old man came in full regimentals of saxe-blue with huge epaulettes and about 15 rows of medals. He wanted to be photographed in his joy-rags; he says he's going to send one to the President! At lunch the Titai was served with his own

arrack and wouldn't touch any of my drinks. What was worse, he kept filling my glass full of the filthy stuff. He himself had been drinking it ever since 8 am, the Tao Tai informed me, and was already half-seas over. We were all relieved when suddenly, just before the ices he nodded to his nearest servant and a second later whistles blew outside, the band struck up, and the old man took his leave...'

Understandably both Clarmont and Doris were longing to be able to escape from parties and go on tour. There was an accumulation of consular work to be done at Yarkand and towns on the Khotan road but they arranged to approach Yarkand from the mountains. Clarmont was particularly keen to get up the Karatash valley under the east face of Kongur and October was the only practicable month for so doing. The Skrines took Nazaroff with them for the early part of the tour. It was the first expedition the old geologist had been on since coming to Kashgar as a refugee. He and Doris started the journey in a tarantass, a simple form of carriage being merely a basket swung between two poles. Clarmont saw off their caravan of seven camels and set off himself later on a horse.

Chapter 12

Kashgar 1922-23

The capital of Singkiang was Urumchi, about 50 marches distant from Kashgar. This was the seat of the Provincial Governor, Yang Tseng-hsin. In the introduction to his last book, 'Macartney at Kashgar' written in collaboration with Pamela Nightingale in 1973, Clarmont wrote: 'I now realize that the picture I drew in "Chinese Central Asia" was sadly incomplete... We in Kashgar knew little of Yang Tseng-hsin. Indeed he must have been a somewhat shadowy figure to Macartney. I depended for Urumchi news on reports of agents of doubtful veracity, valuable but infrequent letters from members of the China Inland Mission, and on the talk of rare visitors... It was not until the 1930s that news began to seep out, showing what a remarkable governor Yang Tseng-hsin had been'. With the advantage of hindsight, Clarmont could see that Yang had been responsible for the survival of peace in Sinkiang when repercussions of the Russian Revolution were rocking Kashgar. The Sinkiang frontier was officially closed. What was taking place on the other side of it was of prime interest to readers of the Consul-General's reports in Delhi and Peking. Agents brought reports of the Bolshevik Commissar at Andijan in Bokhara making overtures for a treaty with Kashgaria. However, the extent of any meetings between Bolshevik officials and Chinese from Kashgar was determined by the attitude of the Urumchi Government. And Yang remained firm, though at the time Clarmont supposed him simply to be anti-foreign.

One of the main responsibilities of the Consul-General – indeed the main reason for his having to visit the cities of the southern oases – was to look after the interests of British subjects. These were numerous, being mostly settled immigrants from Baltistan, Chitral, Bajaur and other frontier districts of North West India. In the early days, comparatively few had taken the trouble to register as British but in 1911-12 when the Russians began an intensive campaign of penetration with a view to ultimate absorption of the province, a large number of Chinese subjects were registered as Russians. Macartney, in order to checkmate the Russians, registered the immigrants as British. The Chinese had had no objection: while the Russians had been a power in the land the Chinese had been quite glad to play off the British against them. But things were different by 1922. Russian influence was virtually nil. The Chinese had begun to object to what they thought was taking away of their subjects by the British. Hence Yang Tseng-hsin's anti-foreign reputation. And hence the need for the British Consul-General to embark on two months' tour.

On the outskirts of Yarkand they were given two receptions – chah-jans, as the wayside tea-drinkings were called. The troops were out with bands

playing and all the Chinese officials were in the reception party. Yarkand was larger than Kashgar but being on the flat was less picturesque. Its bazaars were fascinating – Rembrandt would have revelled in the glimpses of interiors, courtyards of poor people's houses, corners by ponds with weeping willows, eating-shops, smithies and carpenters' shops. Doris loved too all the strange ceremonial part of the Consul-General's tour. He had eleven busy days at Yarkand, with numerous outstanding cases in which British subjects were concerned. The Swedish Mission ran an orphanage there and the Skrines gave a tea-party for the 28 inmates. After a large meal and games organised by Doris, the orphans lined up of their own accord and sang Swedish hymns in Turki.

The Hsieh Tai (Commanding Officer) of Yarkand provided a cavalry escort to lead the Skrines across country to the Zaraf-shan river where they were met by the Aksakal of Posgam and a crowd of British subjects. The usual chah-jan took place in a gaily-decorated tent by the roadside. Clarmont had no difficulty with the Amban over the few outstanding cases but it was not possible to make an early start even when all the business had been done. Farewell calls had to be made on the Amban at the Yamen and on the Aksakal at his house; then there were three separate farewell tea-drinkings on the roadside beyond the town.

The next stop, Kargalik, was only 24 miles away. In addition to the tea-drinking welcomes and parades of troops, two Chinese trumpet-bands – one in front and one behind – escorted the Skrines into the city. The Amban of Kargalik was a Manchu called Kwei and Clarmont thought him the strongest and most capable magistrate in the province, specially commissioned by the Governor in Urumchi to fight the British over the question of registration of British subjects. He loaded the Skrines with hospitality and ceremonial honour, including a dinner-party attended by the Manchu ladies. The registration question had been mishandled by Etherton, Clarmont thought. Etherton's one aim having been to increase his own importance, he had continued Macartney's policy of raking in as many British subjects as possible, though the necessity for this had passed, nearly all the 'Russian subjects' having reverted to Chinese nationality. Etherton had also worded notices sent to Aksakals very tactlessly, antagonising the magistrates. The consequence had been a campaign against the recently registered British subjects. The Amban of Kargalik had imprisoned some and extorted 'affidavits' to the effect that they were Chinese and had falsely pretended to be British. Etherton had not himself been to Kargalik and had made no attempt to grapple with the situation. One of the British subjects who had been imprisoned had died in prison and genuine British subjects went over to the Chinese by the score, saying 'there was no more a British Consul'. Clarmont had to spend a week in the town, sitting in 'joint session' with the Amban for nine or ten hours each day: 'I'm glad to say I've won nearly all along the line. The Amban is a little man with a loud voice and a quick brain, and he has a wonderful flow of words as well as great keenness on his job: I respect him for that, though I don't approve of his

methods[49]. His efforts have been mainly directed at tiring me out by long sittings and getting me to make admissions that will help him with his higher authorities. (The whole matter is before the Minister in Peking). I've succeeded in defeating every attempt of his to obtain admissions and I've publicly discredited his witnesses. Under my cross-examination they all broke down and contradicted each other hopelessly, one even admitting that he hadn't been present when an affidavit purporting to have been made by him had been written and sealed! I'm glad to say that as a result the British subjects here have plucked up courage... Privately our relations were of the best. We became quite members of Kwei's family. He was hoping, I suppose, to disarm me and make it difficult for me to report against him to Peking... I've already told him the truth, which is that he carried out most energetically the orders received from the Governor at Urumchi'.

Mr and Mrs Kwei accompanied the Skrines to the chah-jan a mile out of the town, and there were farewells and final petitions from British subjects yet further along the way. They reached Chulak Langar that night. 'Langar' means rest-house and 'Chulak' means maimed, the name recording an incident when a man had stumbled into the building having lost his hands and feet from frost-bite. Travelling in December was certainly very cold; Doris kept warm for part of the time by lying in the bottom of the tarantass wrapped in bedding. The rest-house was a substantial stone-building put up by Yakub Beg 'Bedaulat', the Turki who had turned the Chinese out and ruled as king in the 1860s. The view from it at dawn was wonderful: on one side the blue Kuen Lun rising height beyond height to glaciers and jagged peaks; on the other, a limitless expanse of dunes, the terrible Takla Makan desert.

Goma was the next town, then Khotan, one of the most ancient cities in the world. Clarmont saw several collections of treasures from the lost cities under the sands of the Takla Makan. There was more consular business than foreseen and he regretted not having longer to look out for valuables. There was lovely brass and copper, silks and furs. Old Khotan rugs were difficult to find, as was jade. The reason for the scarcity of jade was that the Titai – the tyrant at Kashgar – was cornering the entire supply; his local representatives everywhere had orders to have all jade sent to him.

The last and most distant city visited was Keriya. No European woman – and few men – had been there and the Skrines were watched by large crowds wherever they went. Unfortunately the weather was hazy, obscuring the view of the Kulu Lun and Altyn Tagh ranges though the nearest peak was only 50 miles distant. The Altyn Tagh (Mountains of Gold) were the source of furs – snow-leopard, lynx, wolf and sable.

By the time Clarmont made his next tour of the southern oasis cities, a great change for the better had come about over the question of British subjects. He had done much work to obtain agreement to a system of joint registration. The Aksakals were beginning to understand that they should keep on good terms with the Ambans and not involve the Consulate-General in disputes with

the Chinese authorities except in genuine cases of injustice. At Yarkand elections were held for a new Aksakal. Clarmont introduced an innovation in the shape of the 'alternative vote'. There were five candidates; by making every British subject vote for two candidates in order of preference, it was possible to find which candidate was at least tolerable to the largest number of voters. Clarmont presided at the secret ballot and the outcome was a satisfactory surprise. He took the opportunity of the presence of the entire British community to make clear to them the changed situation. Speaking to them in three languages, Urdu, Persian and Turki, he explained how formerly the encouragement of anyone with a claim to come forward and apply for registration had led to the registration of some who had long severed all connexion with India. These should have adopted the nationality of the country where they lived. It was not, as some people appeared to think, a favour to the British Government for a person with no right to British nationality to register himself as a British subject; rather it was a privilege granted only to those who could claim it, either themselves having come from British territory or being the children of immigrants from British territory. No one whose father had been born in Chinese territory was eligible for British citizenship.

A mission from Afghanistan had arrived at Yarkand. No treaty existed between China and Afghanistan and a delegation of Chinese officials, including Chu, the Tao Tai (Governor) of Kashgar, were trying to negotiate an agreement. The leader of the Afghan mission styled himself prematurely 'Afghan Consul-General for Chinese Turkestan'. In view of the newly-made Treaty of Friendship between India and Afghanistan, Clarmont determined to be friendly (though the Afghan should have called on him first) and invited the Afghans to dinner with the Chinese. He was disappointed by the calibre of the leading Afghan – an inferior type – but the Mirza (secretary) was a much-travelled man who had joined the mission straight from Moscow and seemed certainly to be a Bolshevist spy.

The departure of Harding after completing his one year as Vice Consul meant that the Skrines could not get away from Kashgar as frequently as they might have liked. In other ways it was an unmitigated blessing: Harding had been uncongenial as a colleague, not only egotistic and rude, but disloyal in the sense of being unwilling to subscribe to official policy. Instead of writing a confidential report about him, Clarmont wrote semi-officially to the Minister in Peking, Sir Ronald Macleay[50], ending 'I hope he will prosper in his future career and will always get the job he wants most – so long as it isn't one in which I am likely to be associated with him'. Macleay replied that Clarmont's views about Harding coincided with his own: 'it speaks volumes for your tact and sense of humour that you were able to keep the peace. I am sure I would not have done so and nothing will induce me to have him working at the Legation'. He went on to say that it was not easy to secure the best class of junior for the vice-consul's post in Kashgar which would have to remain unfilled for a while. Macleay himself had not been able to get to know all the

members of the China Consular Service: the chaotic state of the country made it extremely difficult for him to get away from Peking; he had not even been able to visit Canton or Hankow.

Russian affairs caused a great deal of work. Agents reported frequently about the frontier districts where despite official closure profits were being made from trade. Clarmont passed back to India a flow of intelligence concerning Semirechia, Fergana and the Russian Pamirs. Also the presence of White Russians interned in Sinkiang was a matter of much concern. The Urumchi Government often behaved barbarously; General Annenkoff was believed to have been held there in prison for two years. A certain Colonel Tchemagin was being kept secretly at Aksu: he contrived to make contact with the British Consulate-General and Clarmont was able to extract a promise from the Amban at Aksu that the officer would not be surrendered to the Soviet authorities. Then a former station-master on the Trans-Siberian railway was found to be in custody at Yarkand, caught while trying to make his escape to India. The Russian community in Kashgar were most appreciative when Clarmont's representations succeeded in having the man released.

The activities of the Swedish missionaries sometimes caused work too. In 1923 the fast of Ramazan took place in April and as usual crowds of country folk came into Kashgar. It so happened that the Swedish Mission had been conducting a 'forward policy' and had made a number of conversions at Easter. All the Mission's activities were obnoxious to the mullahs and mosque-school teachers and monster petitions were presented to the Tao Tai demanding the stopping of the Mission's work and punishment of the converts in accordance with Koranic law. Six of the converts were imprisoned and inflammatory sermons were preached, inciting the mob to attack the Mission and kill Christians. The Chinese authorities were frightened and their vacillation fanned the flames. The entire staff of the Mission, Christian and Moslem, ran away and the hospital, school and printing-press had to be closed. The panic was increased by the fear that the General, himself a Moslem, might sympathise with the fanatics.

Clarmont did what he could to help the missionaries. He lent them servants and uniformed orderlies and he had all the Mission ladies to stay at Chini Bagh. Perhaps most effective, he conferred daily with the Tao Tai, urging him to put a stop to the agitation. The Titai mercifully did not intervene and at last the Tao Tai plucked up courage to summon the chief merchants and Qazis and tell them they must put down the disturbances. The matter, he said, had become an international one, having been taken up by the British Consul-General – and no one wanted a repetition at Kashgar of the Boxer riots and their sequel. Conditions soon returned to normal.

Clarmont advised Dr Gustafsson to engage in no religious work for some time and to urge the Swedish Minister at Peking to obtain a definite pronouncement from the Chinese Government as to what activities the Mission might resume. Since southern Sinkiang was a purely Moslem country,

Clarmont considered that treaty provisions relating to missionary activities in other parts of China should apply in only modified form: it was unreasonable to expect the Chinese Government to look with equanimity on activities which might give rise to serious disturbances among their Moslem subjects.

Domestic life at Chini Bagh was filled with variety. Doris's special delight was a large menagerie but she was a good hostess too. She made admirable arrangements for a men's dinner-party on the King's Birthday. Peeping out of her bedroom window onto the terrace where the men had been sitting, she saw with amusement that as soon as the guests had gone into dinner the servants of the visiting Chinese officials came and finished the drinks. There was also a large garden-party for members of all the different communities, the majority being Turki Chinese. Clarmont ordered from India a football and its arrival heralded a new era for the Consulate. At first it was used by Doris's 'boy scouts'; then the grown-ups were introduced to soccer. The Hunza men were the best, though none of them had ever seen a football before. By Boxing Day they knew enough about the game to play an 'exhibition match' – the Consulate staff and orderlies against The World. Christmas Day had been celebrated most festively. Clarmont had asked his mother many months before to send him a quantity of toys. Doris had obtained from India Christmas tree decorations and she took an enormous amount of trouble with preparing food. There were ten children, Chinese and Russian. Though the Russian Christmas was not celebrated until a fortnight later, the Russian community flocked to the Consulate from near and far. After tea, everybody moved into the drawing-room where the Christmas tree was and the sound of sleigh-bells was soon heard. 'Who's there?' shouted Clarmont in Russian specially learnt for the occasion. 'The Father of Ice', came the reply and in came Father Christmas carrying a sack full of presents.

There is a touching tribute to both Clarmont and Doris in a book Nazaroff wrote about his stay in Kashgar[51]. After mentioning the stir caused, specially among the women of the European community, when news came that the British Consul-General was to be accompanied by his wife, he said that the Skrines' arrival 'was a red-letter day for our poor little Kashgar society, as it opened out a new vista of possibilities of social entertainment among a small colony that was suffering from depression and monotony... Mr and Mrs Skrine livened things up immensely and brought a lot of happiness into families that had forgotten their *joie de vivre*. The charming young hostess of the British Consulate was in fact a public benefactor, who won the affectionate gratitude of us all...' Nazaroff went on to mention specially the Christmas entertainment for the children – 'Poor little souls, they had neither toys nor books; small wonder that they firmly believed in a world of magic, represented in Kashgar by the Good Fairy in the gardens of the British Consulate'.

Chapter 13

Kashgar – End of an Era

In 1923 the Government of India offered Clarmont the substantive appointment of Consul-General but he had decided that he would rather stick to his plan for going on home leave in 1924. He had had only five months at home during 12 years and looked forward to leave very much. On the other hand, he enjoyed living in what he described as 'this delightful Arcadia' and he took every opportunity to travel and explore. At the beginning of his first tour, he and Doris had marched up the wide stony valley of the Karatash river. Too much water had still been coming down to get the caravan up to Chimgan, a Kirghiz settlement at 10,250 ft but camping at a lower altitude had the advantage of being less cold. From camp in a deep valley he made a couple of climbs, fixing his position with the plane-table with reference to the known peaks. On the second climb he attained a height of 12,700 ft among snow-fields and set up his plane-table and cameras on the narrow top of a rock pinnacle from which marvellous views were visible in all directions. Kongur itself was veiled in cloud but the numerous mountains which could be photographed were all hitherto unknown. Then they moved camp up a side glen and stumbled upon the Kaying Bashi – a place both Clarmont and Doris were always to remember with rhapsody as the 'happy valley'. This was wide and sunny, with two glaciers coming down into it and great forests of deodar and juniper, ringed round by peaks of up to 20,000 ft which rose sheer from the green floor of the valley. Several Kirghiz families inhabited this little Paradise and were most friendly. Doris was a great success with them. The Skrines were able to return to Kaying Bashi a year later and Clarmont succeeded in filling in a blank space on the map east of the Kongur range. He could claim to have discovered Shiwakte, fixing its position and its connection with the main Kongur range and the mountains of the Karatash basin. Photographs taken at 16,000 ft turned out splendidly.

They managed also to tour in the southern slopes of the Tien Shan range but to Clarmont's great disappointment did not have time to cross the Muzart Pass into the Ili district of northern Sinkiang. They reached only as far as Bai where an issue of considerable importance to British Indian trade came to light. The Amban of Bai had forbidden the local Qazis to seal bonds taken by British subjects from Chinese subjects for trade debts. Since a bond was not admitted in evidence in a debt case unless it had been sealed by a Qazi it was impossible for a British subject to recover a debt through a Chinese court. After a stormy interview with the Amban – an ignorant man – Clarmont placed the matter in the hands of the Taoyin. Much of the route followed by the Skrines was little-

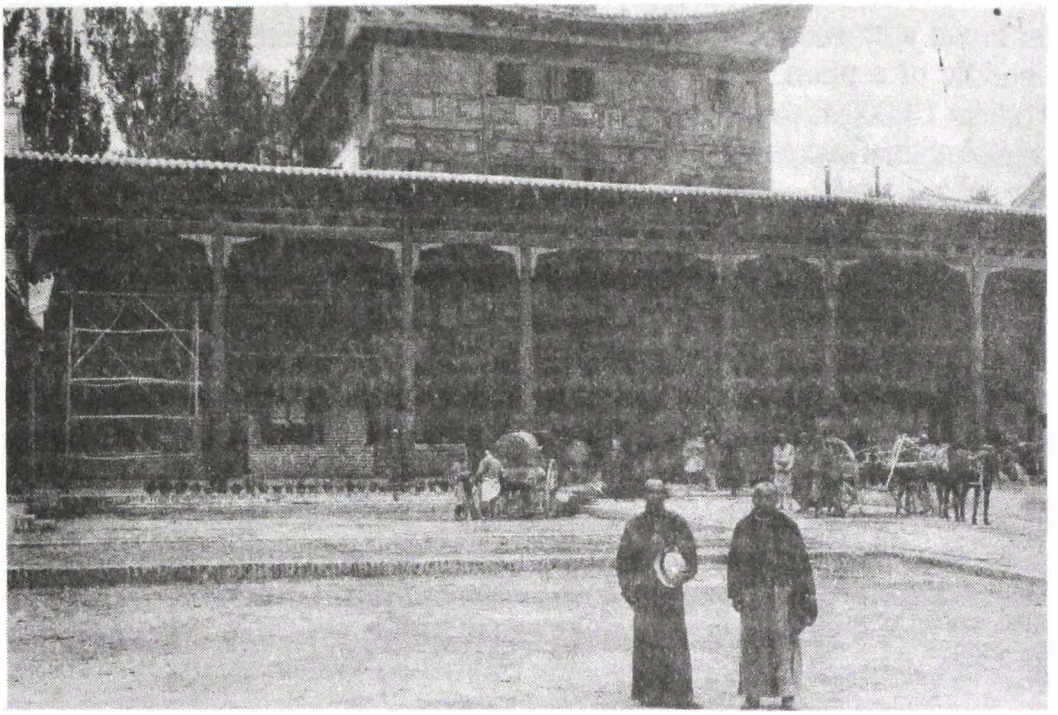
known and Clarmont was able to make corrections and additions for the General Staff Route Book. The return to Kashgar through Maralbashi was made in perfect weather, the air so clear – 'We seemed to be in a valley perhaps 15 miles broad with snow-capped hills say 7 - 8,000 ft on either side, instead of in the middle of a plain 120 miles broad with mountains 25,000 ft to the south and others 18,000 ft to the north'.

On their final tour of the southern oases Clarmont had the good fortune to be able to take a telepanorama of the Kun Lun range. This nearly impassable barrier between China and Tibet is almost always obscured by dust and haze: Marco Polo who travelled through the oases on his journey to Cathay had seemingly been unaware of the existence of snow-covered mountains on his right flank.

They had to hurry back to Kashgar from this tour. Reports reached Clarmont in Yarkand that a Chinese force was being assembled in Aksu to wrest power at Kashgar from Ma Titai. Chu (the Tao Tai or Governor of Kashgar) who had been Governor Yang's representative at Yarkand in negotiations with the Afghan mission, had felt unable to return to Kashgar while Ma Titai was all-powerful there. He had now been summoned to Aksu to play a part in Governor Yang's plan for re-asserting his authority in Kashgaria.

The Titai's latest villainy was concerned with his monopoly of the shale-oil workings which produced kerosene oil and paraffin wax. There was a good demand for the oil but the Kashgar market could only absorb small quantities of wax. Accordingly, Ma Titai began to sell it forcibly. He portioned out the Old and New cities into wards and appointed a number of his Begs to distribute so much wax per month to each shop-keeper, whether he wanted it or not. The wretched cobblers, who preferred using beeswax, were forced to take double supplies. Very soon complaints arose and the leader of the cobblers petitioned the Titai to let them off taking any more. The unfortunate petitioner was beaten to death. Soon afterwards an incident occurred at the frontier-post on the Kashgar-Tashkent road: some Chinese soldiers sent into Russian territory to collect debts were fired on. The Chinese Officer had sent off alarmist reports suggesting that the Bolsheviks were about to attack and asking for reinforcements. Ma Titai sent off frantic wires to Urumchi and Peking and ordered the district Begs to recruit an army of 2,000 for him – 'went so far as to order 2,000 pairs of boots and the same number of coats in the bazaar. You see, though Ma Titai draws from the Treasury the pay of about 10,000 soldiers, he only keeps up an "army" of two or three hundred and pockets the pay of the rest!' When the reports from the frontier arrived, the Titai sought to turn public opinion in his favour – and encourage recruitment – by hauling up eight of his wax distributors and accusing them of over-charging the shop-keepers and then sentenced them to have their hands and feet cut off. He had a special device, like a huge bacon-slicing machine, for this purpose. The victims were then placed one at each of the four gates of the city as an example to robbers.

Three of them survived, one of them being brought in by orderlies from the Consulate and treated by the Indian doctor.



11 Elaborately decorated wooden Palace built for himself by General Ma Titai at Kashgar new (Chinese) city just before his downfall, 1922. Left foreground: Captain Ma Hsih Ying, who led the force which overthrew him. Supply and ammunition wagons are loading up with loot from the Palace,which was full of jade, raw opium and other valuables.

Governor Yang's plan was well-conceived. Using the frontier incident as a pretext, the Chinese posts to the north of Kashgar were reinforced so that the Titai would not be able to escape into Russian territory. Strict censorship had been exercised for many years, so he was kept quite in the dark about the assembly in Aksu of some 5,000 men. Rumours were of course rife but few facts were known in Kashgar: the Hsieh Tai (Commandant) of the Old City, who was the son of Ma Titai, called at the Consulate-General with the object of pumping Clarmont about troop movements. The main body set out from Aksu on 24th May by the main road through Maralbashi. No attempt was made to keep its movements secret and Ma Titai calculated rightly that it could not reach Kashgar before 4th June. But a smaller column of about 500 troops marched swiftly via Uch Turfan through the outer ranges of the Tien Shan, following much the same route as the Skrines had taken in their tour the year before. This force was led by a bitter enemy of the Titai, Ma Hsih Ying. It was successful in capturing all the Titai's scouts and reached Kashgar New City under cover of darkness. Clarmont's diary tells what followed: 'At dawn when the gates were opened as usual Ma Hsih Ying and 20 of his men rushed in and made a straight line for the Titai's magnificent new four-storeyed palace of painted wood. The New City was full of the Titai's troops, but the latter were

an undisciplined, slack, opium-smoking lot, and the attack completely surprised them as well as their General who was still in bed. The Titai hastily collected a few personal orderlies and fired at Ma Hsih Ying and his party as they crossed the courtyard, killing a lieutenant and wounding two other ranks. But Ma Hsih Ying was not to be denied his revenge, and he was into the house and up the three flights of stairs to the Titai's bedroom before the latter could organise a proper defence. The old General fired at Ma Hsih Ying with his magazine pistol but missed him, whereupon Ma disarmed him with a revolver-shot in his right arm and speedily had him a prisoner.

'The Hsieh Tai and his troops at Kashgar Old City, six miles away, had still to be dealt with. The Hsieh Tai's Yamen is provided with massive mediaeval fortifications. Its outer walls, which are also those of the town, are only 150 to 200 yards distant from the Consulate-General over which bullets whistled freely during the fighting. The men from outside the fort soon overpowered the Hsieh Tai's inferior troops and rushed the Yamen. As at the New City, once they had lost their leader the local troops ran, and the rest of the day was spent by the Governor's soldiers looting the Yamen and chasing the Hsieh Tai's men. No violence was done to civilians; the troops appeared to be well in hand...

'Next day, Ma Titai was shot publicly and his body exposed in front of the main gate of the New City, to the great delight of the populace who collected in crowds to spit upon and otherwise defile the body of their late tyrant. Rejoicings have been general at the overthrow of the self-styled "King" who had oppressed Kashgaria so long. The 32 ladies of the Titai's harem together with the Hsieh Tai's womenfolk are prisoners in the Yamen but are to be released later and maintained at State expense...

'Apart from the great increase in prestige gained by the Urumchi Government by this display of power, the position of the Chinese in southern Sinkiang has been greatly strengthened from the purely military point of view...'

Another strengthening of the Urumchi Government's powers might be expected to follow from the erection by Marconi of a wireless station at Kashgar. Dockray, the engineer in charge, had built a station at Urumchi whence arrived his caravan consisting of 117 5-horse carts and 1,000 camels. With a small nucleus of skilled Chinese workmen, the remainder Turki day-labourers, he erected three 305 ft towers. He was immediately able to receive stations in Siberia and in Europe – on the day after General Elections in the United Kingdom he was able to announce that Baldwin had been made Prime Minister, news which otherwise would have taken several weeks to reach Kashgar. There was some mystery about being unable to make contact with Urumchi: Clarmont strongly suspected foul play. The Chinese politicians who had carried out the deal with Marconi might be assumed only to have been concerned with the 'squeeze' they had made out of the contract. The money had been raised by a loan on the London market and if the tests could not be carried

out satisfactorily the Company would be unable to prove that the stations had been completed.

Clarmont by no means regretted that there was to be no immediate prospect of regular wireless communication with India. He had been pleased when he heard the name of the officer chosen to succeed him, Lt. Col. R. Lyall, who sounded a good man. What was needed in a remote and unsupervisable place such as Kashgar was someone the Government could trust to tell them the truth. Lyall arrived in Kashgar at the end of August. The handing-over was straightforward, written records having been made, a filing system introduced and annual reports from the Consulate submitted for the first time.

Doris spent the last night in Kashgar weeping bitterly and there were no less than seven ceremonial tea-drinkings by the wayside when they left. The route chosen for the return journey to India gave an opportunity to reconnoitre yet another blank on the map. Clarmont had seen from a height of 13,000 ft near Kaying what appeared to be a pass on the north side of the Gez valley. If practicable, this pass would avoid the dangerous fords of the lower half of the valley. It would also afford the chance of seeing the north face of Chakragil. The people at a village on an affluent of the Gez river were most reluctant for them to go over the pass, which was called the Arpa Bel, saying that it was very difficult and dangerous. The reason for this reluctance at last emerged – the Arpa Bel was a secret and the Kirghiz did not want the Chinese to find that there was an easier summer route up the Gez valley to Tashkurghan. The scenery was stupendous, Chakragil and its glaciers were visible but the dust-haze hampered photography. The top of the pass was a knife-edge ridge 13,350 ft, giving a view of Chakragil, Kongur and all the Shiwakte mountains.

The rest of the journey across the Pamirs was very cold, lack of fuel being the great draw-back at camping-places. After a long stony march, the first Indian outpost – Misgar – was reached. Here a small P.W.D. building housed the Telegraph Station – to which so many messages had come from Kashgar by courier for onward transmission. Clarmont felt a curious sensation receiving and sending telegrams over a counter once more and hearing the tap-tap of morse. The Skrines made good progress over the next six stages to Baltit, doing the journey in four marches. The Mir of Hunza again entertained them handsomely and Clarmont found that his two years at Kashgar gave completely new perspective to discussions with the Mir concerning the Chinese, Russians and Afghans.

They were particularly keen to visit Nagar where they had not stayed on their outward journey, Clarmont being specially attracted by the knowledge that it contained the Hispar Range where are the biggest glaciers in the world outside the Arctic and Antarctic – also K2, the world's second highest mountain. They walked – only six miles – from Baltit to the capital of the rival state. They were given a memorable reception by the Mir of Nagar. The entertainments included archery which really looked like an exhibition by

Parthians of Alexander's Macedonians: the mounted men, each with his bow slung over his shoulders and an arrow in his belt, collected at the far end of the ground. Then the band started a barbaric melody and one by one the competitors galloped down. Several shot their arrows very close to the target which was a small silver leaf stuck in the ground. Clarmont himself took part in the tent-pegging. The Mir formally presented him with one of the silver marks, politely pretending that he had succeeded in taking a nick out of its edge. He took part in a game of polo too and twice managed to do the 'tombuk'. This was a stunt in which a player has to gallop up the ground holding both stick and ball in his right hand and at a fixed mark he has to throw the ball in the air in front of him and smite it. 'By some extraordinary fluke', as Clarmont put it, he managed to hit the ball each time.

Paul Nazaroff, the Russian emigré with whom the Skrines had become really friendly, had through Clarmont's good offices at last been able to get away from Sinkiang. He had been useful to the Consulate-General in secret service matters and translation. His only money consisted of some gold roubles worth about £50. Clarmont had arranged for Nazaroff to travel to India by the Leh route – Nazaroff would not have risked the Pamir route for fear of being snatched by the Bolsheviks. The Skrines met him in Lahore and gave him onward tickets all the way to London and money for expenses on the journey. Clarmont wrote to his father asking him to look after Nazaroff on first arrival in London; he hoped eventually to obtain for him a job as a prospecting geologist in French-speaking Africa.

A short visit had to be made to Simla whither Clarmont had been summoned by the Foreign Secretary, Denys Bray[52]. Bray told him that the Government of India owed him 'a very real debt of gratitude' for having shown up Etherton. And at Simla Clarmont was able to hand over his survey work and panoramas to Major Mason of the Survey of India who was most appreciative. 'As I expected', Clarmont wrote, 'he has found many minor inaccuracies in my plane-table work but he says he will be able to put my map in bodily and is going to have specially printed a large-scale map of the hitherto unexplored region from my map and photographs'. The General Staff was also most appreciative of help with a new edition of the Military Route Book of Chinese Turkestan.

Chapter 14

A creative interlude, 1924 – 26

The Skrines arrived home in December 1924 and the prospect of 18 months home leave lay ahead. Clarmont had been able to save money and was determined to enjoy it. Doris had been dreading the prospect. She had no feeling for 'home' at all, which was odd in one so passionately patriotic. Clarmont supposed that in some ways she had never grown up; she tended to look upon her mother and other relations as hostile adults bent upon interfering. She loathed London and continental travel because of unpleasant childhood associations. Clarmont, by contrast, had never taken root in Asia as so many in the Indian services did. England and Scotland were his home. He went to work in the East, much like a suburbanite boarding a train each day for the city.

His leave was also to be much occupied by writing. Miss Ella Sykes, the intrepid sister of Sir Percy Sykes who had accompanied her brother on much of his central Asian travels, had recommended Clarmont to Methuens as a possible author of a travel book. Methuens had been most impressed by Clarmont's photographs and had offered terms for a book which Clarmont had accepted. Before getting down to writing this he had a programme of lecturing. Both the Central Asian Society and the Royal Geographical Society had invited him to speak. He found that lecturing came to him very easily ('no doubt hereditary') but his mass of material, including pictures, meant that the labour of reducing the whole to a talk of 50 minutes was very severe. His lecture to the R.G.S. was the basis of an article in the Society's Journal called 'The Alps of Qungur'. The writing of this was the prelude to the drudgery of working on 'Chinese Central Asia'.

He found an excellent base from which he could work and play – furnished rooms in Hurlingham, five guineas a week for two. Frank had had misgivings about Clarmont's intention to play polo at Hurlingham as a relaxation from writing but Clarmont had calculated the expenses carefully and the two ponies he acquired were not in their first youth.

Doris did her duty as a daughter and Clarmont accompanied her on a round of visits to Whitelaw relations. She did not really like any of them. Clarmont however developed an excellent relationship with Whitelaw *père* – whom he called 'Mr Dad'. Mrs Whitelaw, a chronic invalid, spent much time in bed.

The manuscript which Clarmont delivered to Methuens was considered to be much too long and he had to work on it during a later visit to North Berwick. He thought the revised version of the book a considerable improvement – '*L'art d'ennuyer, c'est de tout dire*'. A large party of cousins

was being entertained in the new Whitelaw house, Nungate. He found Doris organising amateur theatricals. She had written the words herself and was producer and stage manager: it gave her plenty to do and she was thoroughly enjoying it.

As a reward for her having put up with London and then her own family, Clarmont took her to Morocco. For himself, he had had enough of heat and sand and glare and eastern smells, but Doris was happier in Marrakesh than she had been since she left Kashgar. She had been looking forward to the end of the leave and she found an excuse for returning to India ahead of Clarmont. Her only sister, Iris, had married an officer in the Frontier Force Rifles, a Quetta acquaintance who at Doris's invitation had called on the Whitelaws when on leave. Iris, now Mrs Bunbury, was in Quetta with her husband and was about to have a baby. Doris arranged to go and stay with her, Clarmont following her to India two months later.

