

YOUTH·AND THE·EAST

AN UNCONVENTIONAL
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

EDMUND
CANDLER

Youth and the East : an unconventional autobiogr
PR 6005 .A46 Z5 1926 3 AHR00009871Y



Candler, Edmund,

American Alpine Club Library

NOTE BY PUBLISHER.

As internal evidence shows, this work was written with the freedom and intimacy of anonymity, but to the initiated the authorship was unmistakable, and the various chapters as they appeared in 'Blackwood's Magazine' were recognised as being from Mr Candler's pen.

'The Times' said of the opening chapters:—

"Every now and then even 'Blackwood's' outdoes itself on its own lines; and if the author of 'Youth and the East' can keep up in future instalments the sense, the charm, and the interest of this first section, he will be the agent of the new marvel."

The sections went from strength to strength, and the Publishers were reluctant that so brilliant a literary achievement should go unacknowledged. At their request Mr Candler has consented to give his name to the book.

Youth and the East

An Unconventional Autobiography

BY

EDMUND CANDLER

William Blackwood and Sons
Edinburgh and London

1924

TO

SIR MALCOLM SETON, K.C.B.

(At one time Editor of the 'X-onian')

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE UNVEILING OF LHASA.
THE LONG ROAD TO BAGHDAD.
THE EDGE OF THE WORLD.
THE MANTLE OF THE EAST.
THE SEPOY.
THE GENERAL PLAN.
SIRI RAM, REVOLUTIONIST.
ABDICATION.

&c.

I.

BOOKS OR PEOPLE?

BOOKS OR PEOPLE?

I.

“BOOKS or people?” I remember being shocked, when a small child, at hearing a misanthropic visitor at my father’s house put the question: “Books or people? If you had to live with one or the other, which would you choose?”

I thought him an ogre, of course, an inhuman monster, all the more wicked because he was a clergyman, in whom I believed the charities were immanent. But before I was into my teens I had a great deal in common with that old man. If I still liked people better than books, I made greater efforts to escape from them. Visitors had glimpses of slippered feet flying up the stairs; or if, as they passed the second window of our dining-room, they glanced inside, they might have seen the hinder part of a small boy wriggling through the buttery hatch into the pantry. Thus early had I joined the company of books.

Strange visitors must have come to that house. I have another recollection of one who spoke of books, a lady who came one day to see my mother. This must have been at least four years after the ogre posed his memorable conundrum, for it was in the summer holidays, and I had carried ‘Hereward the Wake’ back with me from school. Not a prize—I never had any—and probably not a holiday task, or I should not have been so absorbed

in it. I saw a lady coming up the drive, but did not budge, feeling safe stretched out flat between a lawn-mower and a wheel-barrow of cut grass on one side, and a thick herbaceous border on the other. Then, after sundry adventures in fen-land—it might have been five minutes or half an hour—I was startled by voices. My mother and the lady were bearing down on me. My mother, who had garden scissors in her hand, was cutting flowers from the very border which formed the screen of my earthworks on the side of the drive. I remember the lady by her side, a hard equine face under a stiff narrow-brimmed straw hat. She would have been stockish if it had not been for the compression of whale-bone, which gave her the look of a bulky hour-glass, the kind of uncompromising figure one discovers in faded photographs when turning out old drawers.

Escape was impossible without bringing disgrace on the family, and my only hope was that they would turn before they reached the end of the border. However, they bore on until I saw that collision was inevitable. The equine-faced lady's protests at the spoliation of the flower-bed were interrupted by the apparition of a small boy, a palpable fugitive, raising himself solemnly between the handles of the wheel-barrow. My mother presented me apologetically.

“Do you like books?” she asked. “Are you fond of reading?” observing my ‘Hereward,’ which had a handkerchief stuck in Chapter VI.—lately the receptacle of bait, we will hope not worms,—to speed my return to the wantonly interrupted adventure.

With the shamefacedness of one detected in secret indulgence, I admitted that I liked books and was fond of reading.

I suppose it was a sane enough question to put

to a small boy ; but I have heard it addressed since, quite innocently, to grown-up people. " Do you like books ? " She might have asked, " Are you an imbecile, a slug, or a cabbage ? " I believe I was old enough even then, at the age of eight, to understand that books are only media, and that you must be interested in books if you are interested in anything. Even a head-hunter would be glad of an illustrated manual.

Afterwards I argued that books *are* people, or one need not read or consort with any that are not ; that you can banish books that come between you and people, but you cannot always banish people who come between you and books. The unsocial bookworm has a sublimated curiosity about the inner life of his neighbours. He avoids persons, but is an epicure in personalities. This, of course, is a vice, as it means that in all his human contacts, unless he too writes books—which is too frequently the case,—he gives nothing but only takes. A selfish isolation. I was never told that it was wrong to read books, though, perhaps, I was made to feel that my furtive escapes to them were in some sort of way a disloyalty to the herd. Why otherwise standing between the handles of the wheel-barrow should I feel those vague uneasy prickings of the conscience ? But to understand is to forgive. That old misanthrope's choice was not between books and people, but between the folk of his vicinity and other folk with whom he could only communicate through books. In my case it was a choice between the lady with the stiff narrow-brimmed straw hat and ' Hereward ' ; in his case, as I learnt when I had grown out of the age of ignorance, it was a choice between the lady's men-kind and Horace and the Early Fathers.

Possibly there was no one in his parish who

had any physical, spiritual, or intellectual adventures to retail. Not that he might not have been equally bookish and unsociable in any other environment. He was born a bookworm and recluse, insensitive to the ordinary social currents. That is to say, in the terms of the electrician, he was a non-conductor. He lacked that sixth humour, the necessary medium of *rappport*; or if it existed in him, it could only be switched on through the medium of books. He was in hourly communication with the absent and dead, but from the quick and the present, the potential interloper in the company he had chosen, he fled.

The old misanthrope, I am afraid, was a bore. My early memories of him were not of a fugitive, but of one provocative of flight. Like war he created a solitude. And he ought to have been happy in it. Fate had endowed him with a providential armoury which won him the victories he desired.

The neighbourhood, though thinly populated, must have had more than its share of incompatibles. I remember—it was somewhere about the time of the misanthrope's visit—wondering what my parents meant when they talked of bores. I gathered that a bore did something to you. It was something unpleasant. What it was, and exactly what part of the person was affected, I did not know, but it appeared to be a danger to which grown-ups were perennially exposed, indoors and outdoors, in their own houses and in those of other people; and even at games and in church. I had never witnessed the act of boring, and my curiosity was agitated. Yet through some instinct of pride or delicacy, I hesitated to inquire, feeling that, like child-birth, "being bored" was one of the many things it was wiser not to ask questions about.

One evening my father returned from a visit to a house in which, it seemed, he had been compelled against his will to stay for long hours and drink tea. I heard my mother ask him how he had got on. He had never been so bored in his life, he told her. And he was so abundant and insistent in his lamentations that my loyalty and pity were moved. "Father," I said sympathetically, when a pause in his jeremiad gave me an opening—and a hearing, for I was not often articulate,—“I hope *you* bored *them*.” Again it was a question of the honour of the family. In all innocency I prayed that in that mysterious strife he had given as good as he had got.

II.

At school, wisely enough, books were not encouraged as a substitute for people. Books were a discipline. "It is not knowledge," Dr Arnold explained, "but the means of gaining knowledge which I have to teach." This, I believe, was the general aim of our Public Schools in the 'eighties—in the secondary matter of education. In grammar, syntax, prosody we were well grounded. The dead languages were our portion at X., and the traditions of pedagogy saw to it that they remained dead. Our anatomical researches, no doubt, had their practical value as an aid to expression in the living tongue, but were no more inspiring than a post-mortem. We did not sail with Ulysses or feed Lesbia's sparrows.

Perhaps it was our own fault. We ought to have conjured up our own images. But to borrow any colour of emotion from books—above all, from school-books—would have been bad form.

Certainly we were not taught to look for romance or humanity or poetry or adventure in the classics ; and looking back on those early days I cannot believe that any of our masters at X. heard the sirens' voices or descended with Æneas into the underworld.

I was still "fond of books." I "liked reading." That had not been knocked out of me. But the company I got out of them belonged to my interior life. It never occurred to me to admit to their society personages with whose names I became acquainted through the school curriculum. Regulus, Nicias, Cæsar, Alcibiades were shadows and abstractions. Yet there must have been a very thin film between me and the pageant of Greece and Rome. Something I must have seen. A blur of colour here and there must have soaked through. For without any definite associations or detailed picture the name of Syracuse still recalls something sad and moving, an atmosphere overcharged with tragedy and doom. Beyond this impression, and a few plangent lines of Homer, all that I remember of the Greek that was drubbed into me at school is a voice that no one who has heard can forget. Thirty years after I had thrown aside the *Anabasis* with all the other drab-coloured text-books, when I was exploring the old fort at Trebizond and gathering primroses and green hellebore in spring, I heard the cry that has echoed through the ages since the day when Xenophon, and what was left of his Ten Thousand, stood on Mount Theches and looked down on the sea.

And Regulus. We droned through our Horace without a regret for Regulus. Ovid's exile, Dido's lamentations, the fate of Socrates and Cicero left us unmoved. Our school-books and our taskmasters were non-conductors. An atmosphere of

dusters, blackboards, chalk, false quantities, syntax, exam. rep., and imposition school, as impermeable to the ghosts of dead passions as phenyle to unhealthy germs, interposed between the young barbarian and the sublime.

And there was no conjuror at X. like Mr Kipling's form-master in 'Regulus' to puncture the screen. It was in a dug-out in 1917, when I had not opened a Latin book for over a score of years, that I came to know Regulus through that endearing pedagogue. I returned to Horace. The copy that reached me wore the same drab uniform that I remembered in rows upon my shelves at X., a company in quarantine. The dulness of their covers was an index of the dulness of their contents. The ritual of pedagogy provided that they should not have the appearance of books. The tradition of the repositories of classical learning at our Public Schools seems to have been almost Brahmanic in its obscurantism, as if there were a conspiracy to keep the profane and uninitiated from the door. At X. the golden legend was religiously obscured. We had no heretical illuminator like Mr King, and one could not expect a boy of sixteen to guess that these gloomy pundits were in possession of *mantras* that might call up spirits eligible to associate with the best company on his private stage. A stupid half-awakened boy, it is true, yet impressionable, and not insensitive, with his pores open to every kind of suggestion, quick to extend the growing ramifications of his hobbies into any new field of romance. One would think that there must have been some one to open a door.

Perhaps in the Sixth? But I never reached the Sixth—an omission due to the accident that my passage through the Upper V. coincided with the winter and the Easter terms, a season of the

year when strategy dictated a place in the middle of the form. We took our seats by the week's marks, and the five middle boys in the class were snugly ensconced by the hot-water pipes at the farther end of the room from the dear old gentleman who was appointed to guide us at this important stage in our traverse of the classical tangle. Nobody ragged him, I am glad to say; but we in the distance enjoyed complete immunity from supervision. I would be alone with Monte Christo in the Chateau d'If, or maybe playing nap with my neighbour, when I would be aroused by a plaintive high-pitched cry from the end of the room, "Go on, Tau." There were generally a few seconds in which to ask my neighbour, quite audibly, the place, and the meaning of the first word or two I did not understand, before the voice, increasing in volume and irascibility, repeated for the third time, "Are you asleep? Go on, Tau. Wake up, sir. Don't mutter."

There was one master who made us work, and I passed through his form in a single term. It was a flight rather than a passage. If one fell foul of this ogre one might spend a week without seeing the sun save through the windows of one's study or one's classroom, or in the all-too-short scurry between. From him we learnt the Greek conditional clauses, the fulfilled and unfulfilled, the distinct and indistinct future. Ten years afterwards the formula was so burnt into my mind that I could scribble it down without an effort of memory. I did actually inscribe it in a lonely hour on the white surface of a riven birch-tree under a glacier in the Himalayas—*εἰ μὴ* with the optative, *εἰάν μὴ* with the subjunctive—or was it the other way about? Even now I sometimes dream that I have got it mixed, and

wake up with a delicious sense of escape to realise that it doesn't matter.

I remember the sudden hush as the Tartar swept into the classroom like gusty Boreas, the stern finality with which he roared, "Shut your books." It was the weekly history lesson. We had been given a chapter of Smith's 'Smaller History of Greece' to prepare, which alternated in our curriculum with Smith's 'Smaller History of Rome.' Our books were shut. Two of the boys were distributing long narrow slips of paper like book-markers, on which we were to write out the answers. Then the catechism—each question a rapid challenge flung out like a pistol-shot. It was a duel: each blank on one's paper was a bull's-eye to the Tartar. "One. What river did Alexander cross?" "Two. Who did he meet on the other side?" "Three. What was the date of the battle of Arbela?" And so on to twenty. "Exchange your papers." The Tartar read out the answers. Each boy marked for his neighbour. Right or wrong: there was no room for any shades of correctness or inaccuracy, no doubt as to the river Alexander crossed or the name of the general he met on the other side. History at X. was a muse of solid incontestable fact. It had some relation with geography, but none with the laws that govern the actions of men and societies. The manners, customs, faith, traditions, political and social systems of a people, the evolution or decline of civilisation among them, with its relations of cause and effect, were not her concern. The mind of the young barbarian was unclouded by speculations. Either Alexander crossed that river or he did not. Sophistries, nuances, generalisations, abstractions were no pabulum for the embryo leader of men.

Yet in spite of this simplification of our studies

I am afraid that I was never "good at history," even as it was understood at X. The lesson ended with an unforgettable tribunal, the assessment of punishment after the reading out of marks. "Smith, how many?" "Sixteen, sir." "Jones?" "Fourteen, sir." "Robertson?" "Fourteen." "Tau?" "Seven, sir." An awful pause. Doom sat entrenched on the brow of the Kalmuck. "You, Tau. Write out the chapter. Come here, Tau. Bring your paper with you." I approached the judgment-seat. The scorn and sorrow in the knell-like intonation of the Tartar, when he pronounced my name, made me ashamed of that innocent patronymic. Ten minutes to the hour, but a great deal might happen in ten minutes. The Tartar held out my paper at arm's-length, as though it were unclean. I would have given a good deal to be any other boy in the class. But I was soon to have a companion in the pillory.

"Who corrected Tau's paper?" thundered the Tartar.

It appeared that I had only six questions right, and not seven. The date of the battle of Arbela I had ascribed to 331 A.D. Further confusion. What imbecility had induced me to drag in that A.D.? There would have been no question of before or after Christ if I had simply stuck to figures. As it was, the chivalrous lad who passed my A.D. was summoned up beside me, and had to write out the chapter too.

One of the few things I learnt at X. was the date of the battle of Arbela. That date stuck to me like a burr, and I have never forgotten the B.C., which might otherwise have proved a pitfall.

III.

I am afraid the historic sense is lacking in the alumni of X., at least in those of my generation. I was entirely without it until I reached the age of twoscore. At Bers Nimrud, on the reputed site of the Tower of Babel, I was conscious of Alexander receiving the priests of the temple of Belus, but the vision was of later derivation, though there had been a youthful period, inspired by a visit to the British Museum, when Babylonia and Assyria became my furtive hobbies.

At Cambridge I belonged to a set in which novel or recondite literary interests were fashionable. It was a pose, but a very innocent and universal one, part of the entertaining game played by the interior self with the exterior in the stage of intimacy before the partners are solidly united. Youth no longer moves as a leg in a centipede, but enters its own habitation, proudly conscious of an individuality ; the inner is well pleased with the outer ; the instinct for ornament is pardonable. In those early days the Yellow Book and the Bodley Head were the last word in our esoteric circle. The literary event of my first year was an essay by Mr Max Beerbohm. We crowned John Davidson laureate for his "Ballad of a Nun." Owen Seaman edited the 'Granta.' J. K. S. was still a memory of the K. P. The pose, I believe, was even more of a cult at Oxford in the early 'nineties. One remembers Tubby in Mr G. S. Street's delightful *boutade*, 'The Autobiography of a Boy,' and his humour of being carried in a sedan-chair swathed in blankets and reading a Latin poet. There was a man at my college, senior to me by a year, who read Suetonius in

the train on the way to Newmarket. This evidence of catholic interests was irresistible. I became proud of his friendship. Needless to say, Suetonius was not included in any University course, or the spell would have been broken.

At Cambridge, as at X., I owed nothing to the schools, but pursued my own byways among books, paths that generally led nowhither. The child was father to the undergraduate. I rarely attended a lecture. Was that the fault of X., or does it amount to a tacit confession that it was through our own mulish obstinacy that the staff failed to give us a glimpse of the property we were heirs to? "If boys are mules, then let them be trained as mules," may have been their argument. After all, ninety-nine of us out of a hundred are so constituted that we discover the humanities through living contacts rather than through dead authors. And X. had its uses. To be thrown into a microcosm of a world and to find one's own place in it is no doubt a salutary experience. That is the accepted justification of the system. Still X. cannot be entirely acquitted. The fact remains that we were not educated. Nor were we taught the means of gaining knowledge according to Dr Arnold's precept. We were left to discover this for ourselves. When we went out into the world, history had no significance in relation to our own lives. Experience, as it came to us, had nothing to verify or contradict. The signposts and symbols all round us were inscribed in no script that we could understand. And we lost many a sermon in stones and running brooks by knowing nothing of its context.

Still it was all new country, and we were probably just as happy as if we had been properly educated and well grounded in the classics. We

had no "pointers," as our American friends call them. We learnt by our mistakes. We rode at blind fences. The spills we took added zest to life.

In youth folly and illusion are sweet; melancholy is sweet; disenchantment is sweet when it is a week old; ignorance and curiosity are sweet, and even dearly-bought wisdom, if one has a sense of humour. The most enchanting books are those which take us from the nursery to an age of prudence, breaking our shins against every obstacle in life. The greatest gift of a novelist is the power to recapture and communicate youth, to make us rub those vicarious bruises, pick ourselves up again, and go on stumbling through a renewal of illusions towards the discovery, however sad, of the profound meaning or meaninglessness of life.

Youth is most glamorous in Du Maurier's three simple effortless masterpieces, in 'Clive Newcome' and 'Pendennis,' in 'Richard Feverel,' 'Harry Richmond' and 'Nevill Beauchamp,' in 'Lord Jim' and 'Jean Christophe.' Conrad has given the title of 'Youth' to one of the most moving stories in the world.

But to those who have derived more pleasure from books than from people, the epicures in personalities, it is the youth of genius in autobiographies, young souls at bay in Philistia, that appeals most. It is paradoxical that the constant companion of an unlearned boy should have been the scholarly De Quincey, of whose rhetoric and erudition I was a prodigious admirer. Here was a potential torch-bearer, the earliest sympathetic influence that might have guided me to Greece and Rome. I could lap up erudition from De Quincey as if it had been pure romance. So fascinated and intrigued was I that I could wade through fifty pages of forced and tedious rhetoric

to arrive at one spontaneous passage in which the spirit of the opium-eater appeared for a moment evasively.

A picturesque original, and a truant. That must have been the spell. But what a truancy—to abscond at the age of sixteen so solemnly, conscientiously, and portentously from school with no baggage beyond a favourite English poet and a copy of ‘Euripides’! I felt the contagion of ‘Euripides,’ but it was too late—my last term at X., and I had forfeited the golden key that opes amain. But I could wander with De Quincey over the Welsh hills and lose myself in “the great Mediterranean of Oxford Street.” I never pass through Soho in fog without a glimpse of the sad expectant face of Ann.

De Quincey had no youth. There is very little radiance in the dark places one haunts with him, but an abiding and Sphinx-like mystery, more attractive to youth, perhaps, than joyousness. Rousseau, his spiritual antithesis, was another companion. Judged by every decent standard of life, young Jean Jacques was a poor creature at the best, but he has personified youth in the first six books of his ‘Confessions.’ There is a pastoral freshness in Book VI., like the smell of a hayfield. Every one who has read the ‘Confessions’ at an impressionable age wants to see Les Charmettes. In the inhospitable places of the earth my dreams of Savoy have always centred round it. When I was drawn to Chambéry on my return from the East I was familiar with the charming old country road, deep cut and shaded by limes and elms, that leads to Les Charmettes, the little old two-storied white house with its steeply-sloping roof of tiles, the vine below, the orchard above, the garden *en terrasse*, the little border of box, and the clump of chestnut trees on

the other side of the lawn, the *glycine* by the porch and the pear tree under which young Jean Jacques sat with Madame de Warens, the scene of those few perfect days through the memory of which he has added a new glamour to youth.

I have never had the habit of visiting the lions of a country through which I have been passing ; only there are certain places made familiar to the spirit to which I have been greatly tempted to resort in the flesh, and these are mostly associated with the youth of genius. In the evocation of youth genius can quicken the faculty of interior dramatisation in the dullest spirit. The landscape, atmosphere, architecture, superstitions that gave it its bent can be made more hauntingly real than any historic scene ; they become part of our own sympathetic experience, as intimately associated with our introduction to life as the places where we first saw the mountains or the sea. Compare De Quincey's 'Opium Eater' with the sterile, impersonal divagations that crowd his other works, the first six books of Rousseau's 'Confessions' with the morbid and tedious sequel, the earlier chapters of Renan's 'Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse' with his passage through the seminaries. Later I was drawn by Renan to Tréguier, the sombre old town, *écrasée par sa cathédrale*, which gave him his *indestructible pli*. "*On y nageait en plein rêve, dans un atmosphère aussi mythologique au moins que celle de Bénarès ou de Jagatnata. . . . Je n'étais à l'aise que dans la compagnie des morts, près de ces chevaliers, de ces nobles dames, dormant d'un sommeil calme, avec leur levrette à leurs pieds et un grand flambeau de pierre à la main.*"

It was not at X. or the University that I first felt these impulses to pilgrimage. At Cambridge I might have been likened to an inquisitive young

animal introduced as an exhibit into some exhibition, surrounded by objects and images, many of them attractive and glittering; but the faculty of observation was dormant, though there was always a vague intuition that the other exhibits would some day have a meaning; the time would come to break bounds and explore. This is not a too fanciful analogy. I can square it with my reminiscences of my passage through Paris and Rome, a happy, healthy, ignorant young cub, on the way to the East. It was my first visit to the Continent. At Paris, I remember, I boarded a tram to the Bastille, a building vaguely associated in my mind with the Reign of Terror. At the terminus I got out and addressed myself to a perplexed Frenchman. "*Pardon, monsieur, mais où est la Bastille?*" The Bastille was not there. "*A bas la Bastille,*" I echoed, remembering some yarn I had heard and forgotten about aristocrats and tumbrils and an angry mob. Still that Bastille-hunt, I felt, was a good story, and the classical tag to it, so aptly quoted, more than saved my face when telling it against myself. I dare not record, even in these confessions of asinine youth, how long after this the figure of poor little "Froggy" at X. remained in my mind as the impersonation of the French people.

"Roma" at the railway station in the early morning, when I had expected merely the inscription "Rome," tore a huge rent in the film that stood between me and reality. Light came flooding in as I drove through the streets in the fresh nipping air of that February morning. The sights and smells of Rome were a wonder and a delight. And with this hazy glamour I was content, like people borne rapidly through an Alpine pass in a charabanc, who say they like flowers and are satisfied with the flying patchwork of

colour. I could summon no individual ghost, Latin or medieval. They ought to have been rising up at every corner. The Campagna had been peopled for me by Browning. Modern romance was easily accessible through the novels of Marion Crawford. But the Forum was empty. I had nothing to animate it save a sour bust or two of an emperor, orator, or general, painfully familiarised in the chapter headings of Smith's 'Smaller History of Rome.' If only we could have gone to Rome in the holidays, and returned with some of its atmosphere in our pores, enough to give sustenance to the school-boy imagination, even X. might not have proved so unprofitable an introduction to life.

IV.

At Rome another big aperture was driven into the crust of my ignorance by a devout French baron, who passed his afternoons at the Vatican. "What does the Pope do all day?" I asked him carelessly one evening at table d'hôte. He explained to me in perfect English and with a delightful irony some of the preoccupations of the busiest man in Europe. The Pope, I gathered, had no need to kill time. I had pictured a diminutive figure in a cassock and biretta wandering aimlessly in the huge labyrinth of the Vatican. Probably the silence and immensity of the building impressed me so much that I could only think of its invisible occupant as weighed down by it, lost in the *grand milieu*, like a child standing under a great rock. Or rather I pictured: I did not think. The building and organisation of States, armies, Churches, and universities, like

the mechanism of engines and watches, were phenomena which I took for granted.

I had not then begun to associate politics with the Church. The instances that were presented to my intelligence of the worldly, unscrupulous, and calculating part that priestcraft has played in history must have appeared incidental. I knew nothing about the history of my own country or of Europe, save what I had gathered inferentially through a few biographies, the plays of Shakespeare, and the novels of Sir Walter Scott. When I picked up Froude at the age of two score years and five, I could not understand why people were burnt at the stake for reading the New Testament. I had the most ingenuous notions about Western civilisation, though after ten or fifteen years in the East I believed I had begun to understand the inscrutable Indian. An appointment in a Native State ensured an unconscious education of the greatest value. Here in little I saw repeated the drama of history in large ; but it was a long time before I began to discover that duplicity is not a vice of unmixed Oriental derivation.

At the mature age when I began my desultory studies, I had seen enough of the world to follow Emerson's advice to read history actively, not passively. That is to say, to regard one's own life as the text and books the commentary. A few years in an Indian Native State is perhaps the best introduction to history. It was easy at Balloki to explain the past by one's own experiences. One stood on a narrow bridge between the centuries. The conditions of life were not so much Asiatic as medieval. It would be a compliment to the Maharaja of Balloki to compare him in mentality with Pope Clement VII., but there is no doubt that an acquaintance with one would be an aid to an understanding of the other.

And the material for commentary went farther back. Even Gibbon, had he known the Maharaja's ministers and courtiers, might have added some pointed footnotes to his history. It is even possible that the unlettered product of X., having drunk of the waters to which he would not be driven, might contribute an apt marginal comment here and there to 'The Decline and Fall.'

Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' or rather, "*off* the Roman Empire," to adopt the amendment of the lady who kept the second-hand furniture and bric-à-brac shop in the small market-town associated with my infancy, was, I believe, the first "serious book" I possessed. It was much too serious to read. But at the 'Hereward' age I dearly wished to possess it. For many years it lay with other volumes, equally dingy, in a capacious linen-basket in the shop of antiques under a table with a mirror guarded by two brass fire-dogs. The old lady let me have my Gibbon for a song. An annual tip which I had come to regard as a prerogative was not entirely expended on it. No doubt she thought it dull and slow, as it had suffered the indifference of generations. Slow it must have been, if it took the historian ten volumes to describe his suspended fall off the Roman Empire. Anyhow, perhaps because of its dulness and slowness, I was allowed to take it away for a good deal less than a shilling a volume.

Gibbon was translated from the linen-basket to the shelf. I am afraid I cannot say "promoted," for he continued in neglect. No doubt I was converted to the view of the lady in the shop. His fall was not rapid enough. To what limbo the neglected volumes have passed, I know not. Maybe they have returned to the linen-

basket; or perhaps some book-lover has discovered treasure in them.

The third volume of the history which I had with me on the Tigris was a recent cheap edition. In Mesopotamia Gibbon was not accounted slow; he was almost topical. All the sufferings of the Roman army with Julian were endured by our troops in Iraq. The heat, the inundations, the "swarms of innumerable insects that darkened the unwholesome air," so feelingly described by Ammianus Marcellinus, Julian's eye-witness, were our daily inflictions. The sand-fly stuck in Chapter XXIV. bears witness to the continuity of history.

We were reading and making history at Shumran and Ctesiphon. On the early morning of 23rd February 1917, when I watched the Norfolks silently lowering their pontoons in the twilight before dawn to make the historic crossing of the Tigris, I had been reading the passage in Gibbon describing Julian's crossing at Ctesiphon overnight. I thought of the emperor's silent anxiety, disguised with smiles of confidence—like Maude's,—his successful mystification of the enemy, the sudden divulgence of his plans, the astonishment of his command, and how, when the signal was given, "the most impatient of his legionaries leaped into five vessels that lay nearest to the bank; and as they plied their oars with intrepid diligence, they were lost after a few moments in the darkness of the night. A flame arose on the opposite side. . . ." When the Norfolks were nearly across, the signal of alarm was a rifle-shot; the stream was churned with bullets. Julian's braves climbed the bank under a shower of stones, darts, and fire, and stood victorious upon the ramparts. We witnessed the same achievement of the impossible in the face of apparently insuperable odds. It was the same broad rapid river,

a swollen tawny stream in flood, 400 yards wide, with a current running five knots ; and the same formidable entrenchments of the enemy lay the other side, in our case pickets supported by artillery with reinforcements of infantry within call, in Julian's a numerous army of heavy cuirassiers, dexterous archers, and huge elephants, who (according to the extravagant hyperbole of Libanius) "could trample with the same ease a field of corn or a legion of Romans."

Life was the text here and history the commentary. In general the text is easier to find than the commentary. The ideal education might be defined as the system, or rather the influence, a person more often than a book, as the master in Regulus, that develops the inclination to look for it. In the bookworm the commentary swamps the text ; in the young alumni of our Public Schools the margin left by the text is too narrow for the commentary. They stumble through life without a suspicion of the relation between books, or history, and experience, unless they happen on any chance enlightenment after they are fledged.

Still, to repair the omissions of X. has been an entertaining hobby. Self-education at a mature age casually and by inference has its compensations, especially when books have necessarily become the substitute for people. Youth's zest for indiscipline is undiminished ; one is spared the humiliations of correction, and there is no bugbear of examiners. *ὄτι* and *οὐν* can settle their own business, and one is untroubled by the digamma.

Books or people ? There have been periods in my life when I have had no choice. The person who brought me my books wore a loin-cloth and a leather belt with a brass inscription. He ran swiftly on bare feet, and carried a staff with

jingling bells on it to frighten tigers and snakes. The very scantiness of his apparel made his gifts the more estimable. Bôdu, dak-runner, introduces 'Les Immortels.' If he had brought me the classics, I believe I should have returned to them. At Devagiri Bôdu was at one end of the conducting machinery. His symbolic loin-cloth emphasised the remoteness of the other bank—*amor ulterioris ripæ*—have I maligned X. ?—and the substantiality of the bridging gossamer of books. The threads of that bridge appeared the more wonderful and iridescent after the ebony blackness of the little gollywog. He would dally a moment to discuss rice and pice with the cook. When I heard the jingle of bells again on the path, the caduceus of my Mercury—I cannot resist a little learning, the privileged *snobisme* of the newly enriched,—I was already with the *Immortels*. The lights gleamed on the quays of Paris.

“ Guizot receives Montalembert !

Eh ? Down the court three lampions flare,
Put forward your best foot ! ”

V.

I visited a multiplicity of worlds at Devagiri. In cities it is good to read about the desert and the jungle. Burton and Doughty and Kinglake please best in a room overlooking the Thames. For the perfect *milieu* one needs a fog, not too thick, but sufficient to lend a mystery to the lights on the Embankment and the roar of traffic over Hungerford Bridge. In the desert one turns to 'Tess' or 'Under the Greenwood Tree' for the sweet smell of English woods and lanes ; or if

one hankers for cities one can walk down Jermyn Street with Major Pendennis. On one of the sultriest evenings of an Indian hot weather, when the coppersmith and brain-fever bird were silenced by the heat, and the sand of the dried-up river outside my bungalow smelt like a brick kiln, I took 'Reynard the Fox' to the scant shade of a stack of sleepers by the burning-ghat. The copper sky lifted and the earth ceased to burn, as I read the most English book in the English language since 'Dan Chaucer,' and thanked God that the old fox escaped.

And the books that have bridged physical and spiritual abysses are even more communicative when one opens them again in their native atmosphere. Finding that 'Kim' could make even Amballa railway-station romantic, I was careful to have him with me when I spent a night in the old Mogul garden at Pinjor. I have read Vigne in the Shalimar at Srinagar, De Joinville in the country of the Saracens, Henri Mouhot at Angkor Wat, and Thomas Manning in Phari Jong, where the icy gusts, larding the pages with the smoke and grime of yak-dung fires, nearly blew me out of bed.

These old friends, like a pipe or a poem, to borrow Oliver Wendell Holmes' simile of the meerschaum, take on new colour from associations. They become mellow with intimacy. For a background to 'La Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédaque' I can recommend an old French city like Arles or Avignon. Or if one wants to read a book steeped with the atmosphere of a place, take 'Ramuntcho' to a balcony overlooking the Bidassoa on an autumn afternoon and watch the emptying channels, a web of white light on a surface of violet and amber and mother-of-pearl.

The melancholy voluptuous monotony with

which Pierre Loti invests all his scenes, the alternate rhythm of sap and decay, the sap merely a phase in the progress of decay, breathes through 'Ramuntcho.' Like 'Les Pêcheurs d'Islande,' it is a book of consuming nostalgia, and for its beauty one can forgive the shadows it has interspersed in one's memories of the Basque country. I read it in the East before I knew Fuentarabia, and again from the balcony where one could hear the sad curlews, whose cries alternated with the pious chimes borne across the Bidassoa from Spain.

Pierre Loti on the East I generally abhor, a *poseur* whipping up his jaded emotions, parodying the lost sensibilities of youth, painting himself into the picture with an abundance of cosmetics. The metaphor is mixed, but it has the truth of illegitimacy. Bôdu seldom brought me a French author who wrote naturally about Asia—always the tiptoe strain of listening for *les tigres qui rodent*, or *les serpents qui glissent*, the *me voici* and the *me voilà*, the hint of carelessness amidst perils, and the trail of 'The Arabian Nights.'

Loti takes his coloured threads with him, chooses the dyes at home—one can fancy an iridescent inspiration in the Cannebière at Marseilles. He is not among the influences that draw Young England to the East. If I could have read Conrad's 'Youth'—it appeared years later when I was at Balloki—I should not have rested until I had become familiar with the secret places of Asia, "the lands of the brown nations, where a stealthy Nemesis lies in wait, pursues, overtakes, so many of the conquering race."

It was just that Nemesis which attracted me. I believed that the contacts and collisions of East and West still provided adventures akin to the medieval. I wanted to be pursued stealthily with the risk of being attacked and overtaken. Chivalry

could not attain full stature in a *milieu* of pavements and chimney-pots. My favourite biography at X. was John Nicholson, my favourite novel of Sir Walter Scott, 'The Talisman'; and I loved to read of the European free-lances in India under the Sikh and Mahratta régime. "In Vishnu Land what Avatar!" I found that suggestive line most intriguing. I had at least half a dozen solutions as to what became of Waring. One, I remember, was that he was the long-handed god in the temple of Jaganath Puri. I could not wait for maturity to satisfy my appetite for the East. De Quincey's Malay became a glorified creature in my imagination. I looked for him in the Asiatic Sailors' Home in Poplar. I was infected by the opium-eater's horror of the Chinese; and horror to the young, of course, means attraction—not to the schoolboy only, but to the adolescent.