Clarmont returned from seeing Doris off in Venice to a country about to experience the General Strike. He enrolled as a special constable for its duration. At the end of May came the final high-peak of the leave. He had decided to cut short his polo – there was almost certain to be polo in India – and to fish in the north of Scotland. 'Mr Dad' was a keen fisherman and Clarmont wanted the chance to repay some of his kindness. Clarmont was able to rent a lodge in Wester Ross near Poolewe called Tournaig for £100 for six weeks. Helen Skrine came to keep house. The venture was a resounding success. After it, he wrote to his mother: 'I have a long, memorable and on the whole most enjoyable leave behind me. And the best bit has been the last six weeks. Nothing can take away from us the Tournaig adventure. The drive there – the five weeks in the little lodge by the loch – the drive south – it is all a beautiful dream, an imperishable memory. I have long since ceased to regret that Doris was not with us. It meant so much more to you, and therefore to me through you, than it would have to her. I shall never forget the thrill with which I heard you say on Loch Beannoch "How I would like to spend the whole summer up here – *this* is the only life worth living"... You probably wouldn't say so now – nor would I, for of course one must live in the great world – but it showed that Nature spoke to you, as it always does to me in the Highlands... Tournaig for pleasure, and the Book for achievement – these two have made my leave a success, a possession for ever'.

Chapter 15

Princely States, 1926 - 27

'To be perfectly truthful', Clarmont wrote to his mother, 'my new job doesn't thrill me very much. It's nice, easy, gentlemanly, comfortable – but that's not what I want...' It was the post of Secretary to the A.G.G. Punjab States. This was the title given to the Viceroy's representative with the Native States of the Punjab, United Provinces and Sind, his Agency being based at Lahore. In May the A.G.G. with his Secretary moved up to Dalhousie for touring in the Hill States, then they spent some time in Simla, returning to Lahore at the beginning of November. The touring was of course to be very different to what the Skrines liked best, being on their own.

One of the best things about the job was the character of the A.G.G. – Colonel Beauchamp St. John[53]. He was a son of one of the great Frontier administrators of old, Oliver St. John. Clarmont was aware that his own jobs so far had all been either on the Frontier or outside India, excepting for his one year at Delhi-Simla; he liked St. John very much and expected to gain greatly from the experience of working under him. Another attractive feature of the Agency was the variety of the States. They comprised Sikhs, Rajputs, Mohammedans: mountaineers and plainsmen. Clarmont's predecessor, H.R. Lynch Blosse[54], had once been Assistant Private Secretary to the Viceroy and was a very thorough person with the 'Secretariat mind'. Taking over was accordingly straightforward.

Doris had been a support to her sister in Quetta and the baby had safely arrived. Clarmont was privately amused to find that Doris had apparently been living quite a social life – though her one reason to return to India ahead of him was to avoid 'society' at home. Now she was looking forward to house-keeping in Lahore with her cats. She was not very taken with the prospect of going on tour as a member of the A.G.G.'s party. They were 'in camp', i.e. away from headquarters, at Simla. The Skrines lived at Corstorphan's Hotel, Clarmont doing a great amount of paper-work, having the help of only two junior clerks from the Lahore office.

Colonel St. John had stayed at Viceregal Lodge and was favourably impressed with Lord Irwin – 'a *very* good man, far better than Reading was'. The Skrines dined at Viceregal Lodge and they too liked the Irwins. Comparing notes afterwards, they realized that neither of them had said 'Your Excellency' once. This would have been amiss with the Readings. The Viceroy and Lady Irwin were shortly to visit Lahore and Bahawalpur State.

The Skrines moved to Lahore by car – a small Singer which they had bought in London. Clarmont was immediately plunged into preparations for the Viceroy's visit. He did not envy the civil authorities and the Police. A

Mills bomb had exploded in a crowded part of the town on the route H.E. was to take to the Durbar. Some feared that it might be a rehearsal. On the other hand, there was a Persian saying 'the caravan route that has just been raided by bandits is the safest'. Two of the States' Chiefs were to come to Lahore for the occasion, the Nawab of Malerkotla and the Maharaja of Patiala.

The great day came for the Viceroy's arrival by train at 8 a.m. The station had been splendidly decorated, with acres of red carpet and jungles of palms and other greenery in tubs. Clad in levée dress (dark blue overalls, white helmet with brass spike and chain), Clarmont stood by the A.G.G. and the two Chiefs, while directly opposite where the Viceroy's carriage was to stop stood the Governor of the Punjab, Sir Malcolm Hailey, and Lady Hailey. The two Chiefs and their staffs were wearing gorgeous flowered silk robes and puggarees and jewelled swords. Beyond the Governor's group came the judges and high officials of the Punjab, 'nearly half of them Indian', Clarmont noted, 'sign of the times'. He continued: 'The Viceregal train came very slowly into the station, and we watched carriage after carriage pass, filled with troops, minions, kitchens, the Viceregal Camp Post Office, and so on. Finally it stopped, and out stepped H.E. looking very tall in his grey morning coat and white "Curzon" topi, Lady Irwin looking extremely pretty in a fawn-coloured coat and skirt and a not-too-cloche hat. After H.E. had shaken hands with Sir Malcolm Hailey and the egregious Signora (who looked more like an ex- or even practising governess than ever) he greeted Colonel St. John who introduced me to him and then the two Princes. Then came my sole function in the proceedings (other than shepherding the Potentates); I solemnly introduced the two Princes to Lady Irwin, who smiled very sweetly and doubtless captivated the susceptible Patiala (who is a notorious Henry VIII) no less than the cultivated and intelligent but far less imposing little Nawab of Malerkotla'.

The following morning came the chief event of the visit as far as the A.G.G. and his staff were concerned – the formal exchange of visits between the Nawab of Malerkotla and the Viceroy. (An exchange of visits with the Maharaja of Patiala had taken place already at Simla.) The ceremony was carefully rehearsed and Clarmont wrote a description of it after it had taken place: 'The Nawab, his heir apparent and seven Sardars and officials as his retinue all gorgeously apparelled, arrived at Government House sharp at 11. He was met at the porch by two A.D.C.s in uniform who conducted the party up the staircase. At the top they were received by me in the capacity not of Secretary to the A.G.G. but of Under-Secretary to the Government of India, that official being absent and therefore represented by a local political officer. I shook hands warmly with the Nawab and his son and conducted them exactly three yards to the door of the drawing-room where I handed them over to the Political Secretary to the Government of India, Sir John Thompson[55]. He conducted them to the dais where the Nawab was received by the Viceroy and seated on the throne at his right hand. If he had been a 17 or a 19-gun Chief, the Nawab would have been met by the Viceroy two-thirds of the way from the

dais to the door, and if he had been a 21-gun potentate like Hyderabad or Gwalior he would have been met at the door of the room. On the right of the dais sat in large and ornate chairs Colonel St. John (who was in attendance with the Nawab as his Political Officer) and beyond him the Heir Apparent and the seven Sardars in order of precedence. On the Viceroy's left sat his suite, consisting of (in order of precedence) the Political Secretary, the Private Secretary, the Military Secretary, the Assistant Private Secretary, myself, two British A.D.C.s and two Indian Honorary A.D.C.s.

'After a few minutes' conversation between H.E. and the Nawab, the while *nous autres* conversed quietly under cover of the strains of the band on the lawn outside, the Viceroy made a sign and two richly-clad *chobdars* (mace-bearers, literally) appeared carrying gold vessels on trays containing attar of roses and betel-nut wrapped in leaves. With much ceremony they advanced and the Viceroy, rising, sprinkled some attar on the Nawab's handkerchief and presented him with two cakes of betel-nut which I was disappointed to observe that the Nawab did not at once commence to chew. Next, Sir John Thompson (not the Viceroy, as the Nawab was not a big enough Chief) gave attar and betel to the Heir Apparent and to Colonel St. John, after which I gave them to the Nawab's seven attendants.

'The giving of attar and betel is the signal for the end of an interview and as soon as I was finished everyone got up and the Viceroy said goodbye to his visitor. The Political Secretary conducted the Nawab and his son to the door, I took them back the three yards to the top of the stairs where the A.D.C.s received them and conducted them to the porch. The party drove off, leaving behind the four senior attendants in the A.D.C.s' room. The reason for this was that the four were now a deputation entrusted with the task of announcing to the Viceroy that the Nawab would be ready a quarter of an hour later to receive him. The deputation had not time to go back to the Nawab's residence in between the visits, so they had to remain in hiding at the Viceroy's! At 11.25 out they popped and off went an A.D.C. to inform H.E. that the Nawab was waiting for him. A procession of cars then went round to Kashmir House and the proceedings were repeated, *mutatis mutandis*. A Guard of Honour of 50 Indian Infantry had received the Nawab at Government House, and a similar guard of Malerkotla Imperial Service troops in bright red and black uniforms received the Viceroy. At Government House, four magnificent *chobdars* had stood behind the dais, two carrying peacock's feather design painted maces and two silver-mounted yak's tails; at the Nawab's, only one *chobdar* with a yak's tail officiated. The attar-sprinkler and betel-nut jar were of silver instead of gold, and so on. As it was the Nawab's durbar, he had as many attendants as he liked (he is limited to seven at the Viceroy's durbar) and they were all presented to H.E. by the Nawab, whereas at Government House they had been presented by Colonel St. John. The Nawab gave attar and betel to the Viceroy, Colonel St. John, the Private Secretary and the Military Secretary; his Prime Minister gave it to the rest of us. All these details are fixed and immutable precedents

like the laws of the Medes and Persians. A salute of 11 guns had been fired when the Nawab called on the Viceroy; one of 31 guns was fired when H.E. paid his return visit. After the latter was over we all (except Colonel St. John) accompanied H.E. back to Government House, as also did the Nawab's deputation. All went without a hitch and the Nawab was a "prood man the day" when it was all over, though he had suffered considerably from nerves'.

Next week was the Viceregal visit to Bahawalpur. Clarmont again had to take the part of Under Secretary to the Government of India, becoming a member of the Viceroy's staff during the ceremonies. There were four main functions on the first day of the visit, the Nawab wearing a different costume at each. When he received Lord Irwin in his own durbar his puggaree and front blazed with diamonds instead of the emeralds and pearls he had worn when calling on the Viceroy. Lord Irwin was very good on these occasions, Clarmont considered. He was perfectly natural and could put the other man at ease at once. But he was not an orator and at the State Banquet read every word of his speech which had been partly drafted by Clarmont. The following day a great duck shoot took place. The 'bundobast' was most elaborate. The whole party moved overnight to a place called Jajja among the jungles on the banks of the Indus. The little branch-line had apparently been built specially to enable high officials to reach in comfort the magnificent duck-shooting on several big shallow lakes. Clarmont hurried with the A.G.G. from the State Banquet to board the A.G.G.'s 'Tourist car' – a well-appointed carriage consisting of bedrooms, dressing-room, bathroom, kitchen and servants' accommodation – which was itself attached to the Viceroy's pilot-engine. This always preceded the Viceroy's train by half an hour. After breakfast all the guns were driven in cars along specially-prepared roads through the jungle to one or other of the lakes. Each gun had been given a map with the position of his butt and instructions about which boat to use and the time to be in position. The Viceroy and the Nawab with six other guns went to the biggest and best lake and the rest of the party went to the smaller lakes.

Clarmont found himself with his loader and four local shikaris, sturdy men specially clad for the occasion in dark blue shirts and shorts. They glided over the glassy waters of the *jhil* on which were great floating islands of tamarisk to a hide built of poles and straw and surrounded by tamarisk. Soon the fun began. The wildfowl, about half and half duck and teal (the former chiefly mallard and gadwall) came in thousands from every direction. Clarmont's shikaris wading about in the shallow water were kept very busy. The shooting lasted about two hours and the total bag amounted to 1234 birds. Clarmont's personal score was 105. The Viceroy in the best butt got 151. 'It sounds terrible slaughter', Clarmont commented. In fact the number of wildfowl on the water before the shoot was estimated at 85,000 so the percentage shot was quite small; and none of the birds killed were wasted.

The neighbourhood was a perfect zoo for wild life. In the evening the Viceroy and some others went after black partridge. Then, after dinner in the

big central room of the palatial rest-house, they all entrained for a tour of inspection of the Sutlej Valley Project canals. This began from Asrani whence 160 miles of road had been specially made for the Viceroy to motor over – not metalled roads but covered with grass to prevent the wheels of the cars sinking in the sand. The fleet of State cars consisted of two Rolls-Royces, a Daimler, a Buick and two Dodges. The peculiar edge-of-the-desert country was most familiar to Clarmont for whom the interest of the drive was not so much in what he saw as in what he imagined there would be when the new project was complete. It would irrigate a larger area of land than both Egyptian and Sudanese irrigation systems put together and would make Bahawalpur far the richest state in the Punjab.

Two nights were spent at a magnificent desert camp at a place called Chak Abdulla. A street of big tents housed the Viceroy's staff behind the Canal Department rest-house. Bahawalpur tents were famous. They were enormous and the inner flies were made of gorgeously-coloured Multan appliqué-work, arabesques and figures cut out of cloth and stitched onto the canvas so completely as to cover it. The camp was lit by electricity, an oil-engine and plant having been specially brought.

After returning to Lahore the main event for the Skrines was the publication of 'Chinese Central Asia'. Clarmont's parents had both helped greatly in the last stages; Helen had done the indexing, the more burdensome because the Place Names Committee had just issued revised spellings for many proper names; Frank had sent out prospectuses. Clarmont was delighted with the appearance of the book. It was good value at 21/-. He had paid £15 for the cost of reproducing as its frontispiece a painting by Doris of a Kirghiz bride; Methuens had included at their expense a folding sheet of mountain panoramas. Originally, Clarmont had asked Sir Aurel Stein to write a foreword. The request had reached Stein in Upper Swat just when he was writing accounts of his identification of Aornos and other sites connected with Alexander's campaign on the North West Frontier. Stein regretfully declined, saying that he did not have a 'ready pen' which was why he had never written anything for the 'general reader'. He commended the choice of Sir Francis Younghusband to write a foreword, saying 'his name is a household word wherever there are English-speaking people who care for Central Asia'. Reviews soon began to appear and were all laudatory, the Times coming nearest to a criticism when saying 'at times the author is inclined to repeat himself, and one is tempted to skip the long extracts from letters'. The most informed review of the book was by Sir Percy Sykes in the Geographical Journal. Soon after publication, Stein spent an evening in Lahore with the Skrines. They found him fascinating – far more interesting in conversation than on paper –'He's a regular savant with all the savant's impatience of the amateur efforts of the layman, yet he complimented me on my work with obvious sincerity. Praise indeed...'

The Skrines were glad to go away from Lahore to stay with the Maharaja of Kapurthala for his birthday celebrations. They motored the 76 miles there in

the little Singer. The Maharaja had represented India at the League of Nations and his recent work at Geneva provided a ready subject to be brought into the speech which Clarmont drafted for St. John to make when proposing H.H.'s health at the State banquet. Clarmont had been astonished at the style in which the Maharaja lived – 'The Palais is the finest building I have seen of its kind outside the capitals of Europe, built on the model of Versailles and standing in the middle of a beautiful park. The interior is no less magnificent and in good taste too – all French. The family are entirely Frenchified, speaking that language among themselves, altogether eschewing purdah and even the more strict Sikh customs – the men from the Maharaja downwards, wear their hair short. The ladies are charming and very easy to get on with. Doris and I are very popular as we speak French, unlike the other English guests. The Maharaja has no official Rani (his latest French unofficial one does not appear on these occasions) but his eldest son, the Tika Raja, and his two younger sons have their wives with them. The Tika Rani is a lovely Indian girl educated in Paris. Besides these ladies there is the Maharaja's daughter, also Paris-educated, who married the Raja of Mandi (one of our hill States). She is quite beautiful and dresses wonderfully (they all wear the sari, I'm glad to say, thereby showing the family good taste) but is looking rather unhappy. I believe he's rather a boor and they don't get on well'. The Skrines stayed in the 'Cottage' – which corresponded to the Petit Trianon – 'Everything beautifully done, including real European long baths with h. and c.' The Maharaja had a French chef and an English-trained band. Kunwar Mahajit Singh, the Maharaja's third son whom Clarmont found the most amusing one, took a small party including Mrs St John and two of 'the Franco-Indian (I don't know how else to describe them unless Indo-Parisian) ladies for a trip in a motor launch. It was extraordinarily pleasant, the river being absurdly like an English one, with wide glassy reaches between willow and reed-fringed banks, a most unexpected experience in the dusty drab Punjab'. One of the Princes had a lovely Italian villa with exquisitely kept gardens sloping down to the water's edge.

The next State to be visited was Jind, second biggest of the Phulkian States. The occasion was what Clarmont irreverently called 'Dog Week', i.e. a dog show and field trials. The old Maharaja was stone deaf – you had to write down everything you wanted to say to him. He was obsessed with gun-dogs, as was his neighbour Patiala. Watching other people shoot soon palled; Clarmont thought it was absurd to make such a fuss about gun-dogs in that type of country. The State was pretty well run by a very able Chief Minister, Dr Dhingra, and there was a certain amount of office work to be done. Then there was a dinner-party and a cinema show afterwards – 'dreadful, because all the Indian actors are Hollywood-trained and look and behave exactly like dark-coloured Yankees'.

After a brief return to base at Lahore they were off again, this time with the entire office staff. The Regent of the tiny State of Loharu had induced the A.G.G. to present in person to the new Nawab (a minor) the *Kharita*, or letter

of recognition, from the Viceroy. Loharu, the State capital, was a mere village; the State's only vestige of greatness was the high lineage of the Nawabs. They were of Moghul origin, being descended from the old Khans of Bokhara. The new Nawab was only 16 and the Regent who would rule for the next two or three years was a remarkable character, Amin ud Din Khan, who had himself ruled as Nawab until 1910. He had then been deposed for having brought the State to bankruptcy and Clarmont thought the decision to make him Regent now might have been rather rash. But he was a quaint and amusing old man whom Clarmont took a great liking to. As Regent, he certainly made the most of the occasion. The A.G.G. and Clarmont had to don their uniforms in the train and then drive 35 miles across sandy country from Jhumpa, a tiny station on the Jodhpur – Bikanir Railway. They were met by the young Nawab outside the town and had to 'process' in state with a picturesque crowd of Sardars and villagers on camels and on foot. St. John drove with the Nawab and the Regent in a landau drawn by camels. The Regent managed matters very well. St. John had had food poisoning on his last visit to Loharu but on this occasion the food was quite good. After lunch came the exchange of visits – similar though on a much smaller scale – to the ceremonial exchange of visits at Lahore. At the return visit, the A.G.G. read out the *Kharita* and presented it to the young Nawab. Later there was a tea-party. It was all very simple and friendly.

The next tour was to Nabha, then on to Patiala. Clarmont wished he could have stayed longer at Nabha – it was so pleasant being left alone, with no Maharaja, no ceremony, no *mulaqatis* (visitors with an axe to grind). The reason for this state of affairs was that Nabha had in 1922 been the scene of a nasty dust-up as a result of which the Maharaja was removed and the State placed under a British administrator. The Maharaja was living at Dehra Dun, shorn of his kingdom but not of his powers or honours, while a senior Punjab civilian called Wilson Johnston[56] ran the State with the help of a Council. It was a very pleasant job, if one was fond of shooting as was 'W.J.' He was a big genial humorous Scotsman whom everybody liked and he ruled the State with a firm but kindly hand. St. John and 'W.J.' were both gun-dog enthusiasts.

At Patiala, Clarmont did not stay with the other guests at the 'Bardari' (guest house). He had accepted an invitation, on the strength of a very slight previous acquaintance, to stay with Rushbrook Williams, a journalist and publicity agent whom the Maharaja had taken on as his Foreign Minister. Clarmont rather regretted this; the Agency had a great deal of work to do with Patiala and no doubt Rushbrook Williams hoped to make it appear that he had the A.G.G.'s Secretary in his pocket. However, the quantity of work spared Clarmont from witnessing all of the gun-dog trials which lasted from 8 a.m. till dusk.

In February 1927 the Skrines were on tour with the A.G.G.'s party in Bahawalpur when a telegram arrived saying that Clarmont would almost

12 The Hon. Lt Col Beauchamp St John CIE, CBE, IA, Agent to the Governor General Bahadur; with his Secretaries Clarmont, Rai Bahadur, Dewan Gian Nath; and the Nawab Sahib Bahadur, the Nawab Regent Bahadur KCIE, and members of the Loharu family and officials; just after the presentation of the Kharita of recognition of the young Nawab to Loharu 'Masnad', January 11th 1927.

certainly be required for a post in Persia, so few officers with Persian experience being available. Four posts would become vacant at the same time – the consulates at Sistan and Kerman, the Political Agency at Kuwait and Secretary to the Resident at Bushire. St. John had been promised that his Secretary would be left with him for some years and at first was naturally annoyed. Clarmont and Doris were inwardly overjoyed but tactfully disguised this and St. John agreed to Clarmont's being released on the understanding that it would be to the consulate at Sistan.

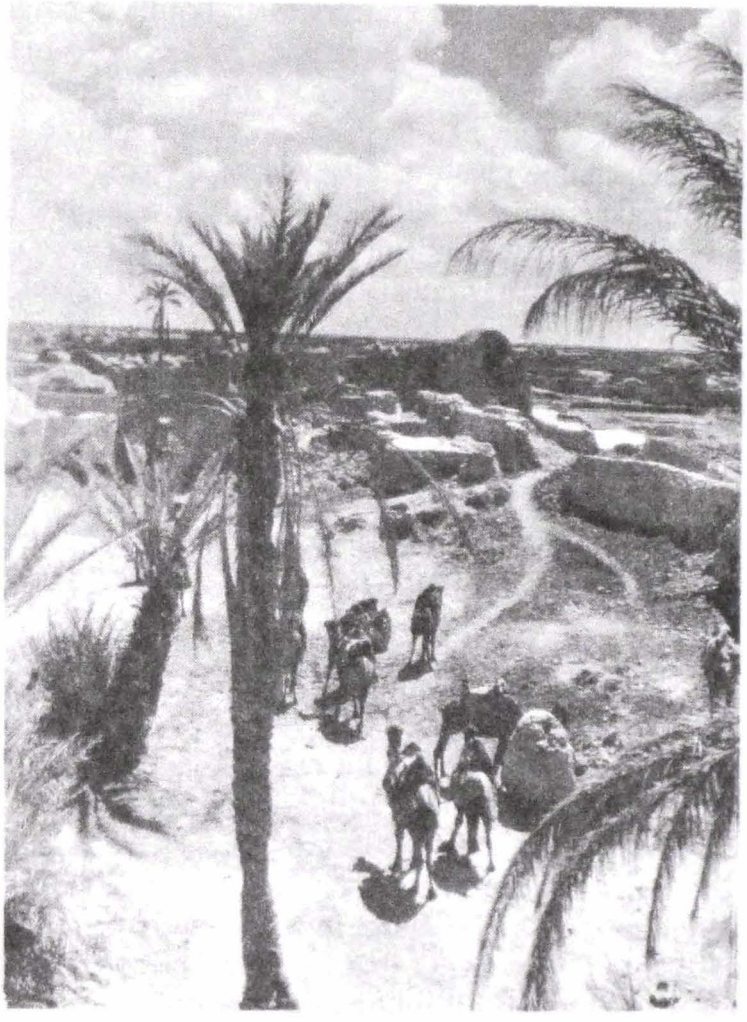
The arrival of Clarmont's successor as Secretary was delayed but St. John, the most considerate of chiefs, agreed that the Under Secretary, Gyan Nath, should officiate so that the Skrines could leave at the end of March as planned. Their caravan consisted of cook, khitmagar (Ahmad Baksh who had been with them in Baluchistan and Kashgar) and Clarmont's bearer, Ahmad Din. With the utmost difficulty Clarmont had persuaded Doris to allow him to find a home for a kitten, but she said that she would chloroform the two cats if she could not take them and he had to agree – 'They will keep her amused on the long journey, anyway'.

Chapter 16

Pahlevi Persia 1927 - 28

The post of Consul, Sistan and Kain, was in 1927 an important one. The province of Sistan commanded the Persian route to India. The Sarhad, in which the Skrines had toured when Clarmont was P.A. Chagai, had been handed over to the Persians and was now under the Governor of Sistan whose province also included the strategically important western frontier of Afghanistan. The capital of the province was Nasretabad where the Consul had his cold weather headquarters. This was only 1750 ft. above the sea, so for part of the summer the office moved to Birjand, a town some 5000 ft. up in the province of Kain (Qainat) near the borders of Khorassan.

After a brief stay in Quetta where Clarmont gave two lectures at the Staff College, the Skrines found themselves rumbling down the familiar Nushki line. Doris cried on seeing Nushki, with its tiny bazaar and patches of green and the Political bungalow on its flat-topped hill. The westernmost 50 miles of railway line were in Persia and at railhead – Duzdap – there was now a Governor, an O.C. Troops, Customs and other officials. There was also a British Vice-Consul, a young Political called McCann[57] who met the Skrines.



13 Sistan Old City

Duzdap was a purely artificial township, owing its existence solely to the railway. The 'road' between Duzdap and Kerman was in more or less regular use, the Indo-European telegraph line being a great safeguard to motorists.

The Skrines' caravan which set out from Duzdap consisted of the small Singer, a hired Dodge lorry and two Ford lorries. Everybody had said that a little British car such as the Singer would be useless. Clarmont was a firm believer in the superiority of British over American vehicles. The Singer's low clearance led to a fractured crank-case when descending a dry water-course. This meant two nights at a God-forsaken place called Girdi Chah in the middle of the desert; it consisted of a telegraph-hut, a mud rest-house and some ruined levy-lines dating from the British occupation. A repair of some sorts was carried out and the Singer performed splendidly on the last part of the journey. The rocky desert became a mud-flat and then, turning a corner between low cliffs, the travellers came on a green sea of half-grown corn. They passed through a well-watered and cultivated country with hardly a single tree, the reason for the absence of trees being the terrible 'Bad-i-Sad-o-bist-Ruz', or 120-days wind, which blew continuously between June and September at up to 80 or 90 miles an hour. A detour had to be made round a large lake which had formed the night before, the result of heavy rains a week earlier among the mountains of Ghazni and Kandahar which fed the headwaters of the Helmand. Finally they came to a backwater of the Hamun, the great lake of Sistan, and were met by the welcoming party consisting of the Vice-Consul (an I.M.S. doctor, Captain Ledger[58]) and Sheikh Muhammad Eyub, the acting attaché. They crossed the water with some difficulty on a reed-raft and were welcomed by Persian officials. There was to have been a wayside tea-drinking by the water's edge but it was too windy to pitch a tent.

Nasretabad, the 'capital', was treeless and the town itself only an overgrown village of some 7000 inhabitants, but the massive whitewashed gateway of the Consulate led to a garden full of palm-trees and limes and willows, green lawns and masses of flowers. The Consulate building was long and immensely solid, not beautiful but convenient and comfortable inside.

The country was horribly misgoverned. All land was crown property, with no private ownership, and the people were milked shamelessly. Instead of the land being let on lease for reasonable periods, the Government auctioned it afresh every three years. With no security of tenure, it paid the tenant to get as much out of his piece and improve it as little as possible. The average farmer was the poorest of the poor. But the potential was great: with the water available from the Helmand river the cultivated area could be vastly increased, and if the railway were extended from Duzdap, wheat from Sistan could be sold in Karachi for half the ruling Indian price.

British society in addition to Captain Ledger and his wife included an Extra Assistant Commissioner who was a clerk named Moore[59] from the Government of India Army Department, and the Bank Manager. Persian

society was entirely official and military, no Persians living in Sistan from choice owing to its remoteness and lack of amenities. Clarmont exchanged calls with the Governor and the other senior officials, finding them all very friendly. 'By far the most important person', he wrote, 'is the Commandant of the Garrison, Colonel Azizulla Khan, Rais-i-Tip (Brigadier-General). Things are very different from war-time in Kerman. The country is under a military dictatorship in all but name, a kind of Fascism with Reza Shah as Mussolini. The civil power still exists in name but it is the military that rules. Colonel Azizulla Khan has a thousand relatively well-drilled and well-equipped men under him. He was on very bad terms with my predecessor, Fisher, owing to a real or fancied slight, and would have nothing to do with the Consulate. I heard terrible tales of the anti-foreign Colonel; Howell, the acting Foreign Secretary, wrote to me specially about the matter, asking me if I could possibly make it up with the Colonel. Sure enough, I had not been here a day before tales came to my ears of the things the Commandant had said, how he had heard of the villagers making a road for us round the floods and had objected strongly to their doing anything for the Consulate, and so on. Now I knew that the trouble between him and Fisher had had something to do with the initial calls. As I was the newcomer, and as the Consulate has no *official* relations with the Army. I decided that I could without loss of face call first on the Commandant, quite privately and without the Attaché. This I did. The Commandant received me rather stiffly at first; in fact, he did not receive me, he had the Governor (who is altogether in his pocket) in to do so. The Governor awaited me in the reception room and the Commandant came in a minute or two later, an obviously studied act of discourtesy. However, I refused to take offence, paid him compliments and talked pleasantly to him for half an hour or so. Towards the end he thawed considerably and we parted quite cordially. The question then was, did the Commandant intend to return my call? Three days passed and no sign. Then came Monday, the Shah's Coronation Day. The Commandant was giving an evening teaparty in his garden, and to my surprise a verbal message came from him inviting Doris and myself and any other European ladies or gentlemen to come to it. At first I thought I would refuse, as he hadn't called and also had not sent a written invitation. However, I was determined not to give him any cause for offence. So we went, and Mrs Ledger, when she heard Doris was going said she would like to come too. All four of us bearded the lion in his den, which was very prettily decorated with coloured electric lights among the trees and rose bushes. The Commandant received us very cordially at his own table and we talked to him and the Karguzar and Customs officer in French. Doris did her bit nobly and was charming to the Persians. The Commandant was evidently very pleased that we had come to his party, especially the ladies, and before the end I was sure we had got him eating out of our hand; so as we left I clinched the matter by saying "We hope to see you at the Consulate some day – no formality, of course". The Commandant had to say that he would be delighted, etc., so now I think we may expect him. Why

I am particularly anxious to win over the Colonel is that he is a *rara avis* – the efficient and high-principled Persian officer, rare now but non-existent before the present regime. He not only keeps his officers and men in order, but does not abuse his power. As a local notable said to me, "Before, there were 50 men here and they looted and harassed the country; now there are a thousand, and you wouldn't know there were any troops at all'. A good chit in an oriental country'.

The Skrines were very relieved to get away from Nasretabad in May. The noise, the insects, the heat – aggravated by the lack of any ice-making plant in the town – made living there very tiresome. The first part of the journey to Birjand was rugged and quite shadeless. It was made more uncomfortable by Doris insisting on carrying her cats in a large basket on her knee every yard of the way. The track had been made as an unmetalled road by the East Persia Cordon Field Force in 1918 and had not been touched since. It improved as they went higher, the rainlessness of the climate having wonderfully preserved it, and the last lap of the Persian plateau was really enjoyable – typical Persian landscapes of wide valleys covered with sparse vegetation between fantastically-shaped hills, dotted with green villages nestling at the mouths of glens. The countryside was covered with blue and mauve irises. The Indian Attaché, Khan Bahadur Abdul Haiy, had returned from leave in India and was already at Birjand to meet them. They were delighted with the Consulate *kalata* (country-house and garden). It looked down on the whole Birjand valley with its *kalatas* dotted about and the city with its two fine old castles on their rocks. Far away to the west, as far as the eye could see, fields of wheat and barley were ripening in the sun. The peasants here either owned their land or held it on secure leasehold tenure and appeared sturdy and contented.

Clarmont now met for the first time a man with whom and with whose family he was to become great and lasting friends. This was the Acting Governor of Qainat and the chief local landowner, Sarkar Amir Shaukat ul Mulk. He was a considerable rarity – an unselfish, public-spirited, enlightened nobleman. He understood the British point of view thoroughly. 'The Shaukat', as he was referred to, was responsible for Birjand having the best piped drinking water supply and the best school-and-college combined in all East Persia. The other officials, taking their cue from the Shaukat, were all as friendly as could be. The British community consisted of the Indian doctor-vice-consul, the English bank manager and his family, and about ten Sikh and Mohammedan traders. There were also four Russian emigré families and a Soviet Agent. The Shaukat was extremely hospitable. He loved entertaining Europeans and was a mine of information about the country and the people. He had the Skrines to stay at a country house 45 miles from Birjand in the mountains where there was a medicinal spring and from there they went camping further afield with tents and donkeys. They also fitted in a visit to

Meshed which Clarmont had for long wanted to see, having the ambition at some later date to be Consul-General there.

Sistan was very much less unpleasant when they returned to Nasretabad in the autumn. The wind did not blow the whole time. The most interesting development officially for Clarmont was the reopening suddenly and unexpectedly of the Russian Consulate. The local authorities had no foreknowledge – the former Russian Consulate was in fact still being occupied by the Afghan Consul. The new Consul appeared to be a senior man; at one time he had been Consul-General in Teheran. Since the breach of relations with Britain following the Arcos raid earlier in the year, Soviet activities in Persia had increased and a new Russo-Persian commercial agreement had been concluded. The purpose of Russian consular representation was ostensibly to push Russian trade in South and East Persia. As Clarmont saw things, their aim was to kill the remnants of trade by the Nushki-Duzdap line and by their propaganda and bribery to undermine British influence. He thought that they would succeed as regards the trade – 'but I think we'll keep our end up as regards prestige – it won't be the fault of Colonel Biscoe[60] at Meshed, Davies[61] (I.C.S.) at Kerman, McCann at Duzdap and Ledger and myself here if we don't. We have the great advantage of being personally popular with the Persians. It's just a question of how much the Russians can afford to spend; with one or two notable exceptions, like the Shaukat at Birjand, every Persian has his price – and a pretty low one too'.

The Soviet Consul's early activities concerned the formation of a syndicate for import and export trade, the Consul offering to advance goods worth 500 tumans against 100 tumans cash. He also made big advances to flock-owners with the aim of obtaining a corner in the following season's wool clip. With his two cars, he proposed to give seats to Persians at nominal rates on a twice-monthly service to Meshed and he had plenty of cinema films and a big wireless receiving set... Clarmont worked hard to frustrate Comrade Platte, as the Soviet Consul was called. Platte had planned to go for a shooting expedition on the property of a big Baluch chief; this would have been useful to him in establishing relations with the inhabitants of the Indo-Persian border. 'Unfortunately', wrote Clarmont, 'the local Revenue Officer with the approval of the Governor issued orders to all landowners in Sistan that they should not entertain any foreign Consul (a self-denying ordinance on my part, but it was worth it)'. He exchanged friendly calls with nine different officials in four days in his campaign of counter-measures. One of these resulted in the Chief of Police politely informing Platte that he could not be allowed to use his wireless set without special permission from the Teheran Government – 'and it won't be our Legation's fault if that is granted'. After the initial impact made by the new Soviet presence, Clarmont felt satisfied that the Persian officials who gravitated towards the Russians were simply out for what they could get – including strong drinks.

The tiny British community in Sistan got on among themselves very well. The new bank manager was an outstanding athlete, so he was a great acquisition for the Consular soccer team. There was also tennis. The old Governor and the Brigade Commandant came occasionally to tennis parties at the Consulate – the latter always came in uniform, removing his smart riding boots before playing. The black partridge shooting around Nasretabad was as good as anywhere. Unlike the chikor which runs, the black partridge sits tight, then gets up with a whirr. The shooting was mostly in gardens and vineyards which meant constantly scrambling over mud-brick walls and jumping across deep trenches. The Governor insisted on lending the Skrines mule-transport for a camping holiday at Christmas near the ruins of Shahristan; the neighbouring site of Zaidan had been a large city destroyed by Tamerlane. The whole camp was quite impressive, the retinue including the Duffedar and one sowar of the mounted escort and three mounted levies.

They had to return to Nasretabad for New Year's day parties including a reception where Clarmont had to propose the health of H.M. Reza Shah Pahlavi. Doris was busy with parties for purdah ladies. Then came the excitement of the visit of Shahzada Amanulla Mirza, Amir-i-Lashkar (Commander-in-Chief) of the Eastern Army who arrived from Meshed with the Shaukat ul Mulk. The Prince-General, as he was called, (he was a relation of the late Shah's), decided to put up at the house of the Brigade Commandant whose wife sent frantic messages round to the Consulate to borrow knives, forks, spoons, etc. The custom in Persia was for the newcomer to call on residents. Clarmont had called on the G.O.C. in Meshed but he knew that the Persian Army was too high and mighty to call first on anybody: 'He would expect me to call on him. I refused to do that, but as I was anxious to see as much as possible of him and cut out the Russians, I compromised by sending my Indian Attaché with the Persian officials to meet him, with a private letter in French asking him and the Shaukat to dinner *en famille*. Next morning I received news that the General had said (not for my ears) that he would like to come to dinner, but would not come to the Consulate unless I called on him first. I sat tight, but sent a verbal message to him through the Shaukat that as I knew he was busy with inspections, etc. and tired after his journey I would excuse him calling on me and hoped he would come to dinner and count that a call!! The sociable and really quite friendly Prince fell to this'. The dinner, followed by bridge, went very well and the next day Clarmont called on the G.O.C. and talked military affairs connected with the railway and Persian Baluchistan. Then a series of hurriedly arranged festivities took place; shooting, tennis-parties, dinners and bridge and – the greatest excitement – a polo match. Polo had not been seen in Sistan since 1911. The General suggested it – 'as he wanted to show us what a good player he is. His staff officer and his A.D.C. both play, and he got in a very indifferent performer from the local cavalry to make a fourth. As for the Consulate team, besides myself our Escort Duffedar and Lance-Duffedar played, and Ledger had a try as

No. 1. The result was a draw, 3 all, we getting the last goal amid huge excitement. In the mêlée in front of their goal the Prince was knocked off and bit the dust, to the horror of all the Persians present, who expected him to order the immediate execution of all our side. But he's a sportsman all right. It was a most satisfactory result from the political point of view. The Prince-General thoroughly enjoyed the game and his other gaieties too. It was a triumph for the British cause, as he practically ignored the Russian Consulate'.

The Skrines had a week in Delhi in February. Clarmont had much to discuss at the Secretariat and Doris – comforted by regular 'All's well' telegrams assuring her that the cats were surviving – did some shopping. One of the main things Clarmont had to raise with the Government was the future of the Sistan Consulate. He had put in a memorandum recommending that the head-quarters of the Consulate should be at Duzdap instead of at Nasretabad. Before the war, when there were neither railway nor motors, Sistan old city had been an entrepôt of some importance between India and Persia. Now the position was changed; Duzdap was the 'port' for India. Clarmont was well aware that what was seen as destructive criticism was always unpopular and his recommendation was made knowing that his two predecessors had both boosted the importance of Sistan. He now had to tell what he saw as the truth about the railway – that there was no hope of its losses ever falling below 5 lakhs a year and would rise vastly when the permanent way had to be renewed. He advised the sale of the section in Persian territory (about 60 miles) to the Persian Government – or giving it to them if they bore their share of losses on its working. The Persians would almost certainly refuse, so the train service to Duzdap would stop, but there were plenty of motors to do the journey between Dalbandin and Duzdap. Clarmont reckoned that giving up the Consulate at Sistan and raising the Vice-Consulate at Duzdap to a Consulate would involve a saving of some Rs. 70,000 a year.

On their way back to Persia the Skrines stayed with the St. Johns – he was now A.G.G. Baluchistan – and had further discussions about the railway both with St. John and the Divisional Traffic Superintendent. The trade was certainly insufficient to warrant a broad-gauge line ending at a cul-de-sac in the desert.

One of the other important matters which Clarmont had discussed at Delhi was Soviet activities in Persia. He had arranged for a cinema owner in Quetta to come to Sistan with a selection of reels for the inaugural performance of the Governor's cinema so as to keep out Soviet films. He little knew that a few weeks after his return to Persia he was to play a vital part in the safe escape of the first major political defector from the Soviet Union. This was Boris Bajanov. All Clarmont was able to say to his mother was that he had been involved in 'an interesting little bit of William le Queux – Anthony Hope work'. The story came out for the first time when Gordon Brook-Shepherd, after studying the official documents, wrote in 1976 about Bajanov's escape. Bajanov had been Stalin's personal aide and secretary to the Politburo. Having

crossed with a companion into Khorassan, the two were most fortunate in receiving sympathetic treatment from Persian officials and were protected from assassination by O.G.P.U. agents who were shadowing them. Comrade Platte figures in the records as having received orders that Bajanov should be liquidated at all costs. The Persians succeeded in moving Bajanov and his companion to Duzdap. Here they were able to get in touch with McCann, the Vice-Consul, and here is where Clarmont came into the story. 'It is partly thanks to his energetic action that there is a Bajanov story to tell', wrote Brook-Shepherd. Clarmont had hurried to Duzdap when he received McCann's report and he found the two Russians living in a quite unguarded rest-house. Bajanov had with him original minutes of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and proof of his own identity. Clarmont followed up his first telegrams to the Government of India with the message: 'After examining Bajanov I came to the conclusion that he was speaking the truth and that his escape from Russia affords a unique opportunity for H.M.G. to secure up-to-date information regarding the inner working of the Soviet Government and their military preparations and designs'. When at last agreement was received for the two Russians to enter India the question arose of how they could get there. No train was due to leave Duzdap for four days and the presence of O.G.P.U. agents in Duzdap would have made travelling by train dangerous. Comrade Platte was himself in Duzdap hoping that the attempt at liquidation would not still fail. A Mohammedan merchant who owned a Hupmobile volunteered to drive the Russians by night to the levy post at Kacha where he delivered the refugees to the Indian jemadar with a letter from Clarmont. Brook-Shepherd continues the story: 'Skrine was left to savour his triumph; and, to do so, had to revert from his Scarlet Pimpernel role to that of the deadpan diplomat. Before leaving for Sistan in the wake of a very glum Comrade Platte, he told his Vice-Consul what to do in case he should ever be asked officially about the two men. Captain McCann was to reply "that the Baluchistan Administration will be warned of the escape of two potentially dangerous Russians into British territory". The Mohammedan merchant who was called Jamuladdin Mullick had declined any material award, so Skrine had asked his Government whether he might not at least be allowed to thank the man officially. Many weeks later, H.M.'s Consul for Sistan and Kain was advised by higher authority "that an expression of the appreciation of the Government of India may be conveyed to Mr J. D. Mullick, for his public-spirited behaviour and for the energetic and effective assistance he gave to you in securing the escape of Messrs Bajanov and Maximov". Then official caution intervened: "I am, however, to suggest that the communication should be made orally only; or, if in writing, no reference should be made to the precise incident in question"'.

Clarmont's visit to Duzdap had given him the opportunity to do a small tour in the Sarhad with McCann. He took the precaution of asking the Persian O.C. Duzdap for an escort so that he could not later be accused of any intrigues with the tribes of the Sarhad. His main purpose was to explore the north-west

side of the almost extinct volcano, Kuh-i-Taftan. This was another, albeit smaller, blank patch on the map. They camped at a spring 6,200 ft. up and went on with camels to a summer grazing-ground from which a satellite range of fantastic black mountains stretched for 20 miles to the north-west of the volcano. Clarmont obtained the names and distances in hours' marches of other grazing-grounds, with a view to returning in the autumn and perhaps making a map.

A couple of months later he heard to his surprise that he had been awarded the Gill Memorial prize by the Royal Geographical Society. He had not known of the existence of the award until he received telegrams of congratulation. He was very pleased, specially when he found it was worth £52. He decided to spend the money on a new camera outfit of the best make – 'Newman and Guardia, the Rolls-Royce of cameras' – something he would not have dreamed of buying without the windfall.

The Skrines' friendship with the Shaukat and his family provided opportunities for some interesting touring from Birjand. There was nothing much to do at Ab-i-Tursh, the Shaukat's country-house, except bathe in the fizzy water which came bubbling out of the ground at about 70 degrees fahrenheit. To provide an additional recreation, Clarmont laid out a primitive 9-hole golf course. In the autumn they revisited Ab-i-Tursh with a student from the Quetta Staff College as their guest, Clarmont having obtained permission for him to accompany them on the grounds that they would be going near the Afghan frontier which would be educational for him! Clarmont had found a route from Ab-i-Tursh over the Muminabad range into the Gazun valley to Furg. The Shaukat was delighted to find that this could be made practicable for a vehicle, having wished very much to be able to get his car over to the places on the north side of the range. On the autumn tour they watched from the topmost wall of the ruined keep of Furg as the sunlight faded on the distant frontier mountains of Zir-i-Kuh. Next morning they revisited the castle with a villager who spoke with bitter regret of the overthrow by treachery (113 years earlier, Clarmont calculated) of Mirza Rafi Khan who had built the castle. They went on to Durukhsh, another old village with a fine fortress, the headquarters of a sub-district under the Governor of the Qainat at Birjand. A small detachment of Indian Cavalry had been posted there in 1919, so British prestige was high. Durukhsh was famous for its carpets, the most beautiful of Birjand carpets both for colour and design. The current boom in the carpet trade was however disturbing. Production had quadrupled, looms being set up in the remotest villages without proper *ustads* (master-weavers). A consequence was that anything over ten years old was a 'semi-antique'. The tour ended eight miles beyond Kain where the lorry met them to take them back to Birjand.

Here for a few days was the G.O.C. Eastern Army, the Amir-i-Lashkar. The Skrines' ground-work at Sistan had borne fruit: the Prince-General expressed a wish on arrival to see Clarmont and Doris and actually called on Clarmont first. 'It is as well', Clarmont wrote, 'that he is affable, for the

campaign the Persian army are just beginning against the formidable Baluch rebel Dost Mohammed of Bampur (just south of the Sarhad) affects the Indian Government very closely owing to its being on our Baluchistan frontier with a lot of tribes common to both sides. The Persian Government, instigated by our enemies, firmly believes that we are intriguing with Dost Mohammed and helping him. This is pure rubbish but Teheran being so suspicious it is all the more necessary for us local officers to keep on good terms with the Persian army on the spot'.

Doris's contribution to the good relationship with the Persians was naturally among the ladies. In a letter to Helen she described a party she went to at a house and garden where 'Mrs Governor of Sistan' had come for a change of air: 'They have a wonderful large shallow tank in the middle of the garden, so I took my bathing dress and bathed in the middle of the party, which was a splendid amusement for the Persian ladies who all stood round and shrieked to me to come out as they thought the water must be cold... We danced and ate and ate and danced (*pas de deux and pas seules – à la Persanne!*) until 5 o'clock in the evening. I always take my old Kanku (my ayah) to these parties. She is a hill woman from Patiala State and very intelligent, and enjoys herself enormously. After we had had a magnificent lunch we staggered out into the garden and all the maids went into the dining-room and finished up the very sumptuous remains. Kanku told me that she has eaten enough to last her two days!! I always make her put on her best clothes on these occasions – partly for the honour of the British Empire and partly because she looks so picturesque – and in purple silk trousers edged with gold, a pale blue "kurta" (or shirt), a dark blue and yellow velvet waistcoat and a mauve muslin sari, she is really quite a spectacle. I am much amused to notice that whereas when I first came to Sistan the maids who accompanied their mistresses to tea-parties came in any old clothes, Kanku's purple silk trousers have fired them (or their mistresses – I don't know which) to tremendous efforts and they now always put on their best!'

The Shaukat was no longer acting as Governor of Qainat, his cousin, Hisam ud Daula, having come back from Beirut where he had acquired a new and young Egyptian wife. This caused some excitement in Birjand because his first wife, an elderly Princess whom he had married for her money, was furious about the newcomer. She was called Shahzada (Princess) because she belonged to the late ruling tribe of the Qajars. Clarmont commented that it was odd that though the Qajars were 'down and out and the Peacock Throne occupied by the ex-commissionaire and uneducated trooper Reza Khan' everyone even remotely connected with the former dynasty was still called Shahzada. The Birjand ladies were agog to see the new Egyptian wife and to discover what the Shahzada Khanum would do. Doris had become very friendly with her. The western ferment was strong among Persian women of the upper classes and their talk was often about veiling and the purdah system. The Shahzada Khanum said that she would never herself doff the veil, but she fully realized that it would

come – 'let the present generation of children be brought up unveiled, don't let us grown-up women give up the veil suddenly; it's far too dangerous and unsettling'. A terrible scandal had been caused at Meshed by Queen Souriya of Afghanistan. She visited the shrine of Imam Reza in European costume and unveiled. Clarmont suspected that she had done this in collusion with the Persian royalties; Reza's wife had appeared unveiled at the famous shrine in Qum. A shaikh who was preaching noticed her and began to preach at her. She had some male attendants with her and they answered back and threatened to beat the shaikh. However, they left the shrine, probably because the congregation sided with the priest. The Queen telephoned straight to Reza Shah who came along in a towering rage with soldiers in armoured cars, burst into the mosque, beat the offending shaikh, beat the Chief of Police of Qum for not having prevented the incident and – specially horrifying to the public – liberated and pardoned several murderers who were taking sanctuary from the law in the mosque. 'He's up against the mullahs on all sides', wrote Clarmont, 'and it will be interesting to see whether or not Islam will in the end be too strong for him'.

Clarmont had to spend much of the last months of 1928 at Duzdap. Although the Persian Coast and Islands Order in Council had been abrogated by the Persian Government (this was the ordinance which provided for ex-territorial, i.e. consular, jurisdiction), it had been agreed that cases in which proceedings had already taken place in Consular courts should be finished and not referred for trial afresh by the Persian courts. There was a massive appeal case from a judgment of McCann's. More interesting than the court work was the 'war' in the Sarhad. The G.O.C. came in from Khwash specially to see Clarmont and large quantities of arms and ammunition were coming from India to supply the Persian army. The Persian force was about 3000 strong and had both field and Lewis guns. They also had two aeroplanes, the first seen at Duzdap. The Persians had no proper landing-ground prepared and the pilot, a Russian, had an anxious time landing. He circled the Vice-Consulate several times before he spotted where to alight and there was a squadron of cavalry manoeuvering, turned out to welcome him. He landed and found himself taxying after a mob of bolting horses.

The G.O.C. marched from Khwash at the head of his men and with the collusion of traiterous Baluch captured two important forts. Persian Baluchistan was terrible country and further success depended entirely on the extent to which treachery to the Baluch cause would spread among the wild tribes to the south. In the event, Dost Mahammed Khan, the rebel 'king' of Baluchistan, was mopped up.

From Duzdap, the Skrines went for a business and shopping expedition to Quetta and then stayed with the St. Johns at Sibi. Here the A.G.G. made a proposal to Clarmont which affected his hope of going home on leave in late 1929. He begged his mother to concentrate on the good aspect of the news before becoming disconsolate. St. John had asked him to come and serve under

him in Baluchistan, probably as P.A. Sibi. Clarmont had decided to accept. He was flattered that St. John should want him and felt he owed St. John a debt of gratitude for having agreed to release him from the Punjab States in 1927. Apparently Clarmont's successor as Secretary had been a failure and St. John had had a trying time with troubles in three States. Clarmont also liked the prospect of regaining a footing in Baluchistan, though he was most disappointed at having to postpone his home leave.

Chapter 17

Back to Baluchistan

1928 – 1931

The home leave to which Clarmont (not Doris) had been looking forward would no longer have been to a base at 147 Victoria Street, London. The Skrine parents had decided to move to the south of France. Frank had remained as mentally active as ever – in 1926 he had produced a book on 18th century gossip based on the memoirs of Miss Laetitia Hawkins[62] and he was now working on a book about Bengal in the 1870s. But his health was failing and the winter climate of the south of France was more congenial to him than England. The parents had had some misgivings as to how Clarmont would receive the news of their move – quite unnecessary because both he and Doris thought the plan an excellent one: Frank and Helen were fluent French speakers and the exchange rate of the franc would be in their favour. Helen had found a small stone house in two acres of ground outside Aix-en-Provence called Les Bosquets. It was this new home that Clarmont had been looking forward to seeing in 1929.

He had to go down to Sibi to take over the Agency from the A.P.A. who had been acting as P.A. for a month. He was a very pleasant young Political Officer called Sahibzada Mohammed Khurshid. He had been at Sandhurst and in the British Army, followed by the Indian Army for three years and then the usual administrative training in a Province of British India which all military officers in the Political Service had to go through. The Agency headquarters moved to Harnai for the hot weather. Many people in the Shahrig and Harnai valleys remembered Clarmont from 1915–16 and he was warmly welcomed by the tribesmen. He was very glad to have the opportunity at once of making a short tour into the wild mountain country of the Zarghunghar. The boundary between the Quetta-Pishin and Sibi districts passed along a high chain of cliffs of 10 to 11,000 ft. The Quetta side being the catchment area for the Quetta water-supply was fairly well known but the Sibi side was seldom visited – the last P.A. Sibi to have been there was Sir Henry Dobbs in 1911. Clarmont had wanted to explore these uplands in his A.P.A. days but no P.A. – and therefore no subordinate official – since Dobbs had taken any interest in the Dumars. They were a Pathan tribe of sturdy shepherds and Dobbs had encouraged them to turn to agriculture to supplement the uncertain living from their flocks. Excessive water was here the problem, unlike the rest of Baluchistan. It came streaming off the steep hillsides and washed away what little soil there was. Several *vialas* (water-channels cut out of the mountain-side) were shown to Clarmont as having been constructed with the help of

advances granted by Dobbs. Clarmont determined to do what he could for the Dumars with further advances for *vialas* and bunds.

The great bonus for P.A. Sibi was that his hot-weather quarters were at Ziarat. At 8,200 ft. above the sea, with tall junipers and willows to provide shade and a comparative abundance of water and vegetation, living was pleasant, even in a June heatwave. Doris had taken a violent dislike to Quetta and stayed at Ziarat with the cats when Clarmont had to go there. She had been in tears for three days after reluctantly leaving one of the cats – who had become pugnacious in his old age – at the Political bungalow at Harnai. Clarmont hoped that she had discovered for herself that one could not keep even five cats without trouble between the gents and an embarrassing number of kittens from the ladies.

Frank Skrine had been well known in Bengal for the festivities which he arranged in his district to brighten the tedium and hardship of the peasants' lives. Clarmont inherited this philanthropic trait. The King's birthday had not been celebrated in Ziarat for two years and he considered that the recovery of George V from his recent illness gave an excuse for something special in the way of sports. In the past these had consisted only of decorous events such as foot-races, a horse-race for mounted levies, a tug-of-war, and so on. Clarmont did not see why only the strong or swift should share in the prize-money and, with Doris to help, included an egg-and-spoon race and a sack-race. The hundreds of Pathans present were completely puzzled at first but they quickly saw the fun. A big Pathan with long black locks turned out to be expert at the egg-and-spoon race. Then he was challenged to a match by Ahmad Din, Clarmont's bearer, who won hands down – he had always won this event in Sistan.

Cholera in Sind in August caused an influx of Sindhis into Baluchistan and Clarmont had to go down to Sibi to take precautions against an outbreak of cholera there. From Sibi, he went on down the line to Jhatpat, headquarters of Nasirabad district. The only cholera cases there were imported ones and precautions against the spread of the disease had been taken, so he took a lift from a Sikh P.W.D. suboverseer in a trolley down the line to Jacobabad where he had several matters of business to discuss. The acting Deputy Commissioner was a tall goodlooking Rajput Pathan, Sahibzada Sardar Mohammed Khan. Though he had never been to Europe he was thoroughly imbued with British ideals. 'His watch-word', Clarmont wrote, 'is "gentleman"; I couldn't help noticing that he frequently applied the standards of a gentleman to his work and the behaviour of those with whom he had to deal. Not like the Swarajists, who hate and despise (or affect to) the English "gentleman". I once overheard a station porter at Delhi abusing another, and one of the terms he used was *"gentleman ka batcha!"*' The Sahibzada talked quite freely of his wife, a sign of the times. He wanted to take her out of purdah but as usual was meeting with opposition from her family. The girl was very keen to learn English and was having lessons from an American ex-

missionary lady. It was a problem for would-be modernized Indian men and women to find ladies to teach them European manners and customs as well as language. Who knew what un-British, if not actually anti-British, ideas might not be being put into little Mrs Sardar Mohammed's head along with the accent being put into her mouth? Jacobabad was a hot-bed of intrigue between Hindu and Baluch. The poor Sahibzada had a horrid time – as a Mussulman his sympathies were strongly with his co-religionists, but as a Government servant he had to try to be impartial, facing daily abuse in the vernacular press of Sind which was run by the Hindus.

The D.C.'s house was of great interest to Clarmont because it had been built – literally – by the famous General John Jacob who had been the first Frontier Commissioner there in the early 19th century. He it was who raised the Scinde Horse, later the 35th and 36th Horse, the latter Jacob's Horse – 'my regiment' as Clarmont regarded it from the time when before the war in Cawnpore he had learnt so much from living in their mess. General Jacob had made the furniture as well as the house and had built his own cavalry lines and ridden 100 miles on a July day in Sind and parleyed with Baluch and Brahuis in their own language – 'No wonder he is still worshipped by the local Mussulmans as a *pir* or saint! His portrait and sword are kept in the great dining-room of the Residency and every now and then the Bombay Government write officially to the Deputy Commissioner to ask if they are all right. It is pleasant to think that a matter-of-fact 20th century British administration takes an interest in keeping the old hero's memory green'.

When Clarmont had been asked by St. John to postpone his home leave, he had received an undertaking that he would be allowed some local leave during 1929. The opportunity came after the P.A. had held his end-of-season Durbar at Ziarat. Thanks to Clarmont's personal acquaintance with the Persian Military Governor, he was given permission to visit the Kuh-i-Taftan region of the Sarhad. Late autumn was the best time. The Skrines, with their car on board, travelled west from Quetta on the familiar train as far as Mirjawa. From there they drove south on the old military track towards Kwash, leaving it to strike west on an ill-defined branch track which climbed gradually up to a place called Kosha at the mouth of one of the valleys issuing from the Kuh-i-Taftan. Kosha was the summer resort of Persian officers from the garrison in Kwash and here the Skrines were welcomed by the Colonel and his wife. The next day they went shooting: chikor were plentiful – a covey every 200 yards. They camped high up in different valleys, crossing some steep passes as well as climbing to the crater of Kuh-i-Taftan. They would have liked to have had longer at one camp where there was 'a regular Scottish burn tumbling down, crystal-clear water swarming with snow-trout', but Clarmont wanted to achieve his object of completing a set of panoramic views of the mountain taken from intersected points so as to enable the Survey people to re-draw the map of the area. When the photography was all done, Clarmont and Doris walked down to

a place 11 miles away on the track between Kosha and Duzdap where they had arranged to meet their car.

The Skrines' Austin was an excellent car and had helped Clarmont in a practical way in his campaign both in Persia and Baluchistan to 'buy British'. The first small Singer had been a fine advertisement, and for the Sistan Consulate he had acquired a 6-wheeled Morris. A consequence was that others followed the example; even the Governor of Sistan was driving himself about in an Austin-7 before Clarmont left. Clarmont claimed that British cars scored heavily over American, French and Italian ones of the same class in the quality of the steel. St. John had been an admirer of Studebakers, so the Skrines were delighted when he returned from leave having bought himself a Sunbeam.

Clarmont was glad that St. John had returned from leave. His senior E.A.C. for Marri-Bugti tribal affairs had just committed suicide. The poor man had been too long at Sibi – three hot weathers running – and had destroyed his own mind and finally himself by overwork and brooding in a place notorious for its bad hot weather climate. Clarmont was doing all he could for a compassionate grant for the widow and the education of nine children. St. John let him choose any man he wanted from the E.A.C.s in Baluchistan as a replacement and Clarmont picked on Captain Pinhey[63], son of a very well-known Political who had once been Resident in Hyderabad. It was important to get a good man because a dual blood and woman-feud was in progress between the Marris and a Loralai tribe called the Khetrans on the one side and the Bugtis on the other. It began by a party of Marris, disappointed of a bride for one of their number for whom they were negotiating with the Khetrans, abducting a Khetran woman. The Khetrans retaliated and the Bugtis became involved by accident when one of them was killed in a raid by Marris on Khetrans. Reprisals and counter-reprisals had continued, culminating in a set-to with deaths among all three tribes. The P.A. had no real power inside Marri-Bugti tribal territory but Clarmont was trying to prevent further bloodshed and abductions by threatening the Sardars concerned and taking hostages. They could really do what they liked under the antiquated and anomalous system but Clarmont was determined to teach them that they were living in the 20th Century under the British flag and – 'so great is our prestige even in these wild parts, that though the Marris can put ten thousand desperate fighters into the field (most of them armed with swords, certainly) and the Bugtis nearly as many, I've no doubt that they will take the lesson'.

He motored the 55 miles from Harnai to Duki where he met the P.A. Loralai, Khan Bahadur Sherbet Khan, and the Loralai Superintendent of Police and the A.P.A. and they all drove further into the wilds to a place called Hosri where Sherbet (who had made all the administrative arrangements) had a pleasant camp prepared. Next morning they rode off across wild jagged mountains to Kohlu, the cars going back and round by Loralai to Barkhan – 200 miles – against the 40 they were going to ride to the same place. Two

days and nights of hard work at Barkhan were spent in a sort of 'Versailles Peace Conference' between the Sibi and Loralai sardars.

Some intractable problems remained over Marri-Bugti affairs. Many of these stemmed, Clarmont thought, from the ill-effects of the five years 1922-7 when Johnston[64] had been the A.G.G. Sibi Agency had had the additional disadvantage of having had two inexperienced military Politicals consecutively. A consequence was that a hundred and one difficult questions had been mishandled or shelved. With the backing of St. John, he planned a ten-day tour in the Bugti country, visiting some places where no P.A. had been before: the Bugti Nawab had usually arranged for an officer touring his country to go straight to Dera Bugti and back, not liking what he regarded as 'interference in the internal affairs of his tribe'. Clarmont had the good idea of taking with him, in addition to Pinhey, Dr Henry Holland[65]. He was an immensely popular missionary doctor with an international reputation for eye-surgery who had been working in Baluchistan for a long time. He brought a case of instruments and medicines with him. Clarmont regarded him as 'a man in a million – worth more to the Empire than all of us Baluchistan Politicals put together'. They started from Jacobabad, driving over bad roads through the rich canal country, then crossing the 'Frontier' branch of the Desert Canal to find themselves in the desert, the low line of the Bugti hills ahead. The cars all stuck in sand but dozens of picturesque Bugti were ready to push them through and they reached camp at Sui, a Bugti post in a wide shallow valley commanding the main route from Sind. The hospitable Nawab sent round quantities of Baluch *sajji* (roast mutton) and curries and pilaus to their tents in true Perso-Baluch style. After one more desert camping-place they reached Loti, in the disturbed Shambani country. It had seen no British officer since about 1880. Clarmont had been particularly anxious to meet the recalcitrant tribesmen of the Nawab's in their own territory and at Loti there were 30 or 40 of them with grievances who refused to pay the Nawab Sardari dues. One more march brought them to Dera Bugti, the 'capital' of the Bugti territory where the Nawab had his residence and held his jirgas and durbars. The country they had marched through was extremely poor and one might have expected no more than a mud fort and a score of black tents; however, the Nawab owned lands in Sind and the Punjab and he and his father before him had built up quite a respectable little town and citadel, with shady gardens and a roofed bazaar. The gateways were swathed in red and white calico bearing loyal messages of welcome and flags. Dera (meaning camp) Bugti was situated in a long shallow valley and owed its location to a good water supply. The Nawab was fully aware of the poorness and backwardness of his tribe, but he was intensely proud of his hereditary chieftainship. He was a fine figure of a man, massive and upstanding with the long side-locks of his race and a black beard. The nature of the tour was primarily 'showing the flag' but Clarmont had to be firm with the Nawab over some matters concerning his treatment of his own subjects: 'Last night I had a great pow-wow with the recalcitrants in the presence of the Nawab

– of course it would have been a false move to have treated with them separately. Three years after Johnston refused to listen to these people's complaints and twice threw into jail deputations of them which waited on him in Quetta, they still don't trust Government. I have had the greatest difficulty in getting their headmen (including a woman, by the way) to come into Dera Bugti and try to make it up with the Nawab. If only we can settle this dispute it will more than justify the expense of the tour, apart from the other good results I hope for. There's a struggling school which I want to give a leg-up to; there's a big half-finished and abandoned irrigation project and there are various judicial cases'.

Returning from Sind, Clarmont had seen the Sukkur Barrage at a critical stage of its construction. The coffer dam in the middle of the river was about to be submerged. The engineer in charge had also had to make defence preparations. Gandhi had just been arrested and trouble was expected. The engineer's plan was to get everybody off on to barges and then, if the worse came to the worst, down to Karachi. Clarmont did not himself think that they would have trouble – relief could be sent from Quetta in 24 hours. Frank and Helen at Aix-en-Provence were having to put up with much gloating in the French press over the difficulties of the British in India. Clarmont hoped that his parents would draw comfort from the second part of the Simon Report; they would notice that Baluchistan was the only province which the Commission advised should be left as it was. In Baluchistan all was peaceful – 'No sedition of any kind dare raise its head in Quetta or Sibi. Any clerk found to be dabbling in sedition or even propaganda is frog-marched out before he can say knife. They can do what they like in India proper but *this* is the Frontier, the barrier behind which they carry on their "wars of liberation" so safely. I wish they'd followed our Baluchistan methods in the N.W.F.P. and kept out agitation and Congress... I'm no die-hard, as you know; I have far too much sympathy with the Indians and their aspirations and understanding of their desire to run their own show, but this Congress business is so obviously insincere. The movement is in the hands of vain self-seekers who are thinking of nothing but the jobs and the power they're going to get as soon as we are out of the way, and they are making cats' paws of the few idealists and the many fanatics... The whole of our policy in India since the war has been calculated to make the Swarajist and the Khilafatist think that the worse they behave the more conciliatory we shall be towards them. Nobody dislikes "Dyerism" more than I do; to go on massacring a mob after its spirit had been broken and to boast about it to the judge is to me inexcusable: but I can't help seeing plainly now what a victory Jallianwala Bagh and its sequel was for the Swarajists. The fate of Dyer and his colleagues has since made many an otherwise resolute magistrate and police officer and soldier think not twice but many times before standing up to a mob'.

The only incident in Baluchistan resulting from the 'civil disobedience' campaign might have been nasty but ended happily thanks to the quick reaction

of the Afghan Government. Two Army officers, one with his wife, were motoring from Chaman to Quetta when they were held up by Pathan raiders and taken off on camels to a village across the Afghan border. The driver of a passing train happened to notice their abandoned cars and very smartly stopped to investigate. He spotted the tracks and concluded that there had been a raid and gave the alarm. British troops were not allowed into Afghanistan but Quetta wired to Simla and Simla wired to Kabul and the next day King Nadir Khan wired to the Governor of Kandahar and Afghan troops forced the raiders to surrender their captives who were driven back to Chaman. The motive for the raid was to bring about the release of three Achakzais who had been arrested in Baluchistan for pro-Congress activities.

Doris had a strong sense of duty which compelled her, when she had to stay in Quetta, to be a great support to Lady St. John (the A.G.G. had been made K.C.I.E. in the 1930 New Year's Honours). Lady St. John was splendid with Indians and Doris took great trouble in making her purdah parties successful, inviting Europeans she could rely on to mix well. She accompanied Clarmont on tour whenever she could and she once went to Marri tribal territory, being the first wife of a P.A. to visit Kahan, its upland capital. She also enjoyed short camping holidays from Ziarat. The great ledge of the Khalifat range was a remarkable feature, running almost the whole length of the massif half-way up the south cliff. It was mostly about 15 yards wide but narrowed in some places to only 2 ft. above a drop of 3,000 ft. Doris did not have a good head for heights but she had immense pluck. On one occasion they came upon a herd of eight markhor on the ledge. Domestic animals were however her main love and the thought of home leave in 1931 was already casting a shadow for her – not so much having to stay at North Berwick as having to leave her cats – all of them except two who by this time went everywhere with her. She had engaged a remarkable person, a Pathan woman called Kimat, to look after her cats. Kimat became known as 'Colonel Barker[66]': she had dressed as a man for many years and had served in the Levies. Only when she was wounded in the Marri Rising was she found to be a woman. In the light of a sworn statement taken from her in 1918 she had been awarded a pension. Doris was able to make elaborate arrangements for 'Colonel Barker' to stay with the cats in clerks' quarters attached to the big Political bungalow at Harnai, with a daily supply of food and fuel. Clarmont of course looked forward very much to home leave, the more so since when he returned at the end of 1931 he expected to be P.A. Kalat. He looked upon this as one of the most attractive posts on the Frontier. The A.G.G. would by then be Norman Cater[67] whom Clarmont knew from Simla.

Sibi Week in January 1931 was less of a trial than earlier ones, Mortimer Poulton[68], the hard-working A.P.A. taking much of the load. The most difficult conundrums were connected with precedence in Durbar – 'Woe betide the P.A.A who treats such questions light-heartedly. Durbaris have been known not only to stay away from Durbar because they haven't been given

what they consider their proper seats, but to cross the border and become outlaws!'

Clarmont was able to hand over charge to Poulton at the end of February and was then guest at a farewell tea-party at the Durbar Hall. The Marri and Bugti Nawabs who bore most of the expense of the party presented him with a silver cigar-box and a salver and Clarmont thought that they spoke sincerely when they expressed the hope that he and Doris would return to Baluchistan – 'I said I hoped so too, not adding that it would be Kalat – we'd both prefer Sikkim or Meshed!'