To return, then, to adolescence. The same unreflective half-awakened ass—I have grown to think of him impersonally—who sympathised with the idleness of the Pope, and received three-terms-worth of education in half an hour from the devout French baron in Rome, was a week later reading 'The Light that Failed' in the harbour at Suez. To youth in those days Kipling was a provocation and a challenge. I believe the very hideousness of the picture in such tales as 'At the End of the Passage,' or 'The City of Dreadful Night' was part of the lure of the East. At an impressionable age the dramatic instinct is so strong that one is drawn on to the stage. Out in the East one believed one would meet these people, Imray and Spurstow and Strickland. One longed to have been at the end of the passage and to have come out of it, to have missed by a hair's-breadth "the mark of the Beast," or at least to live in scenes that had been the back-

ground to those struggles, sufferings, escapes, or sudden death.

I had consumed a great many volumes of Asiatic travel before I left X. Yet I remember one of the countries in the East I proposed to visit was Eurasia. Modern geography, of course, was not included in the school curriculum, and the few towns and villages of the Peloponnesus whose names I remembered were no help. Poor old X. Most of us saddle it with our imbecilities, a convenient Aunt Sally at which one hurls missiles, that ought to, and no doubt do, as in these pages, recoil upon oneself.

VI.

I must not saddle X. with the *Chloe*, but somewhere between the University and the more serious business of life I found myself serving as cook's mate on a cattle-boat homeward bound from Buenos Ayres to London. Here, in spite of the omissions of X., my erudition was respected. I was even consulted as an oracle. I remember a discussion between the cook, the donkeyman, one of the firemen, and Maurice, a Channel Islander and my particular friend, as to who was the greatest author of the day. "Mary" Corelli was acclaimed with one dissentient voice. It was the cook who ungallantly ruled her out on the score of sex disability. He did not question her literary pre-eminence; but, being a woman, he argued, she could not be an author. "Orther," he echoed with fine scorn, in that superior voice which earned him from Maurice the sobriquet of "Mr Know-All"; "orther, indeed; ortheress, *you* mean."

I remember another discussion which touched my pride more nearly, as a confidant and conspirator. It concerned the murder of the captain. "Sour Krout," "Old Kroodger," or "that b—— old German sorsidge," as he was variously called by the crew, was my first introduction to a type that has since earned his race universal opprobrium. I forget his name, and even the details of his appearance. All I remember is that he was huge and red, a heavy feeder, an immense beard and face—two squares, the upper one punctured by protruding red eyes. A cumbrous gait, heavy yet silent. He wore carpet slippers, which are associated in my mind with spying. He filled a door; his approaches were signalled by darkness, not sound. The sound when it issued from the crater was appropriately volcanic.

There was an understanding between me and old Spiceapple, the steward, that when I heard these eruptions in the neighbourhood of the pantry I should run to his aid. He was afraid Old Kroodger would strike him when there was no one by. He wanted a witness. "You stand by me, sonny. That's Board of Trade."

I remember standing by him in my shirt sleeves, an interloper from the galley, with a half-scoured frying-pan in my hands. Old Spiceapple was cowering by the dresser. I felt as if I had intervened between a python and a rabbit. The python's anger was diverted, but I was immune; he couldn't strike or scrunch by reason of that mysterious inhibition, Board of Trade. Still, I confess I should have been happier if the board between us had been a little more tangible and solid. Autocracy, huge and omnipotent in malice, restrained by a single abstract fetter, is an awesome thing. Sour Krout's immobility was terrifying. One feared spontaneous combustion, for his

anger had no vent. He continued to fill the door. He could only mutter and glower, and threaten to damn my seafaring future by a bad certificate.

Old Spiceapple, leaning against the dresser, seemed to be suffering from a kind of paralysis.

Years afterwards I saw the name of Spiceapple over a shop-window from a tram in the East India Dock Road. An odd name! It must have been stowed away in a corner of my mind with other lumber for years. There was something as subtly reminiscent about it as a smell.

Where had I heard it? It called up a puckered careworn face in a loft or a greengrocer's shop. Some one old and helpless. A wrinkled face. That suggestion was the rind of the apple, of course. Hence the loft. And the spice? It must have been a pastry-cook's shop, not a greengrocer's. I had had a glimpse of rock-cakes and gingerbread in the window under the sign; it was a pastry-cook's shop I had seen from the tram. Now I had it. It was the rock-cakes that brought it all back to me. "The Old Stooard" made the rock-cakes. "Yer like your rock-cakes, sonny," he would say to me. He pampered his watch-dog. "The Old Stooard" was Spiceapple. No one called him Spiceapple on the *Chloe*. I had only seen his name once, on the back of a ship's envelope, grimy with plug, on which he had painfully inscribed his address with shaky fingers at the end of the voyage, "Mill Street, Poplar, off the East India Dock Road."

I did not return on the tram to the pastry-cook's shop, for the old stooard must have been dead long ago. He looked at least seventy on the *Chloe*. The arbiters in the supernal scheme of things will debit Sour Krout's account with his premature grey hairs, his peevishness and whimpering. Spiceapple was a most depressing mess-

mate. A word of sympathy or any hopeful suggestion of "a better time coming" would only increase his lamentations. He would reply, "There is no happiness this side of the grave, sonny," or, "When I'm gone, there will be nobody to miss me." At times Maurice and I were afraid he would shuffle up the scuttle steps and "go over-board," as he threatened.

Of all apt names I can remember Spiceapple is the aptest. A dried-up wrinkled pippin, laid on a shelf; and his complexion was russet, polished yet not overclean, as if he rubbed himself instead of washing. I can see him now leaning in his favourite attitude, with one elbow against the dresser, the other pressed to his hip, his furrowed brow outlined against the bright silver dish-covers—I polished them myself,—gazing at nothing with a far-away despondent droop of the eyes, thinking, no doubt, of the house in Mill Street, Poplar, "round the corner, off the East India Dock Road."

But to return to the encounter. I was dismissed with Germanic oaths to the foc'sle to smoke a pipe instead of working, and to listen to the intermittent detonations of Old Kroodger at different points on the deck. In the lulls between these outbursts I knew he was ruminating revenge. A term of idleness in the foc'sle was a miserable exhibition of the punitive resources at the command of a martinet—"kidney-garden law," as Maurice would have said. It argued a wilted tyrant. Evidently Old Kroodger would have to think of something better than that.

Soon I was summoned with Maurice, who was also in disfavour, to the chart-room. Old Kroodger sent us to the potato-locker on a mission of purification, a three days' fatigue. The scouring of pots and pans was an item held in reserve until after the day's work. It was Old Kroodger's alterna-

tive to putting me in irons, the penalty of defiance. But I rather enjoyed it; and Maurice was my particular friend. We had to peel off the shoots and separate the good from the rotten, to avert contagion in the bulk. It was a period of exaltation, from menial to manual labour, for I had been promoted to second steward. Moreover, I had the smell of dear earth in my nostrils, and as we scraped and picked and sorted, I thought of 'Tess' and her cows and milk-pails and turnip-fields. Books again. They always obtrude. But a turnip-field is never the same after reading 'Tess,' or a rock-pool and sea-anemones after 'Father and Son,' or a Breton sailor after 'Les Pêcheurs d'Islande.' People outside books have not this faculty of transmutation. Maurice was a good fellow, but he has not transfigured the potato.

The thing that surprised me was that he talked like sailors in books. His conversation was mainly of ports and restaurants ashore of the "free-and-easy-music-every-night" sort. He had served "Mary Collins" (Victoria Regina), and he was fond of retailing his disreputable adventures with a Philippine maiden "as black as the devil's sea-boots." And he had a naïve way of confessing how he went ashore at Monte Video or Singapore and "commenced to drink." Or he would tell how this or that "hoodlam" or "pier-head-jumper" was "properly Shanghied in the States," or how he had "got to windward of some b—old German skipper—that's Board of Trade." Sour Krout he mutilated in pantomime. He would stand up to a suspended leg of mutton and spar and duck in the most comical way. Then he would throw his voice into the potato-bucket or under the locker, until old Spiceapple would get up, look round nervously like a fright-

ened rabbit, and sputter wheezily in his throat, "Old Kroodger's singing out." Maurice was the best amateur ventriloquist I have met, and a born raconteur. From him I learnt many a flower of speech. But the purport of this digression is to come.

The surface of the *Chloe's* potato-dump was pleasant enough; as has been suggested, it had even a pastoral smell. Towards the end of our excavations, however, on the third day, we reached a stratum that was—bearing in mind the skipper's intention, I cannot think of a better word—distinctly punitive. The salvage of the occasional wholesome spud from the core of corruption was beyond our patience and our physical powers. Maurice and I rebelled. We hatched a dark plot "to dump the bloomin' lot overboard" when old Kroodger was safely out of the way in the chart-room.

It was somewhere about the sixteenth parallel that the residue of the potato-locker of s.s. *Chloe* was discharged into the sea. I suggested as a second course in this festival to the fauna of the ocean, Old Kroodger himself. "Chuck Old Kroodger overboard and poison all the fish!" was Maurice's morose comment. "But yer jokin'," he added. "You listen to me; I'm the man to stretch his — neck as long as a — jib-down-haul——"

"*I'm* not jokin'," Maurice continued grimly, emptying a spadeful of putrescence into the potato-bucket, "Old Kroodger's for it. We're goin' to do him in."

This was for me the moment of pride. Maurice trusted me absolutely. I had long been free of the foc'sle; now I became an initiate, and not the least one, in a secret tribunal. The cook, I was flattered to hear, was excluded. His loyalty

was suspect. In an atmosphere of darkness and an obscene smell, congenial to crime, I received my initiation. Maurice unfolded the plot as far as it had materialised. I did not know then that history was repeating itself to the Nth in these communal sittings on the *Chloe* to discuss the removal of a tyrant. Youth had not learnt to weave the pattern of experience into the embroidery of Clio.

That other board, which was not of trade, had decided that Old Kroodger's disappearance must be accidental. This seemed easy to compass. The main question was whether it was easier in mid-ocean or in port, the instant now, or "the first good chance that offered." The propitious elements in Old Kroodger's horoscope were symbolised in human weaknesses and indecisions. Like other tyrants, he was saved by delay. It amounted to letting "I dare not wait upon I would." Maurice favoured the docks. If only Old Kroodger could be circumvented on a dark night on the London river—Maurice with three inimitable gestures rehearsed the issue. A resolute push, a heavy splash—this with the assistance of the potato-bucket; and a strong tide—here Maurice rolled his eyes and swept the air pontifically with a suggestion of inexorable rhythm, until I felt that Nemesis herself commanded the waves that bore the corpse, submerged by its own grossness and iniquity, out to sea.

Somehow when I saw Old Kroodger in the saloon the next morning, disappointingly corporeal, I knew that he was safe. Certainly I did not regard him as a doomed man. Yet I refuse to believe that Maurice and the others were play-acting. That would spoil the whole story, blunt the point of the pen, as the Arabs say. I have dragged in the *Chloe* with a purpose.

For in daring to draw a parallel between the companionship of people and books I feared that without such evidence I might be suspected of not knowing people, that is real people as distinguished from the subscribers to circulating libraries, characters in other words, "the kind of people one meets in books." No one can summarily dismiss me after the episode of the potato-locker as a mere bookworm. A person who has been drawn into serious consultation by sailors on the ways and means of tyrannicide—not the ethics, mind you, a very different thing—must at least have nibbled at life.

VII.

How romantic and real Mr Conrad would have made my messmates on the *Chloe*. To me, of course, they appeared very ordinary at the time; even now, after the passage of years, they do not seem so real as people in books. Maurice is not so substantial as Singleton in the 'Nigger of the *Narcissus*,' or Silberg, the Norwegian, as Dominic, the padrone of the *Tremolino*. Silberg, in spite of our intimacy, has become as a shadow beside the substance of Dominic or Peyrol or Nostromo. Yet he unburdened himself towards the end of the voyage under the influence of the North Star. There was a vein of philosophy and poetry in the Norwegian, and he was consumed with nostalgia, but being a bit of a spendthrift, he never saved enough to revisit his home. He was too proud to return penniless. It was always "after two more voyages." He told me about "the old woman," his mother, even about his girl, an impossible ideal, and of a household in Christiania,

in which he had served Ibsen and Nansen. I learnt about the real Nansen from Silberg in the long night-watches in the Roaring Forties, dodging behind the capstan to escape the spray with a saving hand on the messenger. Stevenson would have written a book about Silberg.

Conlan, the fireman, too, would now be one of the immortals if he had happened on his creator; his parrot would be as legendary as Félicité's Loulou in 'Un Cœur Simple.' The blackened hulk of a man was born to be "a minor character" in a book, that tragic-comic figure in the background which recurs in moments of tension like a Greek chorus, trivially and characteristically employed: Conlan emerged from his slag-heap, sprawling flat on the deck, lispng the most frightful oaths through the bars of the parrot's cage for hours at a time with a gentle monotony of intonation that he might have borrowed from a dove. His patience was almost nun-like. And the bird was so stupid. That parrot's instruction had become an ideal. One day it would be Conlan's publisher; one day it would shock the bourgeois. I could name a novelist, a poet, and a painter who would perish to achieve the same effects through a sister art.

But at the time Conlan was just an ordinary fireman. I was as powerless to invest him with "the little more" as Peter Bell, when solicited to admire the primrose. That "little more" only genius can lend with its sympathetic intuition, genius which can invest things present and visible with the same glamour as memory and distance. If I had met Conlan in a book, I should probably have hailed him as a portent.

Gradually I lost the longing to touch the end of the passage and come back, to miss by a hair's-breadth the mark of the Beast, or to haunt the

secret places of the earth in search of characters that are only companionable in books. I came to know that if one lived among them one would be as bored and lonely as after an evening's wandering in a great city without a friend.

As one grows older one begins to realise that few of the people one comes to know through books would be interesting if one met them in real life. Possibly one has met them, and has not recognised them. Probably they are not really interesting in themselves, but only in the way their creator has seen them. It is the reflection of them in his mind that holds us. Most of us, literary or unliterary, would have to confess it if put to the test. Kim, if he crossed the path of the Anglo-Indian Deputy Commissioner, would appear a dirty, little, half-caste, bazaar urchin. Kim's Lama would be suspect as a carrier of vermin, the fauna of Tibet. And what pious wife of a churchwarden, busy in good works, would make room for Abraham in her attic if he appeared in the flesh ? One can imagine how the rapt lady subscriber to the circulating library who adores Mr Hewlett's Senhouse or Mr Locke's Paragot would recoil from these eccentrics if she encountered them outside Mudiedom. The social rebel is not "the kind of person she would like to meet" in real life ; he is only tolerable in books.

That is an argument which might be used in support of the view of the old misanthrope. The answer to his conundrum, "Books or people ?" must be books, if people are more interesting in books than in real life. Yet if a suffrage were to be taken in the crush at the circulating library, one may be quite sure that the almost unanimous vote would be "people."

And the voters would have the merit of being gregarious and "great readers" at the same time.

Providence has disciplined them to keep books outside their lives as luxuries no more essential to living than *hors-d'œuvres* or dessert. But in these reflections suggested by the misanthrope's conundrum I have imagined the case put to readers who cannot separate books from their lives.

VIII.

At Devagiri I became like the misanthropic visitor at my father's house. I preferred books to people. I must not take credit in this for any accommodating optimism or resignation. For people did occasionally visit Devagiri. Good people came and bad people, but only good books.

Living alone in the jungle, where one falls into the despotic habit of summoning or dismissing one's ghostly company by the mere lifting of a hand to the bookshelf, does not fit one for the sociable life. When one has been an autocrat for months and has to receive guests who do not come and go, speak, or be silent, at one's nod, one suffers something like an abdication. At Devagiri I became an unsociable bookworm. The place has points in common with Hummel's fire-pit in 'The End of the Passage,' in its insufferable heat, and its isolation. On Sundays in the dog-days I was generally alone, but nothing would have induced me to have sent out S.O.S. messages to any European within the radius of a hundred miles to come in and help me to disperse the shades of ennui. There are people one would ride miles to meet over *pavé*; some to whom one would cut a path through prickly pear, but the odds are that they are not within reach of the particular gridiron where one happens to be. The

blind instinct of gregariousness that drove Spurstow and Hummel to seek each other's company to bicker through interminable Sundays seemed natural to me in the days of ignorance. I would have summoned any neighbour to fill the abode of emptiness. It was not courage. I simply did not understand the risks.

I remember an invasion one Sunday morning when I was splashing happily in my bath, thinking of the idle day I was going to spend with a book. It was 'Beauchamp's Career.' I had not read it since X. I had not even cut the leaves, lest I should be tempted to dip into it and nibble at it before the day I had set apart for the feast. The dream was dispelled by the loud peremptory voice of one of my countrymen in a distant part of the house. No Englishman ought to have been within fifty miles of Devagiri. I lay still, squeezing the bubbles out of my sponge, and listened anxiously to the approach of unslipped feet.

"Huzoor," I heard at the door, "there is a strange sahib in the verandah."

Great were my apprehensions while dressing. Who was this person who had casually substituted himself for Nevill Beauchamp? Would he stay to breakfast? That might be tolerable, even pleasant. But to lunch? Or for the night? The prospect of "just talking," possibly for sixteen hours together, dismayed me. And it would mean putting off Beauchamp for a week. I was too much of an epicure to read him in furtive snatches with an uneasy conscience howling out to me all the while that I was neglecting a guest.

I found the substitute for Nevill Beauchamp in the dining-room examining my books. The full shelves attracted him. He was an Oxford man, an Indian civilian, a small satrap in his

way, and, I believe, a double first. And he had the Oxford manner. Why is there no Cambridge manner? And why is it that the Oxford manner sometimes becomes accentuated in Indian civilians instead of becoming fainter with the increasing span of leagues and years that separates them from the fount of academic inspiration?

Kermode, for such was his name, had absorbed all that X. or its equivalent had to give him. He was one of those well-informed men who can tell you without opening a dictionary the difference between Casanova and Canova, or Kossovo and Kosciusko. Oxford too had done its duty by him. And he had a retentive mind.

His interest in the bookshelf was a promising beginning, but before breakfast we were bickering as to whether the adjective to onomatopœia should be onomatopœic or onomatopoetic; and when I conceded that one was as good as another, he would not accept the compromise, but stuck to his variant as if it had been a fighting cock and he had staked his academic honour on its trampling my variant into the dunghill—his dunghill. Puerile polemics, but it was his egoism, not his argument, that provoked me. I have never been a purist in words. I remember on the *Chloe* agreeing with Maurice for the sake of peace and affection that “anteheluvian” meant “upside-down,” as against the cook’s interpretation of “ould-like,” and the donkeyman, who insisted that it had to do with the infernal regions.

All that unprofitable morning we discussed books. Or rather my onomatopoetic friend instructed me as to literary values and canons of taste. But I was perversely unintelligent. The climate of Devagiri was accountable for a good deal. Then there was ‘Beauchamp’ separated from me by two doors and a sense of hospitality

which I was otherwise inconsistently abusing. Deliberately, or subconsciously, I proceeded to my revenge. Kermode found me "an oppositional animal," as my Babu said of his tat. When he spoke of Samuel Butler's work as "exempt from the crudities that disfigure Victorian prose literature," I asked him if he had read 'The Cardinal's Snuff-box' or 'Three Men in a Boat': "A laugh in every page. Butler is a humorous writer too; isn't he?"

And talking of books of travel I recommended him two on Spain which I had just been reading. One was by Borrow, 'The Bible in Spain'; the other by Mr Bart Kennedy, 'A Vagabond in Spain,' I think it was called, both good in their way. Borrow a little old-fashioned, of course, a bit slow. I was reading Borrow, I explained, but I offered to lend him Mr Bart Kennedy's book—I was careful not to say "give," as that might awaken his suspicions—if he liked to take it away.

This led to questions of style. I denied my gods. "Meredith and Hardy? What did they write? Were they collaborators? Wait a bit, though; I think I have read one of Hardy's, 'How to be Happy though Married.' Yes, I like Hardy. A topping book."

And Stendhal. Kermode's patience was not exhausted yet. He tried me with Stendhal, whom I bracketed tentatively with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. 'Sherlock Holmes,' I argued, ought to be included in the hundred best books.

Very patiently Kermode explained to me that 'The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes' was not a book. He outlined in brief the qualities essential in a work of imaginative fiction. He eliminated detectives altogether, and gave very few marks for plot. My hero of Baker Street did not ap-

proach the circumference of the elect circle. I had been beguiled by puppets.

“Then why is he so popular?” I asked innocently.

But the question was not so innocent as it seemed. It launched Kermode on a new monologue.

“Popularity is by no means a safe estimate in the standard of literary values,” he was saying sententiously, when I escaped by a trick I have learnt without leaving the room or even getting up from my chair.

It is a kind of trance. I did not actually get to Beauchamp; and Kermode was still a burden, but only a figurative one, no worse than the locust or the steam-roller grinding granite into the road outside one's window. The instrument he plied now was the drill-bore. It struck the ground harmlessly—very near my feet, it is true,—and my temples were sensitive to the vibration, but I knew that if I left my body in the chair with certain lines drawn tightly between the mouth and the eyes in a parody of complacent interest, my spirit might escape where it willed, to ‘Beauchamp’ or to ‘Sherlock Holmes.’ I had wound myself up like a clock, and my responses to the other mechanism were automatic, almost effortless. Kermode droned on like an ugly noise in a dream, like a bell rung by a German, which Samuel Butler—his disciple can probably quote the passage—has described as a noise “like the smell of a crushed cockroach.”

To speak of a noise like a smell is to employ the figure of katacrexis. I thought of using that scrap of erudition as a counter-offensive. I am proud of the word. It has stuck to me like the Greek conditional clauses and the date of the battle of Arbela. We were taught figures of

speech at X., though I doubt if any of my contemporaries have travelled so far from the disciplinary contempt for abstractions cultivated at the old school as to become what is commonly known as a highbrow.

I believe I discovered for myself, instinctively and without tutelage, the difference between real books and sham ones in my teens. I stick to it now that 'The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes' is a real book, for all its "retail of mechanical dolls and devices" so distasteful to Kermode. Or if it is not a real book, it is as like one as an apple is like a pear. I should be sorry if X. turned out men who didn't like 'Sherlock Holmes.' I can answer for the younger generation. For I have laid it on pillows at midnight to be devoured in the early morning and discussed at breakfast.

Well I remember stealing into the kitchen one chilly Sunday morning in September, an adult trespasser, with 'Sherlock Holmes' in my pocket. It was the church hour, all too short, and the kitchen was the only warm room in the house. I remember the pattern of the cretonne on the cook's chair, and how religiously I drew it up to the fire. Holmes with his pipe and his dressing-gown! What company! The man himself is a creation, more fascinating than his adventures. He has transfigured Baker Street. As one reads one becomes, like Watson, Sherlock's ape. Half-way through, when Holmes lights his briar, instinctively one's hand feels for the pouch in the pocket of the ancient Norfolk jacket, or dressing-gown, and the old delicious dilemma recurs, whether to have another fill, that favourite cut plug, cool to the last puff—what tobacco does Holmes smoke, one wonders; if one knew, one would get it,—or to draw one's chair nearer the fire and finish the yarn at a stretch.

It was a stolen hour with apprehensive glances at the clock, and the entrenchments of comfort strategically prepared for rapid evacuation when the shadow of the cook darkened the window. For one had to make good one's escape before the first knell was heard of boots on the scraper, or the grating of the key in the lock of the scullery door.

Complete comfort, complete seclusion, not merely solitude, but well-laid defences against invasion, are essential for the hedonist with whom reading is a ritual, and who means to get the best out of his companion of the hour. How one resents the intrusion of gross corporeal bodies with their inane preoccupations who enter one's preserve and chase away the shades! One reason why I hated leaving Cambridge was that one could nevermore, after cutting the pages of a book and stoking up the fire, sport one's oak against the Kermodes prowling outside.

IX.

At four o'clock Kermode departed. He had intended to stay the night. *I* had bored *him*. It was a *coup nul*; honours were divided. I had given as good as I got. Limp and exhausted I repaired to 'Nevill Beauchamp.'

Limp, but impenitent. Kermode fled because he found me impossible, stupid, opinionative. It did not enter his head that he was an unwelcome guest. I am quite easy about that. He simply weighed me, found me inadequate, and went on. "Tau is a nonentity," was his judgment, as reported to me years later by a third party. And it had the merit of truth. For when in his neigh-

bourhood after this encounter I took care to become thinner than air, invisible, non-existent.

Still I asked him to stay, argued the lateness of the hour. I obeyed the letter of the law, and if inwardly I violated the spirit, think of the provocation ! Kermode or 'Beauchamp' ? People or books ? That is hardly a fair conjunction. I confess I have loaded the dice. I am not a keen and conscious misanthrope like the old man I spoke of at the beginning. But Kermode was too attached to his formulas. He insisted on them, would not release you until you had poked your nose right in, like a bad bit of road that holds you up as you are passing a dead mule. I am all for license. If an author has anything to say, let him say it in his own way. If he has personality of temperament, let him exploit it. The high-brow's dismissal of what doesn't come into the formula is like the Chinaman's contempt for women with uncrippled feet.

In the company of books one escapes these bickerings. In spite of X., I could follow M. le Curé de Saint Michel when he quoted Pliny. "*Dicere solebat nullum esse librum tam malum ut non aliqua parte prodesset.*" It may be that any book is better than no book, but would he have held that anybody is better than nobody ? There is less physical pain in reading a bore than in listening to one. The determinate drill bore, or the indeterminate earth-scattering bore, who is generally feminine and more difficult to escape, may perforate one in the flesh, but one knows how to deal with them in books. You may leave them on shelves, laugh at them, or neglect them, or throw them face downwards on the floor, when they disgust you, or scribble insults in the margin. You can shut up books, but you can't shut up people. Of violence in the last resort Sibrandus

Snafburgensis is the classic example. "Then I proceeded to my revenge." If I had Kermodé compressed within covers, I should leave him in the crevice of the plum tree amid "rain-drippings stagnate," for the water-beetle "with great blind deaf face to make of her eggs the stately deposit."

I escaped from Devagiri, I think before the blue mould had grown all over me, but the experience has increased my sympathy with the bookworm. There is a lot to be said for the old misanthrope and the circumvallations he built round his Horace and his Early Fathers. Doubtless he had his cronies who lived behind similar earthworks, and to these he would lower his portcullis—at a sign. Alive to the peril of admitting that the accident of vicinity imposes obligations on the interior life, he was single-minded in his choice of friends. With the trusted Roman inside the walls and the potential Vandal without, he took no risks.

Books or people? There are as many solutions to the conundrum as there are dates in history, or as there are people or books. Still it is easy for the bookman to load the dice. Is one more thrilled to hear that Petit Pierre has inherited a room of his own at the age of ten, in which to work and dream, or that John Robertson of Acacia Lodge, Victoria Road, has bought a new cucumber frame; to learn that Mrs Robertson is expecting a second child, or that old de Joinville has taken his courage in his hands and reproached St Louis for his unkindness to the Queen?

II.

YOUTH AND THE EAST

YOUTH AND THE EAST.

I.

WHEN one leaves the University one is faced with the degrading necessity of earning a living. Work to the average undergraduate, apart from adventure, means doing something which one does not like for money. Those three years at Cambridge—and we knew that it must be so at the time—were the happiest of our lives. We sipped nectar with the gods, and the morrow never troubled us. Our last term must come to an end like other laps in the Golden Age, but so long as there was a week, a day even, left, we did not let it bother our heads. I remember a careless group, of which I was one, lying in the grass in the paddock and discussing the future, conscious of the angel with the flaming sword lurking somewhere in the elms. What did it all lead to? What were we going to be? For my own part I felt that life had been so delightful that it was quite enough to have *been*. Why bother? Something was sure to turn up. There must be other Edens somewhere. Looking back, it seems a shameful admission, but apparently we were all vocationless.

“What are you going to be?” asked Tubby, “a parson or a schoolmaster?” It was priesthood or pedagogy. Outside these bounds a University degree led nowhither, unless one happened to have funds, or could light a candle at the shrine

of nepotism, or were possessed of an intelligence quite out of the ordinary. Tubby was going to be a parson, and it seemed that I would have to be a schoolmaster—we had an alliterative and less dignified name for the office in those days. I rather envied Tubby. His life would be passed in less noise. And to be a parson would mean that he would have a “living.” Why is it that in speaking of the Church of all professions the material reward of service should be so indelicately emphasised? But Tubby would be worthy of his hire. He would run the village cricket club; play bowls with the farmers; be delightful to old ladies, by whom he would be idolised; and generally give everybody a good time. A trout stream, of course, would be a *sine qua non*; and, perhaps, if he came into a really good living and didn’t marry, he would be able to keep a hunter. A placid, enviable, pastoral existence. Often in the torrid East have I pictured rectory lawns, flower borders, and shrubberies; the may or lilac in blossom; moths on June evenings drunk with the fragrance of the limes; peacocks and red admirals in August sunning themselves on the buddlea, a perch designed for them by God, just outside the study window; and at the end of the garden a low raised ha-ha, and the glebe beyond it with cattle dreaming in the shade of great tufted trees, and the grey lichened roof of a barn half-hidden among the sycamores.

But for the bugbear of Sundays I think I should have been a parson. Dogma was the stumbling-block. I could not move confidently among these mysteries, or see myself the appointed interpreter between my Maker and my fellow-mortals. It was altogether too big an assumption. To begin with, there were the thirty-nine articles, to which I could not honestly subscribe. Teaching was

almost as repugnant as preaching, but as I could not be a parson there was nothing for it but to fall in with the rank and file of pedagogues. I think all of us were schoolmasters at some time of our lives, even those who afterwards became clergymen. But we entered upon the career without conviction. "What does it lead to?" Bangs asked Tubby; and dear old Tubby, dropping his voice to the bass of an undertaker, droned theatrically, "The grave." How droll, humorous, and unexpected Tubby always was. The grave, indeed! We had forgotten its existence.

That morning the results of the Classical Tripos had been posted up on the Senate House steps. I had been allowed an Ordinary degree. It was rather annoying to see my name in the list as a failed Honours man, as I had already obtained my Ordinary in the ordinary way, through the General and Special, like other Poll men, and it was a great joke in the paddock that morning that I should be dubbed Ordinary a second time. I was indeed a rare kind of fish. A double Honours is a common distinction. But a double Ordinary! I was probably the first of the breed distinguished by my ordinariness, of an exaggerated normality, which was now posted, proclaimed, and advertised to the world. However, I was very modest about it, and grinned with the rest, remembering that ordinariness is the one thing that does not expand with reduplication. Being doubly ordinary does not make one extra-ordinary; or so I tried to persuade myself, subduing my pride, though I was not quite sure. The problem presented an element of paradox, and mathematics was never my strong point. I had failed in the Little-Go my first term, obtaining only one mark in arithmetic. I failed again my third term, not in arithmetic this time, but in Euclid, which I

had passed in the earlier examination. In the meanwhile, owing to these pedestrian studies, I had neglected my classics. I record this in no spirit of humility, but to explain how it was that my tutor took two and a half years to discover those glimmerings of intelligence in me which decided him to send me up for the Honours degree at the eleventh hour, and without preparation.

Jimmy Latham, my tutor, was a Platonist of great erudition, one of the most distinguished. He had a delightful dry humour, and a gift of persiflage which was almost endearing. One gladly suffered his contempt for the sake of the academic *mot* that gave point to it. Superficially he regarded me with a hostile eye, and it must be admitted that this was not without provocation. In the lecture-room the spirit of my approach to the classics bordered on irreverence. I had a trick of rendering Latin authors in the vulgar tongue with a certain spontaneity, but with an insufficient attention to accuracy. My construing was too obviously impromptu; but I was never at a loss, and to bridge the wide and abysmal lacunæ that separated the unrelated scraps of learning I had picked up at X., I drew on winged fancy. I suppose it was the instinctive perversity of the excluded, the emulous tribute of the incorrigible and profane to the corrigible and initiated. I should have liked to have been inside the temple, but found myself on the doorstep. Well, then, I should play another kind of game! There is a philosophy of the doorstep, a kind of joyous indifference; to the young and callow mind of the early 'nineties the pose was highly picturesque, even romantic. Thus I indulged youth's genius for compensation, though inwardly I had a great respect for the humanities.

Tubby, whom everybody loved, was a master

in reconciling this play-acting with one's self-esteem. I was foolishly flattered when he explained that my tutor and I could not get on because we were "two incompatibles." I liked the dual number with its implication of faults on both sides. Poor old Jimmy! I was almost sorry for him. An encounter soon after my second failure in the Little-Go did not improve matters between us. When he met me on this occasion I was in classic guise. I was Perseus, and I wore a leopard-skin for a loin-cloth, but was otherwise "naked as Vhanus," only I carried for spear and shield a poker in one hand and a round looking-glass in the other. Tubby and I had commandeered the four rooms on our landing, and we had invited at least half the men of our year to one of those innocent entertainments which undergraduates of the day luridly termed "a drunk." I remember a momentary diversion in which we literally shovelled red-hot coals of fire on the heads of the proctor and his bulldogs who, attracted by the disturbance, had unwisely taken up a position outside our windows, and were calling up to us from the street. Here Bangs, our Lancelot, intervened. "Damn it all, Tau!" he expostulated, "red-hot coals are not Geneva. Naturally they are shirty." Upon which, to neutralise the breach in the convention, we began conscientiously to pour down jugfuls and basinfuls of cold water to extinguish the flames.

The proctors retreated discomfited, and most of us had forgotten all about them, when somebody had the happy idea that the shield of Perseus should become his Medusa mirror. The game now was for Perseus to strike with his spear, or poker, at any who were bold enough to approach from behind in such a way that their image was reflected in the glass. Medusa, of course, or who-

ever the skulking assailant might be, was armed too. Thus the blows were generally parried. The last apparition I saw in the mirror was the shocked face of the senior tutor.

After my interview with Jimmy Latham the next morning I had to leave Cambridge, a light penalty for so grave a misdemeanour, as I lost nothing by being "sent down," having already completed my term.

The mummery was forgiven. My acquaintance with the legend of Perseus may have had something to do with it, also my explanation that we were rehearsing a Greek mime. I was careful to look up "mimus" in the dictionary before I interviewed Jimmy. Anything out of the 'Dictionary of Antiquities' was a red herring that might be drawn across the trail of merely modern instances with certain effect. I listened to a dissertation on Roman and Greek mimes, a farrago of erudition and wit. No mention was made of the proctor.

It was in the next term, I think, that Jimmy Latham discovered the incompleteness of my philistinism. A translation I made of some lyrics by Mr William Watson into Latin elegiacs sowed the first seeds of doubt. "Very pretty," he said of my rendering. "A trifle rococo, perhaps, but you have caught the spirit of it." Jimmy was both pleased and puzzled. His manner in our infrequent interviews became more ironical and humorously quizzical after that, as if I were a half-tamed barbarian in process of *apprivoisement*, potentially corrigible, with a turn of freakish wit, though hardly an eligible candidate for Classical Honours. I used to write verses for 'The Granta' and 'The Cambridge Review,' and these, apparently, he read. He taxed me one day with a lampoon on himself. It was an adaptation of Catullus (XVII.) into Browningsese. "Mr Tau,"

he asked me with an affectation of reproach, "are you the author of this pasquinade?" 'The Cambridge Review' lay open on his table, and he read the offending passage aloud, slowly and hesitatingly, as if it had been an acrostic or conundrum over which he had been puzzling when I knocked at his door.