Chapter 18

Home by car 1931

The Skrines now set out on their long-cherished plan of driving all the way to the Mediterranean. This was a less adventurous project for them than for most, since they were already familiar with the first 600 miles and they were both fluent in Persian and French. They took with them Muhammad Azim, their excellent Brahui driver, and two cats. The first stage of the journey was by rail as far as Duzdap – now renamed by the Persians Zahidan. Here they had to wait a week because the train with the car had been held up by a fall of rock on the line. Clarmont filled in the time usefully by hiring a car and putting in finishing touches to his exploration of the Kuh-i-Taftan region.

They eventually set off, the 16 h.p. Austin piled high with baggage on the carrier and both running-boards. Muhammad Azim was to spend the summer with them in Europe, so his luggage – as well as the cats' – had to be taken, in addition to camp-kit. Their route took them north through familiar country. Several changes had been made by the Persians in the nomenclature of towns and districts. Sistan was now called Zabulistan and Nasretabad had become Shahr-i-Zabul. Most of the road as far as Meshed had been thoroughly repaired. Petrol was available at an Anglo-Persian Oil Company depot 165 miles after Duzdap. At Shusp 20 miles further on, Clarmont was pleased to find the little rest-house which he had repaired in a good state and being looked after by the custodian he had appointed in 1928. From there they went to Birjand where they were warmly welcomed by the Shaukat-ul-Mulk and two days later they were in Meshed. After a short stay at the Consulate-General they set off into new country, encountering for the first time the 'garage hotel'. These were as a rule two-storeyed brick buildings surrounding a court-yard, with garages and dining-room below and rows of small bedrooms above – none too clean but usually not verminous. The sanitary arrangements were of the most primitive. The cost of a room worked out at about 1/- a head and the food, such as mutton pilau, eggs and excellent Persian bread, was equally inexpensive. Petrol averaged about 1/6d a gallon.

They had hoped to have been able to drive from Meshed via Kuchan and Bujnurd to the Caspian but were advised that this road had in places been washed away, so in order to see the Caspian coast and the forests of Mazanderan they had to make a diversion at Semnan and cross the Elburz. They spent two days at Barfurush, mostly in rain, but the weather cleared and Clarmont was able to take a telepanorama of the Elburz range to add to his collection of mountain panoramas.

At Teheran the Skrines were entertained by the Chargé d'Affaires and the road from there to Isfahan was up to European standards. Isfahan had the first

decently clean hotel they had seen in Persia – unlike the hotel in their next stopping-place, Sultanabad. They drove west from there, having left the Hamadan road for a short-cut to the main Teheran-Baghdad road just short of Kermanshah. From there the Iraq frontier at Khaniqin was only 160 miles distant. The customs formalities on leaving Persia had been facilitated by the *Rais-i-Gumrukh* at Kermanshah, an old friend from Duzdap, and the *taxe de séjour* on the car amounted to about £2. Motoring was not allowed on the Baghdad road after dark, so after dinner in the excellent railway station canteen they boarded the train for Baghdad.

From Baghdad the route was pretty well-beaten. Twice weekly convoys made the desert-crossing to Damascus. The made-up road stopped at Ramadi on the Euphrates, the rest of the way to the outskirts of Damascus being sand. The convoys made one stop at an outpost on the Iraq-Syrian frontier, Rutba Wells. Clarmont was driving behind a Buick which had no tail-light, Doris, Azim, the cats all asleep, when he suddenly noticed that the North Star which should have been on his right had swung round to the near side. He managed with difficulty to catch up the Buick. Its driver had fallen asleep at the wheel and had steered the car in a circle. They reached Damascus at 8 a.m. and thence made their way through the Lebanon into Palestine. At Haifa they shipped the car by cargo-boat to England – for the sum of £12 – and went on themselves by train to Port Said where they caught a boat for Marseilles. They had spent a month on the journey and had covered over 3,000 miles. Azim had looked after the car splendidly. Its performance had been a further vindication of Clarmont's long-held belief in the quality of British cars.

Clarmont and Doris were most favourably impressed with the parents' house at Aix. This was to be the home of Doris's two cats for the duration of their leave since they would have had to go into quarantine if brought to England. Doris and Azim then went to London, Clarmont following by air from Paris. He had his paper on 'The Highlands of Persian Baluchistan' to give at the R.G.S. The evening was a great success; the map of the Kuh-i-Taftan region had been produced by the Survey of India to incorporate his extensive additions and corrections. They then all went to North Berwick and Clarmont went off with Whitelaw *père* to inspect Loch Choire Lodge in Sutherland which Clarmont had rented for two months from the end of May. It promised to be a delightful place, very remote, 16 miles from Kinbrace, the last twelve miles on a private road. The rent for the two months' let worked out at about £6 a day.

The considerable domestic staff needed to run the Lodge was partly engaged from Edinburgh and a letter has survived from Doris to her parents describing her journey with Azim and the cook:

Royal Hotel
Tain

28.5.31

Dearest Mum and Dad,

I know how hectic I shall be for the first 36 hours after we arrive at Loch Choire, so am writing from here to thank you very much for my time at N.B. and to tell you that 'McKiny', Azim, self and baggage have all arrived here safely. I marched into the Ladies Waiting room as soon as I got to Edinburgh, and saw a row of females sitting round the walls – there were several whom I hoped weren't 'McKiny' – and then suddenly I saw Mum's *ex-hat* sitting in a corner, and so I extricated it and led it off to the train! The firsts were all empty, but I was glad that I hustled McK and Azim in plenty of time for soon every seat was taken. I had hurriedly explained to McKinny that Azim, tho' an Indian, was very cultivated and nice, but she looked at him a little as if he were Lobengula in full war paint, until Perth, when he got out of his own compartment, hurried to a fruit stall, and on returning advanced into her carriage and placed 3 bananas and 2 oranges in her lap!! So with these and some tea and sandwiches she lunched quite sumptuously. The guard took a great interest in us and saw that everyone was comfortable. We reached Tain about 7 o'clock and a dilapidated car brought us to this hotel – which is really most comfortable. Whether it is McKinny's look of Queen Victoria, or Mummy's ex-hat, or the presence of Azim, I don't know, but I am being treated like a Maharajah in his own dominions, and the manageress insisted on my dining in solitary splendour in a 'parlour'. Thank you both for having been so awfully kind about everything – especially Azim. He is a devoted slave where you are both concerned, and I feel that if it wasn't for the wife and the two babies in India, he would probably demand to stay on in your service and drive the Hillman for the rest of his life! It is so unfortunate that people like you have not had to deal with 'Aryan brothers' – as the Indians are called by the British in India – for I know that all of them would have been devoted to you both.

With much love Always yours
D.F.S.

Mrs McKinnon proved herself an excellent cook. There was a resident housekeeper at the Lodge and a table-maid, house-maid and kitchen-maid had to be taken on. There had been a good deal of rain and plenty of salmon had come up the Naver – the beginning of the season was so good that the price of salmon in Edinburgh fell to 1/- a lb. The only fly in the ointment as far as

Clarmont was concerned was that his father's health did not permit his parents to leave the south of France and stay with him.

Because of his father's state, Clarmont had applied for an extension of leave and he was over-joyed when he had a letter from Cater saying that he favoured this, with a view to Clarmont taking over as P.A. Kalat in the spring of 1932. But the prospect of longer at home – a winter at North Berwick – made Doris desolate. She had planned to go to Les Bosquets for a week at the end of July. Clarmont had done his best to dissuade her from making so long and expensive a journey for the sake of a few days with the cats – 'but I might as well be arguing with the man in the moon! If she were to hear now that Mackie was ill, she would start off at once for Aix'. He wrote this on 3rd July. A fortnight later he had a letter from his mother saying that Mackie had indeed had an accident and had probably lost the sight of one eye. Clarmont resolved to keep this information from Doris for the present. The house was full of guests and he did not want their last fortnight spoilt by Doris being hysterical. He asked his mother to perpetrate an 'amiable deception' by telling Doris that the accident had happened 'about now' instead of whenever it did happen. But the deception failed; Helen's letter in reply to Clarmont's arrived when he was out. Doris was so anxious for news of the cats that she opened it and at once saw through the plot. After a sleepless night, she decided to bring Mackie over from France and keep him in quarantine with a vet until her return to India. The first week of August saw Clarmont accompanied by an agent from Cox's & King's and armed with a Ministry of Agriculture permit to meet Doris and the cat at Dover.

While she had been away he had fitted in visits which she would not have enjoyed and had seen to the illustrations for his article about the Kuh-i-Taftan which was to be published in the Geographical Journal. Three of his photographs had been published in the Times; the ten guineas he was paid for them had been useful for his heavy photographic expenses. He was enthusiastic about a new colour film of which he had seen a private demonstration. He considered that once the public had seen travel films in colour they would refuse to look at them in black-and-white.

Doris made up her mind to return to India with the cats before the end of the year. He advised his mother not to try to dissuade her – 'It will only annoy her. Remember, it's the pussies first and the rest nowhere; it's not only that – she hates having nothing useful to do. Her heart is in the east where she feels she is doing some good and her family can't interfere with her. She will arrive in Quetta about Xmas, collect the cats from Harnai and she'll be very happy working at the Purdah Club and the Girl Guides and preparing for her fairly important position as Mrs P.A. Kalat'. With this plan agreed, Clarmont and Doris spent a thoroughly happy month of the autumn at Les Bosquets. At the beginning of December, Clarmont saw her and the cats off for Bombay.

He did not at all like the prospect of returning to the East leaving his mother without any companion to help her look after his father. Frank had

become very heavy and was liable to fall. He was thankful to see a nurse/companion whom he had interviewed installed at Les Bosquets at the beginning of 1932, just before he was due to board a Scipio flying-boat at Brindisi. This took him via Athens and Castelresso to Tiberias where the passengers transferred to a Hannibal which plied the Cairo-India route. The aircraft had seats for 14 passengers and to Clarmont's great pleasure a fellow-passenger on the Baghdad-Basra leg was Freya Stark – 'She's trying to get up into the mountains of Luristan in the autumn. She's exactly the same as ever, perfectly charming'. They were well entertained at the Consulate and next morning the flight continued, now with only two passengers. Clarmont revelled in all the incidents of the flight. After Basra, they stopped for refuelling at Bushire and Lingeh and then made a night-stop at Jask. The next day the only landing before Karachi was at Gwadur where Clarmont set foot on his own district of Mekran, as evidenced by the black-bearded Baluch and Brahuis.

This was a splendid way of travelling between Europe and India, Clarmont thought: 'It really does bridge the gulf, you're introduced to the East gradually but rapidly. One doesn't feel nearly so exiled...'

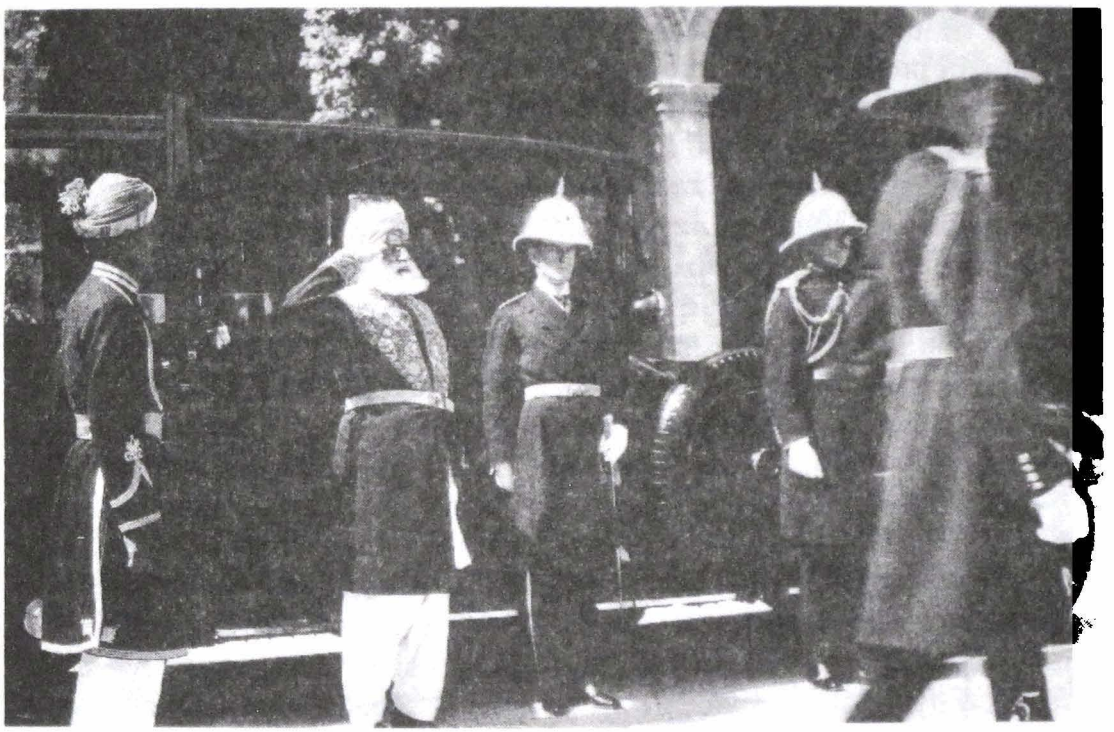
Chapter 19

Kalat State 1932-34[69]

Clarmont's arrival at Mastung was claimed to be full of *iqbal* (auspicious good fortune) because it coincided with a break in the dry weather and badly needed rain. He was delighted with the situation of the P.A.'s house, on a low hill with a vista through trees of fine rugged blue mountains. The peach trees in the garden were covered in blossom and hyacinths and violets were in bloom. He affected to be a little disappointed to hear that the Government of India had asked for him to go as Deputy Secretary to Simla but Cater had objected, saying that there was no one else available for Kalat: he would be too senior, after having been P.A. Kalat, to be Deputy Secretary on a future occasion. But Doris was delighted and she said, not altogether in joke, that she would have demanded a separation if Clarmont were posted to Simla. And Clarmont was more than compensated by the fascination of the Kalat job. The new Khan, Mir Azam Jan, had lived as a political *détenu* in Quetta for 30 years and had the reputation of being vindictive. Clarmont at once took a liking to him and believed him when the old man said that he wanted to clear up the mess in which the Kalat State had been left by the late blind Khan. The Agency itself was in apple-pie order. Senior officers had invariably held the post and had stayed in it for years at a time. The P.A. Kalat had moreover always had a British A.P.A. as well as two British officers in Mekran – the A.P.A. Mekran and the Adjutant of the Mekran Levy Corps. The Chagai Agency had been added to the responsibilities of the P.A. Kalat as from 1st April and the A.P.A., Mortimer Poulton, put in charge of it.

The immediate matter causing most work for all the Baluchistan administration was a Viceregal visit. Lord Willingdon was going to come for five days and hold a Durbar in honour of the new Khan of Kalat. This meant a great deal of preparation, specially on the part of the P.A. Kalat, because the programme included a Kalat State Banquet and a State Ball in Quetta and a visit by the Viceregal party to Mastung for lunch. Apart from the intricacies of invitations and seating arrangements and the need for exactness over all the ceremonial, Clarmont found that he had to arrange such details as for a special covered passage to be constructed between the ball-room and a nearby house taken specially for the occasion so as to provide a place where the Vicereine could 'powder her nose' away from the common herd. 'Isn't it all idiotic?' he wrote, 'why make such a fuss? Perhaps to impress the Khan – not a bad thing, but hardly worth so much trouble. My difficulty will be to ensure that the old Khan, who's paying for the whole thing, gets the proper share of the publicity and *izzat* as host. It must *not* look as if it were the Viceroy's party'.

The elaborate ceremonial at the initial exchange of visits went very well. The Viceroy's Military Secretary, 'Pug' Ismay[70], said that it was the best exchange of visits Lord Willingdon had experienced. In addition to the old Khan of Kalat, the little Jam of Las Bela had to make a ceremonial call which in his case was returned by the Foreign Secretary, not by the Viceroy in person. The Khan was entitled to a salute of 19 guns, so when he made his call, the Viceroy advanced exactly two-thirds of the way to the door to greet him. The morning of the ceremonial visits involved three changes of dress – black frogged frock-coat, overalls with gold stripe, gold belt and sword for the Khan's call; levée dress for the Viceroy's return visit; then into plain clothes – a morning coat – for the Viceroy's meeting with senior Politicals. He talked interestingly to Clarmont about Indian politics and Gandhi of whom he had a low opinion as a 'saint'. He thought that Lord Irwin's mystic streak had led him to be bamboozled by Gandhi more successfully than a normal man of the world would have been.



14 Arrival of HH the Khan of Kalat, accompanied by Clarmont, to call on the Viceroy, May 1932. As he gets out of the Daimler lent him by the Viceroy, once the property of King George V, the Guard of Honour of 100 Indian Infantry gives the General Salute, which HH acknowledges.

Clarmont drove with the Khan to the Durbar along a route almost roofed with red and green flags – the Kalat colours – and lined by troops. The salute of 19 guns was fired and the Khan was received at the Durbar ground (the race-course) by the A.G.G. and the Army Commander and inspected his guard of

honour drawn up opposite that of the Viceroy. Clarmont could not observe the earlier arrival of the Jam of Las Bela (his A.P.A. was looking after the Jam throughout the Viceregal visit); it had been a comic sight. The Jam was barely 5 ft. high and was escorted by Poulton and one of the Viceroy's A.D.C.'s, both very tall. The Times correspondent, in Quetta just to cover the occasion, had made the witticism: 'Look at Crosse and Blackwell preserving the Jam!' The Khan looked marvellous in his gold-embroidered white woollen *choga* and white turban with the *sarpech* (kind of flexible crown), studded with emeralds and rubies, enclosing it. Ten minutes after the Khan's arrival, the Viceroy arrived. Clarmont had nothing to do during the proceedings but rise and sit at the proper times, 'like a church service', and listen to the speeches which he had drafted, to be approved first by Cater then by the Government of India. He and Cater had vied in introducing the most rotund platitudes.

There were immense garden-parties, one for the Quetta people and one for the Sardars and minor headmen and landowners, and then the State Banquet and the State Ball. All the arrangements for the State functions had been made on behalf of the Khan by Clarmont and Doris. The Club Secretary was excellent and produced first-rate food and champagne. The magnificent State dinner-service was used at the dinner and had to be taken out by lorry directly afterwards for use at Mastung the following day.

Doris had been given her head over the decorations of the ball-room. She and Clarmont had paid a visit to Kalat, the ancient capital of the State, and together they had ransacked the treasures of the Miri, the mediaeval castle of the Khans of Kalat. The late Khan had spent the last seven years of his life in the Miri blind and scarcely ever moving out of it. He had been something of a magpie as regards clothes and stuffs and armour and personal belongings of all kinds. One room contained about a thousand walking-sticks and riding-crops – and some dreadful knouts; Clarmont noticed blood clotted at the end of the thick thong of a whip said to have been for use on women. The old Khan had kept about 150 female slaves as well as his wives and concubines. The Skrines borrowed embroidered horse-cloths, tablecloths, turbans and Baluch shirts stiff with needle-work. They wanted the ball-room to look really characteristic of Kalat. And they really succeeded. The normally rather bare room was transformed by a frieze of black camels along a broad band of green and red cloth, old matchlocks, swords and shields on the walls and pillars swathed in ancient embroideries and as a back-drop a huge scene-painting of the Miri of Kalat effectively flood-lit.

The lunch-party at Mastung went according to plan, the table decorated by Doris, with her own roses and the Kalat Horse Show cups and a set of old Jaipur alabaster camels from the Miri. At a little private ceremony afterwards, the Khan presented Lady Willingdon with a pair of alabaster camels (which she had openly coveted) and a cheque for Rs. 20,000 for her Zenana Hospital scheme. Then the party went round the stables and paddocks of the Kalat State stud-farm.

Lady Willingdon, nicknamed 'Mauve Marie' from her addiction to the colour, so strong that even her bathroom fittings were said to be mauve, was notorious for getting her own way and causing trouble by insisting on changes in a programme. Doris had accompanied her to visit the Khan's ladies and the Vicereine had appeared horrified when she heard that they would not be witnessing the Durbar. She made the Viceroy practically command the old Khan – who was very conservative – to send the ladies to see the spectacle. As a result, work had to be carried out all night by arc lamps to fix up elaborate purdah arrangements near the top of the grand stand. The ladies saw the Durbar and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

The visit was altogether a great success. The Willingdons enjoyed themselves and the Khan who was himself very good at ceremonial appreciated the 'face' given him by being 'crowned' by the Viceroy in person. Ismay wrote warmly to Clarmont, 'It speaks volumes for your foresight and zeal that everything has gone off without a hitch'.

Doris loved living at Mastung. The Khan's Prime Minister, the Wazir-i-Azam, had his office in Quetta where too was the A.G.G. The Khan himself was usually in the summer at Kalat. Clarmont tried to fit his work in Quetta into two or three days a week, keeping Mastung, which had the best house and garden, as his main base. Doris disliked Quetta more and more and increasingly loathed ball-room dancing. People had ceased talking about Clarmont being at dances without her; it seemed to be understood that he did not interfere with her simple pleasures – cat-keeping and bossing the gardeners – and she did not interfere with him. She was extremely gullible, prepared to believe anything she was told about other people's naughtiness, and she solemnly informed Helen that Clarmont's Quetta friends played strip-poker.

The house at Mastung became too hot for comfort in July and the Skrines moved their base to Kalat which was 6,700 ft. above the sea – 1300 ft. higher than Mastung. Kalat had its own little 'hill station', Harboi at 9,500 ft. The little house there was something like an Alpine climbing hut and the car track stopped a long way below, the last ten miles having to be walked. The aboriginal mountaineer inhabitants were as self-contained and unsophisticated as any in the remotest parts of Persia.

While at Kalat Doris had the luck of being invited to the wedding of one of the Khan's daughters to a son of a leading Brahui Sardar. The final ceremonies lasted from afternoon till midnight. The bride was about 18, the marrying age being older in Baluchistan than in India, and was weighed down with stuffy but gorgeous clothes and many pounds' weight of jewel-studded gold ornaments. She was given an elaborate coiffure which must have been painful – a number of pigtails plaited tightly right up to the scalp – and then a writing-pad was rested on her head and she had to read texts from a Koran held up in front of her while an old woman laboriously transcribed them on to the writing-pad. The bride nearly collapsed. All present were of course women and Doris's Persian and few words of Brahui were quite adequate for her to be able to

talk during the intervals of preparing the bride. One very aristocratic-looking Muhammadzai lady was present who was heard to say 'In Kabul gold is absolutely *démode'* – brides just wear a few diamonds in platinum settings, none of these clumsy gold breast-plates and chains...' Doris noticed the Khan's ladies smiling indulgently at the speaker, not at all affected by her preaching.

At about 8.30 the bridegroom's deputation arrived to ask (through a curtain) whom the bride appointed to be her *vakil* (representative) whose business it would be to sign the marriage settlement on her behalf. An hour later the expectant ladies heard the distant music and fireworks which heralded the bridegroom. On his arrival with the bride's *vakil* all the lady-guests except Doris were bundled away into side-rooms so that the two men could be admitted. Then the bride's aunt seized the very nervous bridegroom and sat him down beside the still heavily-veiled bride (whom of course he had never seen). Putting one big *chaddar* over both their heads, she gave him a mirror and told them both to look steadfastly into it. Then she lifted the bride's veil and they both saw each other, in the mirror, for the first time in their lives.

The monsoon brought heavy rain to the Baluchistan highlands and flood-water much needed by the cultivators of the broad flat-bottomed upland valleys. An unfortunate concomitant however was the inevitable number of new jirga cases; fights constantly took place over water, accusations that an individual was taking more than his fair share and depriving his lower neighbour. Meanwhile life for the P.A. at Kalat was fairly quiet; a country walk in the evening and a gramaphone record or two after dinner. Doris went to bed early and Clarmont put on dance records after she had retired – 'I sometimes practise tango and foxtrot steps to my favourite tunes, with closed doors and the softest of soft needles so as not to shock her!'

The State budget for the current year – 1932-33 – had not yet been completed by the new Wazir-i-Azam and his attempt at producing one was indifferent. The poor man had inherited a thoroughly Oriental financial system; his predecessor had run the State as his private property for almost 15 years, breaking every accounts rule in the process. Quetta was a noisy contrast after two months at Kalat and Harboi but in the autumn they went off to tour in the remote low-lying part of the State, Mekran.

Clarmont left Doris at Turbat, the capital of Kech-Mekran – a big valley running parallel to the coast at a level of about 450 ft. above the sea. He himself went off with the A.P.A. to a lonely frontier post called Mand; there were some comic monosyllabic place-names in Mekran and Persian Baluchistan, not only Tump which had a picturesque old fortress but also Bint, Champ, Bug and Pip. The state of affairs in Mekran had been allowed to get in a mess. The population of the Kech valley consisted partly of aboriginal Mekranis, very dark, with a proportion of negroid types due to the former slave trade, partly of Baluch and partly of Gichkis. The Gichkis were of Rajput origin and had gained control of the province and embraced Islam. Subsequently the Khans of Kalat had half-conquered them and now the revenue

was divided between Khan and Gichki Sardars, an arrangement which caused continual disputes.

Clarmont thought highly of the Khan for having driven all the way from Khozdar, over appalling tracks, to meet him at Panjgur. He was a game old man and was very pleased with the rousing welcome with which he was received. The main event of the visit to Panjgur was an exercise by Royal Air Force aircraft from Quetta with the Mekran Levies. Quetta was 300 miles away. A wire was received at 10 a.m. to say that four aircraft had taken off at 9.15 a.m. and at 12.30 they were sighted. Clarmont was thrilled to see them in a V – 'like pintail duck on the wing'. All the spectators were equally impressed by the subsequent demonstration. This included message picking-up. A couple of rifles were stuck into the ground by their bayonets and a message on a string slung between them. The aircraft, a Wapiti, approached very low, with a long rod and hook let out which neatly picked up the message. The only hitch in the exercise with the Levies was that the 'enemy's' gun, supposed to have been put out of action by bombs and machine-gun fire, declined to stop firing.

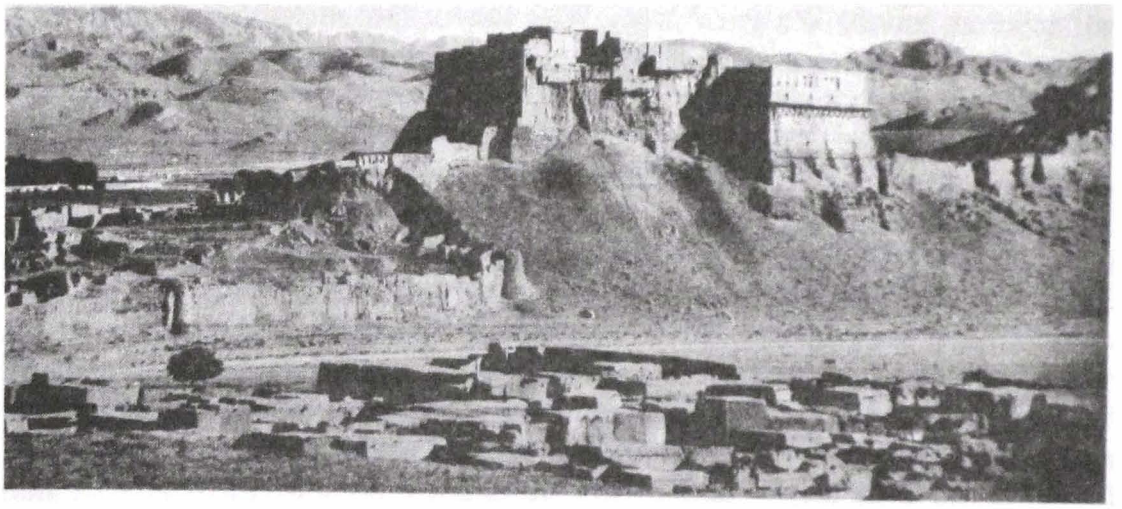
Later Clarmont paid his first visit as P.A. Kalat to Las Bela. He and Doris were met at Karachi station by the Jam's Wazir and Vakil and driven 200 yards to their hotel. The Las Bela people tried to pay the hotel bill, the idea being that the Skrines became the Jam's guests immediately on arrival at Karachi. There was a day's business over a dispute between Las Bela State and the Karachi 'Fishermen's Union' over fishing rights before the party set out for Las Bela. At first the way lay across moors seamed with water-courses and dotted with cactus and aloes, the sea on the left and a serrated line of blue mountains on the right. Then the road struck north up the wide valley of the Purali river. Bela was a little town of wooden houses and narrow roofed bazaars on a hill in the middle of a thickly-wooded valley. The Jam had spoilt its picturesqueness by replacing the ancient wooden buildings occupied by his fore-fathers with ugly yellow-painted brick structures. He had spent too much of his own and the State's money on building and Clarmont had the unpleasant duty of rebuking him about it; the most time-consuming piece of business was discussion of the State finances with the Jam and his Wazir. The Jam was a shy little man but his shyness wore off, specially after Doris had visited his womenfolk – 22 of them. No wonder the poor devil was in debt, commented Clarmont. Further north, in Kalat or British Baluchistan, the daughters would be an asset for whom bride-prices would eventually be paid; not so in Las Bela. Sir Robert Sandeman had died in Las Bela in 1891 and the then Jam had built for him a charming tomb of whitewashed stone in oriental style, a dome supported on four columns and a big marble slab on the grave. It was just like the tomb of a Mohammedan saint, which was what Sandeman had almost become. The State received a mere 10 rupees a month for the tomb's upkeep from the Government, the little garden being maintained beautifully by the State. For the last night of the visit the Jam took the Skrines to a resthouse at

Uthal near good shooting country. The Jam was a first-class small-game shot and Political Officers had always encouraged him – 'better than that he should spend all his time in his harem!'

The Skrines transferred to Sibi – Kalat House – for the mid-winter months and in the New Year's Honours List of 1933 the Khan was made G.C.I.E.. Clarmont rather hoped that this would not mean investiture in Delhi. He did not want the old Khan to get mixed up in 'Federation Politics' which might happen if he were induced to join the Chamber of Princes. The publicity this would bring might be very harmful to Kalat in the long run. Baluchistan was all the better for being thoroughly backward politically – it was the only really self-governing province in British India. No more democratic form of government could be wished for than the tribal system of jirgas dealing with everything affecting the native population according to carefully preserved customary law. But to Delhi the Khan went, amid huge excitement among the Kalat people. No Khan of Kalat had been to Delhi since 1876 and the only earlier occasion had been in late Moghul times when the journey had been made by camel and the Khan had been away from his State for two years. On this occasion the Khan's retinue included seven Sardars of tribes, sons-in-law, 70 other followers and 30 State troops. On the day before the investiture Clarmont took the Khan and the Wazir-i-Azam to the Durbar Hall for a rehearsal. It was not considered suitable for the old man to rehearse his own part but he watched carefully. He was particularly interested in the accolade and asked Clarmont what it was all about – 'I told him about the origin of knighthood and how "dubbing" usually took place on the battlefield in old days. At the moment a pot-bellied Bombay-side mill-owner happened to be receiving a mock accolade from the Military Secretary with an imaginary sword. A twinkle came into the old Khan's eye and he whispered "*That* ... on battlefield?"'

Before the actual ceremony took place the Willingdons greeted the Khan in their drawing-room. Lady Willingdon was quite different to any Vicereine Clarmont had known. She seemed to have a genuine liking for the Khan and bombarded him with questions in an exuberant friendly and natural way, praising him for his turn-out which was certainly gorgeous – a white woollen cloak embroidered with gold and coloured silk, beautifully worked undercoat and baggy trousers, his huge barbaric tiara studded with big emeralds, diamonds and rubies and curious breast-plate. He was incomparably more striking and picturesque than the Maharaja of Kashmir who was present to receive the G.C.S.I. and he carried himself with more dignity.

Before leaving Delhi Clarmont had to attend a conference of Residents and representatives of Provinces – he had been delegated by Cater to represent Baluchistan – on the question of the adhesion of the Indian States to the proposed Federation of India. The British Government's White Paper on Federation was due for publication in March and much would depend on the



15 The Miri at Kalat

16 The Mastung Lunch, 27 April 1932

Back row: Lts Dickson, Aubrey-Smith, Oliver St John; Capt. Freeman-Smith (ADC Viceroy); Clarmont; K.B.Gul. Muhd. Khan (Wazir-i-Azam); Mir Ahmad Yar Khan (Heir Apparent); Mr Mieville (Private Sec. to the Viceroy); The Jam of Las Bela; Gen . Sir Torquhil Matheson (GOC-in-C, Western Army); Capt. Clive (ADC Viceroy); Col. Brett (Commissioner); Mir Muhd. Rahmin Khan (2nd son of Khan); Capt. Budgen (ADC Viceroy); General Newcome (GOC Baluchistan).

Sitting: Doris Skrine; Lady Elizabeth Matheson; the Viceroy Lord Willingdon; the Khan of Kalat; the Countess of Willingdon; Mr Norman Cater (Agent to the Governor General, Baluchistan); Mrs Brett; Mrs Poulton.

On floor: Four alabaster camels with trappings from the Miri at Kalat and Mir Muhd Aslam Khan, grandson of the Khan by his (imbecile) eldest son Mir Akram Jan.

Political Officers whose Princes could make or mar the plans for a federal constitution.

The health of the old Khan caused both Clarmont and the A.G.G. much anxiety. Cater had a low opinion of the sense and statesmanship of both the heir apparent and the Wazir-i-Azam. With the hope of improving the old man's state of health, Cater invited him to stay in Ziarat during the hot July weather, but he died in September. Clarmont genuinely missed the old Khan whom he had found wise and humorous – and affectionate, always calling Doris his 'sister' and Clarmont his 'brother'.

Clarmont had made a point of encouraging the heir apparent, Ahmed Yar, to mix with Quetta European society. He had been made an honorary member of the club and Clarmont had arranged several 'dances' for him, i.e. partners who were willing to sit out with him, and had taken him and his younger brothers for picnics. Ahmad Yar was a firm friend and would be more so as Khan, knowing that Clarmont supported his candidature for the succession. The late Khan had had sons by two wives; the first was a lady of the Mohammedzai family and by her he had a mad son called Akram Jan. Ahmad Yar was the son of the second wife who was a Gitchki from Mekran. The mad Akram Jan had himself a son, a dear little boy called Aslam. The powerful Mohammedzai faction in Quetta was solid for little Aslam. Another interest working for Aslam was the 'United Baluch' party, corresponding to the Congress Party in India – they wanted a long regency in Kalat, power in the hands of a council of Sardars and the present weak Wazir-i-Azam; paradise indeed for wire-pullers and intriguers. 'Fat Boy', as Ahmad Yar was known among his European acquaintances, was solid, matter-of-fact, jolly and comparatively straightforward. Furthermore, he was the rightful heir, as according to the ancient constitutional usage of Kalat, one whose father had been Khan always took precedence over one whose father had not. Thus if the mad Akram Jan were made Khan even for one day Aslam could rightfully succeed. Clarmont let it be known quietly among the influential Sardars that the Government would like to see Ahmad Yar on the throne. This was also the opinion of the State Council which consisted of the eight chief Sardars. The succession jirga consisted of the 36 Sardars of the Confederacy. It met in Kalat, the A.G.G. being present for its formal opening, and duly recommended Ahmad Yar for the Khanate. The question then was who should become Wazir-i-Azam. Gul Mohammad had been a failure and would be useless under an inexperienced Khan. The short-term appointment of a British officer – if the Government of India were to agree – would be the best arrangement for the future of the State's finances. Approval for the appointment of Teddy Wakefield[71], then A.P.A. Quetta, was obtained. Wakefield was a big, athletic, energetic able man in his young 30s. His appointment made an enormous difference: a revised budget was completed in a few weeks and much reorganization begun.

The budget included Civil List pensions which gave Rs 450 a month to each of the two widows of the late Khan whom Ahmad Yar called 'my mothers' – he was extraordinarily impartial towards them, not giving his own mother anything that his step-mother did not receive. The Civil List pensions led to numerous petitionings and Clarmont was called on by a widow of the last Khan but two, Khudadad who had been deposed for barbarism in 1894. She came heavily veiled escorted by two sons to demand why if the widows of the late Khan who reigned for only two years had pensions of 450/- she, whose husband had reigned for 40 years, received a pension of only 300/-.

Ahmad Yar had himself recently acquired a young bride from Kabul. Doris described her as the sweetest and naughtiest child, but she had no idea how to get herself up. She wore a kind of wedding dress with a tiara a bit askew and smeared her pretty little face with cosmetics quite unnecessarily. She had her mother and an aunt and a sister with her and there was furious jealousy among his own female relations. Clarmont was doing a good deal of 'bear-leading' of Ahmad Yar. He was good value at parties but bad at keeping engagements.

The Birthday Honours list of 1933 included the award of the Kaiser-i-Hind Silver Medal to Doris. All who knew her were delighted that her social work with the Guides and the Purdah Club should receive Government recognition. The news was of course welcomed in North Berwick, the Whitelaw parents both being active in social work. Mrs Whitelaw had had an operation and her letters forced Doris to decide to go home for two months. She was very depressed at having to leave the cats but she had one congenial fellow-passenger going on leave at the same time, Mervyn Cox, an Assistant Political Agent and the only man in addition to Clarmont with whom she would 'mixed-bathe'.

Soon after her departure the blow fell which Clarmont had long been expecting – the death of his father. His powers had been gradually fading and in a way the bitterness of death was already past. Clarmont's heart bled for his mother who had had 47 years of marriage, the last four struggling against the inevitable. He took immediate steps to make her an allowance, saying he could afford £400 a year; it would be a different matter if he had children – 'I don't say I'm glad I haven't children'. He planned to go on leave as soon as he could get away and for his mother to come and stay in Baluchistan the following winter.

Doris returned horribly depressed by her visit to her parents. She was back in time to play her invaluable part in the arrangements for the Kalat festivities which followed the Khan's installation. Everything went without a hitch and Clarmont was able to leave by air from Karachi for Brindisi.

Chapter 20

A Chapter of Convulsions

17 Mrs Bartrum with her daschunds at the Simla Dog Show

Foremost among the women who had been willing to help Ahmad Yar in the ways of European society was Elizabeth Bartrum whose husband, Major Vere Bartrum, was an army vet. Ahmad Yar was pleased to have Bartrum as a veterinary consultant for the Kalat State Stud. Elizabeth Bartrum's friendship with both the Khan and Clarmont was the subject of some gossip in European society in Quetta. Clarmont had in fact fallen passionately in love with her.

Helen had expressed some anxiety when she first heard that Doris was to come home in 1933 without Clarmont. 'Don't worry', he had then replied; 'Doris and I – we're inseparable'. He first mentioned the Bartrums to his mother when he described how torrential rain in July 1933 had flooded the bungalows at Stanyon's Hotel in Quetta and he had gone to the rescue of the Bartrums who had been staying in one of them. He rigged them both out in his own clothes and the disaster developed into a hilarious evening, Clarmont smuggling his guests into a box at the cinema (evening dress was *de rigueur*) and then to dinner at the club. Mrs Bartrum was small and vivacious and in Clarmont's eyes had faultless taste, was always beautifully dressed and very popular. Vere Bartrum who was a coarse contrast summed up his wife when he said that 'she smelt good to brigadiers'. It was this coarseness of Vere's and his

alleged womanizing which allowed Clarmont to cuckold him with a clear conscience.

Mrs Bartrum was also at home in the summer of 1934. Clarmont of course began his leave at Aix with his mother but when he went to England he and Elizabeth Bartrum lived together in London as man and wife.

He concealed nothing from his mother and to his delight Helen Skrine and Elizabeth took to each other. He had to fly back to India, being required to act as Revenue and Judicial Commissioner. Elizabeth was returning by sea and Helen made the effort to go into Marseilles to see her just for the short time that her boat was in the port. Elizabeth responded to Helen's maternal devotion to the point of calling her 'our little mummie'.

Doris had changed very much. Previously she had hated Quetta; now she preferred staying there by herself and, instead of accompanying Clarmont to Ziarat and going on tour, she planned a trip to Peshawar. She had become a 'bachelor girl' and advised Clarmont to become 'bachelory'. Clarmont was certain that the change in Doris was nothing to do with his infidelity – he was convinced that she did not know of this – and he felt that he had been blind not to have seen the change coming years ago. Helen was to spend the winter with them in Baluchistan. He expected Doris to play up to the situation and had no fear of strained relations spoiling his mother's visit.

But with no affectionate relationship with Doris left, he missed inordinately having neither his mother nor Elizabeth. The latter was to join her husband at Saharanpur in the Punjab and Clarmont was desolate at the thought of being able to see her only a dozen or so times a year. He was so obsessed that he briefly entertained a selfish plan of going to Delhi for a few days with Elizabeth instead of going to Bombay to meet his mother's ship. He soon thought better of this. It was 40 years since his mother had last sailed for India and of course he would have to be at Bombay to welcome her – but he had an idea. Elizabeth who could get away at reasonable intervals to stay with friends should accompany him to Bombay. They would go to some quiet little hotel and all three stay there a night or two. This duly happened.

Helen's winter in Baluchistan thereafter passed all too quickly. Clarmont reverted to his substantive post so she was with him at Quetta, Mastung and Sibi. She also accompanied him on a tour with Cater to Las Bela. She was a great social asset and the domestic staff adored her.

After Helen's departure, Doris took trouble to see Clarmont comfortably settled into the Mastung house. She herself was about to go to Kashmir and she had been thinking of this as the beginning of a permanent separation. Just before she left she broke down and asked Clarmont if he would mind if this time her departure were not a final one: if he did not want to marry anyone else by the autumn, perhaps she might return to him, and perhaps they could go on leave together via China and America in 1936? Apparently Baluchistan had got on her nerves; she identified Clarmont with Baluchistan society, hence her desire to break away. There had been another factor – though Clarmont

suspected that she exaggerated it. She had herself fallen for Mervyn Cox, Clarmont's former A.P.A. with whom she had travelled home in 1933. More relevant, thought Clarmont, was Doris's consciousness that she had been a rotten wife to him as regards love and children and she felt that she ought to set him free to marry someone who could provide all that. If she knew about Elizabeth she would be certain to cut herself off for good in order not to stand in Clarmont's way. But as he explained to his mother, he could not tell her about Elizabeth, 'Not now, at any rate. She is so miserable and her pride is so humbled; and after all I married her with my eyes open and it is I who have made her what she is. Now that that stage of deliberately trying to put me off is over, and she is more her old self, my former feelings for her have put their heads up again and I simply haven't the heart to send her away for good and all, which is what telling her would mean. I would never forgive myself if she came to harm in some way. You're saying all this time "What of Lisa and your dreams of marriage to her and children?" Don't imagine that I too am not saying that to myself all the time. There's nothing final yet; we may one day decide to part for good. As for Lisa, she has always said that whether we can ever marry or not makes no difference to her love – she will always regard herself as my real "love-wife"'.

Soon Clarmont had an opportunity to discuss Doris's change of heart with Elizabeth. Bored with Vere at Saharanpur, she had sportingly come to stay at the dak bungalow in Quetta, booked in under her maiden name. She had to stay there in great seclusion for fear of being recognized. Clarmont led a double life, doing his work at Kalat House and attending such social functions as he could not avoid, then spending all the rest of the time at the dak bungalow. He was more in love than ever. The thought of Lisa staying all day in her stuffy little room waiting for him – 'such devotion from a girl of irresistible attraction who could have chosen practically any man she liked at Aldershot or Quetta' – was far more than he deserved. They hoped to have a few days together in June before the Bartrums went on leave, but Clarmont had been appointed to sit on the Anglo-Afghan Joint Commission at Chaman and its proceedings might drag on.

What actually happened was unforeseeable. Clarmont certainly would not have made a joke in an after-dinner speech in Quetta in May, saying of the hostess who had been referred to as a 'safe' person, 'if Pam is safe, give me a couple of earthquakes every time!' He had been dining in Quetta on 30th May and returned by car the 32 miles to Mastung, getting to bed about 2 a.m. Almost at once he found himself out of bed, staggering about in pitch darkness amid terrific roaring and crashing. He groped his way over broken glass and fallen furniture to a verandah. The outer door was shut and the window was blocked with strong wire gauze. The air was full of acrid dust, making breathing difficult. He managed to break a pane of glass in the door and to his great relief he was hailed by a Gurkha sentry who seized his hands and pulled him clear. The wall of the servants' compound had fallen down but mercifully

none of them had been killed. When the dust had cleared a little, they crept round the house at a safe distance and saw in the starlight a complete ruin. Both the big towers had crashed, one on to the office and the other on to Doris's bedroom and the rooms off it. If she and the cats had been in it they would have been crushed by eight feet of broken masonry.

With the servants and the Gurkha guard, Clarmont went over to the clerks' lines, finding the survivors in panic-stricken groups outside their ruined houses. The danger was not over; the terrible deep thunder of earthquake was heard again and the ground shook and swayed and the crash and clangour of falling buildings arose on all sides. Moving on as soon as possible into the town, Clarmont was struck by the complete silence and with horror he realized that there was scarcely anybody left to scream. Most people were buried under the ruins, the few dazed survivors trying to pull others from the débris. Dawn revealed that the whole town was in ruins. The obvious thing to try to do was to get into Quetta for help, in the hope that the earthquake had not been so severe there and that help would be forthcoming. The garage had partially collapsed and the doors were jammed and the only car which could be got out was a baby Austin. The hood had to be ripped off because it was in tatters and it took an hour to clear a narrow track out of Mastung and through a neighbouring village. Everywhere was desolation; the earth was cracked in many places and fissures had to be filled in with stones before the car could cross. Reaching the top of the Lak pass, Clarmont held his breath in expectation: his worst fears were confirmed – a sinister canopy of pale brown dust covered Quetta. Making their way through a wilderness of ruined houses to the suburb where Azim Baksh lived, the Jemadar driver Gul Muhammad called to a bystander. The reply was in Brahui but there was no misunderstanding its nature. Gul burst into tears and Clarmont seized the wheel to prevent the car running into a ditch. The quarter where the family lived had been completely flattened.

Kalat House was standing and the staff in charge whose quarters had collapsed on them were alive. Clarmont then went to the Residency. Sir Norman Cater, as immaculately turned out as always, was encamped on the lawn. He had escaped from the Residency just before the heavy porch had crashed in ruins. Quetta had been placed under martial law. By a merciful dispensation, the earthquake area came to a sudden end short of the cantonments. The military hospitals were undamaged and the army had been active in rescue work since 3.30 a.m. Mass burials were taking place in the afternoon and smoke from the funeral pyres of dead Hindus was ascending as Clarmont with a heavy heart began the return drive to Mastung.

There was absolutely no government of any kind, no organization of relief, in all the stricken area of Kalat State. This stretched for a distance of about 45 miles and was five to 18 miles in breadth. The Khan and his family had been safe at Kalat but the old Miri had collapsed. The officer who if available would have been the main organizer of relief was the Wazir-i-Azam

but poor Wakefield whose house was in Quetta had sustained a tragedy, his daughter having been killed and his wife and himself injured. In consequence, Clarmont was acting for him in a really big and unusual job. No help from outside had come as a result of his first visit to Quetta. On the third day he went there again and attended a conference at headquarters – the club lawn – and the authorities were properly woken up. A medical unit and rations arrived at Mastung the following day, followed by Sappers to mend the roads and restore the water-supply and lorry-loads of tents. The military authorities were quite splendid. The D.D.M.S. had been unwilling to let lady-volunteer nurses go into the area owing to the danger of gangrenous infection. Clarmont had urged that if the ladies were gallant enough to volunteer they should not be stopped since men doctors would be quite unable to get at the shy purdah women in the villages. Doris had come back from Kashmir and was most active in running a mess – of course in the garden – for the helpers who were not self-supporting.

When the emergency arrangements were working satisfactorily, Clarmont was ordered by the A.G.G. to take ten days' leave. He was one of only two Political Officers to receive a decoration as a result of the earthquake – he was quite pleased to be made O.B.E.

The leave was blissful – thanks to Lisa who contrived to join him in Simla where they stayed in the same annexe of the Cecil Hotel. Clarmont had many people to see. Metcalfe[73] (Foreign Secretary) and Glancy[74] (Political Secretary) were most cordial. They both thought that Clarmont should get away from Baluchistan and apply for home leave so as to be available for a Residency on the Political side in mid-1936.

He returned to Baluchistan to act again as Revenue Commissioner. This meant residing at Ziarat which had mercifully been spared from the earthquake. The military authorities were in control in Quetta and were being very cautious in the interests of the troops' health. The ruined city's complete emptiness and silence were awe-inspiring. Hundreds of bodies had been discovered and burnt or buried by the Labour Corps engaged in clearing the bigger streets. This had to be done before salvaging of the houses could be started; otherwise lorries to remove the débris could not get near enough. Clarmont was thankful that he had no active part in the work of salvage; as Revenue Commissioner he was snowed under with problems of relief. By the time salvage was begun there was much discontent at the delay, tens of thousands of Quetta sufferers having been prevented from getting at their property among the wreckage. The discontent led to a drive in clearance and reconstruction. Metcalfe visited Quetta; 'a very good man called Wylie'[75] was appointed as Deputy A.G.G. Cater seemed to take little interest in the reconstruction and spent much time in the Loralai district. Clarmont thought that as A.G.G. he should certainly have himself gone to a special meeting in Delhi between Government representatives and the Assembly Committee of non-official members who were dealing with plans for the new city.

In October Doris joined Clarmont at Ziarat and they moved down to Harnai. She was a different woman, perfectly easy and pleasant to live with. She now knew that Clarmont had a 'second wife *à la Chinoise*' and seemed genuinely glad for it. Clarmont was told that he must go on leave at the end of 1935, his successor being recalled from his leave early to take over from him. He was sad to be leaving Baluchistan – but the earthquake had changed everything.

Chapter 21

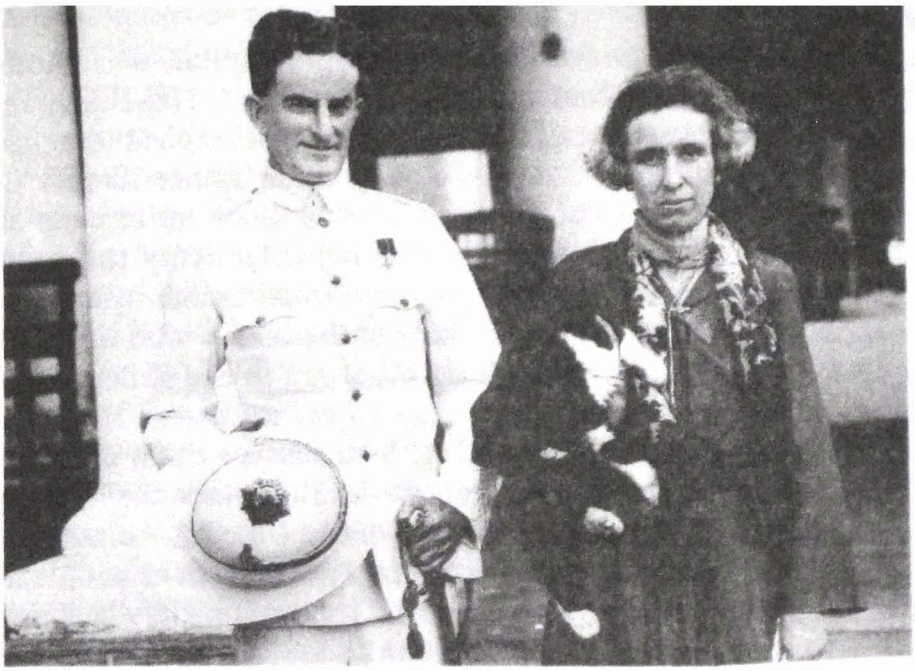
South India, 1936-37

Almost the whole of 1936 was spent on leave, Clarmont being informed that his next posting was to be Resident, Madras States, for which he would not be needed until November. He flew to Alexandria where he met his mother and they had a short holiday in Egypt before Clarmont went on to England. Doris arrived by sea with Mackie who was destined for quarantine near Edinburgh and Clarmont accompanied her to her parents at North Berwick. Leaving her there, he returned to London to join Lisa.

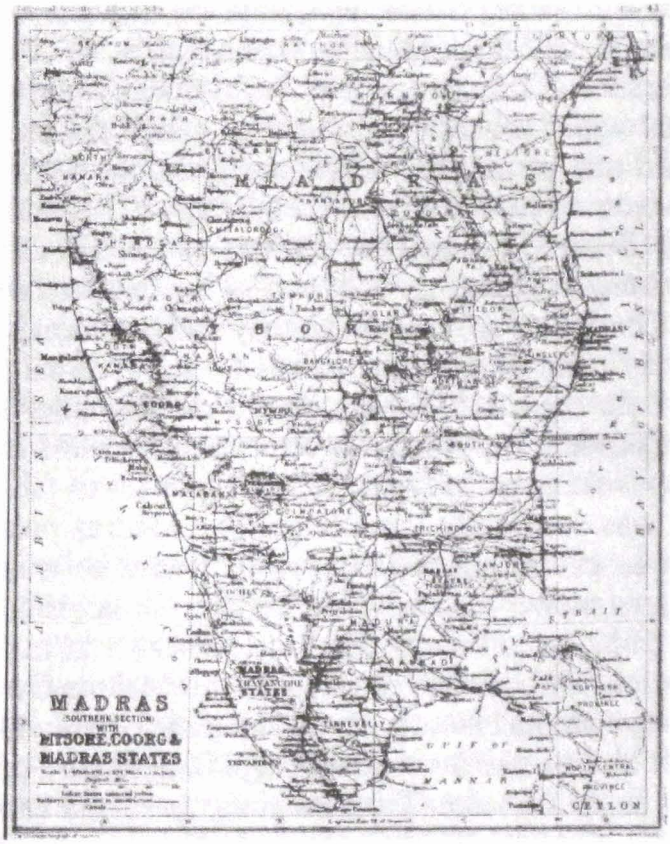
Having been seen off by Lisa in England and his mother at Marignane, Clarmont thought how lucky he was to have 'two such little women'. Doris met him – with Mackie – at Karachi, escorted by many Parsi and Muhammedan friends from Quetta. The onward journey to Ernakulam, the capital of Cochin, meant four days and five nights in trains.

The Madras States Agency consisted of Travancore and Cochin, whose rulers were entitled respectively to 19 and 17 gun salutes, and the much smaller States of Banganapalle, Pudukottai and Sandur. The Residency in Cochin State was at Bolghotty, across the blue, land-locked, palm-fringed waters of Cochin harbour. Lawns with big shade-trees and feathery casuarinas came down to the jetty while a little back from the shore was a genuine 18th century Dutch colonial governor's palace. The old Dutch colonial architects had certainly known how to build. The house consisted of two high storeys with deep verandahs on both floors and a rich reddish-brown tiled roof. The whole effect, white green and red in colouring and perfect in proportions, was most pleasing. It was well furnished and fully equipped, some of the old prints and silver being museum pieces.

Clarmont had to go almost at once to Travancore – the Lothian Committee on Federation was touring south and central India. Lord Linlithgow wished Federation to come in by April but each State wanted so much and was prepared to cede so little that there was very little chance of this happening. The committee consisted of Arthur Lothian[76] who was an old friend of the Skrines, Conran Smith[77] of the Reforms Office and Raisman[78] of the Central Board of Revenue. The committee's mandate was to visit the more important States and discuss details of Federation with the Durbars in the hope of expediting accession. Clarmont found himself as A.G.G. having to preside at the meetings – in theory he was present 'to give the Viceroy's representatives the benefit of his local knowledge'. In practice, he learned much from both sides. The three officers from Delhi were all experts in their spheres while the Dewan of Travancore was the brilliant lawyer and former Member of Council



18 Clarmont and Doris in South India



19 Map of Madras and South India

Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar[79], always known as 'C.P.' and about the cleverest Dewan of any State in India.

The Residency at Trivandrum, the Travanacore capital, was another palace with spacious reception rooms and a grand staircase. The Union Jack waved from the top of an unusually tall flagstaff. Clarmont laughed to himself at the grandeur, thinking that in truth he would much rather live at Les Bosquets. Much of the first days at Trivandrum was taken up in calls and return calls. The Maharaja was 24, the State being effectively run by his mother, the Junior Maharani, with 'C.P.' It was a matriarchal system, the Maharaja always being the son of the senior lady of the family who had a son, the idea being to make certain that the blood royal ran in the Ruler's veins. Clarmont found them all very friendly and easy to get on with. The young Maharaja was boyish and pleasant; his mother, Setu Parvati Bayi, charming, gay and lively. The Senior Maharani who had run the State when the Maharaja was a minor now lived in retirement and was the best of the lot – a real little '*grande dame*'. Clarmont's predecessor had not got on with them or with 'C.P.' but he and his wife had been terribly British and stiff and completely lacking in imagination.

The conference with the Lothian Committee went on for a week, first with the Dewans of the two big States, then with the Dewans of Banganapalle and Sandur together. Each State argued and raised all sorts of points, none of them wanting Federation. Travancore and Cochin being maritime States had problems connected with harbours and customs which did not affect inland States. Lothian said that he and his colleagues had done most of the talking when they visited Mysore, Hyderabad and Baroda but at Trivandrum they had to do more listening. Both 'C.P.' and the Dewan of Cochin, Sir Shanimukan Chetty[80], were as sharp as needles. They not only contested every point but taught the Lothian Committee several things they had not known before.

Doris was a different person, going out of her way to be pleasant to the other Europeans. Both she and Clarmont found the formality and ceremony rather tedious, but Clarmont supposed this was much the same in all the States and had to be put up with, as part of 'earning one's pay'.

The A.G.G. was constantly travelling. The Madras postal authorities provided him with a special bag which was delivered to wherever he was staying, on the understanding that they had been given advance notice of his tours. He was delighted to get away from the coastal heat to Peermade, set among the Cardamom Hills. In the days when the Madras Government had supervised the States, there had been a Residency there. This was now kept up as a guest-house. It looked like a shooting-lodge in Scotland, perched among sheltering trees on a steep hill-side. The numerous tea-estates seemed to be run mostly by Scottish tea-planters. Wild elephants had been a pest, doing all sorts of mischief to huts and gardens and blocking roads and paths at night. Now a game reserve had been formed by damming a gorge near the border with the

Madras Presidency and making an artificial lake at Periyar, the game confined to the lake's numerous peninsulas and islands.

Returning to Trivandrum, the A.G.G.'s driver had difficulty in squeezing the car through vast crowds. Mahatma Gandhi had come. 'C.P.' (under cover of the Maharaja's name) had inaugurated a big religious and social reform, the throwing open of the temples of Travancore to 'untouchables'. 'Temple Entry' was the slogan, Travancore, with 'C.P.' as its Prime Minister, being very much in the news, which accounted for Gandhi's visit.

Clarmont's next tour was to the two little States in the north, Banganapalle and Sandur. Banganapalle, an enclave in the Kurnool district of Madras, was mostly flat and dry. The Nawab's little capital was a mere village set round a half-ruined fortress at the mouth of a valley. A remarkable old Hindu shrine called Yagunti existed some miles up the valley. It proved to be a gem, built in the 16th century of red sandstone, not overloaded with ornamentation, set among tamarind trees with a stream of clear water flowing by. The sides of the valley were honeycombed with caves, some with old carvings, all with deposits of bat-manure. The Banganapalle Forest Department had a valuable contract for its extraction.

Clarmont and his Indian Assistant left from a small wayside station called Panyam and trundled over open country westwards on a metre-gauge railway to Bellary where they were met by the father of the young Raja of Sandur – the latter had been selected for the post in default of a direct heir to the last ruler. Sandur State was even smaller than Banganapalle – only 13,000 subjects – but it was richer, the soil being good and rainfall plentiful. The hills were well-wooded, many of the trees being sandalwood. The young Raja was a gay, manly youth who seemed to rule well. He came of an old Mahratta family. His wife was out of purdah and they lived in a miniature white palace where they made Clarmont feel very much at home. The climax of the sightseeing was a visit to the ruins of Vijayanagar, enormous in extent and crowded with carved temples and palaces and baths, mostly in the best Hindu style of the 15th and 16th centuries, the empire of Vijayanagar having been overthrown in 1565 by a sudden and unexpected combination of Muhammadan powers.

Clarmont had official business to discuss in Delhi which necessitated a 20-hour train journey to Bombay and thence the further long train journey to the capital. He stayed with Glancy, the Political Secretary. Lord Baden Powell was in Delhi, an All-India Scout Jamboree being held in his honour. Frank and Helen Skrine had known him before he became famous and Clarmont was pleased to have an opportunity at dinner of telling him his mother's story – Frenchwoman overheard in crowd during Scout Jamboree: *'On L'appele Bipi – je ne sais pas pourquoi'*. For his last night in Delhi he stayed at Viceroy's House and for the first time met Lord Linlithgow – 'enormous, heavy-jowled and earnest, altogether rather alarming, the very antithesis to Lord Willingdon'.

The Viceroy gave his views on Federation and asked a great deal about the Madras States. Clarmont was asked to show his films and he left Delhi feeling that he had made a good impression.

His doting mother was overjoyed when she received a letter written from Viceroy's House. She was however feeling uncomfortable about her relationship with Doris and the Whitelaw family – 'How I wish I knew what Doris thinks I know. I would fain have her think me a blind and prudish old thing easily kept in ignorance, but I simply can't believe she does think that of me'. Clarmont had had sent to her professional photographs taken of Lisa and himself in London. She did not like them much, the one of Clarmont making him look like 'an American magnate just going to pull off a colossal and not very clean coup... I have not been able to show the photos together for obvious reasons!'

Clarmont was able to allay his mother's uneasiness about the Whitelaws. Mrs Whitelaw had become 'cuckoo'. She was obsessed with grievances, one of them against Doris for not having children – very likely she guessed it was a case of 'won't' not 'can't'. Doris herself was genuinely looking forward to a visit from Lisa. Vere Bartrum had been posted to Bolarum in Hyderabad which made visits practicable. Clarmont thought that Doris was not merely not jealous but thankful to Lisa for taking that side of him which did not interest her off her hands. This was just as well for Helen who was involved up to the hilt in her son's love-affair. Helen went to Marseilles to meet Lisa on her way to Bombay where she knew Clarmont planned to welcome her and to have a further brief 'honeymoon'.

Before this could happen, Clarmont paid a visit to Pudukottai, a little flat plains State surrounded by Trichy, Tanjore and Madura districts of British India. It was ruled over by a Raja who surprisingly was of a low-caste family. In 1937 the State was under administration, the Raja being a small boy. The Administrator was Sir Alexander Tottenham[81], an ex-Madras civilian, who on retirement had found himself bored and homesick for south India. He was able and energetic which was a blessing for the A.G.G. since its distance from Cochin or Trivandrum would have made close personal supervision an impossibility. The part of the visit which Clarmont enjoyed most was seeing and playing with the little Raja and his two brothers and two sisters. They were all in the charge of an excellent English tutor. Four years earlier, the little Raja had been ricketty and not expected to live. Now, thanks to the tutor, he was playing games and doing well at lessons and all the children seemed normal and healthy, just like English children of the same age. The State had some interesting old temples and cave-shrines which Clarmont visited before leaving at the border with Trichy district for Udamalpet. The road lay through Tamil-inhabited country full of colour, the women wearing bright clothes instead of the dirty white universal on the Malabar Coast. The high range of Travancore rose out of the western horizon. The road was flat for the first 16 miles after Udamalpet, then began to climb – no steep gradients but

innumerable twists and hairpin bends, up and up along magnificent gorges and long winding valleys, rich jungle interspersed with rice and cotton cultivation down below. The tea-belt began at about 4,000 ft. and the whole scenery changed to one of smooth green hill-sides closely planted with the laurel-green bushes in neat rows with windbreaks of graceful gum-trees. At 6,200 ft. the road crossed a pass and wound ten miles downwards to Munnar, the central village of the High Range and the centre of the big tea concession. The village had a small bazaar, a huge R.C. church and some tea-estate offices and a few bungalows. At one time the A.G.G. had had a beautiful Residency five miles up a glen leading from Munnar. This had been given up because, it was alleged, the A.G.G. at the time had preferred to spend the summer months in the Nilgiris where he would be near the Governor of Madras; less risk of being 'out of sight, out of mind'. Clarmont rather regretted this. He had a wonderful outing on the slopes of Anaimudi and was able to obtain photographs of bison.

He had already taken a house for the hot weather at Coonoor. The A.G.G.'s office had an official 'recess' of three months and by March the heat in Cochin was oppressive, so he was glad to be able to move the household to a perfectly adequate bungalow on a hilltop at Coonoor. At Bolghotty the mosquitoes had become a pest; there was no way of preventing them breeding in the backwaters. Coonoor was 6,000 ft. up, a little lower than the other Nilgiri hill-stations, Wellington, Kotagiri and Ootacamund. It was charming; clean and airy and full of flowers: prettier than Simla but without the ever-thrilling distant snows. The Skrines had chosen Coonoor as being less fashionable than Ooty and not military like Wellington.

Being in recess did not of course mean being a fixture at one's summer quarters. Clarmont knew that he would have to make a visit to Trivandrum to discuss some State affairs with the young Maharaja of Travancore who was about to sail with his family on a six-week trip to the Dutch East Indies. An inter-State crisis blew up which necessitated his making the visit earlier than planned. This concerned 'temple-entry'. The abolition of 'untouchability' had been one of Gandhi's chief ambitions for years. When he had first launched his campaign it had been opposed in Travancore but on the Maharaja's birthday in 1936, on the initiative of 'C.P.', the Maharaja had suddenly announced that all the temples in Travancore would be open to the very lowest castes. This was violently resented by the Maharaja of Cochin, who was extremely orthodox, and by the large majority of Brahmins. The small pro-temple-entry party in Cochin consisted of some of the younger men who wished for the decline of Brahminism and the breaking of the power of the priests and the older generation.

The clash came over a famous old temple called Koodalmanickam at Irinjalakuda in Cochin territory. The Maharaja of Travancore had always had a say in its management and the right of appointing the high priest who bore the title of Thachudaya Kaimal. By a curious anomaly the Kaimal was never a hereditary priest nor even a Brahmin but became a sort of honorary Brahmin on

appointment to Koodalmanickam. Naturally the priestly clique at Irinjalakuda were jealous of the Kaimal who looked to the Maharaja of Travancore for support. The two States had had frequent wrangles over temple properties and since 1916 the Resident had been the recognized umpire, the 'controlling authority' in respect of secular matters. Travancore had been working up an agitation at Irinjalakuda over temple-entry, bribing certain priests to officiate in a Trivandrum temple where 'untouchables' had worshipped and then to officiate in the Koodalmanickam shrine. The local priests, known as 'Tantries', had objected, insisting on purificatory ceremonies being performed. The Kaimal had refused. Frantic telegrams and petitions had been sent to the State governments and to the Government of India and to the A.G.G.. Clarmont had declined to intervene, saying that it was a religious dispute in which he had to be neutral. However, an important annual festival known as Utsavom was coming on and the Tantries said that they would not officiate until the temple had been purified. Four days before the festival was due to start, the old Maharaja of Cochin, infuriated by tales of Travancore machinations, issued a ruling as spiritual head of Kerala (the ancient name for Malabar) that the temple must be purified and that Tantries who had officiated in any Travancore temple should be excluded until they had performed expiatory ceremonies.

The Maharaja of Cochin sent his Secretary to Coonoor – his Dewan was already there – to consult Clarmont. Clarmont considered that he had no alternative but to support the Maharaja and use his position under the treaty as 'controlling authority' of the Koodalmanickam shrine to enforce the Maharaja's ruling – the temple was on Cochin soil and the Maharaja's Government were responsible for law and order. He did this as a temporary measure, pending settlement of the dispute, without commitment to any opinion as to the rights and wrongs of temple-entry. Long telegrams from 'C.P.' at Trivandrum remonstrated with Clarmont for interfering in spiritual affairs. He was able to reply that he was merely maintaining the *status quo ante*, pending discussion between the two Governments. He decided however to visit Irinjalakuda himself. Large crowds of worshippers thronged the spacious temple precincts and there was an atmosphere of suppressed excitement. Clarmont spent two hours with the Superintendent of the temple and the Kaimal – the latter seemed to be a man of no religious learning, no surprise that he should be unpopular with the local priests and Brahmin congregation. On reaching Ernakulam, Clarmont found a High Court judge from Travancore awaiting him with a mass of papers giving the Travancore side of the dispute. The poor judge had been briefed by 'C.P.' only the day before – he left realizing that Clarmont knew more about the case then he had thought. By the following evening Clarmont was at Trivandrum and had a lively but never acrimonious session with 'C.P.' Clever lawyer that he was, he knew the weak points in the Travancore position and had no intention of trying to defend them. The following morning was taken up with discussion with the young Maharaja and 'C.P.' on many outstanding matters, not only the Koodalmanickam case. Clarmont thought

that he had made them see that he could have taken no other course and was not actuated by hostility to the temple-entry idea.

The South India papers were full of the Koodalmanickam controversy. Clarmont believed that his dash to Cochin and Trivandrum and his efforts at mediation had prevented an open rupture between the two States. The formal complaint being concocted by 'C.P.' against Cochin would probably have to go to the Government of India.