"'Tis a bridge that you want then to leap and to play on,
 But you fear the shanks that are cranked and crazy,
 That prop up the structure you're standing to-day on,
 With posts that knew Hannibal, reckon the days he—
 But a truce to his shade—Props, a shame 'tis to tease ye,
 Lest the thing should give where most rotten the rail is,
 And recline in the swamp, I will build one to please ye
 Fit for the rites of a Salisubsalis.

But I crave of ye this, and this only condition;
 A most capital joke my good men of Verona,
 There's a townsman of mine you must hurl to perdition,
 Head over heels in the slush for the donor.
 In the deepest depth where the mud is the bluest,
 Splash in the slush and the slime and the mire,
 For the fellow's a blockhead—well blockheads the truest
 Know more than a babe on the knee of its sire.

And this dolt-headed cit is the lawful defender
 Of a dainty maid he has caught in his angle,
 A fawnlike bride—not so lissome and tender
 The luscious lure of the dark vine's tangle.
 But stay, '*facit indignatio versus,*'
 He lies like a log in a quarry Ligustine.
 Nor cares he a jot whether better or worse use
 Be hers. Is he doomed from the bridge to be thrust in?

Does he know what his name is, or has he a number?
 Does he know there exists such a dolt as himself?
 Come take him and shake him and wake him from slumber,
 Over the bridge in the mud with the elf.
 Will he leave, do you think, when awoke by the tossing,
 His wits in the filth as a deodand?
 As a mule in the mud of a byway crossing,
 A shoe for a largess to cumber the land.

And such was the song of the poet Catullus,
 With his healthy love and his honest hate,
 The hate song to waken us, love song to lull us,
 Or such was the drift, for we learn too late.
 There's a don and a dun and a bounder in Cambridge,
 A bore and a tailor and tutor to wit;
 Take them each and I'll build ye the same bridge,
 Cast them each in the slimy pit."

"A don and a dun and a bounder in Cambridge?" Jimmy repeated in an injured voice, as if the three persons were one and indivisible. "But why a tailor?"

"Merely alliterative, sir. A kind of jingle. It gives movement——"

"I see." Jimmy surveyed me as Balaam his oracular ass. "And is that the only reason why you have dragged me into your commination service?"

I explained that my list of victims was generic rather than individual. It included all evilly-disposed persons who were in a position to harass the down-trodden undergraduate. Still it pleased my tutor to construe the allusion as personal.

Jimmy Latham heaped coals of fire on my head. After an interval of a week or so he said to me, "Mr Tau, you must go up for the Classical Tripos." But, as we have seen, it was too late. Jimmy, with all his gifts, had not the makings of a good handicapper.

II.

My advice to the Georgian undergraduate is to energise, specialise, concentrate; yet, as a matter of fact, I was never made to suffer for that Poll degree. By all the laws of retribution a dreadful

Nemesis should have overtaken me, but the Providence that watches over the philosopher on the doorstep was, and always has been, my good friend. The appointment I most desired, which was to unbar the golden gates of the East for me, was in the hands of an Oxford man, and he, God rest his soul, thought that a first-class Special at Cambridge was equivalent to his own first in Greats, and gave me the post. Parents who read these reminiscences should take care that they do not fall into the hands of the young; but such are the rewards of indolence, ignorance, and irresponsibility.

Three masters were required to complete the staff of St Paul's, Darjeeling, one of the most important of those establishments for the sons of Englishmen and Eurasians who are denied an education at home. I was appointed Classical Master. Carter, the Oxford man, who selected the candidates, gurgled with amusement two years afterwards when he discovered his mistake. I, with my native optimism—had I not felt all along that "something fat" would turn up?—entered upon my duties quite innocently and in all good faith. And my classics, for that matter, were good enough; I can say it quite modestly. Even Jimmy Latham, most conscientious of souls, stood sponsor for that. And, what is more important, I had the genuine qualification of zeal.

I joined my two outward-bound colleagues on a P. & O. at Naples. It was the first time I had left England. I had never seen mountains before, never climbed a hill higher than the Peak. And I woke up to see dawn break on the mountains of Savoy, pink snow arched like masses of crimson rambler above the black pines in an air more translucent than I imagined possible. The train was passing Culoz. There was barely a second to

catch the name of the station. Magic inscription ! Letters indelible ! Culoz has become a spiritual landmark. I have seldom seen a sunrise or a sunset in the snows without thinking of Culoz. I wrapped myself in my blankets and became glued to the corridor windows until we reached Modane. At Modane we had hot steamy coffee in glasses. This, too, was an adventure. The taste for food, drink, or tobacco, associated with these happy initiations, endures. A caporal cigarette with one's morning coffee in France has a virtue of its own like the hallowed smell of cowslips and primroses.

The stark Apennines were another delight, and the Mediterranean ; and it was almost as exciting as the Culoz revelation to see daybreak at Rome after the second night in the train. A week later, exhausted with adventure, I slept through "Lohengrin" at the Opera House at Naples. I had seen Pompeii and Vesuvius, and in less than a week I should see the East. Port Said was another landmark ; it seemed to me the most romantic place in the world. I looked for Madame Binat, who "could cause things to be accomplished," and I was disappointed not to find her and the Zanzibari girls who danced for Dick Helder. A little imagination, a deal of ignorance, a sufficiency of conceit, and an indiscriminating appetite for experience, are the ingredients of beatitude in youth. We reached Aden after dark, and Hagger, the mathematical master, and I went ashore. We were the only passengers who left the ship. As we anchored at nine and sailed at midnight, and it took at least half an hour to reach the jetty by boat, nobody else thought it worth while. Crampshaw, the third of our party of pedagogues, as untravelled as myself, remained on board. I pitied his sluggish soul.

Hagger had been a gunner, and seen service in the East. He was fifteen years older than I, a bit of a self-conscious play-actor, of the order of "bucksticks"; the rôle of instructor to the impressionable greenhorn was congenial. With him I saw my first Asiatic bazar as it ought to be seen, by lamplight and moonlight, and carried away a chiaroscuro of Biblical impressions. Half-way back to the boat our Ethiopian rowers, black galley-slaves of tremendous sinews, began to clamour for backshish amounting to double their fare. Otherwise they threatened to drop oars. We were running it close. I looked at my watch; it wanted only twenty minutes to midnight. Hagger was splendid. He took out a revolver, which until then had lain unsuspected in his pocket—he was always dramatic,—and covered stroke. It was like a picture in the 'Strand Magazine,' Hagger the hero of the frontispiece. He commanded his temper, and spoke a few quiet impressive words to the Ethiops in their own tongue. They took up their oars and rowed on, submissive as slaves chained to their galleys. Soon they broke into a melancholy disciplined chanty, known to their forbears when Ur was the port of the Chaldees.

"What did you say to them?" I asked Hagger.

"It was an Arab proverb," he replied carelessly. "I picked it up in the Sudan. A good thing to remember when you are in a tight hole. You saw how it crumpled them up."

I didn't believe in that Arab proverb; I had a suspicion that Hagger had never been in the Sudan, and I was a little doubtful about the "tight hole." *Imchi, boukra, bint*, was probably the extent of his Arabic; it is quite possible that this was the formula he used.

"If you take my advice," he continued sen-

tentiously, "you won't wander about in the bazar again without a revolver in your pocket. And don't forget to put one under your pillow when you go to bed."

Hagger's heavy patronage rather spoilt the adventure for me. I disliked this kind of tutelage; it took the conceit out of one. I would not have minded so much if it had not been a pose. I determined that if the East was to be my stage, the next time I figured as a white man trying conclusions with Asiatic hordes I should be alone. I saw myself penetrating to the secret places of Asia in disguise, a Strickland or a Warburton, or, better still, a Waring, an Avatar in Vishnu-land, "assuming the god," with hordes at my feet grown European-hearted. But Hagger made me feel like a precocious schoolboy who had been taken to the Adelphi, though he had understanding enough to have spent a much happier evening at the St James' or Savoy. However, I had some one to despise. As I clambered into my upper bunk I gave the supine Crampshaw, who was snoring too loudly, a dig in the tummy with my toes. His sails "were never to the tempest given."

III.

But to return to the s.s. *Mariana*. At Colombo a Madrasi Brahmin joined the passengers in the second-class, a young man of about twenty, whose oiled and curled hair hanging cavalier-like about his neck, spotless white garments, and general air of refinement and intellectuality, greatly impressed me. It was my first contact with the Indian student in his own country, or rather under his

own skies, though I was familiar with the hybrid mimetic product of the English University. There had been one at my own college, a friendly little dark man, who was pathetically eager to be received among us as one of ourselves. He liked us to ask him into coffee after Hall. Two or three times a term he insisted on giving me his photograph, Mr Asghar Ali, or Asghar Ali, Esq.—his name was always subscribed,—and ultimately Mr Asghar Ali, B.A., Cantab, in cap and gown, dress clothes, frock-coat, flannels, always appropriately hatted, the monotony in subject diversified by pose and a nice choice in fancy waistcoats. He kept a collection of these photographs, which we encouraged him to exhibit, a kind of pictorial autobiography. Apparently it never occurred to him that an album had other uses. None of his friends were included. Later, when I knew more of the Oriental, I tumbled to the abstract theme of that portfolio. It amounted to a sheaf of testimonials, witnesses that could not lie, all testifying to the completeness of Asghar Ali's assimilation. This was the secret underlying its unity. I believe he would have liked a signed certificate from each of us signifying his fitness as an associate, a companion volume of "chits" to provide a text for the illustrations; only he was too assimilated to ask for them.

The European, distracted by diverse unrelated curiosities and appetites, is slow to realise the single-mindedness of the Indian. In the pursuit of prestige or any other kind of advancement, spiritual or material, he can be extraordinarily persistent, but he is seldom interested in things objectively for their own sake. One of the best all-round cricketers I know is a Parsee, but I have discovered that the game rather bores him, and that he only plays as a means to an end.

There was nothing in the least inscrutable about Asghar Ali. Srinivasa Rao, on the other hand, our Madrasi fellow-passenger, was a mysterious and complex being. There was something about him disturbing to my English complacency. Twice a day he went through an elaborate course of physical exercises on deck with dumb-bells—a conspicuous figure, but as unconscious of the outer world, or so it seemed, as the Moslem on his praying-carpet. At other times he might be seen sitting bolt upright on a capstan reading Herbert Spencer. I offered him the use of my deck-chair, but he politely declined. I believe I was the only passenger who spoke to him. I remember feeling vaguely uncomfortable as I watched him moving among us, detached and self-contained, apparently unconscious of his ostracism, as if contact with the new and rapidly evolved race from which he had borrowed his dumb-bells and his Herbert Spencer were a matter of indifference. I was not quite sure whether his segregation was voluntary or enforced. With the single precedent of Asghar Ali in my mind I was rather afraid it was enforced. In any case it implied a kink in human relations that needed straightening out. On the night when we held the last of our smoking concerts in the saloon, social relations were formally established. At my suggestion Srinivasa Rao, like all the other passengers, was invited “to do a turn”—such, if I remember, was the phrase of “the Glasgy engineer,” self-appointed master of the ceremonies. To our surprise he consented; he would give us a recitation, he said. His turn came after the ship’s doctor, who sang “A bicycle built for two.” There was a boisterous and convivial interlude, in which the company could not be induced to drop the chorus. The Brahmin rose in the sub-

siding hubbub. Without a trace of embarrassment he read the whole of 'Adonais' from beginning to end, and he read it remarkably well, quite forgetting himself and the scene in his abandonment to the rhythm. But I am afraid the ordeal was too much for the patience and good manners of the other passengers, Shelley's compatriots, who were visibly and audibly bored. Happily, the Brahmin was too carried away to notice the yawns, the shuffling of feet, the cat-calls of the Glasgy engineer, and Hagger's cry of "Time" in the fifteenth stanza. No doubt he took the half-derisive burst of relief, when he came to an end, for applause.

The next morning he was as remote from us as ever, and to my mind infinitely more intriguing. I had never read Herbert Spencer, and have never before or since had the slightest desire to read him; but this, very naturally, has only increased my respect for those who can and do, especially when they happen to be Indians. An Indian highbrow was something outside my conception. Hagger, of course, would have it that the Brahmin was showing off, and that his parade of callisthenics and philosophy was a mere pose. But I did not accept Hagger as a judge. He was biassed, and there were things he did not understand—the Arab greybeard, for instance, on the coal-lighter at Suez. I pointed the old man out to him as he rose from his prostrations like a figure in Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," though his forehead was grimy with slack. "Hypocrite," was Hagger's comment. But the Moslem gave me the impression more strongly than other worshippers I had observed of really seeing God in front of him and forgetting everything else.

The isolation of Srinivasa Rao rather weighed on my mind. I suppose it was a feeling that

having entered his house, so to speak, we ought to show him the courtesy that one owes to a host; or, if we had definitely appropriated his estate—for his own good, of course—and were in the position of a guardian to a ward, we ought at least to show him the consideration that is due to a guest. I did not work it out like this, as I was born an unreflecting young Conservative, ready to bow my back to “the white man’s burden,” which, by the way, was not so heavy then as it has become since with all the weight of cant we have shovelled on to it. Still, such are the lines on which I would have stated my case if I had submitted my instinct to any process of reasoning. Srinivasa Rao was my first contact with the racial problem. Here was a clean, self-respecting, unobtrusive young man, responsive to courtesy, who read Shelley and Herbert Spencer, and yet he was shut out of the world we had educated him to admire by our own senseless barriers. I felt that there must be something behind this ostracism which I did not understand, that there was more in it than the colour of his skin.

I looked for some corrective of the Hagger point of view. One of the passengers with whom I discussed Srinivasa Rao was a missionary, and he told me a great deal about the inhibitions of the high-caste Indians, their instinct for segregation, and more especially their attitude towards women, which, he explained, made any frank intercourse between the two races difficult, if not impossible. This was consoling. If it was the Indian who put up the barrier, then we second-class passengers of the s.s. *Mariana* were acquitted of anything more serious than ill-breeding.

I have since heard the missionary’s arguments repeated a hundred times. One hears them to-day

whenever there is any talk of the cultivation of social tolerance, East and West clubs, or bridging of the gulf in different ways. The conclusion is that the Indian is unclubbable; he finds our European society uncongenial. "Let them bring their women if they want to mix with us," say Hobbs and Nobbs. But if they did bring their women I am afraid it would not mend matters much. There are Mrs Hobbs and Mrs Nobbs to be considered. Still, the missionary contrived to throw the onus of culpability on the other side. I listened with relief when he spoke about the Brahmin's sin of pride and intolerance, and all the things he holds unclean, and how easily he is defiled. The conscientious Anglo-Indian derives comfort from the caste system. In the impenitent mood when we hug the idea that we are liberal-minded, it is much more comfortable to feel that we are excluded than that we are guilty of exclusiveness.

At least twenty years after this conversation with the missionary, when I rather fancied I was freer of racial bias than most men, an Indian said to me, speaking of the South Africans: "If these colonials had been asked to paint God, they would have painted him white." My spontaneous thought was, "Why, of course; would you have them paint a black or brown God? What a fantastic idea!" This Indian had his limitations too.

I suppose complete toleration will never come until the simple-minded of all nations can picture a kind of chameleon God who flushes, or darkens, or pales, responsive to the hues of his votaries in different climes. But we have made little progress towards the ideal; it is even possible that we may be receding from it. Personally I have come to look upon racial incompatibility as something chemical or physiological, apart from reason, which

is only called up among the supports of our self-respect in a losing battle. Reason and logic in these debates are generally the disciplined reinforcements of instinct.

IV.

This unhappy racial question was to become a recurrent bogey; it quite spoilt my last years in India, though my youthful initiation after parting with the Brahmin was untroubled by it. My last glimpse of Srinivasa Rao was when he turned to wave me a dignified farewell on the gangway of the P. & O. in Calcutta. I remember he was followed by a coolie carrying his bright vermilion tin trunk, which bobbed and swayed in the human tide like a buoy in an estuary. I watched it until the Brahmin became lost in the myriad other mysteries, of which in my recollection he has become a single enigmatic atom.

After that I had no intimate intercourse with the cultured Hindu for many years. We saw little of Indians in Darjeeling beyond our servants, simple, child-like, unsophisticated folk, of a Mongolian cast of feature and mind, whose very guile was attractive. Later I was to know the servant of the plains, but not yet. The old-fashioned type of Indian servant of happy traditions, who knows how to endear himself to his master, has few equals. He needs discovering, but the good sahib will find him, or perhaps create him, if he bides his time. Some day he will have a greybeard to wait on him, who will combine the presence and dignity of Abraham with a tender sensitiveness to his master's wellbeing. In the mind of this picturesque and devoted attendant the sahib's

relationship of *ma-bap*¹ is really no fiction, for the Indian servant is something more than an actor. He becomes the part he has assumed by living it and believing it. When the arts of affiliation become instinctive they are no longer arts. Real smiles and tears of welcome and distress mark the sahib's coming and going, and the sahib himself is heavy at heart when the day of separation comes.

One may inherit this type of servant if one is lucky, but one doesn't just tumble on him. The newcomer, when he lands at Calcutta or Bombay, is generally delivered into the hands of a thievish tribe of sharks. I remember my first morning in an Indian hotel and the uninvited servants and crows who invaded my room with the light. With youth's illiberal impatience I regarded every entrance as an intrusion. I hated the man who came to me with chits, and the hotel barber who rehearsed the most abject grovel of a salaam, and the hotel-bearer who fumbled with my clothes and pretended to sort the things in my pockets until I frightened him away with strange oaths. When I returned to my room from my bath, I found a sovereign was missing from my dressing-table. Afterwards I discovered it on the floor carefully concealed under a leaf, which ought not to have been there. There was no breeze, so it could not have blown in at the window. This meant backshish, of course, if the sovereign was missed and discovered; and if it was not missed it meant fifteen rupees to the bearer which ought to be the sahib's. I felt quite hot and angry at the discovery, and altogether most ingenuously resentful. "This is India," I thought, "a country in which one can trust nobody. How suspicious and circumspect one will have to be! A dacoit

¹ Father and mother.

one could respect, even a hotel servant who purloined boldly; but this servile hedging iniquity——” Here an impudent crow flew in at the window and carried off a piece of toast. “*Es korakas*. Pythagoras was right. There is no doubt where this *canaille* goes to.”

It was one side of India, but the reverse side. I do not remember ever being robbed by an Indian servant since who was not a member of the criminal classes; but for years I regarded the incident of the sovereign and the leaf as symbolical.

I saw nothing of Calcutta and its teeming millions. I did not even visit the temple at Siva Ghat. My interest in the mysterious Indian, his character and religion, was as yet barely awakened. The fascination of the East lay for me in its beasts and birds and flowers and scenery. In this respect my appetite was inexhaustible. And right at the beginning I was to enjoy the most sustained and enchanting entertainment I have ever drawn from natural scenery before or since. On the second day after landing I made the journey in the little mountain train from Siliguri to Darjeeling through the sâl forest of the Terai and up through the tea-gardens into the misty ilex zone at 8000 feet. Little things like the odd flavour of the butter of Himalayan cows, first tasted in the railway refreshment-room at Kurseong and reminiscent of the dank leech-infested jungle, the bitter medicinal flavour of the pummelo, which one continues to eat though one knows the taste for it is illogical—these things and certain smells encountered on that first journey, when the little panting train drew up in the forest to water, the cowy-smelling Himalayan road and the pungent artemisia undergrowth which breathes the essence of the hills, have become associated in my mind with sublimities.

Here I could rhapsodise, but, thank God, there is no need. I have outlived many evil necessities : one of them is having to translate one's feelings into words which never seem genuine or adequate. Men of all professions look forward to independence, but the sweetest freedom must be the journalist's when he ceases to be the hireling of the pen, and can write just what he likes, and how he likes, and when he likes ; or better, when he is confronted with the indescribable, need not write at all. A few months ago I found myself in Burgos, and all the while I was thinking, " Here I am in Burgos, and I have not got to write a word. I thought of my freedom when I woke up in the morning, and hugged it in the streets and at meals, and in the cathedral, like a school-boy who has escaped an imposition. How it would have spoilt it all if I had had to write a thousand words about the cathedral ! Never would I be compelled to describe a mountain or a building again. Youth may have its ardours, but many are the compensations of middle age. Allah be praised, I need not describe the Himalayas. It would all end in " hot air," as the subaltern says, and I am old enough to know that my readers will be almost as thankful for this license of omission as myself.

My two companions slept most of the journey ; in fact, they were not at all times companionable. But at Darjeeling I found others of my generation more sensitive to impressions. At St Paul's we could put eleven masters into the field. Some of these were " characters." There was a naturalist, a pugilist, and a philosopher among them. And most of them were sportsmen. Carter, our Head, we all loved. I had hated the idea of being a master in a private school at home, but school-mastering in India had its compensations. We

began work early, and, so far as I remember, our afternoons were free. I was made captain of the football. Some of the pupils whom I coached in Latin and English passed their examinations. I had a good Arab pony of my own, and the use of one or two others. We were often invited by the neighbouring planters to week-end shoots. In the meanwhile I had really settled down to work. Boys in India, I discovered, had not that rooted distaste for class-work which distinguished my friends at X. This made things easier. I tried to make good the omissions of X., distilling some sort of humanity out of seemingly dry-as-dust volumes. In this way I learnt more by teaching than I ever learnt by being taught.

Still, I did not intend to remain a pedagogue for ever. I meant to wander. Heaven knows how, but somehow I would find the means. Darjeeling was an ideal threshold, or rather an upper storey, from which to climb on to the roof of the world. Tibet lies beyond the barrier of snows. The eye in one sweep takes in a rise of 27,000 feet from the valley of the Runjeet below to the crest of Kanchenjunga, forty-five miles distant as the crow flies. The intervening ridges, forest-clad and blue and purple in the haze, rise in gentle tiers to the base of the massif. Kanchenjunga, in the centre, a tent-shaped roof, with its satellites, fills the horizon. It is supported on the west by Kabru, which is also pavilion-like in its design; and on the east by the cupola of Pandim, and the flanks of these are extended into Nepal on one side and into Tibet and Bhutan on the other in a series of outlying peaks, any one of which, if encountered elsewhere, would be the object of legendary reverence. It is useless to measure or qualify sublimity, but it will be conceded, I think, that a panorama like this, viewed over galvanised

iron roofs every clear morning for a period of three years, must be disturbing to one's sense of fixity. And there was more in it than the æsthetic invitation. It was a challenge. One was looking on the walls that enclosed "the last secrets." Nepal, save for the main straight road to Khatmandu, is closed to Europeans. Bhutan, at the extreme east of the chain, is also a *terra incognita*. As for Tibet, it was then, and still is in spite of the Lhasa expedition, humanly and scenically, the most seductive country in the East.

There was a gunner subaltern in the mountain battery at Katapahar, since become famous, with the gift of tongues and the love of adventure. He is the only Englishman I know who speaks Tibetan fluently. I used to visit the monasteries with him that were accessible from Darjeeling, and envied his easy intercourse with the lamas. I tried to learn Tibetan myself, and engaged a *munshi*, but I could never distinguish the subtle tonal differences of the vowels. There were eight distinct "a's," if I remember, and they all sounded to me exactly alike. I gave up Tibetan in despair, but I did not part with Phuntshog, my *munshi*. Through him I obtained from one of the monasteries a well-worn zylgraph edition in three volumes of 'The Life and Meditations of Milarapa,' the Tibetan saint and poet, illustrated with quaint little illuminated tailpieces of the saint and his preceptor, Marpa Lotsa, seated in devotional attitudes, faintly haloed in green and gold and red and yellow.

'The Life of Milarapa and his Hundred Thousand Songs' is one of the few indigenous books in Tibet. He is the most popular saint in the calendar, and the mendicant lamas still sing his songs. Phuntshog translated them for me. Milarapa was a mystic—one may assume mysticism

in any Tibetan poet. He sang in parables. But it was not his metaphysical subtleties that appealed to me so much as his feeling for nature, which I had been told was rare in Eastern poets, and his communion with the beasts and birds and fishes to whose kinship he owed his conquest over the elements.

“I am the son of the White Lion (snow leopard). Three skills I inherited from my mother’s womb. I slept in the cradle in my childhood until I grew to look over the edge of the cradle. In my youth of lion I travelled in the snowy mountains. I care not though the mountains of snow be spun round; though the rocks be very large, I care not. I call not myself a man.

“I am the son of Eagle, king of birds; I had feathers from the shell. In my childhood I slept in the nest, until I grew to look over the edge of the nest. In my youth of eagle I darted through the firmament. I care not though the firmament be wide. I care not though the path be steep. I am no man.

“I am the son of the Great Fish. From my mother’s womb my golden eyes revolved. In my childhood I slept in the nest until I grew to look over the edge of the nest. In my youth of fish I swam round the ocean. I care not though the waves of the ocean be great. I care not though there be many nets and hooks. I am no man.

“I am the son of the Lama Kargyud. I had faith from the womb of my mother. In my childhood I began to study. In my boyhood I became a disciple, and in my youth I wandered in the forest. I care not though the devils molest me. I care not though there be devils and transformations of devils.

“A lion cannot be frozen in the snow. If a lion

be frozen in the snow, of what avail are the three skills ?

“ An eagle cannot fall from the firmament. If an eagle fall from the firmament, of what avail is it to have wings ?

“ A fish cannot be drowned in the water. If a fish can be drowned in the water, of what avail is it to be born in the sea ?

“ I, Milarapa, fear not the devils. If I fear the devils, of what avail is my meditation ? ”

Milarapa was continually molested by devils, “ the children of his inclinations,” with whom he wrestled until his piety evicted them. When he sang to the demons of Eagle Castle they rolled their eyes in terror, trembling so that the roof of the cave shook. There is a mingled strain of gentleness and wild exaltation in his *Te Deums*, which recall in turn St Francis of Assisi and Christopher Smart. Flaubert, if he had known Milarapa, might have summoned new legions of devils to lay siege to the spirit of St Antoine. I do not know if the songs have ever been translated, but their transcendentalism intensified my longing to go to Tibet.

Transcendental is a word that is always associated in my mind with Tibet. To confess this may savour of mahatma-mummery. What I mean is that Tibet is a peculiarly evocative background for spirits, evil genii most of them, like the *Noijin* who cause avalanches and breathe out the *la-druk*, or poison of the passes—mountain-sickness in our prosaic phrase,—and are generally responsible for the malice of the soil out of which lamaism has grown. One cannot escape these spirits. One must appease them. The stranger in Tibet must live alone in the solitary high places to understand how or why. Then one begins to

feel like a Tibetan, or like Milarapa, who in his heart must have known that he was a chattel of the unseen, though he bravely tried to persuade himself and his disciples that he had cast out the devils who gnashed their teeth at him and showed their tusks in the cave. The sage was an erect spirit. Ordinarily, men who live in conflict with devils walk like automata with no volition in their limbs. They shamble along as if propelled unwillingly from behind. I have watched them crossing the high tablelands like the fatalistic camel in the Buddhist wheel of life. I have known the loneliness, the cold, the creeping mists, the mirage which makes everything seem unreal, the naked desolation, the melancholy of the great shale slopes under cloud, the unmeasurable wildernesses of rock and sand, and the icy, numbing, grit-laden wind that sweeps over them—the physical properties of Mila's demon-drama. Man here is but a shrivelled and attenuated atom. At the top of a pass I have felt the itch to grub up stones and build a cairn. Hence the red and green demons painted on the rock, white stones piled upon black, flat slabs inscribed with the sacred formula set on end, and the mani-walls and chortens so ubiquitous in Tibet that one comes to look on them, in memory at least, as natural features of the country, like the little splintered turrets dotted all along a mountain crest—gendarmes, as one calls them in the Alps,—which, as evening comes on and discloses their sharp lines, one can well imagine to be the ghostly guardians of the place.

Lamaism, of course, is a species of blackmail, by which priestcraft exacts from the Tibetan his ghostly toll. These excrescences of superstition are the natural growth of the soil. People bred in such an environment would naturally hold such

a faith. But it was a long time before I had seen enough of the birthplace of lamaism to divine this. In the Sikkim gompas which I visited from Darjeeling, I heard the lamas' litany of propitiation. I listened to the sad hopeless music of their shells and horns and drums, and the plaintive drone of the monks chanting in alternation; but I did not understand the burden of it, how wholly it was a ritual of appeasement, and how the gods were unappeasable. I learnt this in Tibet. Lamaism is not a religion of hope. All that the faith of the wheel has done for the Tibetan is to open a door of escape. The melancholy of negation enters into the soul of his music, his frescoes, his prayers. Like Milarapa he is demon-ridden. The elements are in conspiracy against him. Even the rainbow is a devil's ladder. Malignant spirits use it as a bridge down which to slide in their dark traffic with earth. In every other religion the rainbow is a symbol of hope.

But Milarapa was a superman. He ceased to be troubled by the visitations of evil spirits, and became perfect in the faith of the wheel, delaying his passage to the blissful state of Nirvana that he might remain on the earth with his disciples, encouraging and exhorting them and convincing the evil spirits for the good of all beings. Naturally he was a popular poet in Tibet; he believed what he hoped, and the Tibetan believes what he fears.

The well-thumbed margins in my copy of 'The Hundred Thousand Songs' indicate the favourite passages of the monks in the lamasery of Ghoom. Most of these are songs of praise or victory. Phuntshog turned to them instinctively. For me they added a new human interest to the mystery and seclusion of a country whose physical defences had become a perpetual challenge. Tibet was still a long way off. I did not touch its frontier until

1901, when I was turned back, like every other traveller, by the Chinese guardians of the wall at Yatung. Later, in 1904, I went with the expedition to Lhasa. That was a dream come true, one of the few I remember in which the substance has transcended the image.

V.

It was at Darjeeling that I had my first experience of an earthquake. I was riding at the time in a bend of the road where I could not see any buildings. I thought my horse had gone mad. He reared and plunged and shied as he often did when he met a roadside pig or any other uncouth object or unsubstantial chimera invisible to my eyes; for Rob Roy was what the spiritualists call a sensitive. But there was something here more terrifying than an isolated goblin. He swerved and gyrated and sank on his haunches as if he were spiritually buffeted from above and below and on all sides; the forward prick of his ears was intensive. I could hear a loud prolonged rumbling and the roar of human voices, angry or frightened. It came from the direction of the bazar. My immediate thought was a native rising. Or was it the mohurrum? The first man I met when I had spurred Rob Roy round the corner increased my fear of something cataclysmic. It was old Power, a septuagenarian, ordinarily of grave and sedate habit, tearing up the hill in his shirt-sleeves with a billiard-cue in his hands. I called to him, but he was inarticulate with fright. When I reached the club I found the porch had fallen in.

Luckily the shock was in full daylight. People

had had time to run out of their houses, so there were not many casualties. Minor tremblings recurred at intervals for at least twenty-four hours. I remember playing bridge in a room with four doors, so that when the candelabra began to swing we each had our own bolt-hole and made use of it. I have since been woken up by small seismic shocks at night—minor earthquakes, but they are terrifying enough. A swaying bed, cracking walls, furniture gone mad, are fearful reminders of the instability of the microcosm to which we have become attached. One is woken up out of a peaceful sleep to be dragged before the indifferent tribunal of Matter. No argument or appeal is any good. One just has to wait with that queer tickling sensation at the roots of one's hair accompanied by a cold sweat, the prescriptive symbols of fright in fiction.

The experience heightens one's sympathy with ephemera. After an earthquake one takes care that the spider which falls into one's bath is not sucked down into the pipe; and at breakfast one carefully disengages a wasp from the honey, wipes its feet, and guides it to the open window. In fact, one becomes half a Buddhist. If one lived under perpetual seismic menace one might become wholly one, like the lama who every evening repeats a spell thrice, and spits on the side of his foot, so that all the insects that have died under it during the day may be born again as souls in Paradise. Is it love or fear? Possibly I am stretching analogies. This sympathetic quickening of our imagination after an earthquake moves us to pity. Our commiseration for the wasp or the spider is an unselfish emotion, whereas the stimulus to altruism in the Buddhist is the personal concern of karma. The godless hunters who visited Milarapa in the cave and begged him to

save the souls of the animals they had killed were certainly not pitiful.

It was during our seismic rubber of bridge that I discovered the happy accident that had planted me in the East. We had been discussing the Universities. Carter was dealing and talking of scholars and fellows and the surprises of the examination lists, when the candelabra began to swing for the second or third time, and we all ran for our bolt-holes. The last words I heard were, "I thought you got a First, Tau."

"So I did, sir," I explained when we had re-assembled. "A First in the Classical Special. My tutor——" I was going to tell him about Jimmy Latham's eleventh hour discovery of my buried talent, when he interrupted me.

"Isn't a Special at Cambridge the same as Greats at Oxford?"

He smiled when I enlightened him and said, "I am glad I didn't know that, Tau. I should have had to have appointed one of the Honours men."

He chuckled over his mistake, and called me an impostor for the rest of the evening. This put me on very good terms with my failed Honours degree. What my dear old chief meant was, "Rather Tau with an Ordinary than some unknown paragon with a Double First." His approval was better than any mere academic success.

Those were happy days. Probably I did not know how happy they were. One never does. Still it added to my content to feel that I must in some degree be earning them. One's Utopias are always in prospect or retrospect. I can look back to many. But I do not remember ever feeling more Utopian than in that first autumn in Darjeeling. The rains were over; the leeches

were dead in the forest ; all the world was green and the air fresh-bathed and clean. One could see into the interstices of the hills. It was October. The cherry-trees were in full blossom. In the Himalayas one has a second spring. Pink almond blossom against a soft blue sky, with the dazzling flanks of Kanchenjunga glinting through the branches. What could be more paradisiacal ? As I tumbled into bed I remembered that three days earlier I had shot a serow. It was very seldom that anybody shot anything in Darjeeling. That serow was a trophy—a bit of luck ; I did not deserve it. Our shikari used dogs. The antelope was driven towards us along a precipice the other side of a mountain stream. An easy sitting shot, and the poor beast lurched, dropped on its knees, and, rolling over the precipice, fell into the torrent eighty feet beneath. I remember its long ass's ears, goat's horns, and feet which looked too slender to support its unwieldy carcase. The week before I had shot a brindled civet-cat as big as a small leopard, and my friend had shot a barking deer. This was in a different forest at a different elevation. I lay awake thinking of the two forests. Infinite is the variety and prodigality of loveliness of Himalayan scenery between the outer ranges at 8000 or 9000 feet and the floor of the valleys. The next Saturday, I remembered, was a holiday. I was going to stay with a friend on his plantation at Singla. On Sunday we would be mahseer-fishing in the Runjeet, less than 1000 feet above sea-level. Here I would be in the tropics, in a hothouse atmosphere. I would sleep in the verandah and wake early to see the straight white trunks of the cotton-trees rise spectral in the morning mist ; then I would wander in the garden before the bearer brought me my tea. An entirely new world : strange exotic fruits and blossoms,

and gorgeous butterflies weaving an iridescent pattern over the flower borders.

One could let a horse out on the flat at Singla. In the upper garden one could shoot pheasants and woodcock, or rather frighten them, knock feathers out of their tails—for the jungle was thick, and I was still unproficient with the scatter-gun. There were many things that one could do at Singla which one could not do on the hill-top. One could æstivate there when the water froze in one's basin at Darjeeling. And it was only a few hours down the hill.