Lisa arrived to stay at Coonoor in May but the 24 hours before she came were agonising. Mackie had slipped out into the pitch-dark night and Doris was hysterical. The search continued all day, Doris eating nothing and refusing even to lie down. Clarmont feared she would go right off her head. His relief when Mackie turned up was at the thought that he had escaped being tied to a permanently melancholic wife for the rest of his life. Doris received Lisa cheerfully and made her very welcome. The two women really got on very well, both sharing a love of animals. It was Coronation year and Lisa was able to accompany the Skrines to a great many social functions, a ball at Government House in Ooty and garden parties. Helen Skrine felt deeply involved, thinking it was such a waste for both Clarmont and Lisa to be tied to partners who did not suit – 'One might write a psychological novel in the style of Paul Bourget about the double triangle which is your life...'

Later in the year Clarmont seized another opportunity for seeing Lisa. He was invited by Sir Mirza Ismail[82], the Dewan of Mysore, to attend the Desara festivities and the Bartrums were invited too. They arrived in time for the big European Darbar at the Palace given for the 250 odd Europeans – State guests and residents in Mysore. Clarmont was astonished by the magnificence and the mediaeval glamour. The immense Dewan-i-Am, or hall of audience, bigger than anything at Delhi or Agra, was lavishly decorated in a combination of Persian and Hindu styles. The throne was a mass of pearls and emeralds in the middle of the open side of the hall, with a red and gold umbrella over it and veiled by curtains until the Maharaja took his seat. Afterwards the show in the Palace square – a musical ride by the bodyguard and comic turns by men on stilts – seemed just as it might have been in the time of Tippoo and the older Hindu kings. On the culminating tenth day of Desara the Maharaja rode in a solid golden howda three miles out to a sacred tree escorted by his whole army and elephants hung with silks and silver trappings. The finale was the return of the tired but smiling Maharaja to a raised platform where he dismounted amid the illuminations, and rose petals were thrown over him as he passed into the Palace.

Helen was confident that Clarmont and Lisa observed *les convenances* when going about in society but she was fearful of the risk of scandal when she heard about the Mysore visit: 'What an adventure having Vere and Lisa in tents and you in a room on the second floor of Government House. How dangerous! I've got a letter from Lisa and she speaks of "darling Clarmont stealing through the velvety night" to her tent! Just fancy if there had been another earthquake –

and how did you do it in a big strange house humming with guests and servants all the time? I shivered with postdated apprehension...'

Chapter 22

South India 1937-39

Helen Skrine's letters were by no means only about Clarmont's marriage and his love-affair. She led a very social life at Les Bosquets and was visited by a stream of relations and friends. She was now in her 70th year. In August she drove in her little car into Italy to stay with Mrs Stark and Freya. Helen had introduced Clarmont to Freya in London in 1926. They had corresponded with each other ever since, seldom meeting apart from the happy occasion when they had been fellow-passengers between Baghdad and Basra. Now Freya wrote to him from L'Arma: 'How lovely it would be if you were here with us. It is such fun to have Helen. We have been lying about half in and half out of the Mediterranean, quoting poetry'. Freya was about to set out on the journey she later described in 'The Southern Gates of Arabia'. She had been unwell in Baghdad but considered herself sufficiently recovered to set out for Aden. From Alexandria she wrote: 'I must write to you now, for who knows how little time I may have for letters when once we get to Aden: we leave on Tuesday, my two female colleagues and I, and get there by the end of the month, and then go on to Hadhramaut as fast as we can and look for a buried city on the Incense Road and hope to find a few of the Queen of Sheba's knick-knacks, or something of the kind. Miss C. Thompson is the archaeologist and Miss Gardiner the geologist, and I am nothing and only hope and pray I may not be a nuisance, as I don't seem to be very fit yet: but with any luck the desert air should be the best of tonics, and anyway the Hadhramaut is so civilised now that doctors and hospitals are scattered all over the place with wireless stations jostling in between.

'Dear Clarmont, how I wish one could see something more of you, and a little more often. Your name was mentioned here by friends and it was nice to talk of you and Helen. It was so good to see her this summer and I am going to try to get to Aix some time before too many years go by. Also to Baluchistan when you get back. Do you think one could get up into Afghanistan from there? I have been reading a rather attractive book called "My Khyber Marriage" by a decent Scotswoman called Morag Murray Abdullah who married the son of a tribal chief (met at a YMCA tea or something in Edinburgh) and went and lived in a hill fortress as a chieftainess. It sounds quite genuine and she seems very much the right sort of person. I wrote to her and wonder if I shall get a reply!

'Other friends of yours I was staying with in Wiltshire – the Ludlow Hewitts[83] who both said "Oh, he is the nicest of all the Politicals out there" – which of course is quite true and shows how discriminating they are.

'Here people have been a bit nervous over the western frontier. I heard the story of how the fleet came out in '35. An Italian plane crashed near Heliopolis on its way south and an R.A.F. man, descending to investigate, found everyone dead and on the plane secret papers with the plan for the attack on the Canal all complete. He was a good man, took the papers, set fire to the plane, and news and condolence were sent to the Italians: meanwhile the fleet came out in double quick time! I hope next time we may be ready without the necessity of a special miracle to put us on our guard.

'I haven't got your address, so do send it me with a letter c/o the Residency Aden and I will send you a Xmas card from the Hadhramaut – and every good and affectionate wish meanwhile

from Freya[84]'.

Many people had assumed that Clarmont would be returning to Baluchistan in a year or two as A.G.G.. He would have liked this prospect but knew it to be uncertain and he was interested in other possibilities, such as Hyderabad. Helen had set her heart on Baluchistan for her son, believing him to be cut out for the job. She admitted that Doris might not be cut out for the Quetta Residency as regards entertainment of the white population, but she would be much appreciated in Indian circles. Clarmont stayed with Glancy again on his next visit to Delhi and gained the impression that he was certain for a first-class Residency after the Madras States. He sounded Glancy about the possibility of going on leave after two years: this might be practicable but Glancy complained about the Department's shortage of men.

Clarmont knew this to be true; he felt acutely the lack of a British assistant. The worse half of the year was the season from October to March with almost daily functions, masses of interviews, cyphering and decyphering in the office sometimes until midnight. The summer brought not only the recess in the hills but also the south-west monsoon. Travelling was continuous; directly after a journey to North Malabar, Clarmont had to see Sir Alexander Tottenham about Pudukottai affairs. Tottenham's Mussolini-ish methods were upsetting some people in the State. He was 15 years older than Clarmont and did not take kindly to the Government of India's control over the administration of the State being represented by someone so much his junior in age. Clarmont had to exercise much tact. Tottenham lost his temper and threatened to resign but he was too happy in his job to risk being taken at his word and finally a satisfactory settlement was reached. The discussions had taken place at Kodaikanal, quite the prettiest hill-station in south India. The bungalows were built round a star-fish shaped lake, charmingly sited with lawns going down to the water's edge and little boat-houses and piers. The climate was less rainy than in the Nilgiris, the only heavy rain coming with the north-east monsoon in November. For the rest of the year sunshine and showers provided a continuous succession of blossom.

The multiplicity of Christian establishments in south India took up a great deal of the Resident's time. He was for ever having to preside at speech days and similar functions held at schools such as the Scott Christian College, a big flourishing institution with hundreds of students, less than half of them Christian, at Magercoil, a place Clarmont described as literally a missionary hotbed – the humidity was saturating. Clarmont hated to have 'to mouth sententious platitudes and fulsome praises'. The Latin Catholics were also demanding. They were so called to distinguish them from Roman Catholics; they acknowledged the Pope but observed the Syrian rite. There were also two factions of the Syrian Jacobite Church of Malabar.

A dispute had been going on between these factions since 1808 when a Metropolitan had invested a fund of 3000 Star Pagodas at 8% with the East India Company. The case had been the subject of High Court litigation since 1875. Now, at the instance of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Government of India called for a report. Clarmont took four days to compile a synopsis of Syrian Jacobite history which included a three-foot long genealogical tree. The Syrian Jacobite Church had been founded by Thomas of Cana in 341 AD when he came to Cranganore with the blessing of the Patriarch of Antioch and 400 Christian colonists. The purpose was to reorganize the already existing Christian church which according to legend had been founded by St. Thomas the Apostle. In the early days the Patriarch of Antioch had had a representative on the Tigris called the Catholicos of the East who was supposed to look after the Christians of Persia and India, but this see disappeared in the cataclysm of Islam. Nonetheless, the Syrian Jacobite Church of Malabar still maintained a connexion with the Patriarch of Antioch; the trouble had arisen from a separatist party in the church who had tried to appoint their own Metropolitan and bishops and shake off the authority of the Patriarch of Antioch. The bulk of the community clung to the orthodox faith and their allegiance to Antioch; only a Metropolitan once ordained and his immediate entourage wanted to oust the Patriarch's authority. Twice in the last century the Patriarch had come in person to Travancore, held a synod and excommunicated a recalcitrant Metropolitan. The difficulty on each occasion thereafter had been to get the church property away from the ex-Metropolitan and his supporters. This is where the litigation began. The Travancore Courts had repeatedly ruled that church property could be handled only by a Metropolitan who had been ordained by the Patriarch; the 3000 Star Pagodas, worth about Rs. 10,500, were held in trust by the Resident who could hand over the interest only to the Metropolitan adjudged by the Civil Courts to be entitled to it. The last Court case had gone on for 15 years, the one before that for 27. The present request for a report was the consequence of well-meaning Anglican busybodies trying to make peace between the two factions – 'with the ulterior motive of effecting a junction with the Anglican Church which has for 130 years vied with the R.Cs in missionary efforts to improve the lot of the poor benighted heretical Syrian Jacobites of Malabar'.

The orthodox Roman Catholics sometimes made work too. An unusual duty for Clarmont was having to interview a Spanish nun belonging to an enclosed order. The bishop of the diocese – a Spaniard – met Clarmont at the Kottayam rest-house and drove with him to the Carmelite Convent two miles away. High walls surrounded the convent. Once inside, they waited in an ante-room in front of a heavy iron grille with big spikes sticking out towards visitors. Behind the bars was a space of about 18 inches and then another grille, behind which in due course appeared three pallid faces. One of these belonged to the nun whom Clarmont had to see: all he had to do was in fact to authenticate a power of attorney she was making for the management of property which had just come to her from deceased parents. 'Such an aristocratic name she had, poor dear! had, I say, because she had renounced it in favour of her convent name, but for the purposes of the law she had to sign her old name... How they can do it, beats me. Once inside the convent walls they can never leave them, even to die. And they do nothing – no missionary work, not even teaching inside the walls – nothing but prayer and contemplation... Fourteen European nuns there are, all Spanish except one German, and seven Travancorean converts. The bishop goes inside the walls once a year only, man-doctors when required, and native gardeners at certain hours each week-day – no one else. I asked how they got their supplies and the bishop showed me a kind of revolving door in the wall; an outsider bringing a parcel puts it into the space (which is guarded with spikes to prevent babies being inserted) and rings the bell, whereupon a nun inside revolves the affair and the parcel disappears'. The signing of no less than 16 documents took some time and the nuns on one side and the bishop and Clarmont on the other chatted away, one of the nuns interpreting for the Mother Superior who spoke no English. Clarmont felt that he dropped a brick when he asked if the heat did not worry them – he himself in thin clothes was dripping. The bishop broke in hurriedly saying that they did not mind the heat a bit; they were very happy in the convent.

The Mussulman State of Banganapalle also took up much time. On Clarmont's first visit, the Nawab had struck him as a shy jungly little man. The trouble was that the State was so difficult to get at – nearly 900 miles by rail and car from Trivandrum – that Residents had not paid it much attention. Clarmont had noticed that the villagers appeared down-trodden and on his return had set enquiries in motion. On examining the State budget he found that the finances were chaotic and the budget so much eyewash. At the same time, the Nawab announced that he and his family were setting out on the Haj and would be away for six months. Clarmont was glad to have him out of the way and seized the opportunity of appointing a good man, Humayun Mirza, as Dewan, with instructions to nose everything out and report weekly. By the time the Nawab returned there was a complete and damning case against him, including proof of lootings from the State treasury and his subjects amounting to over four lakhs in six years – the whole revenue of the poor little State was only

about 3.5 lakhs a year. Having reported the matter to the Government of India, Clarmont wrote to the Nawab advising him to throw himself on the Viceroy's mercy and at the same time instructed the Dewan to advise the Nawab to relinquish most of his powers and ask for help in administering the State, failing which he might have to abdicate. The Nawab was egged on by his friends – his second Begum in particular was a greedy heartless vamp of low origin – to try and bluff his way out. The administration came to a standstill and Clarmont had to hurry to Banganapalle. At a four-hour conference in the uncomfortable little rest-house (no fans or electric light), the Nawab was overwhelmed with the tale of his iniquities. For the rest of the day Clarmont heard parties in suits who had had to pay enormous bribes to the Ruler. He then drafted terms for the Nawab to accept as an alternative to the A.G.G.'s advising the Viceroy to depose the Nawab and take the State under administration. The Nawab signed on the dotted line and after a great deal of further correspondence with the Political Department at Simla a new constitution for Banganapalle was agreed, with all power in the hands of the Dewan who would be responsible to the Resident. Best of all, the Nawab's judicial powers were delegated to the District and Sessions Judge of Kurnool, Clarmont having earlier obtained the Madras Government's approval. The three strenuous days at Banganapalle had been worthwhile, Clarmont wrote: 'my reward was when Humayun and I on our last evening walk through the fields were almost mobbed by grateful villagers who in mixed Hindustani and Telegu blessed me for coming and saving them *and their Nawab* from wicked men! It was obvious that they didn't want to "down" the Nawab, to whom they wanted to be loyal – it was his advisers who were to blame. I did not undeceive them – there was something in their view, poor people'.

Meanwhile serious trouble was brewing in Travancore. A large native bank with 75 branches all over India, the 'Travancore National and Quilon Bank', had failed. Its chairman, a Christian from Quilon, had been to see Clarmont – in recess at Ootacamund – reporting a run on the bank and alleging that it was caused by the vindictive hostility of 'C.P.' Clarmont had done all he could but the run continued and the bank suspended payment. There was a widespread outcry, the Travancore Government being accused of harshness and hostility to the bank. There was some truth in the second accusation; 'C.P.' had been hostile to the bank and for perfectly intelligible reasons. First, the bank's policy had been speculative and unsound, clients' money put into unsecured loans and dud rubber estates, the directors of the bank prospering by loans made to firms in which they had interests. Secondly, the directors all belonged to the 'State Congress Party' which had for six months been violently attacking the existing administration and trying to stir up discontent. 'C.P.' could not be blamed, Clarmont thought, for not having subsidized and otherwise supported the bank. It would have failed sooner or later; it had not been smashed from mere spite.

The State Congress Party had little following but had been organizing small mobs of students and schoolboys to jeer and throw stones at the members of the Legislature. The Jubilee Hall where the Assembly sat was next to the big Science College and near the Law College, so the legislators were at the mercy of students and hooligans when they went in and out. Having heard that there had been some trouble outside the Assembly in the morning, Clarmont who had spent the afternoon clambering about the rocks at Kovilam taking photographs , decided to return along the main street past the Jubilee Hall. Thousands of people were in the streets but all were peaceable. A few brickbats and stones were lying about and the police were still dashing about trying to catch stone-throwers. Clarmont saw a policeman ostentatiously seize a man and hit him on his leg with his lathi – obviously the policeman was playing up to the Resident and this annoyed Clarmont very much. There was no mob; the brickbats had come from students who were now in the compound of the Science College. The District Magistrate and police officers were outside the Hall. Clarmont told the D.M. in a loud voice that he and his police were playing Congress's game by taking rowdy schoolboys seriously and making provocative lathi-charges at townspeople who were there only to see the fun. Next day Clarmont advised 'C.P.' that all he had to do was to expel a few of the ringleaders among the students so that they lose their university careers and their B.A.s The one thing that mattered in south India was jobs and the degrees that led to jobs.

Clarmont also advised importing from Madras a special police commissioner and an excellent former member of the Imperial Police, Khan Bahadur Abdul Karim M.B.E., had arrived in the State just as the bad trouble started. The State Congress Party was now supported by about 20 members of the Assembly. They had not been elected on the representative government platform but had taken up the agitation as a means of ending the powerful Dewan's reign. Madras was one of the seven provinces of British India where Congress had been victorious, so a good deal of moral support came from Madras when the State Congress Party leaders were charged with sedition. 'C.P.', a Triton among minnows, was hated and feared by the majority for whom there were no jobs, admired only by those with no axe to grind who appreciated his ability. Clarmont supported him consistently, though frequently criticizing acts of his subordinates and questioning the policy of the Travancore Government in particular matters.

The State Congress Party declared a 'civil disobedience' campaign, the ostensible aim being responsible government on the lines of British India provinces, the primary object really being to get rid of 'C.P.'. The Maharaja issued an emergency regulation giving the Government powers to deal with seditionists summarily and State Congress meetings were broken up. Despite the prohibition, many meetings were held, all sorts of allegations being made against 'C.P.' and the Government – but not against the ruling family: the theory in Travancore was that the Maharaja was the trustee for the Deity and

ruled but did not govern, the government being devolved on the Dewan who was responsible for all acts of State.

Meetings were held in defiance of the government; speakers volunteered for jail, telling villagers and workmen that the government was afraid of them, the police weak and cowardly and the troops armed only with blank ammunition. Thus incited, mobs attacked police with stones and brickbats and when troops arrive attacked them too. Clarmont took an active part in the crisis. After the first riot, he wrote down an accurate account for publication in the evening papers at Madras and Bombay to anticipate the garbled versions which would inevitably appear. Then he went to Quilon where there had been shootings and conferred with the local authorities and the European businessmen. The most dangerous place in Travancore was Alleppey owing to its large labouring population. A mammoth meeting had been arranged there by the agitators; the crowd was dispersed by tactful persuasion combined with a show of force. In all the riots, nine had been killed and twelve wounded. Seventy or eighty police had been injured by stones and a few had been badly beaten up. Both rioters and police had had enough.

A wordy war took place in the press between 'C.P.' and Gandhi, the Mahatma being no match for his adversary – but this mattered little with the general public for whom Gandhi was a saint and 'C.P.' an arch-villain. Clarmont advised that the only chance was to stage a full-dress sedition and rebellion trial against the State Congress leaders, importing judges from British India or other States for the purpose. Otherwise the world would believe that the allegations of the State Congress were true and the leaders in jail would become popular martyrs and heroes. The crookedness of the fighting astonished Clarmont. 'C.P.' was a Machiavelli but the Travancoreans he tried to govern were lying, mean, cowardly and intriguing. There was strong opposition at Trivandrum to Clarmont's idea of importing a judge from outside. He felt sure it came from the Junior Maharani, 'a Bourbon if ever there was one, learning nothing and forgetting nothing'.

The 'civil war' ended in October when on the occasion of his birthday the Maharaja proclaimed the release of all political prisoners and the suspension of the emergency legislation. This was hailed by the State Congress and the press as a victory but the agitators soon realized that they had got nothing. 'C.P.' was in the saddle as firmly as ever and there was no question of any constitutional change. Moreover, the tide was turning against the Bank directors who were now in jail in Madras on extradition warrants issued by the Resident – 'I'm terribly unpopular with the South Indian public for being in collusion with Sir C.P. in his nefarious schemes! I'm supposed to have been heavily bribed of course...'

There was considerable rivalry between 'C.P.' and the Dewan of Cochin, Sir Shanimukan Chetty. The latter had once been President of the Central Legislature and had progressive constitutional ideas. While the state of emergency was in force in Travancore, the Maharaja of Cochin held a Durbar in

honour of a new constitution. This provided for a minister elected by and responsible to the Legislative Assembly holding the portfolios of certain 'nation-building' departments, the other departments, such as law and order and finance, being 'reserved' subjects. This was 'diarchy' on the model of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 in British India. It was the first such reform in any Indian State. Many guests from outside had been invited to the Durbar and the long speeches at functions such as the 'inaugural sitting' of the new High Court (hitherto only a Chief Court) were an ordeal, specially for those wearing European morning dress.

Doris was spared some of the speech-making. She had been very active in Cochin over S.P.C.A. work and had successfully petitioned the Dewan to have a fine new lion and tiger house at the Trichur Zoo. The animals had been cramped into quite unsuitable cages; in their new quarters they would be as happy as caged animals ever could be. She had also been active wherever she had been in Ladies' Clubs, YWCAs and theatricals. Doris remained on very friendly terms with Lisa who stayed with the Skrines for a month at Bolghotty.

Clarmont was able to visit the Bartrums in Hyderabad on his way back from a visit to Simla. He was favourably impressed by the Secunderabad Club which had many Indian members and no rule about not admitting Indian guests which, commented Clarmont, 'shows how stupid and unnecessary the die-hard attitude elsewhere is, e.g. at Trivandrum where the rotten little club is terribly exclusive. Ooty's awful too...' Helen remarked: 'I suppose the die-hard clubs *will* change, as Indians grasp that their manners must conform to the club rules which started the club system'.

He had had a fruitful five-day visit to Simla. In addition to the affairs of Travancore and Cochin there was the 'new deal' in Banganapalle to be discussed. He obtained agreement to the supervision of both Banganapalle and Sandur being transferred to the Mysore Residency – much less inconvenient than from the far south. Clarmont heard that he would definitely be promoted the following year; Glancy wanted him to remain on the Political side and the Punjab States, a first-class Residency, seemed the most likely vacancy. He lunched with the acting Viceroy, Lord Brabourne[85], and spent several hours with the Military Secretary discussing minutely the programmes for a viceregal visit to Travancore and Cochin in January 1939.

He was able to fit in a hurried journey to Banganapalle. No time to stay with the Resident at Bangalore but instead he met the Secretary, Humphrey Trevelyan[86], 'a grand fellow, and it was very satisfactory handing over to him, a man after my own heart, a whale for work yet thoroughly human and genuinely interested in India and its peoples and sympathetic and full of humour and cheery – the "light touch on life" which is worth so much'.

News had just come that Doris's mother had died, not from natural causes but suicide of a particularly distressing kind. She had thrown herself into the sea at North Berwick, leaving a letter for her husband which had hurt him as much as it was possible for one human being to be hurt by another.

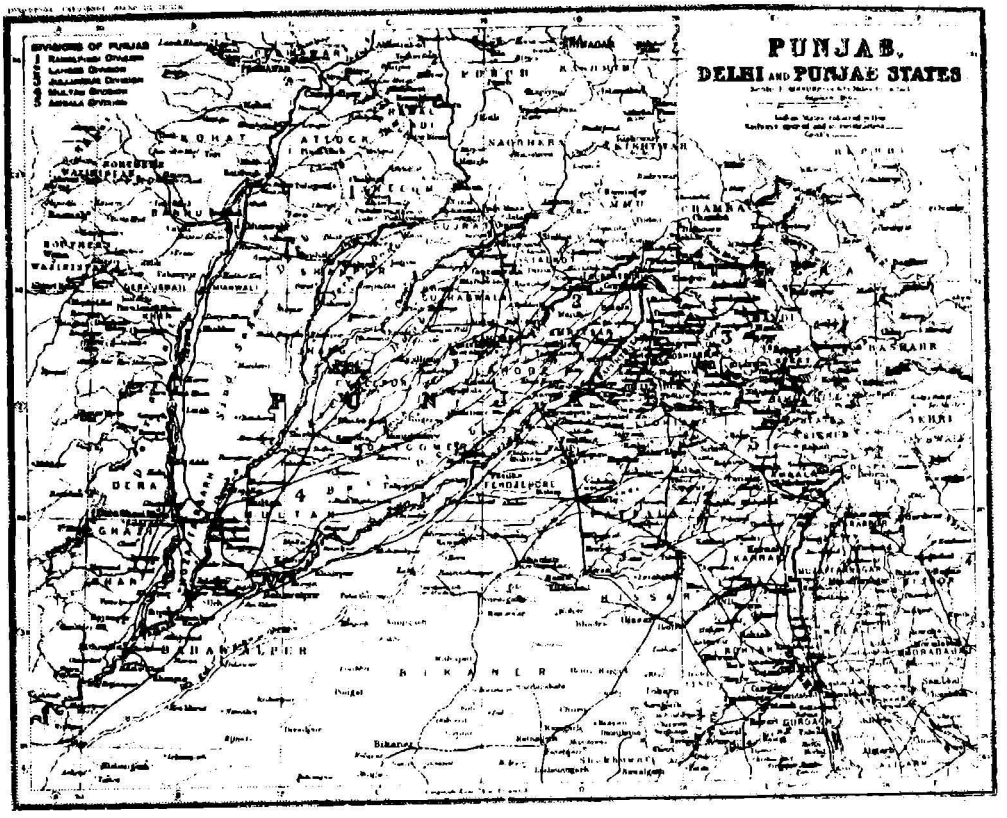
Her body had not been found. Clarmont felt most grateful to Doris for not at once going home but staying to play her part in the viceregal visit. He had for long been agitating for a Political probationer to be appointed to the Madras States and a Personal Assistant, Lieutenant John Steward[87] of Probyn's Horse, arrived in time to be very useful.

The Viceroy's party was enormous. In addition to himself and the Vicereine and their three daughters ('The Band of Hope'), there was the Political Secretary and Lady Glancy, the Private Secretary, the Military Secretary, A.D.C.s and other attendants totalling well over 100. One of the biggest problems was getting them all from Ernakulam to Trivandrum. Previous Viceroys had always come by road. This route would have traversed all the most disloyal and disturbed parts of the State and to avoid this, and also because the coast via Alleppey to Quilon was prettier and more interesting, arrangements were made for launch-travel along the backwaters and canals and a spectacular arrival by water at Quilon with a fleet of big war-canoes or 'snake boats' escorting the party: thence by train for a public arrival in state at Trivandrum.

The visit passed off very well. Glancy brought confirmation that Clarmont was to go to the Punjab States where he would be needed in April 1939.

Chapter 23

Resident, Punjab States



20 Map of Punjab

Hitler and the threat of war dominated everyone's thoughts and conversation during the Skrines' short 1939 leave. From Les Bosquets Clarmont went to North Berwick where Doris was with her father; thence to London for meetings at the India Office and a showing of his South India colour films at the R.G.S..

He was met at Lahore Cantonment station by the man from whom he was taking over, Sir Harold Wilberforce-Bell, and all the Resident's staff. Doris had wanted to be at the station too, but Sir Harold had not let her, saying that it was a formal occasion for men only – 'He's a *zubberdust* old thing, Wilbur'. The Secretary to the Resident was Wakefield whom Clarmont knew from Kalat days as a man with a first-class brain and full of sense. He had been in his present job for two years and knew the Agency inside out. In his memoirs published in 1966 Sir Edward Wakefield drew a humorous and compassionate sketch of the extremely stuffy Wilberforce-Bell. Clarmont assumed charge at midday to the accompaniment of a salute of 13 guns, the Wilberforce-Bells leaving that evening. Wakefield reminisced: 'Sir Harold's successor, Mr Skrine, went to the railway station to see him off. As the train drew out of the platform he said cheerfully "Let's have a party". We went back to the

Residency and had a party. The atmosphere of the Residency, in less than an hour, completely changed in character. From then on it was gay, informal, almost Bohemian[88]'.

There were 36 States in the Agency but the Resident could look to a Political Agent for the Punjab Hill States to take much of the load. He was an able and energetic man, Major Barney Burnett.

Lahore was becoming very hot by May when the office moved up to the hills. Clarmont had taken Mashobra House. It was six miles out of Simla, in beautiful grounds on the top of a ridge. The only snag was that cars were not normally allowed on the Hindustan-Tibet road between Mashobra and Sanjauli, so rickshaws had to be used. Helen delighted in hearing of her son living where she could visualize him – past Elysium Hill and the Lakka bazaar and past the house called Mashobra View where she had been living with her parents when she first met Frank Skrine. But when she heard that the Bartrums, now at Risalpur, were to come and stay at Mashobra House, Lisa for a prolonged visit, she was fearful of scandal. Clarmont was quite at ease on the matter. Lisa was sweet to Doris and Doris was happy. Simla was a hotbed for gossip; no doubt tongues would wag about Lisa who was much too attractive to escape that. Nobody could say however that the conventions were being flouted when he and Lisa were so effectively chaperoned by Doris. They were all careful and behaved perfectly naturally in public, Doris and Lisa being seen about together much more often than Clarmont and Lisa.

The situation in Europe was a spur to those who were trying to make India united and therefore strong, so that in the event of war it would be an asset rather than a liability. In July the Rulers and the legal advisers of all the more important States of the Punjab States Agency were in Simla discussing the knotty question of whether or not to federate. The All India Federation could not come into being until fifty per cent of the Indian States had decided to join. Ten years earlier, the few big States such as Bikaner, Gwalior and Hyderabad had been keen on acceding, supposing that they could secure a favoured position in the Federation *vis à vis* the Provinces. This had greatly influenced H.M.'s Government in trying to push the scheme through. In recent years, however, things had rapidly changed; Provincial Autonomy had become a fact, Congress Governments being in power in most of them. Congress-run British India was now asserting a great deal of political pressure on the States – as had happened in Travancore in 1938. This had frightened the Princes and recent Councils of Rulers and Ministers at Bombay and Gwalior had passed resolutions that the Federal offer was unacceptable on the grounds of containing inadequate safeguards from interference by agitators from British India. In fact, there were safeguards: the Princes were to have strong representation at the centre – 25% of the seats – and would be able to exert a strong influence.

The young Maharaja of Patiala as ruler of the premier Punjab State was in the chair at the Simla conference. His Foreign Minister, Mr Sen, was anti-Federation and argued very ably. Bahawalpur and Faridkot had told Clarmont

that they would definitely accede. The other Punjab States would probably follow whatever Patiala did. Clarmont was able to obtain a postponement of final decision until the 1st September. The question was to be debated in the British Parliament in October and six weeks' grace would give him an opportunity to go on coaxing Rulers individually. The Viceroy went so far as to say to Clarmont that if the Rulers refused to federate he valued their incomes at seven years' purchase.

The outbreak of war overtook the last chance for a decision. The Resident and his staff were immersed in all the various emergency measures connected with the States – application of defence regulations concerning arrest and internment of enemy aliens, protection of strategic points, registration of Europeans for war-work, and so on. The response from the Indian Princes had been immediate and magnificent – over a hundred had offered their services and the resources of their States and many State forces – two of them Punjab States – had been called up and were under training. The Viceroy went down to Delhi a fortnight earlier than usual. He was working hard to secure the cooperation of the Congress Ministries in the Provinces without having to promise for too much after the war. Everyone was aware that the famous Montague Declaration of 1917 from which so many subsequent reforms had stemmed had been made – without consulting Parliament – to gain the maximum cooperation. Gandhi had on the outbreak of war come out in support; then the bargaining propensities came into play – here was an opportunity to extract some valuable concession or definite promise of one. The Congress Ministries in the Provinces had resigned and the Government had decided that the Governors should administer them as a temporary arrangement. All the Government promised was a War Consultative Committee of representatives of all parties for the prosecution of the war and a conference directly after the war to consider amendments to the Government of India Act.

The Resident moved back to Lahore in October and a touring programme began. Constant touring was necessary to maintain personal contact with the Durbars (State governments): everything pointed to a new 'civil disobedience' movement and a renewal of agitation against and inside the States. The Skrines drove in their little car from Pathankot station – reached overnight in the very comfortable white saloon allotted to the Resident – to Jogindernagar where the Raja of Mandi had a bungalow. Here was the site of an enormous hydro-electric station supplying energy to the Punjab. The water came through a three-mile tunnel from a lake on the far side of the mountains. After driving along a narrow twisty road they rounded a corner to find the great Beas River in its gorge below them and Mandi perched on its bank with temples and a bridge and old wooden houses, a regular little Benares among the Himalayas. The Raja and his young wife were completely Europeanized, intelligent and well-informed. Clarmont considered him one of the best of the Punjab Rulers; he had been useful on the Federation issue, thinking out its implications and explaining them to his brother Princes with good results.

Doris returned to Lahore and Clarmont went on with Wakefield to Suket State and Bilaspur. The only way of getting from Suket to Bilaspur was to float down the swift waters of the Sutlej on a raft of skins. Wakefield wrote an account of the journey[88]: 'There were several rapids on the way down. We did a "porterage" past one of them but "shot" the others. At one place we got into a whirlpool and our whole craft went spinning round and round... We arrived at Bilaspur where the Raja met us at some steps leading down to the river exactly on time. Sir Harold would not have thought such a method of progression dignified but Mr Skrine enjoyed it as much as I did...'

This was followed by an arduous tour in the interior of Chamba. There was a great deal of work because the State had been under minority administration. The Administrator was a good man and popular in the State but he suffered from not knowing the local dialect. Dewan Bahadur Madho Ram, his assistant, was well-educated and quick-minded and of a good Chamba family. He was disliked for having got several of his sons and relations into State employment; the unemployed intelligentsia were engaged in intrigues with Congress, the Qadiani Muslims and other parties, to oust Madho Ram. It was a similar situation, on a much smaller scale, to Travancore in 1938. Clarmont went into all the more important and up-to-date cases, interviewing the hill-folk and visiting *mauqas* (places under dispute in civil cases, or scenes of crime). As a result of a week of living and marching with Madho Ram, Clarmont came to the conclusion that he was an exceptionally good man and that Chamba was on the whole well-governed, though not progressive either politically or economically. Personally Clarmont was not in favour of too many reforms in remote, backward, peaceful, contented, motor-road-less Himalayan States. Files had been coming out daily from Lahore and had to be dealt with in the evenings in camp. The State Troops signal company established helio stations linking the camps with Chamba and were able to flash messages in morse from mountain-top to mountain-top, thus enabling urgent messages from Lahore to be answered quickly.

The next visit to a State was made in very different circumstances. It was to Bahawalpur where the Viceroy had been invited by the Nawab for a duck-shoot. Clarmont had been at the camp at Jajja in 1926 when Lord Irwin had been the guest of honour. There were not in 1939 as many birds as there had been. The Nawab was a wonderful host, seeing to everything personally, and there were no hitches. Clarmont had not realized that Lord Linlithgow was such a keen shot; he spent every minute he could in the field, so that several other ploys for him near the camp had to be left out of the programme. The Viceroy had had such a trying time for so long, what with Federation, the War and Congress, that one could not grudge him his two days' shooting holiday. Clarmont was however critical of the way he brought such an enormous entourage. The whole party numbered 82, excluding railway staff of over 100 connected with the Viceregal special train. The Bahawalpur Durbar had to accommodate and feed the whole lot at a place where there was no town, only

desert and jungle-scrub. The responsibility on the Nawab was heavy, not only for the Viceroy's comfort and amusement but for his personal safety. Clarmont was not surprised when the Nawab turned to him as the Viceregal train was steaming out of the station and said: 'That's the best sight to me in the whole visit – the red light on the end of the Viceroy's train!'