But my Himalayan memories are mostly of ascents, of zigzag paths winding up from the steamy moisture of the valley, where the tree-fern rises out of a tangle of rank undergrowth, vines and bindweed, convolvulus, smilax, and the scarlet clerodendron, through the sâl forest to cultivated slopes, terraced rice-fields, orange groves, thickets of the scarlet hibiscus glowing among the great white trumpets of the datura, until at 4000 feet one reaches the fringe of semi-European vegetation. This is the threshold of fairyland. Somewhere about here the road becomes a ladder of stone beside a mountain torrent whose bed is a rock-garden. No ruin or débris here. The wreckage of the stream is hidden in overarching greenery. One ascends until the trees are draped with orchids, hanging in sprays—mauve, white, lemon, and yellow. The evergreen oak and chestnut grow to a tremendous height and girth, sometimes 100 feet without a branch, and their straight stems are ringed and niched with moss and ferns and parasitic plants. The giant pothos-creeper embraces them. When one reaches the true magnolia and rhododendron belt at 9000 feet, one enters a zone of gnarled and twisted trunks, generally shrouded in mist and cloud. The moss- and lichen-bearded

branches writhe fantastically. The crimson and scarlet blossoms glow like coals against the snow. Beyond the tree limit the dwarf rhododendrons form a continuous variegated bed; the high pastures are pied with anemones as thick as daisies, white and mauve and purple and yellow. Primulas flower at immense altitudes. One finds edelweiss and gentian and saxifrage and the dwarf blue poppy at 18,000 feet.

All these zones of vegetation the eye can take in at a sweep. Looking across the valley, it seems an easy climb from the sâl forest to the oak, from the oak to the birch at the edge of the glacier. One has to spend months in the Himalayas before one's eye becomes accustomed to scale. At first one has the most vague idea of distances. When I had been in Darjeeling a few weeks I planned a two days' expedition with a St Paul's boy, a lad of eighteen, with some jungle lore, who ought to have known that our objective and the time we allowed for it were irreconcilable. The valley of the Rung-po lies immediately below the spur on which the school stands, a yawning abyss, it is true, but a drop of less than 7000 feet. My plan was to descend to the bed of the stream and follow it down to its junction with the Runjeet, which we guessed was some seven miles distant as the crow—the English variety—flies. We sent on a coolie by road to the point where the streams meet. Here we proposed to have a substantial "brunch" at eleven, then to follow the Runjeet valley upstream a few miles, and bivouac at night. We started before seven without a bite of food in our pockets after gulping down our tea and toast.

These were the days of ignorance. I have been responsible for many bad bundabusts, but none quite so bad as that. It was nearly noon when

we reached the bed of the tributary stream, a full day's journey, and hard going at that, from our objective. Happily we did not know it, and pushed on with a good heart. Of course, there was no track. In the trough of the valley, which lies east and west, the heat was as enervating as in the plains. The cliffs on both sides caught the heat of the morning sun, and retained it all day. The closeness, the evaporation, the refraction from the rock, were stifling. For hours we clambered over boulders which burnt our hands and knees, or ploughed through deep soft sand. Yet we seemed to make no headway. For long stretches the stream was pent in between steep cliffs, so that we were driven up into the jungle, clutching at sâl trunks, breaking our way through bamboo thickets, hanging by tremulous boulders over nullahs. At four o'clock we met a Bhutiah, and asked him how far it was to the Runjeet, and he told us "a two days' journey." Luckily there was a full moon, for it was nearly dark when we reached the river, and threw ourselves down on the sand in a state of coma, half-starved and too exhausted to sleep. Our coolie, of course, had decamped with our food and bedding.

This experience ought to have been a corrective, but I am afraid it was only symptomatic of an ineradicable and unreflecting optimism. Youth is incorrigible. For years I continued to be the most sanguine and casual traveller. I underestimated difficulties and distances, making little allowance for the salients and re-entrants in hilly country, still less for the misadventures of transport. I would draw a line from point to point on the map. "Twenty-five miles by scale," I would argue, "with any luck one ought to be able to get through in a day." Then in defiance of the first axiom of travel I used to get ahead of my

coolies and pack-animals. This generally meant being stranded without my kit for the night. I would give orders for a double march, a two days' journey in one. I must have been travelling off and on for twenty years before I discovered how illusory are the advantages of these double stages. The truth was burnt into my mind by experience often enough; but one soon forgets. In one's arm-chair, with the map spread over one's knees, one is tempted again to square time and distance too ambitiously by allowing for double marches. One pays for them extravagantly in the long-run.

I was never very robust or muscular; yet I had the reputation of being inexhaustible. My staying powers were quite out of the ordinary. I had a tissue of rubber and elastic, and seemed to be possessed of some interior economic balance which quickly restored waste, so that I could wear down much stronger men. I took no care of myself. I used to lie down and sleep anywhere, and drink any water, however filthy, that came to hand. Before I was forty I had used up all this internal fuel and worn out the machine.

Naturally, with this constitution, I expected too much of my men. My standard was too high and my patience too limited. I had not imagination enough to make allowances for their lack of stimulus. My temper, I am afraid, left much to be desired; and I was often insufficiently explicit in my directions. Another failing was my incurable addiction to short-cuts. In this I have never grown wise. Reason and experience have invariably succumbed to instinct.

Youth, one might think, could not set out more indifferently equipped for travel. Yet my careless, improvident, easy-going lack of system had its uses; it gave me the advantage the Cossack or Bedawi has over regular troops. I travelled

light, and lived on the country. I did not care a hang about discomfort. I was never tied to my base. I penetrated. When I came to an obstacle I was sucked along, like a weed through a sluice, towards my objective. I owed much to my lack of encumbrances. Probably my casualness was the greatest asset I had.

I was true to one principle. I cut down my impedimenta to the absolute minimum. But this was the necessity of economy rather than deliberate design. If I had not travelled light I could not have travelled at all. The expenses of a cross-country journey in Asia are entirely a question of transport. It is much cheaper to trek through the jungle with a few coolies than to live in a hotel. A tent and a bed were beyond my means, and were not really necessary. Failing other shelter I slept in blankets on the ground. I carried with me very few stores, and only two kinds of drugs. I started to make the traverse of the Indo-Chinese peninsula with six coolie-loads of kit, and shed two of them before I was half-way across. On my first return home from the East I got all my possessions on to the back of one camel, and the load included the poor beast's food and my own water—he had none—for ten days. It will be gathered that I waited a great deal on Providence. But not without encouragement: I always found Providence singularly kind.

These were long journeys to be undertaken by an impecunious pedagogue, but at Darjeeling I discovered a great deal of consistency in the laws of compensation. I was a schoolmaster, yet I had my full share of liberty and a horse and a gun. In England, if one is content to remain a pedagogue, one has about as much chance of spreading one's wings as a butterfly that has

emerged from the chrysalis in a collector's box. In India we were more blessed. So far I have only spoken of "the scholastic year." In the term time, as we have seen, we had ways and means of indulging our appetite for adventure. We followed the Himalayan bear to his feeding-grounds at elevations from 3000 to 10,000 feet according to the season, drank tea and Tibetan beer with lamas, shot with the planters, visited the Jungli Sahib¹ in his remote forest camps. But these were the *aperitif* hours, so to speak. Most of the time we were turning over in our minds larger projects. What were we going to do in the holidays? I have not mentioned the fact that we had a full quarter of a year in which to take ourselves wherever the spirit moved us. Our holidays were telescoped into one long vacation, three months on end without a break, in the cold weather. What more could nomadic youth desire? There was time to go to Babylon or Trebizond or the Great Wall of China.

¹ Forest officer.

III.

TERMINOLATRY

TERMINOLATRY.

I.

WHEN my first leave was due, those challenging walls on the horizon, which hid the last secrets, were still unscaled. I will not say that one can have too much of the hills. Only after nearly a year in Darjeeling a change in gradient was welcome. I reminded myself that it was winter, and that the Himalayan passes are more hospitable in autumn or spring. Possibly—if one must search for the concealed logic in one's motives—I felt that the Tibetan frontier was too near. I wanted something farther away—a flat and warm country for choice. I had seen nothing of the plains of Asia.

Burma attracted me, especially its hinterlands. I had been dallying with the idea of a journey to the Chindwin River through Assam and Manipur. The accounts I had heard of the wildfowl-shooting on this frontier were not easily credible; but I had the habit then of hope, or belief in any promises, provided they were sufficiently rose-coloured, which seemed to justify my choice of an objective. The one drawback to the journey was economical. If there were really so many duck. . . . I used to dream of them. After the first shot the air crackled with the tearing of calico, the flapping of canvas; the waters of the jhil darkened under the shadow of wings. Thirty distinct species,

including geese, had been shot in one season. I might bag a pink-head or a wood-duck, or a Baikal teal; who knows? If these innumerable flights of undisturbed wildfowl really existed, I might blaze off half a coolie-load of cartridges before breakfast. But there was a cloud to the silver lining, as my Babu used to say. I had another dream—one of inhibition, a tantalising picture, which still recurs in my sleep, of being among a host of wildfowl without any cartridges, or with a gun with a cursed, springless, ineffectual trigger, the seal of impotence.

The cost of the supply and transport of ammunition is a serious consideration. This was impressed on me at an early stage. Cartridges are an expensive item, and one's outlay on them may be nearly doubled by the cost of their carriage. Ultimately I had to give up small-game shooting on a trek. I found it too crippling to my budget. It was a question of leaving behind one's shot-gun or cutting short one's itinerary.

But without a shot-gun my first excursion in the Burmese hinterland would have been divested of half its glamour. While I was debating the Chindwin project, calculating how far I could square my inclinations with my resources, I had a letter from a friend in the Southern Shan States asking me to stay with him. The invitation was timely, for my leave had been cut short by a month owing to some unexpected work. C. was a crony of Cambridge, neither a parson nor a schoolmaster, but a budding administrator. He had levelled a cricket-ground at his headquarters at Taunggyi, and I found him instructing the young Shans in the national game. When I burst on this idyllic scene the idea of the man at the wicket seemed to be to punish the ball rather than the bowler. He had blocked it, and was pummelling

it into the ground with great vigour. C. retrieved it, and escorted me to his bungalow. I had a fortnight with him all told, and a month trekking by myself in the country to the west as far as the Salween.

With a good Pathan servant who knew the language, a game little Burmese tat, and no difficulties about supplies or coolies, everything was smooth-going. It was early March, spring in the Shan States, an undulating country of fragrant groves and valleys, in elevation between 3000 and 4000 feet, with a temperature rarely exceeding 86° in the summer, or falling below 40° in the winter. Gilbert White would have found "something peculiarly sweet and amusing in the shapely-figured aspect of these downs." The fruit-trees were in flower, orchards of blossoming wild pear and crab-apple, and sweet-scented May, and dog-roses, and a carpet of primulas in the highland villages; and in the lower valleys orchids—*Vanda cœrulescens* among them, as lovely as any Himalayan species—and a semi-tropical vegetation.

The Salween was my *terminus ad quem*. The loveliest of rivers. It is difficult to write about scenery without superlatives. They should be used sparingly, but a traveller is allowed one or two. At least he may pay the tribute of a superlative to the one river, forest, mountain, or city that has most uplifted him, provided he falls back instantly into the positive degree. Let me proclaim then that the Salween at the point of its junction with the Nam Pang is, outside the Himalayan theatre—I employ the qualification hesitatingly, but with the hope that it may earn confidence in a considered and not too hasty judgment,—the loveliest river I have ever seen.

But this is mere statement. It conveys nothing. I can only retail prosaically an inventory of the

elements of loveliness and leave the æsthetic synthesis of the composition to the reader himself. Well, then, on the right bank, a gentle gradient, imagine a dark primeval forest relieved at the edge by splashes of scarlet. This is the flowering cotton-tree. On the border of the forest is a belt of golden sand, fine sand, such as is passed through an hour-glass, and really golden, not discoloured yellow. This sand and gold, which, by the way, is the promenade of peacocks, dazzling apparitions, six feet or more of shimmering plumage—so regal are they that the sand appears to have been swept for them; this glistening sand and gold is the beach of a rushing river as transparent as a mountain spring. Its waters as they catch and lose the sun are blue and green, but one must picture these crude characterisations of colour as subtly etherialised; only where the stream is broken by islands of rock it falls in cataracts of white foam. The river is not too wide—I have no exact measurements; I could not throw a stone across it. But it is important to remember that it is not too wide, as the feature which has fixed it eternally within the bounds of fairyland are the coloured cliffs on the other side. I cannot remember the height of these cliffs—they rose some hundreds of feet above the stream—or their colour; all I remember is that they were radiant. But I do remember the colour of the flowering trees and shrubs which curtained them where they were not too steep, and these were the creamy-white strawberry-freckled bauhinia and the lilac congea which poured down the rock face in a flood, as lavish as lilac in an English garden. I bathed in a cool green backwater. If one were consulted in the manner of one's dispatch from this daedal earth, I should elect to be drowned in it.

For a month of mornings I was woken at sunrise, gulped down my tea and biscuits, dispatched my coolies on the road, and wandered off for two or three hours' shooting in the marshes or woods, or whatever cover there was near my camping-place. Game was not abundant, but there was enough, and the variety and unexpectedness of it kept me in a constant state of excitement. It was my first introduction to bird-life in the East outside the Himalayas, and I naturally confused the local fauna with the prosaic fowl which became so familiar to me afterwards in the Indian plains, the crow-pheasant, for instance, which I shot, and actually ate in the greenness of my ignorance. C., when I described the bird to him and its melodious unpheasantlike voice like the water bubbling out of the bath of a fairy princess, exploded with laughter. "I wonder you don't caw," he said. Not one crow-pheasant did I eat, but two or three, for I was never an epicure in camp. The Brahminy duck, when I shot it myself, savoured of tender beef-steak. I found doves appetising, even when I had run out of ghee and had to boil them; and as my coolies in their degree were equally indiscriminate feeders, my bag, to say the least of it, was unorthodox. I remember bringing in a snippet, a snipe, a paddy bird, a snake, and a partridge. With one duck, snipe, or partridge, I was tolerably happy, especially a duck. I remember with what a bump my first mallard struck the earth, like a missile. A hare was a trophy. I could never get within range of the jungle-fowl or peacock. I was a very bad shot. I did not become workmanlike with the gun until that dream of the innumerable wildfowl came true, and I could blaze off a hundred cartridges before breakfast.

After the morning shoot I untethered my pony,

and rode after my men. I would overtake them about noon, generally under the shade of one of those great pipal trees which in the Shan States take the place of the wayside khan—a magnificent roof of thick-matted leaves, through which the sun cannot pierce, and the blue is only visible at the edge like an embossed ceiling. My pony would always bolt to these natural caravanserais, landmarks that promised a halt and rations. Here I would find the Pathan cooking my tiffin, the coolies would be boiling their rice, and the Panthe traders from the borders of China would be taking their mid-day rest, their mules tethered somewhere within the perimeter of shade. There were niches and partitions among the high-ribbed roots for our separate fires. When I had fed, I would rest an hour or two and smoke and read—something pocketable. It was often Browning or the Golden Treasury. Then the road again. I would overtake and pass my coolies, and tether my pony to the zayat, where we would spend the night. In the evening I would get in my second shoot, as variable and full of surprises as the first; and when I got back to camp, comfortably tired and hungry, I would find the fire blazing, and the doves, or duck, or “pheasant,” according to the fortune of the morning, sizzling in the pan.

The Shan States picnic was an idyllic interlude; but in this, my first experience of camping on my own, I learnt very little about running a *bundabast*. There were no obstacles or transport difficulties. Supplies were abundant; one could travel light; and there were zayats to sleep in everywhere. The climate was pleasantly mild. Not a drop of rain for a month on end. And no unexpected expenses. The game little Burmese tat, which I picked up at Thazi Junction, where I left the railway, carried me over 500 miles. I

kept him six weeks, and paid thirty rupees for his hire. So far from gaining experience by this easy mode of travelling, it only confirmed my casualness. The simplicity of it all was demoralising. It seemed that there was nothing to prevent me from riding on happily and carelessly to the Gulf of Tonkin. But perhaps this was as well. It was an illusion that has coloured my views of travelling ever since. Optimism is helpful in getting one through to the end of a journey, as helpful as impudence in establishing one in a career.

II.

In my next leave I had a full three months, and a little more, and I hit upon a route which was not so easy. I was drawn again to the Indo-Chinese peninsula. But this time I meant to cross it. There is something pleasing in entering a country by one sea and coming out at another. An ocean, when one does not see one's way over the country one has undertaken to cross, is a glorious objective. One feels the poetry of the terminus in a mountain pass, or the source of a river, or the summit of a peak, or the end of a forest or desert, where one touches open country or pastureland. One marks these boundaries with a cairn. But one feels like building a pyramid when one comes out at the sea. Here definitely is an end and an accomplishment. Ruskin recalls among the instincts of childhood the pleasure caused by all open ground, or lines of any spacious kind, against the sky, behind which there might be conceived the sea. The emotion is stronger when one feels that one is nearing the sea after a long journey.

Balboa always seems to me the most fortunate man in history. Xenophon may have felt happier and more benedictory when he saw the Euxine. But Balboa found a new sea. No wonder he and his Spaniards broke into Te Deums when they gazed on the Pacific from the peak in Darien. To Cortes, too, to whom Keats has translated the "wild surmise," and to thousands of unrecorded travellers, some such sea-glimpse, whether long sought for or startling and unexpected, must have been the most memorable thing in their lives. The moment when I felt most Cortes-like was when, after crossing the Syrian desert from the Persian Gulf, I saw the blue waves of the Mediterranean from the crest of Lebanon. And this was from the train.

When I was a small boy I sacrificed almost daily to the god Terminus. At the age of six or seven I became possessed of a thin booklet in a blue paper cover, the size of a lady's visiting-card. This was a relic of the coaching days, and it contained a list of all the villages in the county of Norfolk with their distances from the hub of the universe, the small market-town where the booklet was printed and issued by the local stationer for the modest sum of twopence. The blue booklet became the manual of my cult, a kind of *Gradus ad Terminum*, and I contracted the vulgar, vicious, and transatlantic habit of ticking places off. But as I made all these pilgrimages conscientiously on foot, the boundaries of my acquired territory did not expand very quickly. However, my victories brought me more satisfaction, as they were more hardly won. There was the distant village of Winfarthing, with its historic oak, which for more than a year seemed an unattainable objective. I remember the afternoon I touched the oak with my stick, and cried, "There

Winfarthing !” The *geste* was equally an accolade and a *coup-de-grâce*, implying an end to my subjection. But there was nothing spontaneous about it. The “touching” was the culminating ceremony in my observance of the rites of Terminalia. Churches, milestones, village inns were all touched in this way, as a child will tap the last trunk in an avenue or rail in a palisade. Thus my kingdom was extended. I had a passion for completeness ; and the instinct has survived in the hobby of filling up blank and meaningless spaces—blank to me, not the geographer—in the map.

A coasting steamer from Rangoon took me by Mergui to Tavoy in Tenasserim, the rustic little port at which I landed for the cross-country journey. Here I was only four days, roughly 110 miles, from the Siamese frontier ; yet I could not find out anything about the road. Apparently there were no communications. The road on our side stopped dead in the jungle, and the Siamese on their side made no efforts to meet it. There was not even a track. One walked into a barrier of long grass, shoulder high, on the summit of the range that formed the water-shed between the Tenasserim River and the tributaries of the Meiklong. This I discovered for myself on the spot ; but in Tavoy, as I have said, nobody knew anything, or cared. The Deputy-Commissioner was unwilling to give me a passport. I could explain, though I must not, how I extracted one from him in spite of his reluctance. He and the D.S.P. “looked sideways” at me as a suspicious person, a ne’er-do-well, who was at Tavoy for no good. I was classed in Sterne’s order of delinquent and felonious travellers. Possibly a fugitive from the paternal roof-tree. I was twenty-two, but looked much younger. They affected

a grandfatherly interest in my safety. The D.S.P. asked me to dinner. "We don't know who you are, you know," he kept repeating, and looking at me darkly over his glasses asked: "Now what do you propose to do?" I told him. But it was quite obvious that he thought I was lying. Still, he gave me a letter to the headmen of the villages I passed through, ordering them to help me. Old Watson of the Mount Burney gold-mine, with whom I spent most of my days shooting, explained to me that neither the D.C. nor the D.S.P. could believe that any one would come to Tavoy except on duty or business. If I were really going to Bangkok, they argued, why sneak through in this roundabout secretive way by the back-door?

I was nearly a fortnight in Tavoy before I got away with my passport to Myitta, a village on the Tenasserim River, with a telegraph-office and a small detachment of Karen police, the only station between the coast and the frontier. I made these two stages by elephant. At Myitta I settled down for a few days' shooting. The only English-speaking person in the place was the telegraph clerk, who was half Burman and married to a Kareni wife. Luckily for me we became very good friends. I found him in a state of great dejection because he had run out of ammunition, and I was able to give him a supply of cartridges that would keep him happy for weeks. He lived for shikar, and we used to go out shooting together. I profited by his jungle lore. His wife's connections, too, proved very useful. As a friend of the family I was invited to a *Sabo Pho Pway*—a kind of lay harvest festival, held at night in a clearing of the forest some miles up-stream of Myitta. Like the other guests we arrived on elephants—the only form of transport in this virgin forest; but, unlike them, we arrived

and departed sober. We could have found our way to the scene by the sounds of junketing. Our elephants forded the river, and we found ourselves in a clearing where the Karenis had been threshing all day, and were now, their harvest gathered, given over to the rites of Demeter. The dew glistened in the stubble under a bright full moon, and one could see their faces as plainly as by candle-light. Bucolic youths were dancing on the threshed straw beside their tethered buffaloes, while the maidens sat round in a circle. They looked very sweet and Arcadian in the moonlight. Bacchus was there among the rustic clowns. Only Pan was wanting. But one felt his unseen presence. He might emerge any moment from the trees that ringed the moonlit circle in a dark solid screen. It was Pan's pipe they were playing, that tapering instrument of seven diminishing reeds.

" Sic rustica quondam
Fistula disparibus paulatim surgit avenis."

It was a Theocritean idyll. Only there was too much beer. One by one the uncouth swains subsided in the straw, not vulgarly intoxicated, but with a gesture of repletion, doubtless in honour of the goddess of plenty, as was quite *comme il faut*. The maidens departed like shadows—graceful and erect shadows, I am happy to record. Our mahouts, of course, succumbed. We had to wait an hour or two while they slept off their debauch, and so did not reach home until long after daylight.

Outside the rest-house I met my Kareni boatman. He was the bearer of bad news. His dug-out had been stolen in the night. It was on the morning after the *prway* that I had engaged him to take me down the river to Sinbyoodine, a short

march from the frontier. His family were searching for the dug-out down-stream. The thief, who had no doubt purloined it to take him to some *pway*—for there was one in nearly every village that night,—must have abandoned it somewhere and walked, if he were in a condition to walk, home. Walking, after what I had seen of a *pway*, seemed a bit problematical; but there wasn't the beginning of a problem in the *pway*-returning wassailer's inclination, or ability, to face a twelve-knot stream.

I was resigned to a day's unexpected rest after that wakeful night, but I owed the purloiner of the dug-out more than I knew. Late in the afternoon my friend, the telegraph clerk, came to me with a message from the D.C. of Tavoy, cancelling my passport and ordering me to return. I heard afterwards that he had been in communication with the Government at Rangoon. Now if I had left Myitta in the morning I should have missed the telegram, and the first thing I should have known about it would have been the arrival of a detachment of Karen police at Sinbyoodine with orders to escort me back to Tavoy. This would have meant slipping over the frontier without a servant and with what luggage I could carry on my back. I should have had to abandon my shot-gun or my rifle and five coolie-loads of kit. For, of course, nothing would have induced me to return to Tavoy under the escort of the Kareni sergeant of police.

My boatman arrived almost at the same moment as the telegraph clerk, with the news that he had retrieved the dug-out. I turned to my shikari friend, to whom I had become a kind of *deus ex machina*. He had not forgotten the windfall of cartridges. "There is only one thing to do," I said. "You must give me an hour's start, and

wire back 'T. has left Myitta. Message undelivered.'” He consented, out of friendship to me. I think this is the only instance that has come to my notice of a subordinate official in Government service in the East who accepted a responsibility. The risk of discovery was practically nil. Still he defied the regulation bogey, disregarded orders for an ideal—and that was heroic of him. I have not dared to tell the story before, but as my friend must be secure now from official reprisals, my revelations cannot injure him.

We had barely an hour before sunset, but I had my baggage flung hastily into the dug-out, and by dint of a little hustling induced my astonished and protesting boatmen to push off. It was sixty miles down-stream to Sinbyoodine, and the rapids, difficult and dangerous by daylight, were, of course, impossible in the dark. After an hour we had to beach the dug-out on a sandy spit between two rapids for the night. We were off again before sunrise, and, in spite of the most strenuous navigation, did not reach Sinbyoodine until the second morning. The police, of course, would have already started, but I reckoned with good reason on gaining a few hours on them. They would have no disturbing white man to goad them. As for my own men, I drained myself of compassion. Five minutes in a backwater to chew betel-nut was the limit of my indulgence. Never were galley-slaves so driven.

Everything depended on getting away quickly from Sinbyoodine; the telegraph clerk had not been encouraging about my chances of getting away at all. I was very firm with the thuggee, a stolid, indolent, peace-loving man. He seemed rather puzzled by my passport and the letter I carried from the D.S.P. ordering the village headmen to assist me. Elephants were the only inland

transport in Tenasserim, and they could not be taken over the frontier. There were the "Shan" dacoits to be reckoned with. Carriers? He would see. He would send out into villages. To-morrow, perhaps, he would be able to collect some men. He was abundant in his expressions of willingness to help. But—there were too many of these suave "buts," and underneath them I suspected a profound disbelief in the feasibility of my adventure. Anyhow, there was nothing for it but to wait for my coolies. It was important that I should appear externally cool. If I could get away on the following day before noon I might count on a certain margin of safety.

My "carriers" appeared in the morning. The Karenis have the virtue of independence—*gens admirables, mais parfois pendables*. And apparently there was no precedent of a *corvée*. They stolidly regarded my baggage, and as stolidly refused to budge. The morning was spent in argument and persuasion. The thuggee appeared to be sympathetic but impotent. At noon I harnessed the most submissive-looking of the coolies myself, and by dint of a little prodding, with an affectation of good humour, drove them one by one down the steps from the thuggee's veranda into the road. Twenty paces to the good. But after that they sat down. Things might have been worse. They might have discarded their impedimenta and bolted. I became encouraged. My case seemed less hopeless than that of a farmer I remembered in control of six pigs in a lane. In the last extremity a providential inspiration came to me. I lightly harnessed my boatmen, whom I had not yet paid, and who were therefore more amenable. I persuaded them to give the Karenis a lead. In some mysterious way their example acted as a spell. It was the beginning of accom-

plishment. It made it appear that the thing I was asking them to do could be done. So at last we were on the road. Our progress was still tentative. There were many halts and expostulations. It was growing dark, and the coolies wanted to sleep on their own side of the frontier, but I drove them on. Very slowly the miles increased between us and Sinbyoodine. When we came to the end of the track and began to bore our way through the thick jungle, I knew that I had won. It was pitch-dark when I called a halt in the trackless hilly country a mile beyond the border. The gite I scooped out for myself on the hillside was stony and a trifle too vertical for comfort, but I soon fell into the profound sleep of contented exhaustion. Defeat now was impossible. I was in Siam, and nothing could take that away from me, even if I had to leave behind all my kit. I felt quite sure that in less than a fortnight I should be in Bangkok.

The detachment of police from Myitta—a sergeant and three men—arrived at Sinbyoodine the same evening. This was pretty good going with an Asiatic in command, but they were three hours too late.

III.

Somehow by shifts and stratagems I managed to muddle through happily to Bangkok, but in the course of this journey I received my initiation into the hazards of transport. I had left Tavoy in a ramshackle ticca ghari. Ten miles out, where the road ceased to be *carrossable*, I hit on my providential elephant. Thus to Myitta. And from Myitta, in the hurried way I have described, by dug-out to Sinbyoodine. I now had three

impressed coolies and my three boatmen, whom I ought to have discharged when I left the river. I had no great confidence in any of them. Indeed, when I woke up in the morning, it was an agreeable surprise to find them all stretched out on the grass fast asleep. I counted them: there were six; and my baggage was intact. All six stood by me for the first half-day until we came to a small village. But here the Sinbyoodine men decamped, unpaid. I do not blame them. There was no transport in the village, not a bullock, or a cart, and no path leading to it from anywhere, and the headman was hostile. I reapportioned my baggage, gave one load to my faithful Mussalman servant, who shouldered it uncomplainingly, and took up one myself—a heavy portmanteau, which I carried in addition to my 450 express. The country on the Siamese side of the frontier was a blank on the map. Only there was a river, the May-nam-kway-naiu-ey, which I judged to be little more than a day's journey ahead of us. The going was as bad as it could be, the same trackless country, long thick grass, neck high, and swampy ground intersected by continuous little streams, unbridged, and waist-deep. We saw a herd of wild elephant, and were crossing the tracks of others all day. The Karenis were afraid of sleeping in the open at night, lest they should be trampled on.

We did not strike a village that day, but on the third or fourth morning after leaving Sinbyoodine we stumbled on to one a few hundred yards from where we had slept. Here we found the longed-for buffaloes. My suffering boatmen were free. I gave them more than the double wages I had promised them for every day they served me. They went off ostensibly grateful, but no doubt praying that they might never encounter another

white man. It was being slowly impressed on me that neither white man nor brown contributes to the tranquillity of the other. The white man in his turn, when he unshoulders what has been called his burden, is glad that he will never again have to hustle the East.

But there were many days of hustling before me. I pitched my kit into an empty cart, pointed to the buffaloes, and drew a picture of a boat. I do not think my drawing conveyed much to the villagers, but we made them understand, and without great demur on their part we were soon on the road to the river. Neither I nor my servant could speak a word of the dialects of the countries through which we passed between the Burmese frontier and the China Sea. But languages never bothered me. Signs and symbols were enough. It was the country I was out to conquer; I did not try to understand the people. I may have read about them more eagerly after I had seen them, but making every allowance for the callowness of youth, I was a singularly unscientific traveller. This was the peninsula game, an adventure in penetration.

Two easy stages brought me to the May-nam-kway-naiu-ey; three to the village, where I was able to commandeer a boat. Unhappily, though, I had no money to pay for it. I had left Burma with the idea that the Indian rupee was current in the southern provinces of Siam. Farther north, in Chiangmai, I knew it was the standard currency. But I had struck a province that had no traffic with the Burmese. All the money I had to carry me to Bangkok, over 200 miles, was six Siamese ticals. The villagers did not want my rupees. They would not look at them. What they did look at, to my surprise, for I regarded it as so much wastepaper, was the passport I carried from

the D.C. of Tavoy. When I waved it at the village headman, whose boat I had loaded with my baggage, the spell acted like black magic. I had endured forty-eight hours of "non-possumus," and in less than forty-eight minutes we were spinning down the river to Kanburi.

We put in at the first large village, some five miles down-stream. Here passengers and cargo were transhipped, and our boatman turned back without asking to be paid. The same thing happened at the next stage. Evidently I had struck some regular line of communications, and was taken for an officer on duty. It was doubtful if these villagers had ever seen a stranger who was not a *fonctionnaire*. Transport apparently was obligatory, and backshish unheard of. Anyhow, I was an incubus to be passed on. Thus the exchange question settled itself. At each stage I wanted to give the departing boatman my remaining six ticals, for I have never been so grateful to folk who helped me on the road. I was still sore and stiff and bruised from my coolie work; I had a boil on the shoulder where the strap had cut. And now I had nothing to do but to lie on my back and smoke, and watch the herons and adjutants and kingfishers, as the current bore me on evenly towards Bangkok.

I kept my ticals, however, to reward the boatman who landed me at Kanburi. This as a provision against emergencies. But there were none. Not a single misadventure. At Kanburi the postmaster could speak a little French and English. He dined with me; it was Christmas night. The Governor was able to change some of my rupees, and engaged a sampan to take me to Ratburi, two days down the Meiklong. Thence, by a network of canals and rivers, I reached Bangkok without adventure in a steam-launch.

At Bangkok I was laid up with a severe attack of malaria. Neither the Tenasserim River nor the swampy ground on the Siamese side of the frontier is a healthy country to bivouac in. I owe it to the anopheles, perhaps, that the kindest of hosts took me from a not too hospitable hotel to his own most hospitable quarters. I can trace the soul of goodness in things evil to another degree. If it had not been for the anopheles, I doubt if I should have seen Angkor. And if I had not seen Angkor—— But this is a theme for the fabulist, the part played by ephemera in the ruling of destiny.

My host had many books on Indo-China, but it was Henri Mouhot¹ who most lightened my convalescence. By the time I was on my feet, before I had left my bed even, I was being drawn to Angkor. Angkor Wat, through the spell of its mystery and remoteness, stood in direct spiritual succession to Winfarthing oak. I was still a devout terminolater, though perhaps not so bigoted in the observance of rites as I was at the age of eight when I tapped the oak. In those days I kept a rigid account of my soul with Terminus. Now I had become lax enough to juggle with expediency. In accordance with my vow I was bound to cross the peninsula on foot. But I was tempted and fell, like the pilgrim of 'The Path to Rome,' who made a vow to abjure wheels, and broke it. I wanted to go from Bangkok to Chantaboun by sea. It was only a small lap in the whole journey, twelve hours in a Siamese steamer which looked as indigenous as a junk. I would be a deck passenger, herded with a motley crowd of Asiatic adventurers bound for the Phairin ruby mines. It was not as if I had fallen to a P. & O.

¹ Voyage dans les royaumes de Siam, de Cambodge, de Laos. Paris : Hachette.

A breach in the letter, perhaps, but not in the spirit of my vow. And after all, what difference did it make, sampan or ship, river or sea, just for a few miles? I looked it up in the map, "the breadth of the black of your finger-nail, my leddy," as the Irish stable-boy said to the wife of the M.F.H. Terminolatriy is not a sect of Calvinism. Neither are terminolaters Jesuits. They do not split hairs. I have always had a great contempt for hair-splitting pedants and casuists. And had I not already crossed the peninsula? Was not Bangkok the Gulf of Siam, an inlet of the China Sea? That other bulbous projection which held Saigon was a separate and distinct peninsula. Well, then, if I crossed that too, I would be going one better than my vow.

I rose, then, or fell—I do not know now whether to call it moral courage or cowardice—to the Chantaboun route. The little gap in the red trail across the map has often reproached me. The track I took from Chantaboun to Angkor—there is no road after Phairin—was only forty miles shorter than the direct route from Bangkok by river and bullock-cart; and as I travelled on foot and on horseback, there was no saving in physical tissue. The more desirable way took me through hilly country as far as Phairin and the ruby mines. The way I ought to have taken, like the narrow way, was flat, tedious, and featureless. The broad questionable way was also a trifle more economical. This was important. It would never have done to have missed Angkor through an empty purse. I sold my rifle and my shot-gun and my cartridge magazine before I got to the end of my journey; and if I could have found any one to buy it I should no doubt have sold my dress-suit. Luckily I did not.

"Cut down your impedimenta," is my advice

to young travellers, if any are to be found as green and inexperienced as I was; "but never leave behind your dress-suit." The desert has its ports as well as the sea, and as an aid to getting through a dress-suit may be worth a whole armoury of guns. If I had not had my dress-suit with me in Bangkok, I should have missed the reception given by the Siamese Navy to the King and Queen; and if I had not been at the reception, I should not have met Prince Damrong, who gave me a personal letter of introduction to the four provincial Governors whom it was most necessary to conciliate on the road. My cynical friends in Bangkok had no faith in the virtue of this letter. "About as much good as a sick headache," one of them said to me. But I believe it helped a great deal. Anyhow, thanks to those four Governors, I was able to raise coolies at Chantaboun, a horse and a bullock-cart at Phairin, a sampan at Battambang, and at the mouth of the Siem Rep River a bullock-cart that took me to the very gates of Angkor.

Siem Rep stands in the same relation to Angkor as Jeddah to Mecca, only instead of the desert sand the pilgrim's way is by a clear running stream, and the trees that border it are weighed down by myriads of aquatic birds. I have never seen branches so bowed except by snow.

I spent two days and nights alone in Angkor, and slept on the moonlit flags in the chequered shade of an invading palm-tree—a solitude probably unpurchasable to-day. Angkor has always been easily accessible from Saigon, but in those days few Englishmen had heard of it. Newspaper lords, ennobled by snippets, did not visit it in motor-cars, and cable home flaming headlines about Prince Hassan's carpet and new leaves which kept fluttering out of the 'Arabian Nights.'

It was not even French, though perilously near to being swallowed. One heard a lot of *irredenta* talk about the lost provinces of Cambodia, and the Siamese were becoming uneasy about it. Still the genius of Angkor is revered by its new guardians. They at least have arrested its decay, and that is more than can be said of the Siamese and Cambodians who preceded them, who never spent a tical on repairs. One can see the roots of the sacred ficus at grips with the masonry, a battle of Titans. The encroaching forest has sapped and invaded the inner court of the temple. The ruin it has spread is sublime—not merely in the æsthetic sense; the emotion inspired by the temple's grandeur is deepened by a kind of moral sympathy. This brave old ruin has been enduring the siege for over thirteen centuries. Each scar it has received is beautiful in itself: the green canopy, where the roof has fallen in on the image house; the serpentine arm that is wrestling the pillar from the portico; the huge blocks of masonry, overturned, yet so closely joined that they preserve, without cement, the four Brahmanic faces, which look four ways, embracing an enigmatic universe in their mystic secular smile.

And the struggle is more epic in Angkor Thom, the city of the Khmers, where the havoc is greater. What happened to these Hindu master-builders, where they came from, and whither they have vanished, is the vaguest conjecture. And the mystery of their origin and disappearance is only one of the riddles of Angkor. There is no trace of Hindu inspiration in modern Cambodia, whether in dress, ornaments, vessels, architecture, manners, customs, or thought, beyond the common supineness of the East. The architecture of Angkor is not indigenous; nor did the Aryans bring it with them, or borrow it from any traceable source.

They have transmitted a style which is unknown in their own country, and they have left no record of themselves except in stone. I read every new book on Angkor that I can lay hands on. It is an insoluble problem. But I have no wish to return to the scene. All honour to the French for their pious reparations, but the more I see of their diagrams of the reconstructed Angkor in its cold and naked perfection, Angkor as it ought to be, stripped of its verdure, reinforced against its secular foe, the more I love to think of Angkor as it was.

I was at Angkor in the dry season, when the Tonle Sap, the great inland sea of Cambodia which empties itself into the Mekong, is reduced to a sixth of its area, and becomes so shallow that the boatmen find navigation difficult. We left Siem Rep in a rickety old sampan with a bamboo mast and a torn flapping sail; and with the wind and current behind us made Cambong Chenong, then the French frontier station, in three days. Transport, of course, became easier as we neared Saigon—from sampan to launch, first Chinese then French, and the last three hours from Mytho by train. From Saigon to Singapore by Messageries; from Singapore to Calcutta second-class in a B.I. coasting steamer, rougher in many ways than bivouacking ashore. And so to Darjeeling. My journey (20th November to 1st March) had taken me three months and ten days.

Angkor so fills the picture of this journey, like a shrine at the end of a straight avenue, that I have to remind myself that when I set out from Darjeeling it was not as a pilgrim. I had not heard of Angkor at Kanburi. It was at Bangkok that I began to feel its influence. I was drawn into the pilgrimage as a bit of driftwood is sucked through

a sluice into a stream. After that I had to become an Angkorite if I wished to retain my honour and not be herded with the profane. Not in vain must the pilgrim "wear his sandal-shoon and scallop-shell." But it was a very casual bit of terminolatriy.

IV.

My next expedition took me home. At the end of my three years I resigned my appointment at St Paul's. Carter had been intrigued out of his rectorship, irritated into sending in his resignation, which was accepted. I did not wait for the new man. Very few of the old staff stayed on under his régime. One or two resigned with me; others who would have remained were told that their services were not needed. I think, owing to my affection for Carter, I should have "cut my name" in any case. But there was no question of sacrifice. I had been very happy at Darjeeling, but I jumped at the chance of being free, if only for a few months, unattached, uninvolved in any kind of routine, with the whole of the Near East—golden alternatives in the choice of routes—between me and home. I had been poring over itineraries. My loyalty to Carter, I remember, was large and genuine; but I must not take too much credit for that, since in my protest at his dismissal I discovered the very sanction I needed to justify me in increasing the ranks of the unemployed. Nobody would be able to call me a waster. I could take the road without any prickings of conscience. I even persuaded myself that I would have been a dirty dog if I had stayed behind. Very few of one's *beaux gestes*, if one looks into them, are as creditable as they seem.

The very uncertainty of the future after this glorious penetration into the unknown rather appealed to me. Impecuniosity had not yet become a bugbear. I was quite content to remain a philosopher on the doorstep, so long as it was not the same doorstep. Romance and adventure lay in the flitting passage from one to another. If any of the doors had opened and admitted me to some gilded Hall of Eblis in which my future would have been assured, offering me a competency and a pension in repayment for submission to a routine, I should have put a continent between myself and that particular doorstep.

I have a happy recollection of the choice of routes. Maps and books of travel littered my table. The Pamirs and Central Asia, of course, were out of the question. This journey would have to cost me less than a first-class ticket home by P. & O. If one were to land at Bushire and take the road north to Teheran——. This was my first project. Persepolis and the rose-garden of Saadi lay that way. And there were a diversity of routes home when one reached Teheran. I was inclined to leave the Caspian for another journey. I was more attracted by the road through Tabriz and Erzeroum to Trebizond. I had taken an oath that I would see Trebizond—a vow that I fulfilled when I landed from a gunboat in the Euxine in 1918. Or I could strike west from Shiraz. I had heard, though I was no reader of Strabo and Arrian, that there was an ancient trade-route from Persepolis to the Karun River by Ram Hormuz and Bebehan. The Karun was Nearchus' way home. Why not land at Muhammerah and follow the river to Shuster and Dizful, and so north to Teheran? All roads seemed to lead to Teheran. One of the most seductive was the old Babylon Ecbatana road from Baghdad by Kermanshah

and Hamadan, familiar to Semiramis and Darius ; it passes under the rock-carvings of Bisotun—how well I was to know the southern half of it in 1917 ! I thought of returning from Persia this way.

And then what after Baghdad ? Supposing one approached it by the Tigris. That would mean more in hand for a wider circuit nearer home. There was the Mosul route. By the desert to Nineveh ? Or by Kurdistan ? Or one might follow the Euphrates to Aleppo, or take the caravan-route to Damascus by Deir-ez-Zor and Tadmor, the ancient Palmyra. Here I was hot on the scent. But as a matter of fact I did not follow any of these roads, or any road after I left Baghdad.

In the end, of course, I followed the line of least resistance, not of physical, but of economical resistance. Physically I chose rather a rough road ; economically it proved the only one possible. Of course, I had absurdly underestimated expenses. I found that the farther west one travels in Asia, the more one spends. Any of these routes to Teheran and the Caspian, with the hotel expenses and railway and steamer fares which they involved, would have cost me twice as much as I had allowed.

When I embarked at Karachi I had not the least idea where I was going to land. My plans were deliberately hazy and indefinite. This added to the interest and excitement of the voyage, and it was really a very practical plan for an impecunious traveller. I was much too ignorant of the world when I started to know how far my money would carry me, or what kind of expenses I was likely to meet on the road. I still had an idea that I might arrive home by Moscow after taking the rail from Baku. Trekking across Indo-

China with a few coolies and a shot-gun, I had found no difficulty in keeping down my budget to five rupees a day; but on the caravan-routes of the Near East, amid a floating population, it was not so easy for a white man to travel economically. Day by day I docked my branching itinerary. Two things became clear: I must avoid trade-routes if I did not want to be mulcted, and I must choose a very direct track to the Mediterranean if my resources were going to last out. These two conditions did not seem compatible. However, I was lucky, and found a way of reconciling them. But my greatest bit of luck was being a guest on a boat that called at all the Gulf ports. I might land anywhere. It did not in the least matter that I had no fixed destination. And my companions on board were men who knew the Near and Middle East, and whose advice, of course, was invaluable. When I did land it was not at a port, but in a private date-garden.

I was so amazingly lucky in those days that I fell into the habit of trusting to luck. Circumstance fortified my native optimism. "Something always turns up," I argued, and in my case it generally did. I was fittingly grateful, therefore, but not really surprised, when at Karachi, owing to a letter of introduction, I was invited to join the officers' mess on that hospitable ship, H.M. Indian Telegraph Ship *Patrick Stewart*, which makes the voyage up the Gulf to Fao about Christmas-time to test the cables. There were a number of other guests on board, and I started on my voyage home in convivial company.

But I must explain how it was that I was landed in that private date-garden. This was in Persian Arabistan, on the banks of the Shatt-el-Arab, at a point opposite Fao. It was, in fact, within sight of Fao, and for this reason I had to

lie hidden in an irrigation ditch all day lest I should be observed by the Turkish officials on the other side. The quarantine regulations in Turkish Arabia at the close of the nineteenth century were discouraging to travellers. When one landed at Basra, no matter where one came from, one was clapped into a filthy lazaretto for a term of ten days. I hoped to avoid this "impedimento" by arriving at Basra in the dark in a native *bellum*, and slinking off unobserved to a hotel. It was my own idea, and I need hardly say it received no encouragement from those of the ship's officers who knew the Turk. However, I was put ashore in the ship's boat with an Arab interpreter, who arranged with a *bellumchi* to take me on to Muhammerah.

We had to wait for the tide, of course, and that meant waiting till dark. And after sunset my boatmen would not stir. They were afraid of being fired on by Sheikh Khazal's river police, it being understood in those days that night-going craft was navigated by pirates. I slept in the *bellum* after a tedious day among the date-palms, whose scaly fibrous bark was to become in after years a symbol of abomination. I shared the Arabs' dates and khobez, a kind of coarse chapatti, having provisioned myself with the idea that we were going to reach Muhammerah that night. Before sunrise we made a start, but we had lost the best of the tide. Soon we could only make way by towing. Then we stopped altogether and moored to the bank. Another day with my *bellumchis* on a date and khobez diet! My protests and gestures only provoked a fatalistic guttural "*bukra.*"¹ That, or its equivalent in negation, is the first word one learns in an Eastern tongue.

¹ To-morrow.

On the second night, having accomplished our fifty miles up-stream, we moored outside the British Consulate in the dark. I carried a letter of introduction to the Consul, and in the morning I was hospitably received. But all hopes of escaping the lazaretto were dissipated. The Consul was emphatic on that point. Even if I succeeded in evading the quarantine officials when I landed at Basra, they would certainly seize me, if not before, when I boarded the Baghdad boat. He advised me to wait for the next B.I. steamer. Five days of purgation might be spent in comfort on board. This would diminish the term in the lazaretto by half.

My host—he insisted that I should dismiss my *bellumchis* and stay with him—was an Orientalist and an Arabic scholar. He had a good library of French and English books on the Near East, and I spent at least eight hours every day reading them before our evening walk. Certain rays of enlightenment I carried away. I remember a translation printed in Benares, the only one I have seen, of Sheikh Nefzau's 'Scented Garden'; it was her husband's translation of the book that Lady Burton destroyed. It is a manual of Arab erotology—a song of praise in the manner of the Psalmist. Sheikh Nefzau's solemn and pious outpourings of gratitude, if one respects the naïveté of the emotion, are as innocent as our harvest thanksgivings. "Why attribute the fruit to God and the germination to the devil?" he might have argued with the lady who made a bonfire of his manuscript. "It is no part of piety to pick and choose between God's blessings."

I became acquainted with other aspects of Arab piety at Muhammerah. My host's commentary on the volumes in his shelves was even more educational than the text. I remember walking with him

behind a grandfather's clock, borne like a bier on the shoulders of four men. This was a present to the man who supplied him with milk. A truly pious man!—the Consul's ingenuity was taxed every year to prove himself his equal in munificence.

“Why don't you pay him for the milk?” I asked innocently.

“They don't sell milk,” he explained. “It isn't done. Melons, perhaps, but not milk. The fellow would become a pariah if he let me pay him for it. The clock is all right, of course; but what the devil——”

The Consul had begun to puzzle his brain about what he was going to give his milkman next year.

I was entering an inhospitable country, and that, as I learnt afterwards, would throw me among hospitable people. The more inhospitable the soil, one generally finds, the more hospitable the people who live on it. Out of self-protection this must be so.

The Sheikh of Muhammerah was munificent in proportion to his rank. He it was who established and supported at his own expense the river police who kept down piracy on the Shatt-el-Arab, and forbade my *bellumchis* to travel at night. I called on him once or twice with the Consul. I had never seen an Asiatic with a more dignified and aristocratic bearing—authority personified as in the medallion of some Moghul Emperor. During one of our visits to the sheikh a fellow-countryman was announced, the captain of a coasting steamer. Sheikh Khazal rose with courtesy to receive a sturdy, stubby, little man in a black coat, white duck trousers, and stained canvas shoes. His face was all beard and bristles, and he had bulging red eyes, and the figure of an unsteady parallelogram; but he was equally lord of himself as the Oriental in his own rough fashion.

I watched the encounter fascinated, expecting to see some increase of awkwardness on the part of the Englishman, or some other sign of sensitiveness to the sheikh's personality. But no. The sea-captain held the sheikh's hand a moment in his crushing grasp, and looked him squarely in the eyes, not in the least embarrassed. "Pleased to meet you," he said, and added, presumably to us, for the sheikh had no English, "Same old faice."

Now why did he say that? Was it deliberate or spontaneous? I think the sea-captain belonged to that solid class of Britishers who refuse to be impressed. I have only once heard the form of greeting since, and it was addressed by a British soldier to a graven image, much more enigmatic than the sheikh, in a temple of Jain Tirthankaras.

V.

I explored Baghdad and its neighbourhood with a genial American whom I met in the lazaretto at Basra. We were lucky to escape from that abode of filth free of contagion. Old D. had been attached to the Ministry of Finance at Washington, and he was travelling round the world appraising the wool exports of different countries. He was old enough to be my grandfather, and I passed everywhere as his son. This opened many doors for me. He carried letters of introduction from financial magnates, and I believe had some sort of official recognition. Anyhow, the merchants of Baghdad—Turks, Jews, and Armenians—fêted him, and myself of course, royally. He had only to express a wish, and it was accomplished. Their houses were ours, and their servants, and horses, and asses, and cattle. We could not have been

better served if we had carried a bottled djinn about with us. One day old D. mentioned to a certain Kerope Effendi that we would like to see Babylon. The next morning we were crossing the desert in the Effendi's heavy coach, drawn by four high-stepping mules. Outriders accompanied us, carpets were strewn for us in the caravanserais on the road, and sheep were killed for our retainers. We reached Babylon by candle-light, and it was exactly, or as near as poetic accuracy admits, threescore miles and ten.

Old D. was enjoying himself every bit as much as I was. He had the heart of a child. All his life he had nourished an unsatisfied passion for travel. He told me that he had never seen a ship leave New York harbour without longing to board her. But his youth and middle age had been spent in an office—black coat, stiff collar, regular hours, graded promotion, a fortnight's holiday in the year, extended to three weeks when the sap would be drying in any other man. This world tour was his first indulgence. "And I had to scrape gravel to get there," he reminded me. "Don't you forget it."

Would I ever have to scrape gravel in that way, I wondered. Old D. had reversed the order of life. He was having his fling at sixty. But he had been really very improvident. Supposing anything had gone wrong in those twoscore odd years in the office. One never knows what ballast one may collect. Besides, his sap might have dried up, and then he would not have lived at all. Altogether it seemed a rash speculation. I dared not have risked it. However, old D. had brought it off all right. It was delightful to "tick off" Babylon with him and the Tower of Babel.

At Hilleh, Mahmoud Pasha entertained us. His house is by the bridge of boats. We arrived after

dark, and were let in cautiously by a wicket in the massive gateway which opened into the courtyard. At the sight of our coach the household became all bustle and stir. Our host received us in his mirrored salon on the upper floor. His house was ours, he told us, and this appeared to be literally and embarrassingly true, for after a few compliments he left us, and his attendants devoted themselves to our comfort, bringing sherbet and coffee, and braziers of white-hot charcoal, and ewers to wash in. He did not join us at dinner, which was quite Spanish in the number and size of the dishes, but reappeared with the coffee. More compliments and inquiries as to our health and comfort, and apologies for the insufficiency of our entertainment. It was a barbarous land, he explained. His real home was in Stamboul. Happily our part in the bandying of compliments fell to old D. He kept the interpreter busy. His exotic Yankeeisms were probably as "colorful" as the Pasha's set speeches. He appeared greatly distressed at our host's hesitations about a return visit to the United States. "Tell him," he said to our bewildered interpreter the last thing before we went to bed, "we hope to see him round Brooklyn way, anyhow. I guess he'll feel good if he circulates some before he turns up his toes to the daisies."

The next day we visited Birs Nimrud. Early in the morning we found two proud Arabs saddled for us at the door, and one for our host; for he would not be separated from us on our expeditions. His time was ours too. An escort of twenty or thirty mounted men, armed with rifles, crowded the courtyard and the street. Old D. had never been on the back of a horse in his life. However, he scrambled up boldly into the saddle on the off side, and hanging on to the pommel, shouted

out to the interpreter, "Tell the Pasha this is my apprenticeship on a horse, anyhow." "A novel expurrience," he explained to the grave escort. It was a "novel expurrience" for the pony too. Before we had left the courtyard, old D. began to tug at its mouth. The beast, at the touch of the sharp trowel-like bit, became restive, and was on the point of discarding him, when an Arab seized his bridle. Old D. had to change mounts. For his sake we made Birs Nimrud at a walk march. No comment was made on old D.'s horsemanship, but the next morning, when we started for Babylon, they brought him, instead of a horse, a small white barrel of a donkey, as demure as a toy, on which his short feet touched the ground.

I remember how disappointed old D. was when I told him—I had been reading up Babylonia in the Consul's library at Muhammerah—that Birs Nimrud was not really the débris of the Tower of Babel, but of some new-fangled building raised by Nebuchadnezzar on its site.¹ On historic ground he measured values largely by antiquity. We found the Germans already at Babylon. They had hardly begun to scratch. The double gate of Ishtar, with its brick reliefs of bulls and dragons, was then unrevealed. There was little to catch the eye of the uninitiated beyond the headless lion standing over its human victim. It is still there, but elevated sixty feet above the foundations by the delving all round.

At Babylon I longed to be an Assyriologist, to decipher inscriptions, and to confound the higher criticism. I envied the excavator. I could understand how to the few who can read the records in cuneiform this dead land must be intensely living. Half the bricks we stumbled over were

¹ The Tower of the Seven Planets, built by Nebuchadnezzar II. (B.C. 604-568).

inscribed with the stamp of Nebuchadnezzar. The surface of the land is monotonous and uninspiring, but the archæologist finds his harvest underground. His companions are the Babylonians. He knows all about their social system, their large co-operative societies of women, the administration of temple endowments, the rites observed in the temple of the Sun God, the relations between the priests and the people. He could roll off the names of the most trustworthy mercantile houses in Babylon during the reign of Esarhaddon or Nebuchadnezzar. He can read the survey tables of Khammurabi; his inventories of cattle and sheep; lists of provisions for his workmen and slaves; the catalogue of the plants in his botanical gardens; orders as to the preservation of fishing rights; the repair of canal banks; the transport of goddesses and their women attendants from Elam to Babylon; the movements of troops, such as the transfer of men from the garrison of the city to a ship lying at Ur. There is a letter from Khammurabi to Sin-idinnam, Governor of Larsa, ordering him to cut down a certain number of abba-trees for use by smelters of metal; only well-grown and vigorous trees are to be felled. A baker is to be restored by the King's command to his former position. An inquiry is to be made into a case of bribery; the bribe-money to be confiscated and sent to the King in Babylon. Witnesses are summoned to court, mortgage deeds inquired into, the repayment of a loan to a merchant is enforced with interest. The King looks closely into audit accounts and inventories.

Thus the excavator resurrects the past. For him all these people live. They are in a way his creations. Their triumphs and reverses have more interest for him, as he pieces their story together, than the résumé of events in Reuter. There are

gaps in the story he is anxious to fill, and his copy of 'The Weekly Times' is laid aside for news that touches him more nearly. At Nippur, perhaps, he has found a broken clay envelope with a missive beside it. It is an appeal from a general on the borders of Zagros or Elam, hard-pressed by the enemy. There is sedition in his camp; the tribes behind him are disaffected; he is shouting out for reinforcements. "Unless a river fleet——" Here the message ends. An unrelated bit of history. Were the troops dispatched in time? Was the province saved for the empire? An eternity of digging and deciphering may not solve these doubts. Yet the safety of the general has become almost a personal affair. The archæologist grows to think of him as some Babylonian Gordon. Years afterwards, perhaps, in a different scene, at Borsippa or Lagash, in the Louvre or the British Museum, he may find the clue. The enemy has been trodden down; their gods are being carried to Babylon; the traitors are in chains. The excavator is glad that his Babylonian general has made good. The voice he has been listening for has come to him across forty centuries; he is probably the only soul, in the last thirty-nine centuries at least, who would have heard in it a human cry.

I envied the excavator. He was not only a scholar but a discoverer—a detective on a grand scale. Sherlock Holmes would have been happy with these problems. I had the dilettante's immense respect for erudition. But I must confess that there were other influences contributory to my envy. The picture in my mind as we turned our backs on Babylon was not of a pale and cloistered student, but of a brown neck and hands and knees. I could dedicate myself to erudition in the open air, but not in cities. This excavator

would be equally wise and ten times more free than the pedant who worked in a museum or library. Incidentally he would possess a horse and a gun. One-half of my mind was with Khammurabi and Sin-idinnam, but the pagan half was counting heads. Now if one could start again and be an Assyriologist——. I was thinking of the glorious sand-grouse shooting one would have on the Euphrates.

VI.

When we returned to Baghdad, I had not made up my mind what route I was going to take home. As usual, financial necessities decided the question. We had been travelling *en prince*; I had still some purchases to make in Baghdad, and I was dangerously near the end of my funds. The worst thing that could happen would be that I should have to cable home for money. That would be to admit defeat.

Everything pointed to the caravan road to Damascus, which leaves the Euphrates at Deir-ez-Zor and passes through Tadmor, the ancient Palmyra. This is a journey of 600 miles, and one might have to wait a month for a caravan. It looked as if I would have to walk home from Beirut. But chance again was sympathetic. I came to hear of a more direct way to Damascus. It was possible to make the journey from Baghdad by the camel-post in ten days. The Turkish Government used to send a man across with the mail every week. No parcels or valuables were carried, and the Bedouin sheikhs received a consideration to let him pass; for the tribes on the Euphrates side, and again as one approaches

Lebanon, are notoriously predatory. The subsidy only covered the post-rider and his mail-bags; if one accompanied him it was at one's own risk. I made secret arrangements with this man, who engaged to take me with him and to provide a camel for ten Turkish pounds. Officially a traveller with the post was not even winked at, so I ceased to frequent the Residency and the Consulates during my last days in Baghdad.

The post-rider travelled alone. There was no track, of course, and at night he guided himself by the stars. Between Hitt and Dumeir on the Syrian side there might, or there might not, be water; and if there was water it was easy to miss it. However, one carried one's own, and if one missed the wells, or they were dried up, the camel had to go thirsty. A special breed of dromedaries were trained for the post by the man who had the contract. After the journey they were given six days' rest. Splendid, tireless, ascetic beasts! Mine had only one drink in the seven days between Hitt and Dumeir, and all that time we were riding eighteen hours out of twenty-four, allowing only six hours for hurried meals and rest.

My camel's abstinence was not the penalty of drought; for the first week in January, when we left Baghdad, succeeded the heaviest rainfall in the year. All the wells were full, but it was wise to avoid them. The dry season would have been safer for my journey. Where there is water there will be Bedouin—that is to say, cut-throats and thieves. I do not use the words in a disparaging sense, for the calling in the conditions of life in which the Bedouin finds himself is as honest as many of higher repute.

Damascus is 360 miles from Hitt as the crow flies, and 473 miles from Baghdad; but we must

have made some wild detours to avoid the Bedouin encampments by the water-holes. My enduring beast owed his one and only drink to a masterly piece of strategy on the part of Moussa, my old camel-man. We rode more than eighteen hours on the day we struck the well. Moussa ate his mid-day meal on the camel, and signalled to me to do the same, pointing menacingly to the horizon, which always seemed to be rimmed with moving unaccountable shapes, and drawing the edge of his palm slowly across his throat. He even said his prayers on his camel, and I knew that this was a bad sign. An hour before sunset we reached the pool, and watered our camels. This was the time that we generally halted and prepared our evening meal of rice and dates, which I always shared with him; but, famished and exhausted as we were, he insisted on pushing on. He pulled up an hour later under the brow of a hill, and hastily scrubbed up an armful of camel-thorn and lighted a fire. In half an hour it was dark, and we had finished our meal. Moussa carefully stamped out the embers, and we mounted again. I discovered then that Moussa had chosen the sandhill under which we had sheltered as a screen between us and the Bedouin. From the top of the rise we looked down on the camp-fires of a mighty host of the Anazeh, stretching a mile or more to the north and south of our course. We threaded that camp with the fires on either side of us, passing near enough to the tents of the Bedouin to hear their talk and laughter. I expected every moment to be challenged, but no doubt they took us for their own people. If we had passed in daylight half an hour earlier we must have been seen; half an hour later the flare of our fire would have betrayed us. I think Moussa ran the risk for the sake of the camels;

otherwise he would have given the Anazeh a wider berth.

But we did not escape them. Twice or thrice on that journey the moving unaccountable shapes descended on us out of the mirage. They took my camel and some of my food and clothing, and gravely debated whether they should take my life. It was a long and rather a grim parley, and, though I knew no Arabic, I had no doubt as to the turn it was taking. Moussa told me in Damascus that the councillors were divided, and that I owed my life to him. This may or may not have been true in the literal sense of the word. The old man may have believed it, but I rather doubt it, though I certainly owed my camel to him, which the Bedouin restored; and on a desert journey one's camel or one's life may amount to the same thing.

On the morning of the day when we reached Dumeir we entered the first pasturage of Syria. I was almost unconscious with cold and exhaustion, but again Moussa refused to halt for our morning meal. He pointed to the black tents of the Bedouin in a valley under the spurs of Anti Lebanon, an immense distance off. But I was obstinate. A pantomime of gestures ensued on my attempts to make my camel kneel. Moussa was trying to explain that even if the Bedouin had observed us and were following, we could yet reach Dumeir before we were overtaken; whereas if we halted——. But I had reached a point of indifference to the Bedouin and everything else beyond the crying needs of numbed and cramped joints and an empty inside. These refractory members were in a state of revolution. I might be robbed; I might even be knocked on the head, though I was always ingenuously sceptical on this point. In the meanwhile I was going

to lie down for half an hour beside a crackling fire, and warm and fortify the inner and outer man.

Old Moussa had to reconcile himself to my obstinacy in the matter, though not in the manner, of refreshment. After some gurgling remonstrances, not unlike the protests of his camel, he turned his beast's head towards the Bedouin's camp and beckoned me to follow him. Half an hour later we were the guests of the Anazeh. They entertained us hospitably. The sheikh was a conspicuous aristocrat. In the easy way he carried his authority he reminded me of the sheikh who rode up to us when we were captured and called off his canaille, who were rifling our camel-bags, as if they were a pack of hounds. He was a genial host, and gave us the best breakfast we had had since we left Baghdad. I could see that Moussa was amusing him with stories of my eccentricities. No doubts regarding my safety entered my head. All that I had heard about the sacrosanctity of the guest among the Bedouin was being put to the test. The laws of hospitality held good. There was the other side of the code, of course, according to which it is lawful to follow up the parting guest in the manner of the Pathan and to put a bullet through him when he is outside the perimeter of hospitable obligations. But I was confident that I was among people with whom this was "not done." I had very little knowledge of the world then; but I still believe in those Bedouin, though my notions of comparative ethics are more elastic than they were. I should have liked to have heard Moussa's opinion on the point. He approached the Bedouin camp with incomplete confidence, and no doubt he had his reasons.

My staunch old guide, to whom I owed my

safe conduct in this journey across the desert, was murdered a few years afterwards by the Dulaim. I heard the story when I was at Hitt with the Euphrates column in 1918. Moussa was returning from Damascus with a contractor who had sold a large convoy of camels, and who was believed to be carrying the proceeds of the sale on his person. The Bedouin crept up behind them in the dark when their figures were silhouetted against the camp-fire. This is how I always think of the old Haji, nursing his beaked coffee-pot over the embers, in his long black boots and weather-worn sheepskin cloak, slightly bent forward, with that patient resigned look of the man who has his eyes interminably fixed on horizons. The treacherous Dulaim shot the merchant first; then they shot Moussa, "being afraid that he might tell."

Two or three years after this the camel-post was discontinued. The attacks by the Bedouin became too frequent. Too many of the post-riders lost their way, "followed the wrong star," as the Arabs say, and perished in the desert.

VII.

Dover was almost as exciting as Damascus. I have often felt the same exhilaration since at the first sight of the chalk cliffs of Kent, or coming into the Solent when the dark oaks and white houses detach themselves from the sea mist, but never so strongly as on this first homecoming. Very sweet was the smell of the barnacles and sea-wrack on Dover pier. This time I did not see the white of the cliffs. It was dark, a clear frosty sky, and the same moon swimming through a thin scarf of herring-bone cloud which I had

seen sinking, a slither of pearl, over Anti Lebanon. Moussa had pointed it out to me the night we reached Dumeir. I wondered if he were back in Baghdad.

The moon was a link which brought Syria very near. I had seen Baalbec by it, and the orange-gardens of Jaffa ; for I had hurried home. Damascus, Baalbec, Beirut, Jaffa, Alexandria, Kent—all under one moon. At Beirut I took a passage by a Messageries Maritimes boat to Marseilles. It was the cheapest route, and by dint of economy and a sovereign borrowed from a companion on board, to be on the safe side, I managed to arrive at Charing Cross with twenty-five shillings in my pocket. I had intended to see something of Turkey in Europe, but even if I had had the funds for the journey by Smyrna, Constantinople, and the Danube, I should have taken the most direct route home. For I was filled with a consuming home-sickness, an influence I had made no allowance for in working out my too ambitious itineraries. And now for the first time I knew what it was to land on English soil.

I had a carriage to myself to Charing Cross, and sat with my eyes glued to the window in a state of wonder, as moved as when I saw the sunrise on the snows of Savoy from the train at Culoz. That magical moon, more magical because I had seen it with Moussa, silvered everything. It stirred up unsuspected emotions. No cypresses could ever look so spiritual by moonlight as English trees. I could distinguish the cowls of the oast houses, the village churches, the silhouette of naked elms. There were lights in some of the cottages. I bathed in the peaceful continuity of it all, the strong, gentle, and subtle beauty. It was a garish romance I had been seeking in outlandish places. I loved England for its physical

and spiritual tranquillity, because it had no scented gardens, or Sheikh Nefzaus, or wandering fakirs, or terrorist lamas, none of the elements that create them—no goblin more malicious than Puck, a land where there is little cruelty and violence, and less unkindness than elsewhere, where all the trees open and shed their leaves at the same time, and the people are all of one colour, and have no bitterness in their hearts.

In a month or two there would be celandines and primroses in the woods. The young leaf-buds would be opening, the blackthorn in blossom. We passed a hop-garden I knew. This was a country of homely fields with hedges and unhumped cattle grazing, gorse on the common, mushrooms and fairy rings, huge dappled cart-horses as gentle as sheep, clean-cut ditches with ferns in the roots of the hornbeam and beech, soft mist on the meadows, and the sun, when it appears, benign and glorious, never inimical. A land where one never wants to creep under the shadow of a great rock. There could never be anything ominous in an English sunrise or sunset—not until the wolves return and the jackal's howl is heard at night. I was glad that I had not left my bones in the desert.

Staying at home, they say, makes one insular; but, generally speaking, the more one sees of other people the more one loves and esteems one's own. And another thing which aids our complacency is the discovery that foreigners of all kinds are much more insular than ourselves. We and they are born and die in these providential blinkers; or, as our Babu friend would say, "We hop about happily in the cage of our ignorance." But, cage or blinkers, however we figure the illusion, piety will recognise in it the design of Providence. I was only twenty-four when I landed at Dover, so it was very natural that our systems

and traditions and institutions—if I thought about them at all—should seem to me as mellow and wholesome as the other indigenous fruit of our island. I am not sure that I don't think so now, though I may have quarrelled sometimes with our system of education. But even that is improving. My son, who was educated at my old school, where they taught me nothing, can follow rapid French, correct my idiom, and read Iphigenia in three languages.

Youth fresh from the East is not easily disillusioned. The only thing which disappointed me, as far as I can remember, was my visit to my old college. But that was my fault. One should stick to one's own incarnation. Going back, except in memory, is generally a mistake. Not a soul did I know at Cambridge except Jimmy Latham. One of my friends was a Don, but he was away. I met a crowd of young men in the courts and paddock who, I thought, looked at me icily. They were the same age as myself, or only two or three years younger; but I felt an outsider among them. All the names on the staircases were different. Three years ago, if I had stood in the court and yodelled out the names inscribed on the wall, windows would have been flung open; heads would have appeared; plans, stratagems, gossip, friendly abuse, and missiles would have been exchanged. We should have hatched some congenial scheme for passing the afternoon. Who was going to be at home after Hall? But now what was I going to do with myself? Where were Tubby and Bangs? I had not heard of them since that last afternoon in the paddock when Bangs tossed up whether he was going to be a parson or a schoolmaster. I climbed the staircase to my own rooms, and met the usurper coming out of them, whistling to himself as if he were

established in perpetuity. I wanted to tell him that they were once my rooms, and to draw him inside and discourse to him about the golden age; but I pretended to be indifferent and unassociated, and passed on up to the next floor, where, finding nothing to detain me except ghosts, I turned round and came down again. Even my bedder had gone. The very swans in the paddock seemed more distant and disdainful. I could no longer counter their pride with a sense of proprietorship. I hadn't the ghost of any heritage in the place.