Clarmont was then off on a quick visit to Jind State. Here he came not only as Resident but also as ex-officio President of the Gun-dog League of India. He shot in one day of the trials but his conclusion was the same as it had been when he had come as St. John's Secretary in 1926 – coolies at eight annas a day would pick up one's game much quicker than a thorough-bred Labrador costing £100 and Rs 2/- a day to keep and feed!

The present Maharaja of Jind had developed a youthful passion for roller-skating. Clarmont felt sure that he was the first Resident ever to have played hockey on roller-skates in one of the Punjab States!

Accompanied by his new Secretary, Basil Woods-Ballard[89], the next stop was Simla for a conference of Hill States Chiefs and their Ministers. The Hill States varied greatly in size: Ratesh had an area of only two square miles, Dhadi a population of 212, the revenue of Rawingarh only Rs. 850/- per annum. At the other end of the scale, Bashahr had an area of 3,439 square miles including 100 miles of Tibetan frontier, Sirmur had a population of 150,000 and Jubbal a revenue of over seven lakhs. The reason for the conference was to press them to combine and pool their resources; some progress had been made in a scheme whereby efficient law-courts and police forces and schools and hospitals would be available for the subjects of even the smallest State. Unless some pooling of resources could be made to work, the more backward Hill States would be in danger of absorption into British India – the best thing that could happen in some ways, but an awkward precedent for the rest of India.

The next tour was to a very different part, first to Faridkot, south-east of Lahore. The young Raja, a Sikh, had plenty of institutions to be visited. Doris opened a fine new veterinary hospital at Kotkapura, the biggest village in the State and the cotton market for not only Faridkot but also for neighbouring British districts. The countryside was comparatively well-watered by canals and the 'Village Uplift' movement started in the Punjab had caught on, with conspicuous results in health and cleanliness. A contingent of the State Troops was already on active service outside Faridkot.

Then the Skrines went on to Khairpur State in Sind, a long train journey from Lahore and a great contrast in weather, sunny and everything bone-dry. Clarmont saw among other things the Sukkur Barrage which he had seen under construction. It had been working since 1933 and irrigated more land than all the barrages on the Nile. The ruling family were Baluch. The Mir of Khairpur was mad and living under a guardian at Poona. Their city was Kot Diji, a remarkable town on the edge of the gravel desert which bounded the canal-country of the Indus valley. It contained a brick-built fortress reminiscent of

the Miri at Kalat. Doris played an active part in these tours, inspecting girls' schools and hospitals and visiting the mother of the mad Mir. Clarmont had an opportunity with Woods-Ballard of a brief stop at the partially-excavated site of Mohenjo-daro. This had been a vast brick-built city, with streets and palaces and shops and a drainage system far superior to anything that had been made in India up to the time of the modern P.W.D. It was believed to have existed between 3,000 and 2,000 BC and had been overlaid by a Buddhist city much less efficiently built.

A three-day visit to Patiala followed. The work of the tour consisted mainly of inspecting hospitals, colleges, dairy-farms, jails and so on, all seeming to be beautifully run. The young Sikh Maharaja was charming company and his entourage a jolly crowd of big, handsome, sporting Sikhs. They went in for every sport and played every game from polo to hockey on roller-skates. The shooting included wild-goose shooting in the middle of the town! There were several tanks with ornamental wildfowl with their wings clipped. Migratory wild geese were attracted to the tanks and provided most unusual sport.

Clarmont remembered from his 1926 visit the unforgettable jewellery. The finest piece was a necklace which had as a pendant the Sans Souci diamond but the glory of the collection was in the emeralds. A single carved emerald in a buckle was as long as his thumb. The most charming object in the collection, he thought, was a tiny toy cannon of gold, its barrel consisting of one huge cylindrical pearl.

He had been allotted as a room to write in what he called his 'crystal office'. It was furnished almost entirely in glass: glass-topped table, chairs and sofas made entirely of glass, an enormous glass grandfather clock – even a glass waste-paper basket. This was only a fraction of the amazing collection of chandeliers and glass objects in the Palace. It had all been acquired by Maharaja Mohinder Singh, grandfather of the present Ruler. He had walked into Osler's in Calcutta one day and ordered a couple of chandeliers. The proprietor did not know who he was and enquired in a loud aside to an assistant 'Who is this Sikh? How do I know he can pay?' This so riled the Maharaja that he bought up the whole shop.

The Sikh State of Nabha had been under administration since 1928, the Maharaja still a minor in England. Wakefield was now President of the Council of Regency. Clarmont managed to fit in a short visit only. He would have had to remain longer but with Wakefield in control he had no worry – 'I know he is running it exactly as I would myself if I were there, only rather better!' There was certainly plenty for the Resident to do in Lahore. He usually accommodated any European or Europeanized Ministers when they came to obtain sanction for their State budgets. This was an opportunity to return hospitality. Vere was now stationed on the N.W. Frontier; when Lisa was able to visit the Skrines she was an asset in helping to balance the male guests at the Residency. As Helen commented, the job gave Clarmont no

21
Installation of HH the Maharajah of Nabha, 1941. Reception of presents sent by the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon.

22 The Maharajah of Kapurthala speaking at his Birthday Banquet, Kapurthala 1939.

chance of *ennui*. He was even asked to give a lesson in 'swing' dancing to the little Rani of Mandi.

There was a Viceregal visit to Kapurthala in March. Clarmont had of course been there ahead. He had remembered the marvellous Versailles-like palace and the atmosphere of great luxury from his visit as St. John's Secretary. The palace remained the same combination of French architecture and taste with British plumbing and Indian domestic service. The one change was that it was even fuller of pictures and curios. The Maharaja travelled abroad every year and each time brought back photographs and souvenirs. The most valuable possessions were not in the palace but in the Toshakhana. Here, besides the usual huge diamonds and other precious stones were two complete sets of horse-trappings studded with carved emeralds displayed on two full-sized horses of polished teak.

The Maharaja had many other things to show the Viceroy who was very keen on rural uplift and agricultural research. The garden-party was beautifully arranged amid rose-gardens and fountains, with sideshows such as flower and vegetable exhibitions, and rides on the magnificently caparisoned State elephants and drives in the Maharaja's zebra-carriage. This was an elegant turn-out of a pair of zebras and a basket-phaeton. The zebras had the reputation of being liable at any moment to lie down and Clarmont's heart was in his mouth when he watched Their Excellencies dash off in the equipage down the drive. The Kapurthala people were excellent hosts; the ceremonial proceedings had been flawless. Clarmont sighed with relief to have behind him the fourth Viceregal visit he had experienced in 14 months.

He then had a good pretext for a thorough change. The case of the mad Mir of Khairpur living under restraint in Poona had for long given the Punjab States Agency cause for anxiety. The Mir's mother, HH the Dera Khas, widow of the late Mir did not believe that her son was mad. For some time there had been intrigues, the object being the return to the State of the Mir so that the Dera Khas and her advisers could rule the State in his name. Clarmont resolved to find out the position for himself. He rejoiced in leaving the pomp and circumstance and secretaries and chaprassis of the Residency behind, and setting off alone, without even his bearer, on a 1000 mile journey. The Mir was living under the guardianship of a retired officer of the Guides Cavalry and an assistant – one of the two had to be with the Mir all the time. The Mir's little son, aged six, was being well looked after in a separate establishment. Clarmont dined with the Mir and his two guardians and his doctor and spent most of the next day with him. It was pathetic. The Mir obviously made a great effort to collect his muddled thoughts and impress the Resident favourably and he begged to be allowed to go back and rule his State. He was not fully coherent. The medical diagnosis of his condition was *dementia praecox*. Clarmont considered that he had achieved the two objects of his mission; he had satisfied himself, first, that the Mir was mad and, secondly, that he was being well cared for.

The visit was much appreciated in Khairpur, especially by the Mir's mother. Clarmont felt sorry for the old begum. Wilberforce-Bell had disapproved of her because she was scheming to have her son back and had refused to allow her to live near him. Clarmont considered her schemings to be so transparent as to be harmless and decided to allow her to go to Poona whenever she wanted.

Back in Lahore and thence again for the hot weather to Mashobra House, the world-shattering news from Europe dominated Clarmont's waking thoughts. France fell, Italy entered the war and communications with his mother were cut.

Chapter 24

'If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster...'

On the outbreak of war in September 1939 Clarmont had sent a telegram begging his mother to come out to India. She decided to stick out the war in France. To leave would look like funk; moreover, India would involve a long and difficult journey while going to England or Scotland would mean an extra mouth to be fed in an already overcrowded little island. Her health remained excellent but she became tired quickly and she was aware of being unable to do all she had done during the Great War.

She found herself very busy at Les Bosquets, no male help available out of doors and refugees from the towns to be housed. Food prices had risen steeply and all spare cash seemed to be drained in answer to war appeals in which she became involved. She was very amused to be invited by two ladies to come onto the committee of '*Oeuvres de Guerre*' as '*représentante de la Grande Bretagne*'. This committee seemed to be democratic France, 'not', she wrote, 'the old stick-in-the-mud aristocracy who never will have anything to do with the government of this country. I expect I shall get scolded by some of them for patronizing "*ces gens*" – but I've always thought that the cleavage between these two camps is the cause of much of France's troubles'.

France's troubles reached their peak in the summer of 1940 and Helen Skrine found herself stranded, cut off from her source of income. Only fragments of news trickled from Aix-en-Provence. Clarmont in India and her relations at home shared great anxiety for her. To escape from Unoccupied France would cost money and the journey would be arduous. Clarmont tried many different channels for communicating with his mother. He was able to pass a message through Lloyds Bank and heard that she was being paid £10 a month by the American Consul-General in Marseilles. He tried through the American Consulate-General in Calcutta to have this sum augmented. The first few months of the occupation had been extremely unpleasant, many of the French definitely hostile. But Helen had some very faithful French friends. She succeeded in letting Les Bosquets and went to live with them. Then, with a monthly income of £20, she planned to get away. Eventually, in May 1941, she set out from Marseilles by train. At Barcelona she was able to cash a small cheque at the British Consulate and she obtained a ticket to Madrid. The onward train was packed and very slow; the journey between Madrid and Lisbon was even worse. She found an inexpensive pension which proved a good place to stay while waiting for a passage to Lourenço Marques and she had to wait in Lisbon until August. After a month's voyage the ship, having called at Portuguese ports on the west coast of Africa, arrived at Lourenço Marques.

Clarmont had heard in June of his mother's arrival in Lisbon. The news had come from out of the blue. He had not known her onward travel plans but he had suggested the Lourenço Marques route as a possible one to India. Once he had heard of her departure from Lisbon he was able to work out roughly when she might be expected to reach India. Of course dates of sailings were closely guarded secrets but he could make arrangements for her to go to friends in Bombay if her British India ship from Lourenço Marques should arrive before he could be there to greet her.

It was fortunate that such arrangements had been made because a chain of quite unpredicted events took place. The year that had elapsed since Clarmont had had regular communications with his mother had passed in much the same pattern as the year before: work had increased and there had been less time for recreation. The cold weather months had been spent at Lahore and on tour and in May the recess to the Simla Hills followed. It seemed positively indecent, Clarmont thought, to be leading such a normal life when everybody at home was undergoing the horrors of the blitz-krieg. After the war, he expected to have a permanent inferiority complex on the subject. Then suddenly, without a word of warning, at the end of August, Sir Francis Wylie who had succeeded Glancy as Political Adviser, summoned Clarmont to his office and informed him that the Viceroy was not going to confirm him in his appointment. He would have to accept reversion to a Second Class Residency or retire. Clarmont was stunned. Glancy had been on leave but had just taken over as Governor of the Punjab and was now in Simla where Clarmont sought his advice as an old friend. The outcome was that Clarmont who did not want a Second Class Residency and had no wish to retire asked for employment on the External side, regardless of pay or status. He submitted a short note on his case to the Viceroy, respectfully asking that his failure to secure confirmation as a First Class Resident in the States should not permanently disqualify him from similar status on the External side and expressing the wish to serve meanwhile as a Political Agent in Baluchistan or on any suitable war mission to Iran. The Viceroy was very cordial, saying that he would issue instructions to ensure that Clarmont would not be permanently disqualified for promotion and he referred to Baluchistan. Clarmont left the interview with a great weight off his mind.

Glancy, hearing Clarmont's report of the interview, wrote: 'I think you've taken the wisest course and hope they'll give you a good job on the External side. As I told you I've had personal experience of this sort of thing, and the main business is to keep the tail on high. You seem to be doing this successfully...'

Clarmont was in fact proving himself splendidly resilient. Wylie had arranged for Corfield[90] who was currently P.A. Quetta to become Resident, Punjab States. The External Affairs Department set in train plans for Clarmont to take over from him in Quetta. The position would be anomalous, an officer of the rank of Resident, Second Class, in a time-scale post. Finance Department agreed as a very special case that the anomaly could be allowed for

six months only. Clarmont accepted the position, agreeing that if no Second Class post or its equivalent were available by April 1942 he should draw only time-scale rates of pay. At the same time he was in correspondence with Corfield about the details of the change-over. He was glad that his successor was to be Corfield who had had much experience on the Political side – 'I feel it much less "be-izzat" to be superseded by you than by another amateur like myself'. Sir Aubrey Metcalfe was now the A.G.G. in Baluchistan. Clarmont had written to him when the blow first fell, explaining how he had volunteered to take Corfield's place and apologizing for being 'wished on' him in such a way; how both he and Doris were looking forward to returning to Quetta, and how he had got over the initial shock of demotion. He was sorry to lose Corfield, the more so since he had been told that Clarmont would probably not be in Quetta for long. The reason for this warning to Metcalfe was the likelihood that the Allies' invasion of Persia – which had begun on 25th August – would lead to a requirement for more Political Officers to serve there. The Gazette announcement on 2nd September about Corfield's appointment to the Punjab States made no mention of where Clarmont would be going, saying merely 'required for service elsewhere'.

Personal letters of regret that he would be leaving them poured in from the States, some of them convincingly sincere, so much so that the sincerity of the editor of 'The Prince' of 5th September can be accepted: '...We are nothing to dispute the decision of H.E. the Viceroy but have to say that the Punjab States would lose an officer who sympathetically co-operated with the administrations and effected great improvements. Almost all the Punjab States can now safely be placed with other progressive States of India and much of the credit goes to Mr Skrine'.

The news of course reached the Skrines' friends in Baluchistan quickly. Among these was Reuben Norton[91], now G.O.C. Western District. Norton became the recipient of Clarmont's explanation of how the proposal of exchange between him and Corfield had come about. When Clarmont left Baluchistan in 1936, almost all his service had been on the External side and he was quite surprised to be appointed to a Residency straightaway. He had inwardly hoped that after two years in the Madras States he might be returning to Quetta as A.G.G. but he had felt duly flattered when he was selected to take over the (First Class) Residency for the Punjab States. All had gone well while Glancy had been Political Adviser but when he left he was succeeded by Wylie – the same whom Clarmont had called 'a very good man' when he was working on special duty in Quetta after the earthquake. 'Sam Wylie', he continued to Norton, 'is a very fine Frontier officer and a very strong, if somewhat dour, character but he had had even less experience of the Indian States than I had. Also he was several years junior to me in the Department, although of course he went ahead of me and dozens of my colleagues when he was made Governor of the Central Provinces in '37. So when, after a few months, I found that I disagreed with him in several important questions of

policy and tactics towards Rulers, etc. I didn't see why I shouldn't say so. However, I was over-ruled; and orders being orders, I tried my best to carry them out. All I did was to try and temper the wind to the shorn (Princely) lamb wherever possible. I continued my policy of trying to understand and sympathize with Rulers in their difficulties and temptations and of interpreting their point of view to Government as well as conveying Government's orders to them. Perhaps I came to be regarded as an "appeaser" at a time when appeasement had become anathema; but appeasement is only bad policy when it is practised towards an implacable enemy, whereas the Rulers of the Punjab States are *not* our enemies but among the most loyal friends we've got. Anyway, I got results; with one or two exceptions (and even them I was getting round) my States did splendidly as regards the War, co-operating loyally and enthusiastically in State Troop matters, in money contributions, and in co-operation with British India generally.

'But this was apparently not enough. Gwatkin[92], Inspecting Officer of the Indian State Forces, complained that one of my States (Jind) was not doing enough and that it was my fault. This seems to have given Sam W. his chance to have me replaced by a less senior and therefore more easily managed Resident. He selected Conrad Corfield – an unimpeachable choice, for Conrad has spent nearly all his service in the Western India States, Central India and Rajputana and has been a great success in the difficult post of Resident in Jaipur...[93]'

On 11th September Clarmont was told by Olaf Caroe[94], the Foreign Secretary, to hold himself in readiness for duty in Persia. He at once warned Corfield that he would have to go slow over arrangements to buy some of his household furniture. Then he heard through naval channels that his mother was on a ship which would be arriving on 26th September, earlier than he had supposed possible, and on that very day Caroe informed him that he had got his assignment – it was to meet the ex-Shah of Persia on a ship at Bombay in six days' time and take him and his whole party to Mauritius.

Fortunately the arrangements for Helen Skrine's reception at Bombay had all been made, so when on 1st October Clarmont tumbled out of the Frontier Mail there she was on the platform, looking not a day older than when he had said goodbye to her.

Chapter 25

'...And treat those two imposters just the same...'

A dozen years later Clarmont wrote an account of taking the ex-Shah and his party to Mauritius which was published in Blackwood's magazine[95]. It makes entertaining reading but at the time the interlude must often have seemed a nightmare. Reza Shah Pahlevi had abdicated as a direct consequence of the Allies' invasion of Persia. The Government of India, wishing to avoid any possible Muslim agitation arising from the king of the biggest sovereign Muhammedan state in the world having been toppled from his throne, decided that the ex-Shah should on no account make any appearance in India. He was however on his way with all his family – except the eldest son in whose favour he had abdicated – from Bandar Abbas to Bombay. Armed with a document saying that Mr Skrine had been appointed by His Excellency the Governor-General-in-Council on a Special Mission and that he should be given every assistance, Clarmont was able to arrange for the S.S. Bandra to be met at the harbour entrance and moored outside. The onward journey was to be made in a bigger ship, the Burma, which would be ready to sail on 6th October, four days later. The orders were that no one from the Bandra should be allowed to go on shore and that no unauthorised person should be allowed to visit the ship.

Accompanying the pilot and the Sea Transport Officer, Clarmont boarded the Bandra whose captain told him that all was well with the Persians who were looking forward to going ashore at Bombay. Clarmont at once had the task of breaking the news to the ex-Shah that he was not going ashore, nor to South America as he had intended, but was to be interned in Mauritius. Moreover, the ship was to be anchored eight miles out, guarded by the Royal Indian Navy. The ex-Shah was incredulous and called his second son and his son-in-law who questioned Clarmont in French. When at last they realized what was to happen there was a most unpleasant scene, the whole family down to the youngest prince – ten years old – abusing the British in general and Clarmont in particular. He contrived to soothe them, assuring them of the attractions of Mauritius where they would be made as comfortable as possible, and promised to do all he could of the shopping required in Bombay. The decision to abdicate had been taken in Ispahan and the royal party had left Persia with very few belongings. Clarmont found that he would be overwhelmed by orders, so the following day he took on board with him an English tailor and a Mauritian lady, both sworn to secrecy, to help meet the requirements. The ex-Shah had plenty of money banked in India and the purchases were lavish, including a sports-car, Persian carpets, refrigerators, toilet articles, clothes, haberdashery, medicines, wines, spirits, 1000 lb of Saharapur rice, games requisites and shotguns. Most of the stuff was loaded on the Burma before she left dock to

take the party from the Bandra aboard in mid-stream but when Clarmont's launch came alongside there were still more trunks and cases to be lifted on to the ship.

The attitude of the Persians changed considerably during the voyage, becoming quite friendly, the ex-Shah appearing to appreciate that everything possible was being done and that there was no intention to humiliate him. On arrival at Port Louis, Clarmont went at once to see the Governor to report on his charges. Sir Bede Clifford[96] and his wife had made splendid preparations in the short time available. The accommodation was comfortable and in a delightful situation and a Persian flag had been specially made to be hoisted when the ex-Shah arrived. Clarmont suggested that the Governor should wear uniform when going on board. He gladly agreed and, when the Burma docked in the afternoon, two companies of the Mauritius Regiment stood at attention on the quay as a guard of honour. 'It was a surprise to me as well as to the Shah', Clarmont wrote, 'and I did not know how he would take it. At the foot of the gangway he stood in his grey suit and Homburg hat, seemingly in doubt what to do. At last he beckoned to the eldest of his sons and after a brief colloquy, walked with dignified step past the guard followed by the five hatless princes. Though he gave nothing away – he glanced indeed somewhat disparagingly, I thought, at the troops – he acknowledged the Commandant's salute with an affable nod and I could see that he was gratified by the honour paid him'.

The ex-Shah asked for a formal interview with the Governor for the purpose of finding out the intentions towards him of the British Government. He claimed that he had never acted against the interests of Great Britain; he had in fact refused an offer of German help. If British demands had been clearly explained to him he would have been prepared to negotiate[97]. When he had abdicated, he said, he put his trust in the British Government to let him retire to any neutral country which he might choose; having admitted British troops to Iran without opposition he considered his country had espoused the British cause and that he was entitled to be treated as an ally, not as a prisoner. Sir Bede Clifford remonstrated but the ex-Shah persisted – 'You say we are free but Mauritius is a prison, albeit a big one'. Not surprisingly, the Governor needed Clarmont's presence in the island for some weeks, to interpret at discussions with the ex-Shah. Once the Persians settled down, Clarmont began to enjoy his short stay very much. The curious natural features of Mauritius appealed to him, its mountains with peaks of fantastic shapes and its coastline fringed with casuarinas and protected by coral reefs. Sir Bede Clifford and his family were very congenial company who loved showing the island's beauty spots to an appreciative visitor. When at the end of November Clarmont left in a Greek cargo steamer bound for Lourenço Marques, the Governor wrote a personal note of thanks to the Viceroy for having sent 'such a helpful, able and tactful person as Skrine to act as escort to the ex-Shah. I should like to convey to you my

high appreciation of the service he has rendered and to thank your Government for making my own task so much easier by selecting him for this duty'.

Clarmont's resilience in overcoming the setback of his removal from the Punjab States was truly remarkable. Far from repining, he delighted in the prospect of having some work in Persia more closely connected with the war. Close friends who knew of his demotion had felt indignant on his behalf but, as Reuben Norton wrote, 'you have never stood higher in their estimation than since you took this knock and the really amazing spirit in which you have taken it'. In Cairo on his way back to India he received confirmation that he was to be Consul-General in Meshed. The prospect pleased very much, because the work would be mainly concerned with overland supplies from India to the Russians – a direct contribution to the war effort. It was satisfactory too to know that his role in acting as escort to the ex-Shah had not disqualified him personally from an appointment which called for the concurrence of the Persian Government. He and Doris had both hoped to have a posting in Meshed but it would have been little fun in recent years. Under Reza Shah Pahlevi the links with British interests had been one by one weakened and a stage reached where British consulates were boycotted. No Persian dared risk social hobnobbing with a British official. All was now changed.

Solely on personal domestic grounds Clarmont regretted the Punjab States. He had enjoyed only a brief glimpse of his mother since she turned up at Bombay when he was about to go to Mauritius. She would have been a rare phenomenon as a Resident's mother in Lahore and accompanying her son on visits to States; now she would have to be left in India, for some months at least. Plans were made for her to stay at Brijnagar with the Maharaja of Jhalawar and his family and then to join Lisa Bartrum in Kashmir for the summer. Vere Bartrum was with the army in Malaya.

Clarmont and Doris (and four cats) set out for Meshed in January 1942. The journey and the narrow escape from being murdered on the way were fully described in 'World War in Iran'.

The country was in an extremely demoralised state, not so much the consequence of being occupied as the result of fifteen years' dictatorship. Clarmont's close observation of Reza Shah Pahlevi on the voyage to Mauritius had led him to conclude that the ex-Shah could neither read nor write. This shortcoming had proved no disability: Reza Shah had taken care to remove all possible rivals. However, this action had led to few men of the governing class being left to control the vast bureaucracy which had become inevitable as a result of government monopolies having been created in all staples. Returning to Persia after an absence of thirteen years, Clarmont was aghast at the corruption among the upper classes and the impoverishment of the lower ones. The administration was a vast racket, the masses being exploited by speculation, hoarding and profiteering. The officials of the main government departments – Finance, Home, Economic and Agricultural – and their confederates among the merchants and landlords are referred to in 'World War in

Iran' as 'the Gang'. The chief priority of the British (and then the American) advisers in Persia was to frustrate 'the Gang' by achieving fair distribution of grain.

A notable exception to the widespread corruption in high places was the Skrines' old friend from Sistan days, the Shaukat-ul-Mulk. He had now returned to his property in the Qainat after six years' exile, the policy of Reza Shah having been to keep powerful local magnates at a safe distance from their domains. He had dropped his Qajar title and assumed the surname Alam[98]. On returning to his estates, one of his first actions had been to open his granaries, thus temporarily knocking the bottom out of the hoarders' market. 'He is one of the best friends we have got,' Clarmont wrote, 'black swans are common in this country compared with great landlords with a sense of *noblesse oblige*'.

Adequate supplies of grain were specially needed to feed the workmen busy on making roads to provide a channel for passing supplies from India to the Russians. The agreed programme for the Allies' invasion of Persia had not provided for any occupation from across the northern border east of the Caspian. This thousand-mile land frontier had been closed in 1937. Despite the lack of any agreed allied plan, when the invasion from the west took place in August 1941, Russian columns entered Persia at three places on the northern frontier and an occupying force was based at Meshed. Thus it came about that after renewing friendship with the Shaukat at Birjand, the Skrines made the final stage of the journey to Meshed with an escort of Soviet troops in lorries.

The Residency in Meshed was an imposing building of two storeys surrounded by a broad Corinthian pillared verandah supporting a balcony, with a domed cupola on a flat roof. It had been built in 1893 when Ney Elias had been the Consul-General. Curzon had been scornful of the earlier British residence and had obtained approval 'for the maintenance of the Consul-General in a style and in quarters better fitted to represent to the native mind the prestige of a great and wealthy power[99]'. The house stood in eight acres of grounds. The only drawback was that in midwinter the indoor temperature was arctic.

Clarmont revelled in his new responsibilities and never doubted his ability to do a good job. His long acquaintance with Persia had given him a great admiration for the patient, courteous, unspoilt peasantry and he was determined to use his influence with the Persian authorities in their interests. At the same time he was resolved on keeping the Russian allies friendly by increasing to the maximum the supply through Khorasan of war material. Doris too liked the challenge. There was very little British society – Clarmont had only one British assistant in Meshed – and there was ample accommodation in the grounds of the Residency for as many animals as she liked. Being a deeply patriotic person, she also threw herself into wartime good works.

When Clarmont went to report to the British Minister in Teheran he found a completely changed capital from the one he had seen with Doris on their way home in 1931. The domed bazaars had all gone; now all was asphalt roads and fine boulevards. Some of the new buildings were very handsome and

made good decorative use of traditional Persian tiles. The ex-Shah had boasted to Clarmont that he had been the first person to make Persians work. Modern Teheran was vindication of this boast.

The young Shah was anxious to hear all about Mauritius. Clarmont had made an album of photographs of Mauritius which had been presented to the Shah as from the Government of India. Now he wanted to know all about the voyage. Clarmont was agreeably struck by the young Shah, finding him more likeable than his father and his younger brother.

The war news was all so grim in early 1942 that thinking about one's own personal plans seemed quite unreal. In the east, Singapore had fallen. Vere Bartrum was probably a prisoner; Lisa would probably stay on in Kashmir. He was satisfied that living conditions in Meshed would be all right for his mother and hoped that she would come and live with him and Doris, but with the German push at Kharkov and the threat to Egypt following the loss of Tobruk, firm planning was not possible: if the Russians cracked, Persia would be near the front line. However, by the autumn the allies' position had much improved both in Europe and North Africa. Clarmont had to go to Delhi for discussions and was able to take some days' casual leave in Kashmir. Helen Skrine accompanied him on the return journey to Meshed.

Chapter 26

Meshed and Teheran 1943 - 48

'World War in Iran' is autobiographical of the last years of Clarmont's public service, all of which were in Persia – Meshed until the end of 1945, then Teheran until his retirement. There is no need here to go over again the history of events which kept the Consul-General for Khorasan very fully occupied and – after the war – the series of crises which concerned the British Embassy. The Skrines were undoubtedly the right people to be at Meshed during the war years. Clarmont's understanding of Persians made him friends among all classes and he was imaginative: it was a stroke of genius which inspired him to arrange for the Viceroy of India to send a consignment of gold leaf as a gift to the shrine of the Eighth Imam. The influence which he exercised on the Persian Governor-General was undoubtedly a factor in the stability of Khorasan when the long overdue elections to the Majlis took place at the end of 1943. His mother was a great help on the social side. Doris too was an asset. 'What the Meshedis think about her I simply daren't try to guess', Clarmont wrote; 'she is most popular and respected even if most Persians think her mad'. The Residency grounds were full of her animals, the lawns ruined by donkeys and the stables which had formerly been used by the Indian Cavalry escort occupied by a legion of cats. She was excellent at producing amateur dramatics and she did all she could to be friendly with the Soviet allies, one triumph in international relations being the production of a Chekhov play translated into Persian.

The measure of British achievement in Meshed became apparent when the war ended; the Red Army marched out of Khorasan in March 1946 – the date agreed under the treaty – which was a contrast to the Soviet decision not to evacuate Azerbaijan and Gilan. The British, led by the Consul-General, had undoubtedly stiffened the Persian administration and as a consequence the Tudeh party had failed to gain much following in Khorasan.

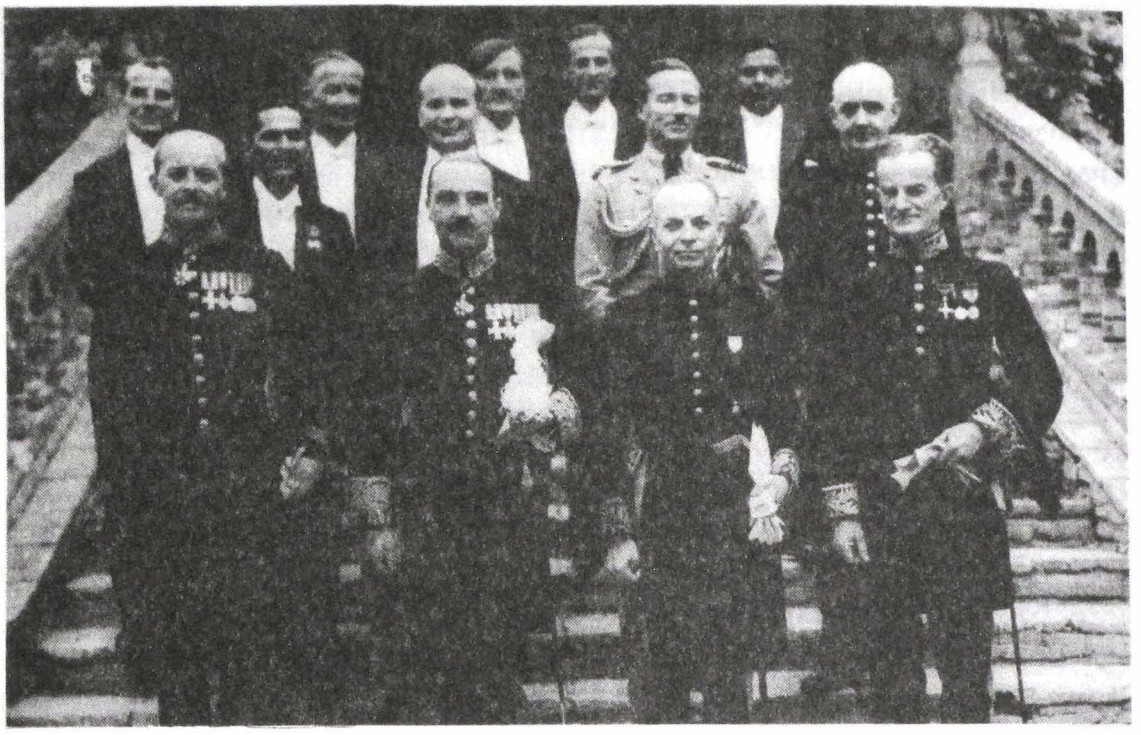
Clarmont's ability to establish good relations with people was most strikingly illustrated by the attitude of his 'prisoners' whom he had escorted to Mauritius. Members of the ex-Shah's family gradually returned to Iran: all of them appeared pleased to see Clarmont again. The eldest daughter, Princess Shams, had been quite the most difficult of the party. She was an odiously spoilt girl and had been a great potential trouble-maker because of her influence on her father. Clarmont met her again at a party at the American Embassy soon after her return and she was charming to him and they always had friendly chats at subsequent social meetings. Not so Princess Ashraf, the Shah's twin-sister who had not gone into exile; she avoided speaking to her father's 'gaoler'.

By the end of the war Clarmont had begun to feel that he should be in some less remote posting. He was 57; his seniority and his record on the External side should be of great use at the centre. He heard with interest of a proposal that he should be sent to the British Embassy in Teheran as a Counsellor. He applied for home leave and before this was granted achieved an ambition he had nursed throughout his stay in Meshed – a camping expedition among the hills and forests of the far west of Khorasan, the Sahra-i-Turcoman. This was just accessible by car at only one point, the Guli Dagh (Flower Mountain) plateau, so named because of its amazing show of wild flowers. Clarmont and his Indian companion ploughed their way along narrow tracks with hollyhocks and hemlock swishing beside them and in springtime the hills were said to be crimson and yellow and blue for as far as the eye could reach. The people of the country were Turcomans of the Goklan tribe, very reminiscent of the Kirghiz of Kashgaria.

The main purpose of his short home leave was to see if his mother could move back to Aix-en-Provence. Her tenants could not yet be dislodged, so she had to live with her sister in St. Andrews. While on leave he heard for certain of his posting to Teheran and in the New Year's Honours List of 1946 he was appointed a Knight Bachelor. His mother was of course the person most delighted; in her opinion, the award was considerably overdue.

Sir Reader Bullard had just left Teheran and Harold Farquhar was Chargé d'Affaires. Clarmont who had plenty of his own work connected with India found that his opinion was being sought on subjects such as Azerbaijan and the oilfields, matters of which he had had no previous experience. He and the Military Attaché were the only members of the Embassy staff who spoke Persian well.