Then, as there seemed to be no one left of my kind, I thought I would go and look up Jimmy Latham, for whom I still had a sneaking affection. I found him just the same, only a little more academic. "Well, Mr Tau," he said, "and have you been continuing your studies of the Latin poets? Catullus in Darjeeling, eh?" He meant to be kind, but I drew in my horns, and retired into the innermost spiral of my shell. I was young enough—well, not exactly to resent being asked questions beginning with an "and," but to feel that complete *rapport* with a senior tutor who put one to this disadvantage was difficult.

Jimmy Latham, of course, had no evidence that I was not still the uninstructed young cub who poured coals of fire on the proctors' heads. Uninstructed, and no doubt uninstrutable, he must have thought me. But was I? I rather thought that I had grown, expanded a bit. I had been educating myself in a sort of way during those last three years, though not deliberately. And had I not returned from "the daily hazards and long bodily sufferance of the desert"? I had come back from them with the glow one feels after a shower-bath when there is frost on the window-pane—a sort of physical satisfaction. Maybe, though exteriorly modest, I was flushed with

a sense of budding importance, the illogical moral glow which is part of the same reaction, as if there were virtue in a douche. If so, the conceit was soon to be whipped out of me. But what did Jimmy Latham know about the Bedouin code, or Saint Milarapa, or the pietistic phallic worship of Sheikh Nefzau? Let him settle *hoti's* business, or the enclitic *de*. There are other things in the world besides Greek.

I was tolerantly reviewing my tutor's limitations when he brought me to earth. It was usual, he reminded me, for graduates to call on their tutors in cap and gown. It appeared that my name was still on the rolls. I might be an M.A., if I paid a fee, and wear another kind of cap and gown. But at this mild rebuke my academic sympathies, which were never very strong, evaporated altogether. Jimmy Latham, no doubt, was quite right. I had offended against the laws and traditions, and these must be upheld. But, as I descended his stairs, like the sensitive young fool I was, I felt that I had been needlessly snubbed.

I went for a lonely walk in the Backs; and then, finding that a travelling menagerie and circus was visiting Cambridge, I went to see it, and felt better, more homelike, when I had exchanged humps with the bear. It was the mood of an hour. The dromedarian hump became a camelious one, and then declined and subsided, as humps generally do. The bear and the camel between them were reviving dormant schemes in the adventure of penetration.

IV.

A PHILOSOPHER ON THE DOORSTEP

A PHILOSOPHER ON THE DOORSTEP.

I.

It is no good pretending that I enjoyed the doorstep. It had its humours, but there were too many disappointments. I had no qualifications for any kind of livelihood beyond my very ordinary degree. This and Carter's testimonial might have gained me a mastership in some second-rate school in England; but I refused to contemplate such a premature surrender. Perhaps when one had lived a little one might fall back on it. When one reached the age of thirty the future would not matter so much if one had a past to look back to. But to be bogged and marooned at the age of twenty-four! My nomadic soul abhorred the notion.

I used to frequent a Scholastic Agency in the neighbourhood of Piccadilly, in the hope that I might get out East again. I remember that waiting-room, and the appearance of some of the young men who came and went, even the colour of their hair and details of their clothes, dressy young men about town some of them who I felt sure would have been supremely miserable if the portals of any academy had opened to receive them. Blind mouths—and I was as blind and hungry, no doubt, as any, and equally innocent of the pretence of a vocation. I envied the members of other professions. Bangs, for instance,

now a doctor, who chose his practice by 'Bailey's Hunting Directory,' and had just put in three years' shooting and polo, with intervals of war on microbes and cholera in a tea-garden in Assam.

The stiff, precise, whiskered, and cravated old gentleman who received us must have been a retired headmaster. He spoke to me as if I were a very small boy. "I understand, Mr Tau, that you are waiting for an appointment in the Antipodes." He said this with a starchy patronage, and the implication that I might continue to wait. "Ushers cannot be choosers," is what he would liked to have said. The head of The Vampire Agency had a quite unfair and illogical faculty of making one feel worthless. Nobody else could have infected me a sensitiveness to the snobbish contempt our grandfathers used to entertain for Ushedom. But I used to leave him almost sore about it. I had forgotten that the word existed until I heard through an open door, "The last usher you sent me, Mr V——, was unsatisfactory."

How I should have enjoyed being in a position to tell the old vampire that, instead of having to enter his room as a candidate for favours, "Ushers ought to be as glad of crumbs as sparrows or beggars." I can imagine him saying, "Ushers, if they are deserving and submissive, are selected, Mr Tau. They do not select." I had put myself out of court, I am afraid, by declining to present myself, on approval, at a school for the sons of decayed apothecaries at Margate.

"No, Mr Tau; I am afraid we have nothing suitable for you this morning. If you leave your address——"

He affected to wince at the address, and asked me to spell it.

"Agate Street, did you say?"

I stolidly admitted it.

“ And W.C. ? ”

“ I am afraid so.”

“ Well, Mr Tau, it will be unnecessary for you to call again in person. Should we hear of a suitable vacancy—in the tropics, did you say? Cancer or Capricorn; I take it it is immaterial which, Mr Tau——”

Such is my dream interview with the Vampire Agency. Coloured, perhaps, as dreams are, but with the pigments of truth. Only the other night I dreamt of that gaunt starched old man, so unsympathetic to youth, a notorious vampire in the days before the existence of Appointment Boards. One might have forgiven him if a little of the blood he sucked had entered into his system.

I wore out the soles of my last pair of boots in that quest, and often had to satisfy my hunger with a twopenny sausage-roll at a railway refreshment-stall. I used to call on friends about dinner-time, and when they asked me to stay and take pot-luck with them, I was ashamed, and made some excuse and went away hungry.

The appointments abroad all went to Honours men. I had not the luck to meet another Carter; but I nourished a thin hope. I used to answer advertisements in the papers, and cultivated the art, modestly and by inference, of self-commendation. One of these letters produced an answer. It was from a schoolmaster who was looking out for an assistant to go with him to Umtoko, or Umtobo, or Umtoto. I forget the name of the place. It was somewhere in Zululand. Things went so far as an appointment. I cannot say an interview, for I saw him, but he did not see me. He seemed to have had some difficulty in completing his staff, for he wrote to me by return of post asking me to meet him at Cannon Street station under the clock. He would be wearing

a green label, he told me, as a mark of identity. I felt that there was something unpropitious about the green label. However, I went to Cannon Street, and found him waiting aggressively for me under the clock. In addition to the large green label, like a bookmaker's ticket, stuck in the brim of his bowler hat, he wore a flaming red badge, a medallion of some kind, in his button-hole. For the purpose of identity the badge or the ticket would have been enough. All the way to Cannon Street I had been reproaching myself for being the innocent cause of his having to wait for me in a public place wearing a conspicuous green label; but directly I saw him I knew that he liked wearing coloured labels for their own sake. It was the way he stood that frightened me, his attitude of witness-bearing, like the impersonation of some dogma, a man born to be ticketed; and what was worse, to insist on tickets—the same tickets—in others.

He looked like a bookmaker turned missionary—the suggestion, of course, may have been born of the ticket, but there was more in it than that,—or a missionary turned bookmaker. The disconcerting thing was that one could not tell which, though man and label were equally *criard*. I dared not inspect him too closely, and I am ashamed to say that in my fear of betraying myself and being seized and carried off to Umtoto, I slunk away from the station, and left him witness-bearing under the clock. Any explanation I could think of to offer him would have been more painful and shocking to the Cause, whatever it might be that his label denoted, than my furtive disappearance.

I am afraid my narrow escape from Umtoto did not fortify my discretion as it should have done. It would be an excellent plan if all candi-

dates for becoming employers would present themselves for inspection in a public place like the green-label man. Unfortunately I had to choose my next employer without seeing him. A photograph might have saved me an ocean voyage of fourteen thousand miles, to Buenos Ayres and back; for he was even more impossible than the zealot of Umtoto. Our meeting was a mutual shock. It was impossible to remain at the beck and call of such a man. I had not been with him three days when he had the impertinence to tell me to turn my trousers down. Naturally I committed him to the devil. And so after a little dock-loafing I signed on as cook's mate on s.s. *Chloe*, a cattle-boat without cattle—for the trade was under the ban of foot-and-mouth disease,—homeward bound from Buenos Ayres.

The voyage had its drama and its humours. I was a little uneasy at first, afraid of being taken for an intruder or outsider. But sailors are the easiest people in the world to get on with. The cook was a bit of a prig, a literary and literal gent, rather inclined to give himself airs, and without the ghost of a sense of humour. A great admirer of Miss Marie Corelli, though he had the highbrow's contempt for merely sporting writers like Hawley Smart. "Mr Know-all," Maurice called him. But some of the others, especially Maurice and Frank Silberg, the Norwegian, were pure salt. They accepted me, I suppose, as a toff on his beam-ends, and as I never alluded to having been on any other ends, they let that pass. My schoolboy humour went down with them. When I called through the buttery hatch, "Two ham and eggs," and Maurice facetiously demanded, "Gentlemen or ladies?" I had Old Kroodger, the tyrant of the *Chloe*, on toast. "One's for a gentleman," I shouted; "the other's

for that blamed old German sorsidge.” Maurice turned to old Spiceapple, the steward, with an inimitable gesture familiar in melodrama, and whispered hoarsely, “Here, Stooard, fetch me a drop of orsnic for Sour Krout—put him to sleep.” My *bon mot* went the round of the ship. I was accepted as a species of wit, and had a reputation to live up to.

We had not been a week at sea when Maurice, the A.B., was promoted to my place in the galley. He accepted his fate with protest, as it was his week as “all-day man,” a six to six job, whereas the cook’s mate had to be up at half-past four, and was lucky if he could leave off at half-past eight. This meant my promotion to deputy assistant steward. I had to lay the cloth, wash up, clean the brass-work, knives, and silver, fetch water from the foc’sle pump, or the well deck tank in rough weather, feed the fowls, do all the carrying between the galley and the pantry, and deal out the lime-juice to the A.B.’s and firemen—this last a welcome interval of fresh air after being cooped up under hatches all the morning. Punctually at noon I appeared on deck with tin cup and pail, and was greeted every day with the stale old witticism, “Pint of bitter, *if* you please.” Thus I came to know the firemen, who had hitherto only existed for me as a needless complication; for in sorting the odds and ends every night there was need of discrimination in determining which should be given to the fowls and which reserved for the firemen’s “black pan.”

Passengers were an innovation on the *Chloe*, but as we had no cattle on board we carried five of them, sick to a man. We were swinging to an angle of forty-five, but not a drop of soup was spilt. I took pride in this work. But it took me

nearly a week to master the complications of the table-cloth. At the beginning I would call in the Old Stooard to see if I had forgotten anything ; but to my "How's that, boss ?" there would be the invariable answer, "Where's yer plates ?" or "Where's yer knives ?" or "Don't let Old Kroodger see that, sonny."

Our detestation of Old Kroodger was a common bond. It united Maurice and Frank Silberg, otherwise widely different spirits. Silberg, with his poetic Scandinavian strain, was ahead of most of us in sentiment. He objected to being called "a drunken beast of a sailor." Maurice, who was inclined to be combative for at least a week after he had been paid off, thought the Norwegian a bit soft on this point. "What does it matter what they call us ?" he said. But Silberg was more sensitive. As if a man could not be a sailor and have decent feelings and opinions of his own at the same time. And in the matter of drunkenness, he argued, the sailor does not drink more than the landsman, who has his glass at his pub every night of the year ; only the sailor, after a voyage of three months, has to make up arrears, and it is only natural that the liquor sometimes gets to his head. That shore folk should encounter him most frequently under these conditions appeared to Silberg unfortunate, but that they should infer any moral inferiority from the accident, an obvious injustice. Such were Silberg's views on the dignity of his calling. Maurice did not "argify" or philosophise. He was contemptuous of civic opinion. The abstract bored him.

I might have regretted my seafaring life on the *Chloe* if the galley staff had had the same licence at ports as passengers. But we were never allowed ashore. A month was enough, and I was as glad as any of the crew to see the London river. Back

at Agate Street, I managed to keep the wolf from the door—though he sometimes got his nose into the chink—without the assistance of the Vampire Agency. It fell to me to coach a deacon for his Priests in the Greek Testament and Hook's 'Lives of the Archbishops.' On the fly-leaf of this formidable-looking volume I wrote:—

“There was a delectable book,
Which was written by Hook or by Crook.
It was baited with snares
To catch priests unawares,
So I think that it must have been Hook.”

To which the deacon subscribed:—

“There was a delectable book,
Which was written by Crook or by Hook.
A good shepherd was he
In charge of a see,
So I think that it must have been Crook.”

This was a promising attitude for attack. Our spirit was greater than our scholarship. Yet between us we circumvented the examiners, who must have employed neither hook nor crook, but a net with a very wide mesh, for the deacon and I had surprisingly little Greek—the deacon, in fact, none at all, though he had learnt the English text by heart.

This was a pleasant interlude, but it was short. Another followed of a few weeks bear-leading on the Continent with a youth not much younger than myself. Thus I was able to see the mountains again, and paid my first and only visit to the Rhine. The flesh-pots of the best hotels in Europe were doubly delicious after the *Chloe*. *Voluptates commendat rarior usus*, I explained to my ward, airing my Latin. But I said nothing about my recent vulgar employment. His father,

an eminently prosperous and respectable bourgeois, with all the prejudices of his class, might have died of apoplexy if he had come to hear of it. He, a Forsyte, to have entrusted his son to the tutelage of a scullion! As for myself, I was sufficiently fresh from the galley to enjoy the elevation. It tickled me to think of the *Chloe* as my ward and I lingered in solitary state over our coffee and cognac in the gilded dining-room of the Splendide, the waiters, as the lady novelist loves to observe, hovering attentively behind our chairs, the fifty *candelabra*, five hundred jets of flame, blazing for us alone, and a string band rhapsodising while we called the tune.

The *Chloe* would be at sea again. Was Old Kroodger still in command, or had Maurice “stretched his — neck as long as a — jib-down haul”? I pictured our mess in the pantry, the Old Stooard, the cook, Maurice, and myself; no tables or chairs. Maurice and I would be sharing the dresser, the cook balanced precariously on the scuttle steps, while old Spiceapple, by virtue of his grey hairs, sat lugubriously enthroned on the bucket.

The Old Stooard (from the bucket). “What are they doing now, sonny?”

Tau (from the dresser). “Talking.”

The Old Stooard. “Talking! Ain’t there room enough on deck to talk, a-keepin’ me waitin’ here all night with my rock-cakes to make and all the lamps to clean, a-keepin’ me back with my work, when——”

Cook (from the scuttle steps). “Oh! I wish I was a —— toff.”

Maurice (from the dresser). “I wish you was.”

“Toffs” was the comprehensive designation of Maurice and his mates for all humanity without class distinction who wore stiff collars and white

shirts. I was now a toff. The waiters at the Splendide were toffs. The term was applied, not so much with envy or ill-feeling, as with the good-natured contempt of the Bohemian for the Philistine. Maurice, if he had met us—me or the waiters—in a railway-carriage, would have enjoyed “smokin’ out the —— toffs” with the coarse black shag in his cutty-pipe.

I wished Frank Silberg was with me at the Splendide. He was the only member of our crew who never spoke contemptuously of toffs, probably because he believed that he was often taken for a toff himself. On shore he dressed like a citizen, had a leaning to domesticity, and, I believe, went to church. With his sea-togs he cast off his sea manners. Or such was his boast. He would have been much happier at our solitary table than my apathetic young ward, and, in spite of this flaw of respectability, more companionable.

Delicious, I repeat, after the *Chloe* were the fleshpots of the Splendide. But I was not a toff long. If I had been, I should no doubt have tired of the rôle. After a few weeks I handed over my young charge, and obtained my certificate. Like the Babu, in one way or another, I had begun to collect certificates, hoping that they might somehow conjure me out to the East. One lad’s father testified that Mr Tau had “pleasant manners in the house.” Soul of Pachiarotto! that faithful hound who worked in distemper, and would persist in doing his duty, although he felt most dreadfully ill! The memory of that household makes me glad that I am no longer a puppy. One advantage middle age has over youth is that one can burn one’s certificates.

II.

Nearly every young man who "likes books," and is "fond of reading," has at one time or other played with the idea of earning a livelihood by writing. Precedents, among pedagogues at least, are encouraging. Most of our eminent men of letters seem to have begun life as schoolmasters or tutors. Dr Johnson, who was one himself, derided Milton for keeping a boarding-school. Carlyle swore that it was better to perish than to continue schoolmastering. They all found the life insupportable. The stories of escapes from fortresses, prisons, and schools are the best things in biography. The rebel genius in his garret is a romantic figure. Youth as a rule is untroubled by the bogey of indigence. But he will be wise not to make a start in the adventure of the declension from the garret to the ground floor until he has at least one manuscript accepted and paid for.

I discovered nothing in the lives of eminent men of letters to discourage my inclination to turn to journalism as an escape from the Vampire Agency. I hoped to get out to the East again as a journalist on some newspaper, or, better still, as a war correspondent. I used to dream of being a war correspondent in the pre-X days, a war correspondent or an explorer. In either rôle one might still sacrifice at the altar of Terminus. But there were difficulties. It was an age of halcyon peace. In the first place, one would have to set the nations by the ears, and then, more difficult still, one would have to persuade an editor to send one to the scene of action; and I knew no editor who would send me as far as Greenwich.

When I reached home from Damascus I sent an account of my journey across the desert with the camel post to one of the leading monthlies. To my surprise it was accepted and published. I expected great things of this start. Any editor, I thought, would be glad of work from a contributor to 'The ——— Review.' But that was the beginning and end of it. Or almost, not quite, the end. I was sent travel books to review for a literary weekly. My dear friend, Elkington, got me this work, and it brought me in about thirty pounds a year. They also published one or two of my travel sketches. Elkington told me the editor thought I looked hungry.

The idea of becoming a journalist was no new project. Intermittently since the age of ten I had nourished literary ambitions. My first appearance in print is a poignant memory. It was a poem that I wrote behind a screen of books in the Lower Third at X. I ought to have been with Cæsar dividing Gaul into three parts, but, like young Nozière, my mind was continually occupied with matters extraneous to the work of the class. The subject of my poem was the venerable school arch. To endow it with consciousness seemed to me a happy and original conceit. I made the old arch sympathetically aware, a repository of emotions. It bridged the present and the past. I had been reading Sir Walter Scott, so I knew all about the emotional state of monks and cavaliers. 'Kenilworth' and 'Ivanhoe' may have lent me a little medieval colour, but otherwise there was nothing in the least derivative about my ode. In inception and execution it was my own. None of your poetic diction. No shying at the commonplace. I bestrode my Pegasus in the Empyrean. The banal did not exist in my world. The metre, too, was my own, spontaneous

and irregular. It tripped and halted, and hurried or slowed down, echoing the sense. The pathetic fallacy I grant you, but here, too, I was innocent of precedent or conscious design.

I finished my ode at a sitting, and knew that I had written something great and new. I have never since been so warmed by the glow of accomplishment. I should have to fall back on Oriental imagery to describe it. I remember too a sense of modest uneasiness. How was I to comport myself under the fame my poem was going to bring me? I wanted recognition. But I did not want Tom, Dick, or Harry to talk about it too much. Haloes and laurels are ridiculous: they make one look a fool. "It is really nothing," I found myself rehearsing modestly. "It just came to me."

I sent my "Ode to the Arch" to the 'X—onian,' and for six weeks waited in suspense. The editor, Carmichael, was the cock of the school, a being glitteringly inaccessible, immeasurably great. He read the lessons in chapel and took call over. On these occasions I watched him fascinated, for I had dared to entrust my poem to him. Nearer approach was unthinkable. I was not even "swished" by him, for he belonged to another house. If any one had told me that a day would dawn when I should hobnob with this paragon on equal terms I should not have believed him. In the hereafter, perhaps, in that resorting and reshuffling of mortal coils we read of in Holy Writ, but on this common earth never. When I saw Carmichael moving abstractedly among other Olympians I dared to hope he was reciting my verses. I thought sometimes that he had the air of a man who has discovered a poet. So far as it depended on his literary discrimination, I had no reason to doubt that my ode would be

accepted. But a hedging instinct warned me not to be too confident, a presentiment common in the young, who are suspicious of something disciplinary and cross-grained in the awards of destiny. "Punitive" is perhaps a better word than "blind" to apply to the goddess with the scales as seen through youth's eyes. In other words, certain things, quite apart from the claims of merit or justice, are too good to be true. Carmichael and such-like arbiters of the destinies of the obscure would simply rule them out.

I waited impatiently for weeks suspended between hope and doubt. And then one day I heard a scurry in the passage. I had seen the house-porter pass the window with the familiar bundle. They were distributing the 'X—onian.' I was reading 'Peveril of the Peak,' and I rooted myself to my chair, affecting indifference. The printed page, of course, became blurred and meaningless. After an eternity of suspense I heard the voice of a crony at the door: "Teddy, your poem is in the 'X—onian.'"

It was not the same Tau who clutched at the school magazine, rather a butterfly emerged from a chrysalis. I turned over the pages slowly in a state of apotheosis. There was a deal of metrical stuff, but where was my "Ode to the Arch"? "I don't see it," I said to my friend faintly.

"It's there all right," he said, "right at the end."

And, true enough, there it was, on the last page, obscured in a prose setting. I looked at the heading: "Our Waste-Paper Basket." My "Ode to the Arch" was appended as a dreadful example to tyros of how verses ought not to be written.

Rejected by the muse, I pursued other hobbies. The plant or bug-collector in those days was barely tolerated at our public schools. Birds'-

nesting, for some occult reason, was consistent with one's self-respect; but a butterfly-net, or worse, a trowel for grubbing up chrysalises, was a badge of shame; and I remember my sense of pariahdom when I was seen slinking into the house by the yard door with an armful of plants. In the eyes of the true-blue 'X—onian,' a collection of dried wild flowers was as contemptible as man-millinery.

There was only one way to live down the stigma attached to these eccentricities, and that was by a certain physical abandonment on the football field. If one is obstructive enough as centre half-back in one's Under Sixteen House team, one may even collect funguses. So I led a sort of Jekyll and Hyde existence. Like the pilgrim on the road to Compostella, I courted injury to purchase indulgences. For much as I loved glory and hated dishonour, I could not desist from these pursuits. I broke bounds at night to catch the moths that were attracted to the sallow catkins in April or the ivy bloom in October—moths that you will only find in April and October, and only on these plants. The green-horned caterpillar of the poplar hawk-moth was a delight. I can still detect a moth on palings or the bark of a tree at thirty yards, though it may be the very colour of the lichen. The twig-like disguises of caterpillars, and the undersides of the folded wings of butterflies, may deceive birds, but they never deceived me. And though I could not construe six lines of Cæsar, I could tell you the Latin name of every weed—even the polygonums and chenopodiums. It was a red-letter day when I discovered *Chrysosplenium alternitifolium* in the osier-bed at Milton. You found *oppositifolium* under the cricket-field wall, but for three years I had hunted for *alternitifolium* in vain. Then I fell under the glamour of

land and fresh-water shells. I took in "The Conchologist, and exchanged specimens with learned professors." When I had collected nearly all the varieties one is likely to find in the British Isles, the obsession left me, and I collected something else.

These hobbies succeeded one another, and generally overlapped. I have forgotten most of the lepidoptera and molluscs, but I am thankful to say that I remember plants, well enough, that is to say, to tell the family of a flower at a glance without having to dissect it with a knife. This makes all the difference on a journey—even on a railway journey, if the train is slow enough, or occasionally stops. But on mountains and on foot it is no exaggeration to say that flowers may double the pleasures of travel—that is, if one knows them individually, and they are something more than a decorative carpet. It was a very nodding and unscientific acquaintance with plants that I cultivated at X. Two botany prizes were awarded for the best collection of wild plants gathered in the neighbourhood. There were two competitors, and I was annually awarded the second prize. But this never affected my zeal. Entomology was also recognised at X. The prize—there was no *proxime accessit* for bugs—always went to a Sixth Form eccentric, a certain Shanks, who was reputed to have the most wonderful collection, which, of course, I never saw. I believe it contained varieties which no one else had seen at X. When Shanks left it was generally accepted that the prize would fall to me, for there was not another boy in the school who knew the difference between a comma and a hairstreak, or who would have owned up to it if he did. I remember waiting nervously at the prize-giving on Speech Day for my name to be called out.

It was rather an ordeal going up with all the governors of the school and everybody's people staring at you. Then at last I heard the headmaster's ringing congratulatory voice—

“Entomology. Shanks.”

But what was this? Shanks had left. There was another Shanks, though, a scrimshanking younger brother. Shanks must have bequeathed his collection to him.

I felt a little sick inside. There is an element of disgrace in being a bug-hunter at all, but an unsuccessful bug-hunter! And the worst of it was that I knew that everybody knew that I expected the prize—was counting on it, in fact.

“Come, Tau; you mustn't look flushed, or pale, or silly, or self-conscious. Pull yourself together, man. It won't do to let them see you care.” I clapped my hands and tried to grin with the others. “But careful, Tau! You mustn't overdo it, or they'll twig. Naturally now; like a Cheshire cat. Try and squeeze a little contempt into it.”

But worse was to come. The headmaster's voice rang out again—

“Entomology. Consolation prize. Tau.”

What a gauntlet of ridicule I had to run, all the way from the back of the hall, where the Lower Third sat, to the dais, as red as a peony, and conscious of it, my naked little disappointed soul exposed.

The injustice of it! My memories of X. are tainted with injustice. I can quite believe that Shanks's collection is still sent up, and is still given the prize. “The sort of dirty trick one bug-hunter would play on another!” as the head of my study explained consolingly.

But this is a small thing in the scale of injustice.

Bug-hunters are outside the code. What rankles still is Carmichael's editorial "Waste - Paper Basket," the grave of my ode and my budding literary ambitions. I am still convinced, so strong was my impression of its worth at the time, that my ode was the best poem that ever appeared in the 'X—onian.' I sometimes meet Carmichael, now a distinguished public servant. Whenever I see his leonine figure in Pall Mall I cross the road, and buttonhole him and say, "Why didn't you put my verses in the 'X—onian'?"

Vers libre they were. A muse wayward and unfettered! "Was I not a pioneer? And you crudely and barbarously Victorian? A strait-waistcoated classicist, with your metric feet stuck in the prehensile mud of tradition. My 'crudities' precluded the Georgians, as Dan Chaucer——"

But this Jeffrey who blighted my literary career meets my attacks with a genial, incredulous, and forgiving smile, which irradiates Pall Mall. He is still unconvinced. If only I could quote my ode at him I know that he would succumb, not as the wolf whom the poet kept from his door by reciting his verses, but out of genuine and remorseful conviction. I would make him recant his editorial heresies. But the strange thing is that though the melodious beat of those lines ran in my head for a score of years, I cannot recall a word of them.

All I can remember of 'X—onian' verse is the poem which was given the place of honour in the number that contained my rejected ode. My maturer judgment tells me that Carmichael should have committed it to the waste-paper basket, though—innocent of envy—I thought the lines very beautiful and affecting at the time. The author was a Sixth Form boy, who ought to have known better.

“Only a cricket card, faded and torn,
 Dropped from the leaves of a *De Oratore*.
 Only a cricket card, yet it has drawn
 Tears to the eyes of an old man and hoary.”

Time’s revenges! When next I meet Carmichael I will mewl these verses at him as my own.

“Well, Tau,” he will say, “if that’s the sort of tripe you would have had me to stuff into the ‘X—onian’——!”

“But,” I will retort, “that was the very tripe, the true and quintessential tripe, selected and commended by the editor, *consule Carmichael*.”

And here I will unfold my stratagem, and if he still smiles his broad unbelieving smile, I will drag him to the post-office in Charles Street, and we will telegraph to the librarian at X. to “wire first stanza of *De Oratore* verses from ‘X—onian,’ Easter number, 1887.”

III.

I was so discouraged at the injustice that was done to my ode that I wrote no more verses until I went up to the University. ‘The Granta’ and ‘The Cambridge Review’ printed my poems. The editor of ‘The Cambridge Review’ used to send me copies of the numbers containing them. These and a certain notoriety for *boutades* among my associates were the only fruit of my muse. Of course, no self-respecting young poet, or epigrammatist, would be satisfied with that. Youth winces at the imputation of “literary ambitions.” I remember how in the pre-X days I could have fallen upon and pummelled the dear elderly female relative, who, passing through the room where

I squatted, tied up in a knot on the hearth-rug, wrestling with my 'Ode to Time'—"Oh, Time has long ears!" it began—and, pausing to stroke my hair, murmured softly, "Literary ambitions!" No; in letters the only proof of worth is payment. And if one scintillates at all, one's sparks should brighten the darkness of the Metropolis. So, spurning the provincial muse, I began to send my poems to London editors. They all came back—all except one, which Elkington and I discovered by chance in the back number of a magazine in a public-house at Ely.

Elkington was not an undergraduate, but a great lover of undergraduates. He was at least seven years older than any of us, but was, and is still, judged by the standard of exuberance, one of the youngest men I know. He had an infectious bray of a laugh, and snorted with good humour and high spirits, and his language was the language of an Elizabethan bargee. Conlan, the fireman of the *Chloe*, might have sat at his feet. Also he was without respect for most of the people, things, and institutions that we had been taught to admire. Such an associate was good for the product of X. Tubby and Bangs and I had always wanted to meet a Bohemian, and Elkington, like my unpublished odes, was irregular, spontaneous, and innocent of derivation. He did not cultivate Bohemianism; and, to add to the glamour, he was a real journalist. He had written a novel—not a good one; but in its cover it looked like the genuine thing, and bore a reputable publisher's name. Anyhow, he had received payment for it.

And if he was not a great novelist, he consorted with others who were great. More than once I was his guest at literary dinners in town, where I, a blushing undergraduate, used to sit at the

same table with the immortals, and sometimes even shake hands with them. I remember going up in a lift at the Monico—truly an elevator in my case—with Elkington, three novelists, and a poet, all men who could suspend the breath of the multitude in their different ways. One of them, I am sure, will be remembered by posterity. But Elkington, quite unimpressed, laughed and spluttered, and poked fun at them, just as if they had been Bangs and Tubby and I. He thought himself as good as any of them, and his stuff as good as their stuff, and he would not have minded telling them so. That was his great charm—his splendid, boyish, unassailable conceit, sublimated into a kind of modesty; for he did not measure himself with others. He was an embracing and universal optimist. One star was as good as another in his communistic firmament; they all sang together, and one's particular part in the orchestra was of small account.

He shocked me sometimes by his want of reticence. He would blurt out without thinking any flagrancy that came into his head. In the Monico that night the lift jammed, and, suspended between the first and second floor, he shocked the poet and the three eminent novelists, who took themselves a trifle too seriously—pontifically, one might say of Stokes,—by his summary of the headlines in the morning papers, *if* the lift were to crash. “The best brains in England . . . in this small space . . . all pulp. . . . A nation in mourning. Funeral at the Abbey. . . . Imperial Cæsar! Just think of it! Us five, Stokes! . . . I beg your pardon, Tau. Us six.” And he presented me. “Mr Tau, a rising poet. . . . Rising, I *hope*.” Here he looked round dubiously at our suspended prison. Then, turning encouragingly to the lift-boy, he told him not to despair. If the

worst came to the worst, he would die in good company. His bones would be interred with ours. Particles of him would be carried to the Abbey. The obsequies of a prince. "Do you know who we are?" he asked, and to my horror he began enumerating the distinguished guests, Hobbs and Nobbs, and Stokes and Nokes, fitting to each his crown. *Quorum pars magna fui*, of course. . . . "Attention au choc."

Thank God! At last we were moving. I had become hot with shame. But if the lift had crashed! What a glorious extinction!

It was Elkington who discovered my verses in the back number of the magazine in the public-house at Ely, and declaimed them as if they had been good verses, or his own. I believe he really admired and enjoyed them. That was his way. He was a most encouraging companion. It was a case of "love me, love my doggerel." "And he has not paid you for it, Tau, or even acknowledged it; not even sent you a pretty little letter of thanks!" The chivalrous Elkington was incensed. He swore by all his gods that he would call at the office and chastise "this son of a saprophyte" if he did not pay up. And, what is more, he was as good as his word. A few days after his next visit to town I received a postal order for five shillings from the editor. Elkington and I had a good dinner in Soho on the strength of it, and Elkington paid for the wine. My honour was retrieved. I had drawn blood from an editor. It was the first trickle of the elixir of life on which I was to subsist in after years.

When I came home from Damascus I found Elkington permanently established in Fleet Street. He it was who got me the reviewing. Even in my undergraduate days he used to try and palm

my stuff off on editors. Again he befriended me. He was a kindly and chivalrous, but unwisely encouraging, mentor. For I was totally unfitted for journalism. To begin with, I had a peculiarly vicious literary style. All my gods spoke another tongue than that which is heard in the marketplace. I was what you might call a temperamentalist, and very easily hypnotised. I loved Meredith then because of, not in spite of, his manner. De Quincey and Carlyle were other dangerous beacons. These were my masters. I was not so imbecile as to try to twist my tongue into the shape of theirs, but the sum of their influences was paralysing. Style appeared to me to be speech out of the ordinary. I thought that words, if they were going to be printed and published, must necessarily be better words, rarer, and more choice than words as they are spoken. Otherwise why should one expect people to pay for the privilege of reading them? When Elkington asked me if I had done a thousand words on Z.'s book, I would say if I were pleased with my work: "Yes; a thousand good words."

The too-indulgent Elkington, instead of discouraging me, persuaded me to write a book. "You've got enough copy to choke Paternoster Row," he said. "There's money in it, Tau." And he quoted the case of some apocryphal journalist who had made five hundred pounds out of a book of travel. "You've got all the material," he said; "it only wants knocking into shape." He alluded to some twaddle I had scribbled for the Indian newspapers to recover part of my expenses. I had not a particle of faith in the stuff. No sane publisher would look at it. "Touch it up; rewrite it; I'll find you a publisher; there's glory and money in it." I did not believe

him, but I was hungry for both, and tired of the doorstep, and had no other work.

Very reluctantly I settled down to the task of revision. A literary man, I thought, must at least be literary; and I tried to recall scraps of bookish idiom—to dress it up, in other words, just as Frank Silberg in his rare social metamorphoses might dig out his stiff civic suiting and creased trousers to go to a party. In the first paragraph I spoke of the traveller as “helpless as poor Iō to fight against the gadfly of unrest”; and in the second of his miseries as “buried under a palimpsest of superadded emotions.” Palimpsest! I was as pleased with that word as if I had dug up a truffle. I believed it would carry the reader contentedly along with me at least as far as the end of the first chapter. But in the second chapter the sops I could collect for him were not quite so happy; and in the third and fourth invention flagged.

After much wasted effort I grew tired of this tinkering, and wisely desisted. The result was, to say the least of it, patchy. One-half of my book, the unrevised half, was, as Carmichael would have said, tripe, but of a relatively inoffensive order; the other and more studied half—well, to employ a phrase commonly used by our grandparents, was enough to make a horse sick. The unrelated whole reminds me now of my visage when I slunk into my hotel in the dark at Bangkok, a caricature of Janus, and refused to emerge from my room until I had been visited by a barber. One side of my face was covered with a three days' growth; the other side concealed by a rambling particoloured beard and whiskers, like two birds' nests in a winter tree. Three days earlier I had tried to shave, and in the middle of

one of the most painful operations I remember my razor broke.

Publication was delayed until I was old enough to be ashamed of it. I had left England when the book appeared, and did not see the proofs. So far my luck of the doorstep held. But my literary Nemesis was not so lenient. True, I had no business to yap about "poor Io"; but my punishment was greater than I deserved. The printer had it "poor I." I could forgive him for making it appear that I had navigated the Meiklong with the aid of "a saucepan and three saucers" (a sampan and three rowers). But "poor I" was a thing that could not be lived down. And in the first paragraph! My publisher, when I wrote demanding the suppression of the book, said that it was a trifling misprint, and did not matter. My unliterary friends agreed with him. And this seemed to be the opinion of the world. Even the reviewers failed to remark on my posturing on the threshold. But philosophy was not so easy on this doorstep. I felt the brand of eternal shame upon me.

I could moralise upon healing time and the tiny iridescent bubble of the ego. For now it really does not matter. The wretched production has been long out of print. It is as extinct as the Dodo, though I remember seeing a publisher's advertisement of a second edition. "Second large edition nearly exhausted." I began to make preparations to quit the doorstep. But Nemesis strikes with a two-edged sword. A few months after this my publisher went bankrupt. Needless to say, I never made a penny out of the book.

IV.

I was on a Norfolk river wrestling with my manuscript when the letter from "India" came, and I had almost given up hope of the East. "India" had advertised in the 'Times' for a man with educational qualifications and Indian experience. No details of the appointment were given. I applied for it, of course. For nearly two years I had continued this habit of answering advertisements, and so far I had received no answers to my applications, which were prompted by superstition rather than hope. So long as one sits by the door, one must keep up the ritual of appeasement. But I had ceased to expect any reward for this piety. The letter from "India" came as a complete surprise. It was short and direct, three lines, asking me to call on him at his club in Northumberland Avenue at 4 P.M. on Friday. The letter was signed "India"; the key to the pseudonym was subscribed in brackets (J. R. Mason).

At the stroke of four, as I stood in the hall of the club, I saw "India" coming down the stairs, a small formal man of about fifty-five, in a grey suit. A thin face and greyish-reddish beard, rather ferret-like, eyes a little bloodshot, and a forward-pointing chin like Captain Kettle's. He drew me aside to a bay on the stairs, where we sat on a window-seat, and began his catechism. He spoke with a snap, but not unkindly. Evidently he was a man who knew exactly what he wanted, and insisted upon getting it. I gathered that he would prefer a pliant candidate. Can one be firmly pliant, that is to say, spiritually independent, and submissive at the same time? I hoped this was

the impression that I was giving him. After ten minutes he rose. He was seeing other applicants, he told me. I should hear from him in a few days. My spirits fell to zero. I had been absurdly sanguine. It had not entered my head that after summoning me he would be seeing other candidates.

I turned down Northumberland Avenue to the Embankment in a haze of abstraction. Logic might have consoled me. Out of a hundred or more applications the choice was narrowed down to five, and I was one of them. But I felt quite certain now that one of the others would be chosen. I should have been much happier if I had never heard from "India." The chances were still five to one, supposing that our qualifications were equal; but what horse that I had ever backed had won at five to one? At half-past four I pictured another candidate on the window-seat, and another catechism, possibly a Varsity Blue and Honours man. And at five a third. The odds lengthened with my depression.

While I was talking to "India" I imagined that I was getting on with him better than I had hoped. But he had been mysteriously secretive about his appointment. He had pumped me pretty exhaustively, and told me nothing. The only question I put to him he evaded. What would be my destination if he appointed me? I gathered that there was a Raja in the case, and that I should have to learn Uriya and Telegu. This pointed to the north of the Madras Presidency. But the mystery was that there should be any mystery.

After ten days' irritated suspense I was summoned again. At the same hour and in the same bay of the window Mason told me that he had selected me. It was on the strength of Carter's

testimonial and my Indian experience. I was to be the tutor of a young Raja, and teach English in his college. Mason then disclosed the scene of my labours. It had a soft meandering name like the Spanish plant in Browning's "Garden Fancies," a name that would be the making of a hexameter. Mason pronounced it with an effort at detachment, a sort of careless pride. I was sure that he had not vulgarly betrayed it to the other candidates. He was in England on business of the State, *incognito*, so to speak. The Privy Council was involved. But we will respect his modesty, and call the place Devagiri, though he and his Raja have long been dead.

I believe I had my fair share of tact considering my years, but I committed a very stupid *gaffe* in this second interview. If I had blundered as tactlessly in the first, I should no doubt have lost the appointment. I told Mason that I had never heard of Devagiri.

"There are a great many places you have never heard of," he replied testily.

He was not going to let my ignorance reflect upon his kingdom. If I had not heard of it, I ought to have heard of it. In Madras everybody knew about Devagiri. Mason *was* Devagiri. He had made it. The railway, the palace, the college were his, and all the other symbols of progress that belied the astrologer-ridden, Brahmin-infested place. For in spite of Mason's surface harrowings the soul of Devagiri was undisturbed. It suffered him, and later me, though, as I learnt afterwards, with deep secret resentment.

It was impossible to tell at first. I watched Mason and the Raja together. Outwardly the Indian appeared as insusceptible to influence as Buddha. Such complete serenity must imply self-mastery, I thought. For I have never seen an

Oriental more like a graven image. The "mysterious, inscrutable Hindu" legend was impersonated in him. One never knew how much of this insulation was traditional and how much temperamental. He was almost inarticulate. The few monosyllables of assent or dissent I ever heard from him seemed to escape automatically without the disturbance of a muscle. But the Raja had one human trait. He was fond of shikar, and used to sit up for leopards over a kill, not in a *machân*, but on the ground, behind a thin thorn zariba. The picture of the Raja and the leopard alone in the dark with only a few paces between them is the most dramatic hunting scene I can picture. For one can imagine the set lines in the graven image swiftly changing and some betrayal of emotion in the eye; but in the dark, of course, with no one to see or record.

His son, my ward, a boy of ten, was his replica. Only in his case, though temperament and tradition may have been equally strong, the insulation was aided by a vacuum. I never evoked a smile from him or the shadow of any emotion. I cannot recall anything in the nature of a scene between us, pleasant or unpleasant. I only remember his little black beads of eyes, set in his sad impassive face, as prominent as in a toy, and his hair trained into a thick oily bunch at the back under a gold-embroidered plum-coloured cap.

But I saw very little of the heir. Nearly every day a messenger would come from the palace with some excuse to explain why he could not come—a trifling ailment, festival, or ceremony, or some Brahmanic inhibition. The astrologers would always vamp up something. They and the women of the palace, I suppose, were afraid that he might become a cipher, like his father, under an Englishman's thumb. Nominally I was employed

by the Raja, but it is doubtful if he was consulted in my appointment. Mason's ascendancy was complete. I have forgotten, if I ever knew, how he came to Devagiri. He was not a Government servant. I believe he in his day had been the Raja's tutor, just as I was the boy's. If so, I can understand the uneasiness in the palace when a second Englishman came to Devagiri. They did not want another white raj. Mason controlled the estate. He was Prime Minister, Accountant-General, Home and Foreign Minister, in one.

"The greatest work of God on high
Is Mr Mason kind."

Such was the burden of an illuminated address presented to Mason on his departure to England for a few months "on business connected with the affairs of the State." It was inscribed on gilt-edged paper with golden capitals at the end of every line in Uriya, Telegu, Sanskrit, and English.

"A gentle, what to say, a noble man ;
A gentle noble race he ran,
Assisting us in all our thicks and thins."

Flattery is too hard a word to fling at the poet, a teacher of Sanskrit in the Collegiate Model School. His verses were a sincere profession of faith, more sincere than the dedicatory incense which our ancestors offered up to the great in the Augustan age—a bowing and adoring before the Divine Source of Energy, whom the Hindu worships in all its manifestations, modern or legendary.

The conservative and unbenefited population of Devagiri, of course, held other views, and probably most of the benefited. But this I could not be expected to know. I doubt if even Mason

knew. One meets administrators who have spent their life in the East without discovering the spirit in which the Asiatic regards "a just but alien" rule. Imagine some Martian set in authority in the Isle of Man by virtue of his un-Manxlike qualities. But Devagiri, it will be objected, is altogether another case. Dark-skinned, backward, unevolved people, who have their heads crammed with wrong ideas, need direction, and the longer they have remained in darkness the more grateful they should be for light. Visitors who came to Devagiri used to say, "The Raja is devoted to Mr Mason." And so he ought to be—the *ma-bâp* and benefactor of his people! But did the graven image really love and respect his "father and mother"? I sometimes had my doubts.

But I did not bother my head much about these relations. There was too much to do. There was plenty of work for me at the college; primarily English text-books and cricket. I had to learn English grammar among other things, as I found my students better instructed in it than myself. And while I was learning to teach English I thought I would write a text-book on the science of teaching it. If one's aim is to convince, it is always better to write about what one is learning, never about what one has learnt—a principle that is particularly applicable in the case of books of travel; for when one has lived long in a country—long enough for the salient things to lose their points and edges—one cannot write vividly about it.

It was lucky that I had plenty to do, for Mason was generally away, and I rarely saw an Englishman during my first year at Devagiri. For the study of the Hindu one could not have found a better district in India. In these sleepy backwaters of "the benighted Presidency," the ritual prescribed by Manu has survived since Vedic

times. I read Abbé Dubois, and was fascinated by his intimate revelations. The Brahmin here was just such a Brahmin, hedged about with his meticulous inhibitions. I studied Brahminism, and kept up my interest in it for years, but neither reading nor observation taught me anything that I could expound confidently about the enigmatic soul of the Hindu.

In time I grew tired of Hinduism, even more tired of it than I was to become of diarchy and hybrid Indian politics. But another hobby that I indulged at Devagiri has never grown stale. First among the ten best books, if I had to choose ten to be isolated with, I should have selected Hume and Marshall's 'Game Birds of India.' For at last I had found my long-dreamed-of hunting-ground, in which one could blaze off a hundred cartridges before breakfast. The jhils were the glory of Devagiri, great expanses of water overgrown with lotuses, pink and purple and white, the haunt of innumerable wild-fowl. The rose-coloured hills, rock, and loam, bevelled off into the lemon green of the swamp at the edge of the jhil. This was the snipe-ground. The smell of the marsh when the sun had been on it an hour was like cowslips, or the smell of dawn in Paradise, as Kipling said of the Sussex thyme. One's nose is biassed, of course, like one's other senses; and what one calls a paradisiacal smell may be only an ordinary smell one happens to have smelt in Paradise. Now I come to think of it, the cowslip smell was stronger in the discoloured ooze of the reed-beds, where one flushed most snipe. There was a rusty iron deposit here welling up from an underground spring. How wise one became as to the lie of the captious snipe! What an instinct one had for the favoured conditions of bent, grass, mud, and scum; and how paradisiacal it was after

the early morning shoot in one amphitheatre in the hills to ride off and find your breakfast, and more snipe, waiting for you in another. And there was the expectation always of bagging some rare species of duck.

My first shoot at Devagiri was at the very end of the season, and there was hardly a bird left on the jhil. I had eight and a half months to wait for the migrant duck to return, and during this time I think I must have pored over Hume and Marshall, vol. iii., nearly every day. I could have passed an examination in the plumage, feet and web, colour and length of bill, and habitat of the thirty-six duck and geese depicted in the plates. More particularly had I noted their seasons. Those records of early migrants in Hume and Marshall were most deceiving. I began to haunt the jhils in October, and even in September, but it was not until late in November that the first flights came in. The last month of waiting seemed drawn out into six. And then in the third week of November they began to arrive—gadwall, widgeon, spotbill, shoveller, pintail, tufted, common, and red-crested pochard, common, garganey, and cotton teal. A thud on the earth, or a splash on the water, and then what breathless excitement when one retrieved the substantial replicas of those coloured plates! The only emotional state I can think of comparable to it was when I used to lie awake at X. thinking of moths.

Devagiri had certain disadvantages, but they were not numerous. The heat was stifling for nearly nine months in the year. And the Raja's brother was a dramatist. We had to go to his plays. It was bad form not to go to them, and worse to go out in the middle. The bugs in the cracks of his chairs used to lie in wait for us.

In their case it was a genuine entertainment, and they bit like fury. *Supplice épouvantable!* We were lucky indeed if we could get home before three in the morning. This enforced theatre-going, and the heat, and the bugs, and the mosquitoes, and other poisonous flies, and snakes, complete the black side of the picture. I can think of nothing else to the discredit of Devagiri. In the cold weather, when the duck and snipe came from the North, it was a demi-Eden.

V.

I had not been more than a year in Devagiri when Mason died. He left all his money to the Raja. All that he had earned from the estate he returned to it, though the Raja was a rich man, richer even than Mason, and not in need of money. The will by which the Raja inherited was found in a drawer in Mason's study, and nobody else benefited by it. But a few years afterwards, after the Raja's death, I think, a second and later will was discovered cancelling the first. I dare not record the *dénoûement*. It is too like a feuilleton. Telling it might cast a cloud of doubt upon other simple and veracious facts in this history. Like Alice, one gets so much into the way of expecting out-of-the-way things to happen, but in stories only, that when they do happen, outside stories, one simply does not believe them.

Devagiri's endurance of the benevolent alien despotism was characteristically Indian. The Raja was hypnotised; and Brahminarchy timid and supine. Courage was wanting even for covert resistance. Efficiency spreads a hard bed for the Hindu to lie on. Sanitation, progress, inspections,

accounts, reports, are the very devil. When Mason died, Devagiri turned over in its half-sleep like a fat man too inert to shake off an accustomed incubus, yet when it slides off of itself, just sufficiently awake to avert another visitation. Not for worlds would the fat man fall back into the position in which the incubus might fasten on to him again. After Mason's death it became quite clear that the graven image did not like white men. As I suspected, he had never really loved his benefactor. And naturally he did not like me, an importation of Mason's, or the college, that forcing-house of the Masonic idea. The new agent, this time a Government official, trod a thorny path. As for myself, I saw less and less of the heir. My days in Devagiri were numbered. But by the conditions of my contract I was fastened on the place until the end of my term of three years.

I had still two years, and these, like so many other years when one looks back on them, seem to have fled as in the Golden Age. I had forgotten the humiliations of the doorstep, and hardly gave the prospect of my renewed acquaintance with it a thought, which was as well, since my responsibilities were doubled, and the doorstep is quite another proposition when it has to seat two. As it proved, we had no cause to worry. Before I left Devagiri I was offered another appointment, very similar in its conditions, with a Europe-loving Raja, who liked white men, and progress, and everything that was anathema to Devagiri. It is unsafe to generalise about Rajas. There is great variety in their reactions; what is acid to one is alkali to another. This one was more evolutionary than the Sircar. But it was fated that I was never to see him, or help him in his progressive schemes. For about this time a very out-of-

the-way thing happened to me, quite as out-of-the-way as anything that happened to Alice or the personages of Greek mythology. I went to bed on the night of 31st December a schoolmaster, and woke up on the morning of 1st January a war correspondent; or, if I did not wake up one, I became one before my bearer had time to bring me my shaving-water.

The scene of this metamorphosis is, of course, very vividly impressed on my mind, though I do not remember ever hearing the name of the place. I had put in my last term at Devagiri, and we were enjoying the brief spell of cold weather. December in Gangam is fresh and cool and dewy, with a persistent but quite benevolent sun, like that rare season, a perfect English May. We picnicked, and shot over the jhils for duck and snipe, and extended our explorations to remote valleys and hills—more terminalia,—long rides in which we had to lay out daks.¹ Then when we were in the middle of packing up to go to our evolutionary Raja, I went off for a couple of days to Waltair, on the coast, to join in the duck-shoot at the end of the Christmas week. This was a great annual event, organised by the club. We were eighteen guns. In these wide jhils, where the duck are innumerable and the cover scanty, the more guns one can collect to keep the birds moving the better. We left Waltair at night in a slow train. The half of it in which we slept was shunted into a siding at one of those small stations which exist for the transport of grain. I was too excited to sleep well. I know of nothing more exciting than a duck-shoot. I used to compare one's suspense as one approached a jhil in the early morning to a soldier's before a battle. Now I know that duck-shoots can be more exciting than battles.

¹ Relays of horses.

The jhil we were going to shoot over was new to me, and rarely disturbed by a gun. There would be hundreds of thousands of birds, packed together like floating islands. After the first shot they would rise and darken the air with a crackling of wings like torn canvas. This sound, following upon the calm and silence, would be thrilling. I had borrowed a second gun. I would need it.

I was up long before the others, and slipped out of my carriage to "eat the air." I picked my way abstractedly among the grain-bags, thinking of the rare duck I might shoot. A pinkhead or a scaup, perhaps! I had never shot either. I was trying to recall the coloured plate in Hume and Marshall, a rose-pink neck with a black bar at the throat, when I ran into a telegraph-boy, who was carrying a brown envelope, and calling out my name.

I opened and read the telegram, filled in the reply-paid form, slipped back into the carriage, and began to shave as if nothing unusual had happened. But in this abstracted interval I had become a war correspondent.

The metamorphosis, I repeat, was as wonderful as anything that happened to Alice. For when I went to bed I did not know that there was a war, or any likelihood of one; and if I had known, I should not have believed that 'The Daily Megaphone' would have summoned me to go to it as their correspondent. If the Dalai Lama had sent a palanquin with a cortège of yellow-robed monks to escort me back to the Potala, if I had been chosen to expound the mysteries of the wheel to the assembled hierarchy at Lhasa, and if the said palanquin and cortège of monks had fetched up at this wayside station, of which I have for-

gotten the name, I could not have been more astonished.

And why 'The Daily Megaphone'? I did not know them or any one connected with them. I had never sent them a contribution in my life, and I was quite sure that they would have rejected it if I had.

And talking about the Dalai Lama. This war was in Tibet. That was another dream come true.

Had I eaten of the magic mushroom? Allah certainly loved me. I felt like a kind of male Cinderella. Everybody wanted to be a war correspondent, and everybody wanted to go to Tibet. Every newspaper in London could summon scores of trained, qualified, and brilliant journalists, and hundreds untrained and unqualified like myself, who would have tumbled over each other to have exchanged Fleet Street for the most problematical glimpse of the Potala. And here was I, and there were they! For a very good and simple reason, of course. They were not on the spot. But what luck! I had walked into the preserves of the most coveted of professions by the sheer accident of proximity. In the month of January 1904 there were three English war correspondents on the active list, and I was one of them.

What a splendid thing it is to be free and uncovenanted. Now if I had been editor of the 'Times,' or Chancellor of Cambridge University, I should never have seen Tibet. One of these days I must compose an "Ode to the Doorstep."

The agent of 'The Daily Megaphone' in India must have been at his wits' end. Three correspondents had been officially conceded, and the organs and institution they represented stood for weight, noise, and universality. It was axiomatic, of course, that the first message to the British

public from Tibet must be megaphonic; but it appeared that there was no detached journalist at the call of 'The Megaphone' within a thousand miles of Calcutta. Weight was already nearly on the spot, though happily impeded in his movements by his very virtue. Universality had packed and was ready to start. One might be sure that he would be as swift as a wire when the word was given. Only noise was wanting. The agent of 'The Daily Megaphone,' I believe, was considering the qualifications of his office staff when he ran into an acquaintance of mine, who told him he could put him on to the very man he wanted, and gave him my name and address. "He has travelled a good deal in an unconventional way," my friend said; "knows the borders of Tibet. He has written a book too. I have forgotten the name of it, but it was very well received." Allah forgive my friend! But, of course, neither he nor the agent had read it. So "poor I" and the "palimpsest" did not really matter after all. Perhaps it never matters what you have put inside the covers of a book—three months after it is published. Elkington was right. "Stick to it, Tau. There's money in it." But this was better than a hundredth edition and a 25 per cent royalty—better than Prince Hassan's carpet. Writing a book does not often take you to Tibet.

I shaved very badly that morning, but I shot remarkably well, with an absent-minded inspiration which I have never regained. I kept my counsel all day, though I could not resist saying to my friend in Waltair as we sat in his veranda by the sea before turning into bed, "I suppose you haven't got such a thing——" We both smiled at this ingenuous idiom. "I suppose you don't happen to have a particularly thick sweater

that you want to get rid of. I am off to Tibet to-morrow by the Calcutta mail."

I had not time to break my journey at Devagiri ; and, though I had packed to be away only two days, I was never to see my little Paradise again.

V.

'THE MEGAPHONE'

'THE MEGAPHONE.'

I.

WALTAIR I remember as a red country; the laterite rock glowed like blood, or fire, in the sun. Chumbi was white, and my translation from one to the other was sudden and magical. At Waltair the air in the veranda by the sea was warm and still; the air of the Chumbi Valley was far from warm, and anything but still. A gale blew, and the thermometer had fallen several degrees below zero. Yet though I arrived comfortably tired and insufficiently protected from the cold, I found the climate exhilarating. These transformations are in themselves warming. Besides, the tidal blood of youth is responsive to the moonshine of romance.

I had only one full day and a part of another to collect my kit in Calcutta. U., whom I was racing, left Sealdah in the same train with me. I had the same unfair advantage over him as I had over the green-ticket man. I knew him, but he did not know me. His valise and yakdans were indiscreetly labelled. "The Tibet Mission, *viâ* Siliguri," invited confidence, which, I am afraid, I basely betrayed; and worse, in return for my betrayal my magnanimous friend heaped coals of fire on my head. I looked at his yakdans on the rack, and asked him if he was going to Lhasa. He smiled dubiously. It

might come to that, he said, if the Tibetan diplomatists were stiff-necked enough. And it seemed most unlikely that the spooks and oracles they consulted would instil any reason into them. Being young and deficient in sympathetic imagination, I prayed for their continued unenlightenment. I hoped their gods would not remove these poor devils' blinkers. Thus we might get to Lhasa, pushing them backwards step by step as they fought us with their black magic, mediæval weapons, and blank fire of incantations. Youth set on adventure is as cruel as an animal. I hoped there would be war.

I felt in an expansive and communicative mood. My companion and I were kindred spirits, and we were drawn to one another. I wanted to tell him that I was going to Tibet too, but that would have removed the hope, which was becoming more and more shadowy, of getting there first. The important thing was to discover if he had got his pass. 'The Megaphone' agent had failed to get me mine before the train started. "Can any one go and look up the Mission?" I asked him. "I suppose it is easy enough to get leave if you know any one on the staff." He smiled at my ingenuous optimism, as if I were a camel whose objective was the eye of a needle. Half the Indian army were trying to get on the show, he explained. They were cutting down the staff personnel most stringently. It wasn't going to be a picnic. And where was the transport coming from? There were no roads for wheels, and a baggage animal eats up the load on its back in nine days. Only three correspondents were to be attached to the Mission. I learnt that the weightiest of them was already in Sikkim, staying at the Residency at Gantok, and studying the military and political situation

from the best authorities. He was not likely to move just yet, but when he did get started there would be nothing more to be said. He was an extraordinarily erudite and picturesque writer; he could be exhaustive without being exhausting, and he had a knack of using all the best words. And there was another correspondent—a dark horse. Here he mentioned my name and ‘The Megaphone.’ But this other fellow had not started. He patted the breast-pocket of his khaki jacket which contained his pass.

In a way he was right. It could not be said that I had started until I had got my pass. I should have to wait for it in Darjeeling, thirty-six hours at least, while he was on the road. The mail we were travelling by carried to-morrow’s post, so that would be no good. I should have to wait for it until four o’clock on the afternoon of the following day. It was difficult to conceal my depression.

A correspondent’s life is a hard one. My first sacrifice was my breakfast. Early in the morning we reached Siliguri, the terminus of the broad-gauge line, and then the base camp for the Tibet Expedition. Here we descended. I had half an hour to wait for the little mountain train to Darjeeling, and while U. breakfasted, I made myself unpopular by disturbing the repose of the Base Commandant. The hectic things he had to say about the state of the transport on the road from Siliguri heartened me a great deal. U., who I knew was counting on the S. & T. for a mount, would be lucky if he raised a skinny, sore-backed, spavined bazaar tat. This discounted his thirty-six hours start. I wired to Jones at Darjeeling—it was like old times—to lay me out a dak, so that when I did get going I

should find a fresh horse between the fiftieth and sixtieth mile—from the base at Siliguri, that is to say. It was here that I should have to show my pass. But, horrible thought! U. would pass the horse on the road before I started. What if he pinched it, or sent the sais back! Nothing would be easier. The sais would hold out a dirty livery-stable ticket with my name on it.

Was I not familiar with the ruses and stratagems of war correspondents? Had I not devoured their histories at X.? Now I was one of the gang myself, but not half Machiavellian or unscrupulous enough. U. was probably a desperate fellow. I ought to have drugged him in the train. And I ought to have wired to Jones under a feigned name. A horse for Tau at the fifty-fifth mile! That would give the whole show away, if nothing worse came of it. Now what would Tau do in U.'s place if he encountered that ticketed providential horse? I began to feel that I should never be a credit to 'The Daily Megaphone.' However, I still had a dog's chance. Jones had a good stable. And I pictured U. flogging his wretched sore-backed tat along; he would be lucky if he squeezed four miles an hour out of it.

The mail was late, of course, on my second afternoon in Darjeeling. I waited at the post-office for the registered packet. At five I retrieved it, and started for Tibet on a strong sure-footed Bhutia pony that could trot downhill. We had 8000 feet of downhill before we joined the line of communications at the Teesta Bridge. It was a bright, frosty, moonlight night—snow on the branches, and ice on the road. But we were soon out of the frost. The road, and the forest smells, and the dripping lichen-bearded trees were delightfully familiar. I slept a few hours at the bungalow of a planter, an old friend, but

started again before it was light, and found my second horse waiting me in the Teesta Valley. After fifteen miles on the flat, luck threw me in the path of another old crony, a forest officer. He gave me breakfast and lent me his Beluchi mare, a fleet beast, which had carried me many times before. And so to Rungpo, where I found my third and last mount, and halted for lunch. I learnt that U. had slept there, and left in the morning after breakfast. He had now only five hours' start of me, but he knew I was behind. As I had feared, the sais of my third horse had been trying to find some one who would answer to the name of Tau. But U. was too honest. I smile now when I think of my kind and scrupulous friend, and my base suspicions of him. War correspondents are not all thugs. In fact I have never met that resourceful daredevil bandit of my dreams, the composite of Macheath and Machiavelli.

At Rungli, the next stage, I had gained three hours on U. He had rested by the way. He and his mount, I gathered, were extremely exhausted. He had managed to raise a horse of kinds at Siliguri, a chestnut waler, of about 15 hands. "They both look tucked up," the S. & T. man at Rungli told me. "I have lent him my tent at Lingtam for the night. You will find him there. Twelve miles up the road." I did not believe the transport officer, though doubtless he spoke in good faith. The road would be thick with U.'s confederates, conscious or otherwise. He would naturally sow rumour in his track. However, I dared not take any chances, so I waited on the road outside until it was dark. The village was very still as I passed through, and there were only one or two lights. My horse made a tremendous clatter on the cobbled stones.

I thought I could distinguish suspiciously elusive figures moving in the shadows—U.'s watchmen, no doubt. I half-expected U. to spring out on me from his hiding-place. He would at least leave a spy on the road. I waited a quarter of a mile outside the village and listened. Not a sound of pursuit. I believed U. had gone on. But the roar of the torrent would have drowned the sound of hoofs. After that I remember zigzagging up the khud for an eternity in the dark forest beside a boisterous stream, leading my horse, for I had ridden him to a standstill.

It had been pitch-dark for hours when I reached Sedongchen, the next stage, at 7000 feet. Here I found another supply dump, and a Gurkha officer whom I knew. U. had not passed, he told me. "I've something here you'll probably be glad to take off my hands," he added, when I explained to him the nature of my errand and the necessity for expedition. And he led me to the stable. It was a fine upstanding mule, the property of an officer who had been invalidated down to the plains, and had left it with the Gurkha man to sell. It was exactly what I wanted. I knew the road up to the Jalap-la, an ascent of 7000 feet, mostly a stone ladder. I bought the mule on the spot. It was now nearly midnight, and the Gurkha officer persuaded me to turn in. "Have a good sleep," he said. "When the other fellow comes along I'll keep him hanging round until after lunch. You will be half-way to Chumbi by then." But I could not sleep a wink. I lay awake listening for sounds on the road. I thought that I heard dislodged stones and a horse whinnying. I was convinced that U. was on the road again, and passing Sedongchen. At two in the morning I could endure it no longer. I got up, saddled the mule, and started up the

hill without saying good-bye to my host. But the mule made enough noise to awaken the dead. I saw a candle lighted in the rest-house, and then my host's head at the window. He flung after me his valedictory objurgations, his summary of my particular form of derangement. I found this abuse cheering. In the next few weeks I was to hear many varieties and repetitions of it, for I had entered upon the most importunate of professions.

It was the most divinely beautiful night I remember. The moonlight traced poems on the curtain of chestnut and ilex. As I rode through the lighted aisles of the forest, half-asleep but wholly content, I found myself repeating tags of half-remembered verses. “*Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram.*” Or was it “*sub luce maligna*”? And surely “*incerta luce*” or “*incertae lunae*” came in somewhere. How intrigued one is by a mangled quotation on a journey! I must send for my Virgil. Here I nearly fell off the back of my almost vertical saddle. The lines had come in an “exam. rep.” at X. I remembered standing speechless before my form-master, the stern Kalmuck, and the recurrent nightmare of being kept back at the end of the term. And now I had forgotten them again, but that awful presence could haunt me no more. If I returned to X. I could knock at his door without fear. What caressing names the Greeks had for the moon! Artemis. Selene. For an hour or two I forgot my pursuer. This was the poetry of life. The silvered rhododendron trunks were like a dream of Dante's translated by Arthur Rackham. How they lurked and grimaced! And then the false dawn. I was out of the forest now, among the dwarf rhododendrons. I saw the sun rise across grassy Alps irradiating Kabru

and Kanchenjunga. It was the delicate rose at the edge of the petal of the eglantine against the white of its centre. The massif lay as much to the west now as to the north. These peaks, which had always seemed the ultimate bounds of the earth, I should soon leave behind.

I breakfasted in great content with the Gurkhas at Gnatong, having wangled a horse out of them. My mule was dead-beat, but I was refreshed. I swore that I would sleep in Chumbi that night even if I had to walk there from the Jalap-la. The road was still familiar, the little Tuko Pass, and the chough-haunted Bidang Tso. From the Jalap-la I sent my borrowed pony back to Gnatong, and drove my mule down the slippery khud to Yatung, 4000 feet in six miles, with cries and blows like the Spanish *arriero*. I had allowed myself five minutes on the pass to look down on the land from which we were tearing the veil. On my earlier journey to the frontier the Jalap-la was in cloud. This time I rode through the Chinese frontier wall at Yatung unchallenged. At Rin-chengong I left my mule in pawn with a Tomo, who produced a great, black, woolly-maned prodigy of a beast. I believe it was some species of mule, but I have never seen its like before or since. I should have laughed at it if I had not been too tired. On this appropriate mount I ambled into the land of unrealities, and arrived in the camp at Chumbi half an hour after dark. I had been between forty-eight and forty-nine hours on the road.

The next morning I megaphoned my cinematographic impressions of Tibet to the British public. It was the first wire, and therefore appropriately megaphonic. U., who arrived two days later, generously commended my duplicity. He con-

fessed to trying to steal a march on me by getting a wire through from Gnatong. The Gurkha man at Sedongchen was as good as his word. "He gave me a great lunch," U. told me, "but kept me waiting two hours for it. The dirty dog! He swore he had never heard your name. Then just as I was starting off he remembered it. 'By the way,' he said, 'what was the name of the man you said was chivvying you? Was it Tau? Why, he went through in the small hours. He'll be at Chumbi to-night. You'd better sleep here.'" He did. "I consoled myself," he added, "with the thought that you were probably dead."

The equable philosophic U., who had been on two or three shows, had a better notion of the rules of the game. Good newspaper correspondents, I gathered from him, ought to be companionable and interdependent, and not out for coups—not like a pack of tradesmen with their eyes skinned all the time to cut one another out. "It's the very devil," he said, "if you can't lie down and go to sleep when you are tired without keeping an eye open in the back of your head. Think of the strain." I agreed with him. I had been thinking of the strain. Supposing one had to keep it up for months on end. These distrustful relations would spoil the geniality of the show.

U. had a theory that correspondents ought to pool news. This communal idea was new to me. I was half-converted. Anyhow, I was glad to find that war-corresponding need not be such an emulous business as I had supposed. Fortunately the Tibet Expedition did not offer much scope for coups, or "scoops," as journalists call them. We had the same telegraph-office and the same censor, and were never very far apart.

If there was any fighting, we all saw it. If there was any political news, it was communicated to us without favour.

Chance, however, gave me one exclusive coup, but chance only. I deserve no credit for it. It was the fortune of the lucky number. The military headquarters and the censor were at Chumbi; the Commissioner and his escort were encamped in the high frozen tableland at Tuna beyond the Tang-la, waiting for parley with the Tibetans. Access to his camp was forbidden. So far not a word had come through. Everybody was waiting in great suspense for news of his first contact with "the enemy." For the advance of the Mission to Gyantse, or even to Lhasa, depended a great deal on the attitude and temper of the Tibetans. It was quite possible that they might attack his camp. It would have been wiser perhaps to have stayed with the other correspondents at Chumbi, as they would be able to cable the situation home directly news came through. On the other hand, there might not be any situation worth cabling, and I knew 'The Megaphone' would be glad to have the first descriptive articles about the country between Chumbi and the Tang-la. It was probably more restlessness and curiosity than anything else that drew me up the line; but whatever the motives, they were undeservedly rewarded.

The day after I arrived at Phari Jong I was talking to the signalling officer on the roof of the fort, when he received a helio message from the Tang-la, which was in communication with Tuna. I had the impudence to ask him for a copy of it, and he handed me this State secret with no more hesitation than if it had been a cigarette. There was nothing officially confidential about the

message as it happened; only it gave the exact summary of the situation, for which everybody was waiting anxiously at home. In ten minutes I had sent the message down the line to the censor. Luckily, he passed it. Not only did my cable appear in 'The Megaphone' two days ahead of the other correspondents' messages, but it preceded the official communiqué. I was credited, I believe, with Machiavellian cunning for this stroke of luck. I heard afterwards that it bound me to 'The Megaphone' with hoops of steel. But, like a wise correspondent, I kept my counsel as to the part chance played in my coup. I foresaw a time when a little prestige might be useful to bank on.

II.

But the best coup a correspondent can transmit to his newspaper is to become the recipient of coups himself. A few months after I joined the Expedition I carelessly received nine wounds. The Tibetans rained coups on me. It was Easter-time, and from the newspapers' point of view an exceptionally slack season. It was not even a centenary of anything or anybody. Nobody dead or alive was "up." The other papers had no felonious countess, or arsenic fiend, or missing heir, or Society divorce, not even an Egyptian mummy, which they could bring out in competition. I became a Bank Holiday sensation. War was romantic in those days, and war correspondents rare and privileged beings. Wounded war correspondents were almost unheard of; or if they got into the casualty lists, it was in the ordinary prosaic way, among the "gun-shot wounds." Only a megaphonic correspondent could

succeed in getting himself mediævally chopped up with swords.