He soon realized that he had been very fortunate in his new job. Sir Reader Bullard and Clarmont had had great mutual regard and respect. Clarmont thought highly too of Bullard's successor, Sir John le Rougetel[100], who had recently been in Bucharest so had plenty of experience of the Russians. Bullard and he were very different. The former, who had been a grass-widower in Teheran, was academic and austere; he much preferred exchanging notes and memoranda to discussing a subject. Le Rougetel liked working out his problems orally. There were continuous crises; it was like playing 'chess, bridge, poker all combined – with the future of the oilfields at stake'. Clarmont played a leading role for the Embassy in the 1946 crisis which featured a general strike of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's labour force. When the strike was broken, the left wing press clamoured for his blood. Le Rougetel valued his services greatly, writing to the Foreign Office: 'I am sure that I need not emphasise the importance of Skrine's presence at this stage... Skrine and his wife have a wide circle of friends here, both among Persians and Indians, and it would be little short of a calamity if some means could not be found of retaining him on the staff of this Embassy...' The difficulty was that Clarmont would be 60 in 1948.



23 At the British Embassy, Teheran, after presentation of Letters of Credence by HE for the Shah, 27 April 1946. Back Row: Embassy staff. Front row: Mr Harold Farquhar (Counsellor); Sir John le Rougetel (Ambassador); Agha Mumtaz (Minister at Court); Clarmont.

The Cabinet decision to quit India by June 1948 raised the problem in Persia of how the British Consulates should be split between the United Kingdom and an independent India. Those at Meshed, Zahedan, Kerman, Bushire and Khurramshahr had always been staffed from India. Clarmont visited Delhi on this question and had a discussion with Pundit Nehru, who was at this time the Honourable Member of Council responsible for the External Department. Nehru had just made a tour of the North West Frontier Province and there had been demonstrations against him by Pathans. The increase in communal tension was tragic, both Congress and the Muslim League deliberately inflaming mob passion, each side thinking they were strong enough to gain control of all India after the British had left.

On his next visit to Delhi there was a new development – a divided India and the creation of Pakistan had been agreed to by all parties and Dominion status for both by 15th August 1947. 'It's Mountbatten who's forcing the pace', wrote Clarmont' 'I lunched with him yesterday and had a talk also with "Pug" Ismay (now Principal Adviser to the Viceroy). Both used polo metaphors! "Pug" described the Viceroy and his staff coming out to India at this juncture as "going on to the field for the last chukker 20 goals down": the only game to play is to gallop the enemy off the field – keep the pace so hot that they can't form combinations'. Mountbatten told Clarmont that he was trying to keep about one week ahead of the Indian leaders, thinking up the next

move before they did and not giving them time to take up positions from which they could not resile without loss of face. Mountbatten revealed to Clarmont that the only way he had been able to get Congress to agree to Pakistan was by letting them think that their India would be regarded by the world as *the* India, and Pakistan as only a seceding state.

This development put an entirely new complexion on Clarmont's current problems, such as the separation of British and Indian representation in Persia. There was also the administration of the pilgrim traffic from the sub-continent and the question of handing over the railway between Quetta and Zahedan. The ambassador-designate for India arrived in Teheran but no one to represent Pakistan had been nominated. Clarmont expressed willingness to work for the Pakistan Government but the decision was reached that it would not be appropriate for representation to be undertaken by other than nationals. The Foreign Office instead approved his continued employment as an additional Counsellor at Teheran for one year. He felt himself most fortunate; no career diplomat would be kept on as a Counsellor at 59 and he had in fact outlasted almost all his colleagues in the Political Service.

Doris meanwhile had found an outlet for her energies. Hating capital cities, she had at first sighed for the remoteness of Meshed but the needs of the often mistreated animals of Teheran soon absorbed her. She started an animal hospital in the town and it became a great success. It was free and there were never less than 13 or 14 donkeys being treated, and some cats and dogs. Clarmont was thankful that she was happy and busy; she was down at the hospital twice each morning and all the afternoons – 'to call her indefatigable is understatement; she's dynamic, like Lord Mountbatten! Everybody's talking about her – not all favourably'.

Vere Bartrum had survived being a prisoner of the Japanese in Changi. Clarmont thought him much improved by the experience. Lisa had spent most of her time in Kashmir. She had stayed with the Skrines for three months in Meshed and Doris and she had got on very well. Vere Bartrum was due to retire from the Army Veterinary Corps and Doris proposed that he and Lisa should visit Teheran so that he would be able to provide skilled help at the Animal Hospital. This did not come about because Vere went on ahead to Europe but Lisa spent three very happy months in the Skrine ménage. She seemed to have a soothing and humanizing influence on Doris. Clarmont realized that the visit would be memorable 'to look back on during the less spacious and colourful years to come'.

He was not in the least depressed at the prospect of retirement in 1948 and looked forward to being in England and of course France. Like his father before him, he hankered after a life centred on London, but he recognized that this would no longer be possible without paid employment of some kind. Meanwhile he was busy on the complicated and sometimes tedious work of winding-up former Government of India posts and helping the two new Dominion embassies. The political work, connected with oil, aviation,

relations with the Americans and the British information services, was much more interesting – but he would not miss it when he was no longer involved. He would miss his friends, specially the le Rougetel family, and the many younger people whom he had taken camping or ski-ing.

When the time came to leave he was not going to waste the opportunity of exploring new country and visiting beautiful places. Having seen Doris off by boat at Abadan – accompanied by a huge dog which promptly gave birth to puppies in her cabin, one cat and two half-grown kittens – he himself set out overland via Azerbaijan, Palmyra and Baalbek.

Epilogue

Understandably the Foreign Office was not able to offer employment to former Indian Civilians of seniority such as Clarmont's. He was fortunate to obtain a short-term appointment in Jerusalem as representative of the London board of the Jerusalem Electric Corporation. When this came to an end, he reconciled himself to the prospect of no more paid employment abroad and made use of his many contacts in Persia to start a service – called Middle East Guardians – which would help parents in Persia place their children at schools in England and care for them in the holidays. His life was centred on London where so many of his interests lay – the Royal Geographical Society, the Royal Central Asian Society, the Alpine Club and the Athenaeum.

Not so, Doris. The tanker on which she had travelled home in 1945 anchored in Scapa Flow. She saw from its deck a low isolated house on the Island of Hoy and at once decided that it was the place for her. She lived there for the rest of her life. She was a great asset to the small community on Hoy, producing children's plays and forming a concert group which toured the other Orkney islands. But she became crippled by rheumatism and increasingly housebound. An inevitable consequence was that her animals became housebound too – sheep were kept indoors as well as cats. Clarmont visited Orkney each summer but he returned abruptly from his visit to Doris in 1971, so appalling was the state in which she was living. She would take nobody's advice, his least of all. She died in the winter of that year. The first provisions of her will were that the S.S.P.C.A. inspector should come over to Hoy from Kirkwall and chloroform the cats and that 25 hours should then elapse before burying them.

Lisa had died suddenly in 1963. Clarmont wrote that his debt to her was incalculable: she had converted him from the prig he had been at the age of 42 into a reasonably adjusted male member of society.

In his last years Clarmont sustained several strokes but he remained continuously active. A new edition of 'Chinese Central Asia' had been published in 1971. While preparing this he had looked up the official records – by then open for research – concerning the early days of British representation in Sinkiang. He found the makings of a most interesting story, the part played by our first consul in Kashgar during the turmoils of the Chinese Revolution. Too incapacitated himself to undertake all the work, he was fortunate to find a collaborator in Dr Pamela Nightingale and 'Macartney at Kashgar' was published in 1973. It was widely and favourably reviewed – a source of satisfaction in his last year of life.

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13 1. Clarmont. The name is pronounced 'Claremont'. It had come into the Skrine family in the 18th century through the marriage of Henry Skrine (1755 - 1803) with Marianne Chalié. Marianne Chalié's mother, Susanne Clarmont, had belonged to a Huguenot family driven from France in the reign of Louis XIV. The spelling Clarmont was an attempt at anglicizing Clermont.

14 2. Colonel John Stewart (1833 - 1914) CIE. He entered the Bengal Artillery in 1851. During the Mutiny he was employed on protecting the communications of the Bengal army operating in Oudh. He is credited with having successfully interceded with General Havelock to save some native temples which were to have been demolished to make way for entrenchments. After the Mutiny he obtained government backing to start a leather industry in Cawnpore and he was appointed superintendent of the Harness and Saddle Factory which later became Ordnance Equipment Factory. The industry employed thousands of hands and proved of priceless value, specially in wartime, in producing army boots. A contractor named Bhagwatdas out of gratitude to Stewart caused a special temple to be built on the Ganges near Cawnpore and placed in it effigies of Stewart, his wife, son and pet dog. These are still revered (1984).

15 3. General Sir Henry Brackenbury (1837 - 1914) GCB KCSI Military Member of Viceroy's Council 1891 - 96.

15 4. Surgeon-General Sir Charles Pardey Lukis (1857 - 1918). KCSI. Director-General Indian Medical Service 1910 and Member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council.

16 5. *Sors tertia.* I am indebted to the late Professor Robert Ogilvie of the Department of Humanity, St. Andrews University, for the information that this phrase was in common use in public schools in the 19th century as a euphemism for corporal punishment. Professor Ogilvie believed it to be derived from Caesar, Gallic Wars 1.53.

19 6. Sir William Hunter (1840 - 1900) KCSI. Compiler of the Imperial Gazeteer of India.

19 7. Montague John Rendall (1862 - 1950). Second Master 1899; Headmaster Winchester 1911 - 24.

23 8. Hubert Murray Burge (1862 - 1925) DD. Headmaster Winchester 1901 - 11; Bishop of Southwark 1911 - 19 and of Oxford 1919 - 25.

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28 9. Nowell Charles Smith (1871 - 1961) Scholar of Winchester and New College; afterwards Fellow of New College, then of Magdalen. Housemaster at Winchester 1905 - 9, Headmaster Sherborne 1909 - 27.

28 10. Frank Carter (1861 - 1939) Professor of Classics at McGill University Montreal 1896 - 1903; master at Winchester 1903 - 1922.

29 11. Harold Edgeworth Butler (1878 - 1951) Scholar of New College and lecturer 1901 - 02; Fellow 1902 - 11. He then became Professor of Latin at University College London, retiring in 1943.

32 12. Henry Cecil Sturt born 1863. Hastings Exhibitioner at Queen's 1882; BA 1886. He became a freelance tutor and lecturer.

33 13. Maharaja of Jhalawar – H.H. Sir Bhawani Singh Bahadur (1874 - 1929) KCSI. He belonged to the Jhala clan of Rajputs. The area of the State was 808 square miles, with population 100,000. All of Frank Skrine's service had been in Bengal and his family's friendship with the Maharaja arose from help Skrine had been able to give the Maharaja in England.

36 14. Hector Granville Sutherland Tyler. ICS 1895 - 1922. Served in NW Provinces (subsequently United Provinces). Last appointment Commissioner Fyzabad Division.

38 15. Sir Robert Sherwood Dodd (1878 - 1950). Entered Indian Police 1899 and was Superintendent of Police in Cawnpore in 1913. He later became Inspector-General of Police, United Provinces, and was knighted.

40 16. Sir Harcourt Butler (1869 - 1938) GCSI GCIE. Lieutenant-Governor United Provinces 1918 - 21, afterwards of Burma.

40 17. William Malcolm Hailey (1872 - 1969) 1st baron, cr. 1936. OM GCSI GCMG GCIE. He remained Chief Commissioner Delhi until 1918 and later was Governor of the Punjab and of the United Provinces. After leaving India he had a long public career and was internationally acclaimed as an authority on colonial administration.

40 18. Charles Hardinge of Penshurst (1858 - 1944) KG KCMG KCVO PC. Viceroy 1910 - 16, later Ambassador in Paris.

42 19. James Scorgie Meston (1865 - 1943) 1st baron cr. 1919. KCSI. Lieutenant-Governor United Provinces 1912 - 18; Finance Member of Governor-General's Council 1919.

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47 20. Leonard Glyde Lavington Evans (1888 - 1976) CIE ICS and IPS. Resident Eastern States 1935 - 36.

48 21. Bruno Wolfgang Wahl. ICS 1903; killed in Persia in 1916 while serving with Indian Army Emergency Reserve.

48 22. Charles Arthur Silberrad ICS 1894 - 1922; served in NW Provinces and Oudh (subsequently United Provinces). Last appointment Magistrate and Collector Saharanpur.

49 23. Sir John Barry Wood (1870 - 1933) KCIE KCVO CSI. Political Secretary to Government of India 1914 - 22.

49 24. Sir Alfred Hamilton Grant Bt (1872 - 1937) KCSI KCIE. Foreign Secretary to Government of India 1914 - 19; Chief Commissioner North West Frontier Province 1919 - 21.

49 25. Sir Percy Zachariah Cox (1864 - 1937) GCMG GCIE KCSI. Chief Political Officer, Indian Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia 1914 - 18. High Commissioner in Iraq 1920 - 23.

51 26. The Political Service. This name was officially adopted in 1937; earlier the formal name had been 'the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India'. This ceased to be strictly accurate once the Government of India Act, 1935, had come into force since the States thenceforward were the responsibility of the Crown Representative, not of the Government of India.

51 27. Lt Col Frank McConaghey CIE. Indian Army 1891; appointed Political Assistant 1899.

55 28. Lt Col Sir John Ramsay (1862 - 1942). KCIE CSI. Indian Army 1882; AGG in Baluchistan 1911 - 17.

59 29. Lt Col William Frederick Travers O'Connor CIE Indian Army. Consul for Seistan and Kain and for Khorassan before becoming Consul at Shiraz in 1912.

60 30. Brigadier-General Sir Percy Molesworth Sykes (1867 - 1945) KCIE. First British Consul in Kerman 1894; established consulate in Seistan and Kain 1898; Consul-General Khorassan 1906 - 13; Consul-General Chinese Turkestan 1915. Raised and commanded South Persia Rifles 1916 - 18. Author of numerous books on Asia, notably History of Persia, History of Afghanistan, The Glory of the Shia World (with Ella Sykes), Through Deserts and Oases of Central Asia, Sir Mortimer Durand, The Quest for Cathay.

61 31. Lt Col David Lockhart Robertson Lorimer CIE. Indian Army 1896; Political Assistant 1899. He was a distinguished philologist; in addition to his study of Gabr, when he was in Gilgit he learned the Burushaski language – of great interest because like Basque it has no affinity with any other known language.

73 32. Bast. According to Sir Percy Sykes (History of Persia ch. 80), the reason for telegraph offices becoming *bast* or sanctuary was that the telegraph wires were believed to end at the foot of the Peacock Throne.

74 33. Lt Gen Sir (James) Bennett Hance (1887 - 1958) KCMG KCIE OBE. IMS 1912. Director-General IMS 1943-46.

80 34. Sir Arnold Wilson (1884 - 1940) KCIE DSO. Deputy Chief Political Officer Indian Expeditionary Force 1915. Later Anglo-Persian Oil Company and M.P. Killed in action as Pilot Officer in RAF.

85 35. Brigadier-General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer (1864 - 1927). CB. Commissioned 1885. Served in Burma campaign 1886 - 7, Hazara expedition 1888, relief of Chitral 1895, Waziristan blockade 1901 - 2, Zakha Khel operations 1908. In 1916 he was in command of operations in south-east Persia to secure the lines of communication of the East Persian Cordon Frontier Force which was being harassed by guerillas of the Yarmuhammadzai and Gamshadzai tribes. With a minute force and much bluff, he occupied Kwash and other strategic points in a campaign graphically described in 'Raiders of the Sarhad'. However, his name is remembered now only for the tragedy which took place at Amritsar on 13th April 1919 and the evil which grew out of it. Dyer was District Commander when serious rioting broke out on 10th April. A mob killed five Englishmen, looted extensively and beat and left for dead a lady-missionary. Dyer acted with vigour and on 13th April ordered troops to open fire on a crowd gathered in the Jalianwala Bagh (inner city). The exits were few and Dyer, thinking that the mob was massing, did not order the cease-fire until 1650 rounds had been expended. 379 persons were killed. Dyer then ordered that all Indians passing the place where the Englishwoman's body had lain should crawl. The guardians of the Golden Temple were thankful for the pacification of the city and invested Dyer as a Sikh in gratitude.

But elsewhere throughout India racial ill-feeling over what had happened at Amritsar mounted sharply. The Government appointed a committee of enquiry under the chairmanship of Lord Hunter, a Scottish judge. Dyer who had been commanding a brigade in Afghanistan was recalled to be a witness. His evidence added fuel to Indian resentment and rekindled controversey: he appeared to be racially arrogant and he

Page sought to justify his severity. Dyer's attitude was condemned in both Houses of Parliament and he resigned his commission.

The Jalianwala Bagh was purchased by interested parties to become a shrine of race hatred, the long-term effect of 'The Amritsar incident' in alienating responsible Indian opinion being incalculable.

In his memoirs 'Not in the Limelight', the late Sir Ronald Wingate recounts an amusing postscript to the tragedy. He was on leave in 1920 and was being quizzed about it by friends in the clubhouse at Muirfield. Wingate went over the whole history, reaching the conclusion that the blame for the outcome lay ultimately with Lord Hunter. A figure rose from a far corner to leave the room, saying as he stood up 'I am Lord Hunter'.

87 36. When Frank and Helen Skrine were driving away after their wedding in 1887, Helen blithely said something about not having children for a few years. Frank perceived in a flash that she did not know the facts of life. He immediately ordered the driver to turn the carriage round and drive back to her parents' house where he confronted his mother-in-law and insisted that she should explain matters to her daughter.

91 37. Duzdap. This was the name adopted by the Indian Government when the place was occupied in 1917, it being derived from two Baluchi words, duzd – thief, ab – water. In 1930, the then Persian Government considering that 'Thieves' Water' was not an appropriate name for a Persian Customs post, changed it to Zahidan. Zahidan had in fact been the name of an ancient city on the banks of the Helmand river sacked by Tamerlane in 1389.

91 38. Sir Basil Gould (1883 - 1956) CMG CIE. ICS and IPS. Served in Persia, Afghanistan, Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet.

92 39. Lt Col Sir Armine Dew (1867 - 1941) KCIE CSI. Indian Army 1899. Political Department 1897. AGG Baluchistan 1919 - 22.

92 40. Lt Col Sir Robert Groves Sandeman (1835 - 1892) KCSI. He conducted negotiations which led in 1876 to a treaty with the Khan of Kalat. His policy revolutionised the attitude of the Government of India towards frontier tribes: jirgas (tribal councils) were made responsible to the Administration in return for allowances and levy (militia) service organised and financed by the Government of India. As a consequence, the frontier tribes were kept under control during the Second Afghan War. Sandeman was Agent to the Governor-General in Baluchistan, directly responsible to the Viceroy, 1877 - 1892.

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93 41. Major G. T. Dennys. Officer in charge Intelligence Bureau, Baluchistan 1920 - 24.

96 42. Henry Duncan Graves Law ICS 1906, IPS 1912 - 34. 1st Assistant to AGG Baluchistan 1919 - 24; Consul for Kerman and Persian Baluchistan 1924 - 27.

96 43. Lt Col Hugh Stewart CIE Indian Army 1893; joined Political Department 1903.

96 44. Sir Henry Dobbs (1871 - 1934) GBE KCSI KCMG. ICS. Served in Persia, Iraq and Afghanistan. High Commissioner Iraq 1923 - 29.

101 45. Sir Francis Younghusband (1863 - 1942) KCSI CIE. Commissioned 1st Dragoon Guards 1882, transferred to Indian Political Department 1890. Explorations in the course of Government missions to Manchuria, Chinese Turkestan. Political Officer Hunza 1892; Political Agent Chitral 1893 -94; special correspondent of The Times in Chitral Expedition 1895. British Commissioner to Tibet 1902 - 04. President Royal Geographical Society 1919.

101 46. Lt Col P. T. Etherton (1879 - 1963). He was one of a trio of Indian Army officers (the others being F.M. (Eric) Bailey and L.V.S. Blacker) who were sent north in 1918 to make contact with the as yet unknown Bolshevik government and, if need be, to recruit levies to protect the frontier. Many years afterwards Clarmont learned from Bailey how Etherton had come to hold the post of Consul-General. When the three officers arrived at Kashgar there was not much doing, the war was coming to an end and everybody was crying out for leave. Macartney had not been home for 24 years. Delhi had suggested that Bailey should take over from him but this was the last thing he wanted, for he knew that the moment home leave was available those nearer the seat of power in India would get first pick. Bailey realized that here was an opportunity for 'shedding his impedimenta' – Etherton whom he did not like and Blacker. He therefore turned down the offer and suggested Etherton instead. Macartney could not get home via Moscow or Vladivostock, so Blacker was attached to the party travelling back to India. Bailey was thus free to push on alone to Tashkent which he knew had been the important objective.

102 47. Sir Aurel Stein (1862 - 1943) was born a Hungarian Jew in Budapest. During his schooldays he was inspired by the career of Alexander the Great. He followed Indian and Iranian studies at Vienna, Leipzig and Tuebingen before going to Oxford and the British Museum to work on archaeology. In 1888 he was appointed to the Punjab University and he spent the vacations on archaeological exploration.

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In 1900 he obtained government sanction for an archaeological expedition into Chinese Turkestan. He reached Kashgar and Khotan and discovered the sites of Dandan-oiliq, Niya and Endere in the southern Taklamakan desert. He returned to London where the importance of his discoveries received public recognition and he was appointed Archaeological Surveyor of India's North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. This enabled him to establish the location of Aornos, the mountain fortress captured by Alexander. He became a naturalized British subject in 1904 and continued to undertake expeditions. His main publications were massive quarto volumes, illustrated by plates and maps – 'Ancient Khotan' (1907), 'Serindia' (1921), 'Innermost Asia' (1928). He died in Afghanistan.

106 48. Sir Evelyn Howell (1877 - 1971) KCIE CSI. ICS 1900. Political Agent NW Frontier Province; Resident Waziristan 1924 - 26; Resident Kashmir 1927 - 29; Foreign Secretary to Government of India 1930 - 32.

112 49. Methods of Amban of Kargalik. There is a photograph opposite page 124 of 'Chinese Central Asia' entitled 'Debtor wearing cangue, Magistrate's Yamen, Kargalik'. In the text the following description is given of a cangue (Turki shal) or heavy square yoke of wood: 'This ancient Chinese method of making debtors pay has long been officially abolished in China proper and in Sinkiang, but it evidently survives in out-of-the-way places; the cangues, I am told, vary in weight from 20 to 60 lb or more, and are left on the neck of the debtor until he pays up. He can move about as he likes within the Yamen precincts, but has to be fed by his relations as he cannot reach his own mouth'.

113 50. Sir Ronald Macleay (1870 - 1943) GCMG. British Minister to China 1922-26.

115 51. 'Moved on..! From Kashgar to Kashmir' by P. S. Nazaroff. Published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1935.

121 52. Sir Denys de Saumarez Bray (1875 - 1951) KCIE CSI CBE Foreign Secretary to Government of India 1924 - 27.

124 53. Sir Beauchamp St. John (1874 - 1954) KCIE CBE. Indian Army 1893. Political Department 1898. AGG Punjab States 1925 - 27; AGG Baluchistan 1927 - 30. Returned to India after retirement and was Prime Minister Jaipur State 1933-39.

124 54. Hely Richard Lynch-Blosse ICS 1911: IPS 1914. APA Quetta 1922-23.

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125 55. Sir John Perronet Thompson (1873-1935) KCSI KCIE. Political Secretary Government of India 1922-27.

130 56. Joseph Wilson Johnstone ICS 1899. Nabha State Administrator 1923 - 28.

133 57. Major Arthur Ernest Henry McCann. Indian Army. Consul Duzdap 1926.

134 58. Major Lloyd Kirkwood Ledger IMS. Medical Officer and ex officio Vice-Consul Seistan 1926.

134 59. George Edwin Moore MBE Extra Assistant to Consul for Seistan and Kain 1920; Vice-Consul at Birjand 1923.

137 60. Lt Col Hugh Vincent Biscoe. Indian Army 1901. Consul-General for Khorassan 1926.

137 61. John Hunter Davies OBE. ICS. Consul for Kerman and Persian Baluchistan 1927.

145 62. 'Gossip about Dr Johnson and Others' published Eveleigh Nash & Gray 1926; 'India's Hope' published W. Thacker & Co. 1929.

148 63. Major Louis Alexander Gordon Pinhey OBE Indian Army 1918. Consul Kerman 1945.

149 64. Sir Frederick William Johnston (1872 - 1947) KCIE CSI. AGG Baluchistan 1922-27.

149 65. Sir Henry Tristram Holland (1875 - 1965). CIE. He went to India as a medical missionary with the Church Missionary Society and became very well known throughout the North West Frontier, the Quetta Mission Hospital becoming famous for successful eye operations. He acted as Civil Surgeon and Chief Medical Officer in Baluchistan during the war. Author of 'Frontier Doctor' and numerous articles on opthalmology.

151 66. 'Colonel Barker' was Valerie Arkell-Smith (1895-1960) who masqueraded as a man. The deception came to light in 1929 when 'Colonel Barker' was remanded in Brixton for bankruptcy and a medical examination revealed 'him' to be a woman.

151 67. Sir Norman Cater (1880 - 1957). KCIE. Deputy Secretary Government of India 1919. AGG Madras States; AGG Baluchistan 1931 - 36.

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151 68. Lt Col Henry Mortimer Poulton CIE. Indian Army 1922. Adjutant Tochi Scouts. Resident Gwalior 1945.

158 69. Kalat. A treaty with the Khan of Kalat was signed in 1876 under Disraeli's instructions during the viceroyalty of Lytton. Under the treaty, the British, in exchange for an annual subsidy, were allowed to control the Bolan pass and occupy Quetta and the Kojak pass. South of the Gumal, the 'Sandeman System' was adopted as governing policy – tribal councils (jirgas) presided over by tumandars and sardars made responsible for the British in return for allowances and levy service organised and financed by the Government of India. Kalat was a confederacy, the Khan being the first among the tribal chiefs of Kalat who elected him to preside over the jirga of the confederacy. The Khanate was the last of the semi-independent khanates of central Asia (cf. Khiva, Bokhara). In 1915, a mentally unbalanced Khan, Mahmud Khan, rebelled with support of the leading sardars. Troops from Quetta quelled the revolt and Mahmud was deprived of his powers which were assumed by the AGG and delegated to his Political Agent in Kalat. Mahmud Khan remained in residence in the Miri at Kalat until his death in 1932.

159 70. General Hastings Lionel Ismay (1887 - 1965). 1st baron cr. 1947, KG GCB DSO. Military Secretary to Lord Willingdon 1931 - 33, then GSO 1 War Office and Deputy Secretary to Committee of Imperial Defence. Chief of Staff to Churchill 1940 - 45; additional Secretary of the Cabinet 1945. Chief of Staff to Mountbatten, March - November 1947. Secretary-General and later Chairman of NATO 1952 - 57.

166 71. Sir Edward Birkbeck Wakefield Bt (1903 - 1969). CIE. Joined ICS 1927; served in Punjab, Rajputana, Kathiawar, Baluchistan, Central India, Tibet and Persian Gulf. M.P. West Derbyshire 1950 - 62. Author of 'Past Imperative' (1966).

167 72. Lt Col Vernon Maurice Hervalwil (Mervyn) Cox Indian Army 1921. Adjutant Mekran Levy Corps 1930. PA Eastern Kathiawar 1944.

172 73. Sir Aubrey Metcalfe (1883 - 1957) Foreign Secretary 1932 - 39; AGG Baluchistan 1939 - 43.

172 74. Sir Bertrand Glancy (1882 - 1953) GCIE KCSI. Political Secretary 1933 - 37; Political Adviser to the Crown Representative 1938 - 42. Governor of the Punjab 1941 - 46.

172 75. Sir Francis Wylie (1891 - 1970) GCIE KCSI. Political Adviser 1940 - 41 and 1943 - 45. Governor of United Provinces 1945 - 47.

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174 76. Sir Arthur Lothian (1887 - 1962) KCIE CSI. ICS Bengal. Special representative of Viceroy in federal discussions with Indian States 1935 - 37. Resident at Hyderabad 1942 - 46.

174 77. Sir Eric Conran-Smith (1890 - 1960) KCIE CSI. ICS Madras.

174 78. Sir Jeremy Raisman (1892 - 1978) GCMG GCIE KCSI. ICS Bihar and Orissa. Finance Member of Government of India 1939 - 45. Afterwards numerous public appointments in Central and East Africa; Deputy Chairman Lloyds Bank.

176 79. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar (1879 - 1966). KCSI KCIE. Joined Madras bar 1903. Dewan of Travancore 1936 - 47. As Dewan, declared independence of State 1947.

176 80. Sir Shanimukan Chetty (1892 - 1953). KCIE. Diwan Cochin State 1935 - 41. Adviser to Chamber of Princes 1945.

178 81. Sir Alexander Robert Loftus Tottenham (1873 - 1946) CIE. ICS Madras, retired 1933. Administrator Pudukkottai State 1934 - 44.

181 82. Sir Mirza Ismail (1883 - 1959). KCIE. Dewan of Mysore 1926 - 41. Prime Minister of Jaipur 1942 - 46 and of Hyderabad 1946 - 47.

183 83. Air Chief Marshal Sir Edgar Ludlow-Hewitt (1883 - 1973). GCB GBE CMG DSO MC. AOC India 1935 - 37. Inspector-General of the RAF 1940 - 45.

184 84. Freya Stark achieved her wish of visiting the Skrines but in Meshed, not Baluchistan. She stayed with them in 1943 and wrote from the British Embassy Baghdad on 15th April – 'We got here safely – sold the car in Teheran – all as well as possible... I am smothered in democracy, so only have time to send you renewed love and thanks and *so* happy to have attained that glimpse of you. I am to go to USA in the autumn for a few months, so goodness knows when I reach Persia again – so *how* good it was to do it when I did – Love to you all from Freya'.

The late Sir Olaf Caroe disapproved of Miss Stark (as she then was). Wavell liked her very much and ordered Caroe to obtain permission for her to buy a car – permission very grudgingly sought and granted in wartime India.

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190 85. Lord Brabourne (1895 - 1939) 5th Baron GCSI GCIE MC. Private Secretary to Secretary of State for India 1932 - 33. Governor of Bombay 1933 - 37; Governor of Bengal 1937.

190 86. Humphrey Tevelyan (1905 - 85) Baron (life peer) cr. 1968 KG GCMG CIE OBE. ICS 1929. IPS 1932. Retired 1946 and joined Foreign Service. Served Baghdad, Germany, China; Ambassador to Egypt, Iraq, USSR and High Commissioner in South Arabia.

191 87. Captain John Amyot Steward MBE Indian Army 1932. Political Department 1938; Muscat 1945.

193 88. 'Past Imperative. My life in India 1927 - 1947' published Chatto & Windus 1966.

196 89. Lt Col Basil Woods–Ballard b. 1900. CIE. Indian Army 1920. Appointed to Political Service 1925. PA Bhopal 1945.

202 90. Sir Conrad Corfield (1893 - 1980). KCIE CSI MC. ICS 1920; joined Political Department 1925. Served in numerous States before becoming Resident Rajputana, then Resident Punjab States 1941 - 45. When British withdrawal in 1947 was decided upon Corfield had obligations which were impossible to reconcile. HMG had consistently assured the Princes that Britain would not hand over her powers under Paramountcy to any successor government. Corfield did everything he could to see that this undertaking was honoured by arranging for all Government of India papers dealing with State affairs to be destroyed.

203 91. Lt Gen. Edward Felix Norton (1884 - 1954) CB DSO MC. Known to his friends as Reuben Norton, he had been a member of the 1922 and 1924 Everest expeditions. When he was at the Quetta Staff College he had been on several expeditions with Clarmont in the Khalifat range.

204 92. Maj. Gen. Sir Frederick Gwatkin (1885 - 1969) CB DSO MC.

204 93. Why Skrine was not confirmed in 1941 as Resident First Class. There is nothing to show in the India Office Library and Records any reason for Corfield's supersession of Skrine as Resident Punjab States. The author was able to consult the late Sir Olaf Caroe who in turn consulted the late Sir Conrad Corfield. They both confirmed that there was no scandal attached to Skrine's private life – such as might have arisen from his affair with Mrs Bartrum.

Caroe wrote: 'Wylie never told me why Clarmont was removed from the Punjab States and I can't throw any light on it. But in essentials it

Page must have been that those two would never have seen eye to eye – they were fundamentally antipathetic'.

There is a significant footnote in Gordon Brook-Shepherd's book 'The Storm Petrels' in the chapter dealing with the defection of Boris Bajanov. Brook-shepherd writes: 'It would be nice to think that Mr Skrine had his official career advanced by what happened..' The footnote reads: 'In fact, it seems unlikely. Sir Ronald Wingate Bt, a veteran of the ICS who was actually serving in Quetta at the time of Bajanov's escape, told the author in 1976 that 'Skrino', as Skrine was always known in the service, was somewhat suspect in New Delhi because of his independent views'.

204 94. Sir Olaf Caroe (1892 - 1981) KCSI KCIE. ICS Punjab; NW Frontier. Chief Secretary to the Government of the NW Frontier Province 1933 - 4; Revenue Commissioner Baluchistan 1938 - 39; Secretary External Affairs Department 1939 - 45: Governor NW Frontier Province 1946-7.

205 95. 'Assignment to Mauritius'. Blackwood's Magazine February 1954.

206 96. The Hon. Sir Bede Clifford (1890 - 1969) GCMG CB MVO. Governor of Bahamas 1932 - 37; Governor of Mauritius 1937 - 42; Governor of Trinidad and Tobago 1942 - 46.

206 97. 'I never could get near the man. He avoided giving me an audience on one pretext or another every time I asked for one' – Sir Reader Bullard, quoted in 'World War in Iran' p.121. Sir Reader Bullard (1885 - 1976) KCB KCMG CIE. Minister (later Ambassador) at Teheran 1939 - 46.

208 98. The Alam family. The Shaukat's personal qualities as a true nobleman were sustained in his descendants. His son, Assadullah Alam, became Prime Minister of Iran in 1962. He was a loyal servant of Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlevi and remained a firm friend of Britain, being made an honorary GCMG. As Minister of the Court, he bore the main burden of arranging the 2,500th anniversary celebrations of 1971 to which Skrine was invited, Assadullah Alam having carried on his father's friendship. He died in New York in 1976.

208 99. A letter from Curzon to The Times quoted by Gerald Morgan in 'Ney Elias, Explorer and Envoy Extraordinary in High Asia' – George Allen & Unwin 1971.

211 100. Sir John le Rougetel (1894 - 1975) KCMG MC. Diplomatic Service. Served Vienna, Budapest, Ottawa, Tokyo, Peking, The Hague, Bucharest, Moscow, Shanghai. Ambassador Persia 1946 - 50; Belgium 1950 - 51; High Commissioner South Africa 1951 - 55.

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The main sources of this book are Skrine's letters (from 1912 to the date of his retirement) which are on permanent loan to the India Office Library – reference MSS. Eur. F. 154. Letters written before he went to India are in private ownership.

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