It is such a long time ago that I have no shame in recalling this fortuitous celebrity. Everybody has forgotten it. Yellow journalism was then in its budding primrose stage. People were beginning to talk of it with tolerant amusement. Until I was invited by 'The Daily Megaphone' to go to Tibet for them I do not suppose I had more than glanced at half a dozen copies of the paper. I had certainly no idea of the loudness of its bray, or of its carrying power, or penetration. When I landed at Dover I found that everybody read it. The hall-porter of the Lord Warden Hotel, seeing my name on my valise, beamed on me a paternal welcome. He said hard things about the innocent Tibetans and suchlike "untrustworthy furriners." It was never safe to go among them, he warned me. However, he was glad to see me safe home again. The barber who shaved me on the icy morning after my arrival was another megaphonian. He might have been expecting me. When I told him that I had come from an even icier climate, where we had been camping in 57 degrees of frost, he tumbled to it at once. Tibet, of course! There could be no concealment; 'The Daily Megaphone' as a popular educator saw to that. He inquired sympathetically about the unfortunate young journalist who had been so badly cut up; and his boy assistant, who was lathering me, hearing that he was operating on the Bank Holiday sensation of eight months ago, nearly dropped his brush.

This was fame, as Dizzy said, and I benefited by it, directly and indirectly, in many ways. It led to a conciliation and a lasting friendship with a gamekeeper who caught me trespassing.

I was granted the freedom of his preserves. Also, for the first and only time in my life, I was able to get my articles and stories into the popular magazines—not for their worth, but because of their author’s association with certain dramatic posters, oases of sensation in an era of almost Saharan tranquillity. The editor of the most popular of these magazines used to frank my contributions with an introductory puff. “Mr T., the author of this thrilling story, who received nine wounds. . . .” I was reminded of the clown’s song in the old pantomime—

“Oh, I loves a bit of slaughter,
And the bleed it flowed like water,
At the drama as I went to when a boy.”

Wholesale venders of scraps, who are at the same time students of the natural history of Demos, and can cater for his inscrutable appetites, attain to great riches. And this is as it should be. The popular newspaper or magazine proprietor is not a philanthropist. Like every other provision-monger, he has to discover what the multitude wants, and ladle it out to them in the gross. It is every bit as reputable a trade as the grocer’s, and surely more intellectual. One gives the mind the pabulum it wants; the other the belly. But it cannot be done with your tongue in your cheek. Demos is a very sensitive and suspicious feeder. The vender must believe in his goods, or he won’t get Demos to buy them. You cannot trick Demos with stuff which you would not have on your own table. He has a nose for the genuine thing. The pioneers in the new commerce who tried to study his tastes objectively from a detached, highbrow, psychological point of view failed, lamentably and deservedly.

The great mind who conceived 'The Megaphone' was not of this order, though I believe he regarded himself as a psychologist, and thought that he had brought the composition of a newspaper to an exact science. And he was a psychologist in a sense. He understood a great deal about human nature, and he had a boyish, effervescing, insatiable interest in life. He loved the adventure of feeding the multitude for its own sake, not merely for what he could make out of it. And the gift was instinctive; it implied no subtleties or conscious analysis. "He had it all in his cokernut," as Maurice used to say on the *Chloe*. "It came as easy to him as to the old Stooard to lay the cloth." For he knew that whatever emotion this or that thrill, scandal, or "story" gave him would be reflected in a million faces at the breakfast-table the next morning. What amused or bored Demos amused or bored him. He was Everyman. Mere thinking could never have set him on the colossal pedestals from which he bestrode the world, if he had not been the impersonation of Demos himself.

I can imagine the lord of 'The Megaphone' saying, "Nihil humanum a me alienum puto"—for he did not despise the Classics—or "A touch of nature makes the whole world kin." His success lay in the ingenious application of these mottoes. He had the wit to perceive exactly how, and when, and where the particular symbolised the universal. The man in the street does not want information. He wants to hear about things that have happened to other people which might conceivably happen to himself—a lucky windfall, a fight with an octopus, a fall from a roof, a house burgled, a murderer at large, brushing sleeves with him, for all he knows, in the omnibus to the city. He wants his mouth to be made to

water, and his flesh to be made to creep. He loves to think of others happier, or less happy, than himself. Envy, or commiseration, are feathers to tickle the ego in us all. ‘The Megaphone’ and its imitators kept alive the glamour of Aristocracy, contriving, with the most ingenious avoidance of paradox, to feed the herd’s curiosity in looking through the barriers at the elect, and at the same time to fortify its comfortable assurance that it was every bit as good as any one inside.

In Tibet—I mended quickly enough to catch up the Expedition and enter Lhasa with them—so long as I had the inspiration of “the last secret,” I could not go far wrong. The last or first of anything is always “straight goods.” But when I came home and had to discover inspiration in average, mean, moderate, and indeterminate things, neither first nor last, it was a much more difficult matter. The good megaphonian was always discovering tendencies, whereas my experience of things was that they were more or less static. This was in the days before the great convulsion. I was not nearly dynamic enough. And, like Pierre Nozière again, my mind was occupied with matters extraneous to the work of the team. When I ought to have been studying some political or industrial crisis, I would be wondering how Benjamin of Tudela got to Constantinople, or what other routes were open to him, or whether the Basques were Iberians, and if so, whether being Iberian meant anything, or how the Black Jews, and after them the White, got to Cochin—not exactly immaterial things, but material at the wrong moment. Benjamin of Tudela was never “up” on ‘The Daily Megaphone.’

Yet one morning, in spite of these numerous

and serious disqualifications, I found myself literary editor of 'The Megaphone.' Literary editor of 'The Daily Megaphone'! It was a sounding title, and I was rather proud of it. But when I told a friend of my promotion, he only laughed. It was one of those derisive little chuckles which are supposed to explain themselves, or if they do not, to imply obtuseness in the inspirer of them. I smiled responsively, though I had not the least idea what my friend was grinning about. Possibly he saw something funny in the conjunction of the words "literary" and "megaphone." If so, it was rather highbrow of him. "Literary" is an adjective that may be equally well applied to the script on a confectioner's paper-bag or to the Apocalypse. So far as I had any say in the matter, I intended that 'The Megaphone,' or parts of it—my parts, of course—should be literary. The paper included among its contributors some of the ablest writers of the day. What was to prevent it being literary, then? I thought of my predecessors. I was one in a line of rapid succession. When I come to think of it, that may have been what my friend was laughing at, the notorious insecurity of the appointment. If so, I forgive him.

Many of my predecessors were brilliant journalists. Some have since achieved fame; but they were allowed little discretion or initiative on 'The Megaphone.' I soon discovered the limitations of "the literary editor." The three columns he was supposed to edit immediately followed the leader. It was his business to collect the stuff, cut it down to the required length, choose the captions and cross-headings—which in my case were generally rejected,—and to get the books reviewed. I inherited a file of articles from my predecessor, which became fatter every

day. The burning question, of course, was which should go in. They had to harmonise with the other features of the paper, and one at least had to be topical. We were ready for earthquake, or eclipse, or revolution. I remember an article on the "Monument," which I found in the file, and which is probably still in the editor's drawer; for the "Monument" would have to be down in the city to be "up" in the megaphonian sense; but so far no iconoclast has laid hands on it.

Often the file was untouched, and all three articles would be commissioned from the three persons in London best qualified to write them. These were of an entirely different stamp from the rest of the paper, and appealed to a different class of reader. Thus even highbrows were drawn into the net. There was an intelligent intelligentsia who bought 'The Daily Megaphone' solely to read the articles on "page 4"; and this was quite distinct from that other class, equally intelligent but more tolerant of triviality, who bought it because they could not resist the itching to see how Demos was fed. Or so they would tell you, but I had my suspicions of them. And I have my suspicions of myself. Even now when I see 'The Megaphone' on the bookstalls I cannot resist buying it—"just to see" what flagrancy or "stunt" the eternally versatile and impenitent corrupter of the public mind is up to now.

But how abysmally the popular Press has fallen! The other penny papers have fallen flabbily, and without confidence, to the same methods as 'The Megaphone,' which is at least consistent in its sins, still the physician who knows himself, still the personification of Demos, it must be supposed, for otherwise it would long ago have ceased to exist. But what a tired Demos, fed on scraps and snippets, incapable of an honest

meal! Does the physician prescribe the diet? Not a bit of it. The physician is afraid of losing his patients, and gives them exactly what they ask for. The important thing is to stimulate and not to tire them, to give them little fillips of sensation, quickly changing, like the pictures. The mere suggestion of concentration, and the patient would change his physician at once. His eye must never be fatigued. He must never see an unbroken column. If an article runs to a thousand words, his attention must be diverted from its length; it must be broken up and continued somewhere else. Though why the reader, who is presumably too tired to get to the bottom of the column on page 1, should be credited with sufficient energy to search for its elusive continuation on page 5, column 6, is a mystery that passes my comprehension.

But "page 4" on 'The Megaphone' is dead. The class for which it used to be written has become so infinitesimal in proportion to the cinema-educated that, commercially speaking, it does not count. Those honest, solid, self-respecting columns have disappeared. Scraps and snippets have succeeded them, generally of the faked tendency order; little essays in three paragraphs, to prove that women are beginning to love a different kind of man, or man to affect a different kind of woman or neck-tie; that girls are less fond of kissing than they were; and that even dog and cat nature is changing with the times.

I look back now with a certain satisfaction to the "page 4" of twenty years ago, though I had little say in the selection of the articles. The editor was the mind of the paper. I grew to understand that it was impossible for him to delegate responsibility. As well expect Old Kroodger to invite the cook's mate to step up to the

chart-room and navigate the *Chloe*. Shipwreck would have ensued in either case. As literary editor, with complete editorial powers, I should probably have lost ‘The Megaphone’ twenty thousand subscribers a week. The trouble was that I was too literary, though all the while I was afraid I was not literary enough. A well-edited newspaper—and ‘The Megaphone’ was a model of efficiency in this respect—is a most sensitive and complex organism. Its parts are closely inter-related. Every issue has an individuality of its own; its features harmonise in a set expression, as marked as the morning’s weather chart. The casual reader, of course, misses these subtleties, and thinks the cargo is just shovelled in as it comes along like coal into a collier. This was my idea when I joined ‘The Megaphone.’ I believed that I could produce a much better paper. Once only during my short term of office were the narrow restrictions in which I moved loosened. The editor went away for a holiday, and it fell to me for a brief week to edit my sacred page with the minimum of guidance. I had plenty of good and approved stuff, but I took the opportunity of improving on it. I still believe that my “page 4” was a model of what “page 4” ought to be. At the moment it pleased me to think that I was raising the tone of ‘The Daily Megaphone.’ But my satisfaction was damped by the return of the editor—a very human person, by the way, in spite of his infallibility,—who told me that my editing had quite spoilt his holiday.

Oddly enough, the article which he particularly condemned had been selected for me by the lord of ‘The Megaphone’ himself, but loyalty forbade the betrayal of my employer, especially as I knew that he had not read the article, about

which indeed I had my own private doubts. A rapid glance at the title had decided him. It was not his way to deliberate over things. "What have you got for page 4?" he would ask me, and when I showed him, the chosen articles would be swept aside. Another day, perhaps, he would choose them himself, but the dictatorial finger must be exercised. It was a pose of his. Physically, he was rather like Bonaparte, and I believe he never forgot the resemblance. There was something pious and filial in the zeal with which he collected Napoleonic relics. He would exhibit them carelessly as if it were the merest accident that they had come into his possession, though, of course, one could not help inwardly remarking on the significance. When Demos called him the Napoleon of the Press, the metonymic title pleased him. His enjoyment of the rôle was infectious, for he was never the great man unbending. There was nothing stiff about him to unbend, and he was most human when he was showing off a little. One of the reasons why everybody in the office liked him was that he had not an ounce of side. He was immensely pleased with himself and his success, but that is a different thing. The simple, ingenuous, boyish delight in bringing things off is the least offensive form of vanity. We on 'The Megaphone' found it captivating. The chief rapped out his orders as if he had been Napoleon, but he never patronised any one. It was all team work, and he the inspired leader; and though one might not see it at the time, it stood to reason that his decisions were right. If they had not been, he would not be the chief, and the voice of 'The Megaphone' would not have been heard across the street, much less across the Empire or globe. It was a great game

feeding Demos, and if only you watched carefully how it was done, there was no telling by what leaps and bounds—bounds, perhaps, more often than leaps—you might ascend.

In the meanwhile the base degrees were not scorned. That was the disarming part about the performance. The chief liked to impress his young men, even his office-boys; and if he took a fancy to you he would be full of unexpected confidences. He had other interests and hobbies besides being a newspaper lord. When he gathered that I was an out-of-door sort of person he used to talk to me about the country life. Travel and fishing were hobbies of his too, and I hardly ever saw him without carrying away some reminder of this. Years afterwards, in the middle of the war, when he was controlling—but I must not say what he was controlling, for that would be to give my secret away—in the middle of winning the war, I might say, for he contributed as much to the victory as any civilian, he neglected the machinery of State for a whole half-hour—and this in the holy of holies, mind you—to talk to me about fishing.

And coarse fishing at that, though he was happier with the fly. His brown eyes grew bright as he told me how he had emptied a pond of tench on one of his estates. That was almost as much of a miracle and an accomplishment as ‘The Megaphone.’ The tench is a more suspicious feeder than Demos, and I have never succeeded in catching one in my life, though I have often tried. Lord M—, however, explained to me how it could be done, and he offered me his house in Norfolk with the adjacent tench-pond for a week-end. Unhappily, it was impossible, and I am afraid now that I have forgotten his tip. But to my mind that tench-pond was symbolic,

and it seemed a thousand pities that Lord M——'s talent—or genius?—had been diverted to megaphoning. He would have made a great Pro-consul.

III.

To be an editor has always seemed to me an ideal occupation. I should prefer a weekly to a daily journal; or, better still, a monthly review. Even this submissive editorial hack work on 'The Megaphone' interested me; and I do not suppose there has been a time in my life when I should not have jumped at an offer of any kind of responsible editorship. Surely if one has to earn one's livelihood by journalism, the best thing that can happen to one is to find oneself in the position of inspiring other people to write brilliantly. This is much easier than having to write oneself.

I felt in rather a false position on 'The Megaphone.' I was ostensibly an editor. Nothing had been said about my writing articles, but the fear of being called upon to write one at a moment's notice hung over my head like the sword of Damocles, and greatly disturbed my peace of mind. I had no faith in my ability to write an article to order. I had occasionally strung a sentence together coherently, generally a description of something I had seen. But these were inspirations, and I could not on the strength of them count on doing the same thing again. If I were given time—it would mean an agonised week-end at least—I might be able to turn out a plausible imitation of the thing that was wanted. But to write an article in the office offhand! The thought terrified me. A music-hall or circus turn, like

keeping up four balls in the air, would be easier.

How was it done, I wondered? The journalist, especially the leader-writer on a daily paper, has always seemed to me the most wonderfully gifted person in the world. I have known two or three leader-writers. Y., on ‘The Thunderer,’ is an old friend of mine. I have dropped in at ‘The Thunderer’ office sometimes in the evening and found Y. sitting on a table and smoking his pipe, surrounded by other scribes as gifted as himself. They would be laughing and chaffing one another as if they had the whole week before them, and time were no enemy. Y. had his leader to write, but one would think he had nothing more serious in front of him than a round of golf. Magnificent nonchalance! “What about your leader?” I would say to him when he suggested dining somewhere. I felt it rather brutal to remind him of this Atlantean task. But he shook it off his back as if it had been a casual trifle. “Oh, any old time! The leader can wait. After dinner will do.” And after dinner he would polish it off in an hour, and it would be round and smooth as an orange, with a core of wit and allusiveness. He had that graceful trick of saying the obvious thing in a way that was not too tritely obvious—a much more difficult art than epigram.

And then, perhaps, at 11 o’clock, or later, a wire would come in, and he would have to scrap that leader and write another about something else—in less than an hour. And he would do it equally well. “The mango trick is nothing to it,” as another journalist friend, Henry Nevinson, remarked. He had returned to Fleet Street from war-corresponding—a much simpler business, and was almost as impressed at the miracle as myself. He became a great writer of leaders afterwards.

Visiting Y. in 'The Thunderer' office recalled my early apprehensions on 'The Megaphone' when I was haunted by the fear of being suddenly called upon to write an article. I used to think of the things that might happen. I was guarded against certain eventualities. The "Monument," for instance. I rather hoped some one would blow it up with a charge of dynamite. But there were a lot of other things that might collapse, apart from the danger of sudden inaugurations—Governments, systems, and the like, altogether a host of abstract and concrete things which might begin or end. Supposing the dome of St Paul's fell in and they wanted a column about it on "page 4" the next morning! What on earth could one find to say? Next to the leader-writers I admired the reporters, who bravely set out to describe a Royal Visit, or worse, a Royal Wedding. "Hardly had the happy pair emerged from the sacred edifice when kindly Sol illumined the scene with unaccustomed vigour." In the old days that would have done well enough, but we were becoming more sophisticated. We had reached a hybrid stage, an appetite more difficult to satisfy.

Once, and once only, did I find myself committed to the penitential ordeal of reporting, and that was years afterwards during the Great War. I was in London when the Memorial Service was held in St Paul's for Nurse Cavell, and I weakly consented to describe it for a London daily. All my memories of and associations with the cathedral are overlaid with the pall-like impressions of that unhappy day. I was profoundly moved by the service, and fell into a kind of ecstatic trance, a vague emotional contemplation of first and last things, of no megaphonic value whatever. The sights and sounds of the service hypnotised me, the sun creeping through

the south windows, gilding the rails of the galleries, throwing great shafts of light across the dome; then, at the end, the sound of a rushing wind, the crash of an illimitable falling wave. It was the "Dead March." A wandering bodiless voice like the voice of God. More awful and sublime than thunder, and transcending all human lamentations. The person, the symbol of victory, had become lost in the thing itself, lifted up, and submerged in the universal.

I had taken no notes, and only intermittently remembered why I was there. Once or twice a glimpse of a keen eagle face, a few seats away from my own, brought me to the surface of things. It was Sir Hall Caine, who was describing the Memorial Service for a rival paper.

In the club after lunch I sat down in front of a blank sheet of foolscap, not at all at ease with myself, though I had not begun to be seriously disturbed about my copy; in fact my mind had hardly sunk back out of that other dimension into which it had been lifted an hour or two earlier by the Life Guards' band and the organ. Then newspapers would have seemed—if I had thought of them—the least material of existing phenomena. Bread and meat might continue to be necessary, but the world could get on very well without 'The Megaphone,' or even the twopenny press. These true perspectives, however, fade quickly, and mundane obligations have a way of asserting themselves importunately. Three o'clock, and I had thought of nothing to say. I began to write: "Everybody was immensely moved this morning in St Paul's Cathedral when——" Well, that was the long and short of it. How could one be expected to translate the nation's emotions? The hand of the clock was approaching half-past three, and I saw no hope of inspiration. The

reading-room in the club was stuffy, and people kept coming in and out and disturbing me. I thought a quieter and airier room might be more stimulating. So I went to a friend's office, and sat in front of the same blank sheet of paper for another hour.

At five I returned, still uninspired. By this time I was thoroughly frightened. My pen and mind had become divorced. I looked at my sheet of foolscap, blank no longer, but islanded with frustrated beginnings. This was worse. "Nurse Cavell," I had written, "was executed in St Paul's Cathedral this morning at 12 o'clock." Slowly the awful conviction dawned on me that it was impossible that I could fulfil my contract with my paper. Ye gods, if I let them down! It would be a historic collapse. A black-letter day in their annals. Such things simply did not happen. The hand of the clock moved to half-past six. I thought of Sir Hall Caine. How spontaneously he would be transmitting his emotions, column after column, in perfect sequence and dignity! I wished that I had never seen a newspaper office, or an inkpot, or a pen. Tomorrow I should have to fly from London—a world well lost. But what a humiliated fugitive! At eight, when everybody else was dining, the hall-porter disturbed me with a message that my editor was "crying out for the copy" on the telephone. "Tell him to send for it here at ten," I said. Of course I did not think of dining. I began in despair to make excerpts from the Memorial Service. I had an idea of filling space by quotations from the hymns. I copied out whole verses, and these, being entirely apposite, led to certain elegiac reflections of which I was not ashamed. At last the theme gripped me, and as I wrote I remembered Tennyson's "Ode on the

Death of the Duke of Wellington,” and subconsciously paraphrased that until I had put together a simulacrum of the threnody that was expected of me. With great physical and moral agony I inflated the bellows that emitted “the hot air.” By eleven o’clock I had delivered my copy. But never again! Those ten hours had taken years off my life.

Thirty years of intermittent journalism have given me no more facility or confidence than I had on ‘The Megaphone.’ If anything, the translation of thoughts into words has become more difficult. If I were to receive a commission for an article to-morrow, I should sit down to write it with a sort of superstitious invocation of chance, and no real belief in anything coming out of it, as one throws one’s stick across a wide ditch which one doubts very much if one will be able to jump.

Luckily, I had only two or three articles to write during my editorship of “page 4,” and as I was given plenty of time for cogitation they were approved, and sometimes commended. However, I soon exhausted the patience of ‘The Megaphone.’ The greatest lady novelist of the day—the greatest of all time, if we are to accept the suffrage of the *Chloe*—published one of her masterpieces during my short tenure of office. On the morning of the publication of ‘Partners in Sin’ I was rung up on the telephone. The proprietor’s secretary was speaking. “Sir M——,” I heard—he was not a lord then—“wants to know why you have no notice of Martha Caraway’s book in ‘The Megaphone’ this morning.” The secretary’s voice sounded a little testy. I hate the telephone. It has always affected me with a kind of paralysis. Even now I fall all of a tremble, and am afflicted with a shortness of

breath and a pricking of the skin like pins and needles when I hear the voice of the young lady at the other end. Never, if I could help it, have I set the accursed machine in motion on my own initiative. But in an office one is helpless. Here I was hypnotised into a sort of coma. I had forgotten the secretary, and was thinking hard over the problem of Martha Caraway. Did they really think her such a big gun? Why Wednesday? I used to send the week's fiction to Cutham Forshort, that popular but otherwise inoffensive novelist, who polished them off in a batch under his signature in the Saturday 'Megaphone.' Martha Caraway had gone to him with the others.

I had let the receiver slip from my ear, and was absent-mindedly playing with it when the faint angry voice came within range again. "Sir M—— wants to know . . ." I shouted down the tube, "'Partners in Sin' has gone to Cutham Forshort with the other novels. Saturday's his day."

Again I was inattentive to the vocal end of the machine. I was conscious only of an expostulatory current. I was thinking hard. For how could I explain the literary demerits of this portentous lady tersely enough for megaphonic ears. To tell the truth, I had never read a word that Martha Caraway had written, but took all I had heard on trust, as one takes the devil. It stood to reason that she must have touched bottom pretty unerringly, or she would never have achieved such sales.

"Every morning paper in London . . ." I heard, "a column at least . . . 'Partners in Sin' . . . News . . . Sir M—— wants to know . . ."

I had been fidgeting with the receiver, and

the current of expostulation had come round to me again. This would never do. I should have to think of something final and clinching to say about the work and message of Martha Caraway, or I should never get away from the infernal machine. I took the instrument and my courage in both hands and shouted down the tube, “Martha Caraway is no good.” What the secretary said I never knew, for I switched him off.

I heard no more about the incident, but the next week my connection with ‘The Megaphone’ ceased. Putting two and two together, I am inclined to think that the muddle I made of Martha Caraway’s literary and commercial values had something to do with it. Probably it was the last straw. I had been on the paper five weeks—rather a long innings for the literary editor. And the rupture was quite friendly. I was given to understand that I was insufficiently megaphonic for the office, though marked down as serviceable in the event of war. This was comforting, though it only amounted to saying that I had established myself in a profession that was dead. There was not so much as the shadow of a small frontier show on the horizon.

Thus, after amicable adieus, I departed singularly light-hearted. I felt like kicking my hard black hat all the way from the office to Waterloo, as we used to play footer with our toppers at X. after chapel on the last Sunday of the term. Once more I was a philosopher on the doorstep, and this time entirely philosophic. I had great faith in the East, which had rescued me before.

VI.

THE INDIAN STUDENT

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I.

IF I had been a soldier, or a forest officer in contact with primitive hill-folk, the memories of my last few years in India would be happier. I would recommend a young man of the same tastes as myself, and free in the choice of a career, to get himself into a Gurkha regiment. If he can, that is to say. One needs certain qualifications for the part. And once assimilated and accepted, I should advise him to refuse any offer of a staff billet that came his way until he was well over forty. Often have I met the Gurkha officer in the back of beyond with two or three of his *jiwans*, as keen shikaris as himself, shooting, climbing, or merely trekking. And I have always envied him. The Gurkha is as friendly, natural, and unsophisticated as an English schoolboy. He is a companion; one can forget race with him; there is nothing ulterior at the back of his mind. If one has to spend one's life among Asiatics, the important thing is that one should feel at home with them. I do not wish to minimise the tie that binds the British officer to almost every class of Indian sepoy, but this attachment is not quite the same thing. Under exceptionally happy conditions, perhaps, it may be, or nearly so, but not as a general rule. The officer commanding Punjabi Mussalmans, Sikhs, Dogras, Mahrattas, and,

no doubt, one might say, Madrasi Christians, will not admit this. Still, I have seen a good deal of them all, and if I had to live my life over again in India I should choose to serve with Gurkhas, and to be quartered at Abbotabad, on the borders of Kashmir, or at Dharmsala, or Bukloh under the Dhaola Dar.

But I was not a soldier, or the next best thing, a civilian in charge of a district, but an educationalist. My work was almost entirely with the intelligentsia, and at a period of growing race consciousness, when our relations with the politically minded were becoming less and less genial. I had my Indian friends. Still, it is never agreeable to live among folk who regard you, though it may be perversely, as one of a party who has wronged them.

My first charge of a college was in Bengal; we will call the place Manikpur. It was in the period of the "Golden Bengal" movement, and I, as the hated Mleccha, was unpopular. Politics were officially banned in the student world, and it fell to me to see to it that the due restrictions were observed. My students were not allowed to attend political meetings; above all, they must not disgrace the college by public demonstrations. I had to expel one or two for this. Politics were the breath of life to them, and it was inevitable that I should appear to them as the ghoulisb impersonation of the foreign incubus.

Until I found myself at Manikpur I had never tried to put myself inside an Indian's skin. When I came to think of it, my students' prejudices appeared very natural. If I were born in a subject country of an indigenous but "inferior" race, I should not love my foreign teachers, or their text-books about liberty. I should distrust their liberal ideals, and no doubt I should think my

own people every bit as good, and perhaps a little better, than theirs. If I were a young Bengali, I should frequent the shrine of Bande Mataram. I should revel in secret societies, and feel myself exalted if any self-denying patriot spoke to me. My dreams would be of liberation, independence, sacrifice. And the more these visions were discountenanced by my foreign masters, the more ardently would I consecrate myself to them.

But I had been brought up to regard nationalism—a virtue in my own people, or even among foreigners in history books—as a disease in subject races. It was only at Manikpur that I began to realise that there might be a generous side to the revolutionary spirit in Young India. Yet I do not know how it was, but somehow these young dissidents failed to engage my sympathies. To begin with, their heads were stuffed full of lies, and there was no truth in them. I got hold of some of their revolutionary literature and studied it. It was poisonous stuff. The venom in it made me feel physically ill. Malice in misrepresentation one expects, but clear-seeing malice deliberately falsifying things is not so repulsive as malice fortified by an incapacity to conceive of the decencies observed by the other side. It would be a just Nemesis if the Goddess of Liberty, invoked with so little understanding, were to turn on her suppliants and cast them into chains. Garibaldi and Nana Sahib, indeed! What profanity of association! No; I still belonged to the school who believe that Liberty is not intended for all sorts and conditions of men, but only for those who deserve it. And these people, subject to my people, did not deserve it. That, frankly, was my point of view.

Then among those poisonous vapourings I would stumble on half-truths. Our own hands were not

altogether clean. There was Clive, for instance. That dirty trick he played on Omichund was worse than a forgery. It was the first I had heard of it, and I was incredulous. I did not believe that an English sahib could be capable of such a *saleté*. I must saddle the neglectful X. with my ignorance, for we were not taught English history at school, and if we had been, it is doubtful if we should have been told the full enormity. All I knew of Clive was the duel story in Browning's poem—

“. . . the man Clive, he fought Plassey, spoiled the clever
foreign game,
Conquered and annexed and Englished.”

Clive had been a beacon of chivalry. And now I learnt that he had behaved like any Bow Bazar vakil. And Clive was not the only one.

It is true that these things happened a very long time ago, that they were reprobated at the time, and that a century or more of straight dealing has done much to wipe out the stain; yet after reading the story of Clive and Omichund, I have never felt the same cocksureness about the racial question. No doubt it is the privilege of the weak to be ruled by the strong, but the older and wiser one becomes, the more one lacks the courage to tell them so. I suppose this weakness is a reaction from the age of cant. One suspects one's motives when duty and interest and inclination march together; and when the spectre of altruism joins the band, and one is not quite sure that it is not funk, one suffers a kind of moral paralysis. If only we could put back the hands of the clock to the pious, confident, unquestioning days of John Lawrence, we should all be much happier.

When I am distrustful of my judgment of

nationalism in subject races, I fortify myself with good old John Lawrence. "We are here," he said, "by our own moral superiority, by the force of circumstance, and by the will of Providence. These alone constitute our Charter of Government. And in doing the best we can for the people, we are bound by our conscience and not theirs." And if that is not a strong enough dose I turn to Carlyle. "Fraternity, liberty, &c., I want to explain, is not the remedy at all; but true *government* by the wise, true, and noble-minded of the foolish, perverse, and dark, with or *against* their consent, which I discern to be the universal law of the world."

Carlyle wrote that to Thomas Erskine, and when I came across the passage at Manikpur in Froude's volume I was heartened. But the Englishman's conscience is not so robust as it was. "No doubt it is good for them," he says, "but would one like it oneself?" That ought to be beside the point. Yet in our humanitarian age we have made it the whole point. The ultimate question has been solved. We have given India her independence. Our dissidents have brought it to that. And all that is left for us to do is to assist the sanest of the emancipated in averting immediate catastrophe.

I have a great admiration for the British administrator who has stayed behind to help when he might have come away. The Juggernaut Car of Liberty is on the edge of the cliff; the reins have been flung to the self-devoted charioteers; but he can still poke stones under the wheels, pull at the brake, and be called for his pains the enemy of the people. All this means delay, and in the meanwhile the wheels of the car may be turned a little off the direct incline, and a sort of *corniche* road may be engineered which leads

at a less suicidal gradient towards the goal—or abyss, should we say?—to which we are pledged. So long as there is no upward curve in the track, theoretic idealism and practical humanitarianism will be reconciled. And we shall have been true to our pledge.

But to return to my Bengalis. Much as they disliked a just but alien domination, there can be no doubt that they preferred it to the rule of Gurkha or Pathan. Generalisations as to racial characteristics are, as a rule, only partially true, but I think it is safe to include the Bengalis among the non-military races of India. Not that they are wanting in courage. The Bengali Police and the Bengali anarchists have proved themselves very brave, individually quite as brave as the police and anarchists in other provinces. And those obscure Bengali surveyors of the secret service who penetrated forbidden Tibet, counting their paces by the rosary, deserve the Indian Order of Merit. They carried their lives in their hands. Kim's Hurree Babu is not idealised. But, collectively, the military spirit is wanting. I met the regiment who volunteered for active service in Mesopotamia during the war.

It was in Baghdad where they were detained for garrison duty, though they were very keen to get to the front and prove that the Bengali could fight as well as other races. In spite of this keenness, however, I was not convinced that they were a martial breed, though I could quite believe that they were ready to suffer death to prove it. They were braver, that is to say, than sepoys of a genuinely military stock. But good soldiers the Bengalis will never be. There was a Bengali guard in the house in which I was quartered for a week-end with a Treasury officer, and it went to sleep twice on sentry duty, and

slept so soundly that we were able to abstract its rifles.

I suppose we ought to have reported the offence to the British officer in command; but however just and logical Nemesis may be, there are occasions when it is indecent to act as her provost-marshal. These young men were sensitive intelligentsia, soft college-bred lads, emulous of honour, and, it seemed, admitted to the theatre of war for political and sentimental reasons. If they had stayed at home, Bengal might have been called unmilitary. And we were glad of them. We wanted Bengal to think of herself as military; that was a unifying bond in the alliance against the Hun which could not be neglected. So in a way it was with our connivance that a dreamy patriotic idealism had landed the lads in this scrape. Under martial law they were liable to be shot or imprisoned. But that was unthinkable. We did not report them, of course. Luckily, horse sense was for once on the side of humanity, as a punishment fitting the crime would have raised a racial issue. Bengal would never have understood.

One unexpected discovery I made at Manikpur was that the Bengali can be useful at football. He prefers to play with bare feet, and is remarkable for his skill in evading impact and juggling with the ball. When Private Atkins flings himself at the Bengali forward he skips aside like a *torero*, and balances the ball on his instep or ankle—a quite unnecessary bit of side-play, but dramatic. Atkins, heavily booted, returns to the charge, but again impact is avoided. It would be admirable if the young Bengali would pass the ball or get on with it, but he is too occupied with his *pas seul*. I have heard one of these individualists described by a fellow-student as “glitter-

ing cynosure under raining plaudits." It is not a pleasant spectacle. Still, it is football played without any infraction of our rules.

A parallel mental subtlety was brought to bear on the game. I believe that the rules and regulations of a Bengal College Cup Competition in those days were drawn up by lawyers, or at least submitted to legal revision. A budding vakil in a team might be more useful than the most obstructive centre-half. Advantages might be gained by objections, and there was always room for legal subtlety in the interpretation of the conditions of the tournament. The happiest consummation, so far as I could see, would be to carry off a cup without imperilling one's position by actual contact with other competing teams.

Football did not help me with my students at Manikpur. Soon after I had taken over charge, the captain of the team came to me with a telegram which he wanted me to frank. We were in for the semi-finals, and likely to be beaten; but he had hit on a stratagem. This was to force the other side to play on a day when the best part of it would be immobilised by examinations. Here he was strictly within the law, so much so that he took little credit for his manceuvre. For the date had been fixed with the other side's consent. I am afraid my refusal to hold them to it was misinterpreted; for soon afterwards Golden Bengal threatened me with assassination. I found the death sentence inscribed in gules, the blood of the conspirators, on my office table.

My almost precipitate flight to the Punjab must have been attributed to terror. To tell the truth, I was more than a little anxious for a change of *milieu*. I did not like Bengal, and the Educational Service, of which I was now a member, chained me to it. I saw that I should have to break

these chains or become for ever afterwards physically and spiritually parboiled. It was a mistake, I suppose, from the prudential point of view, to throw up Government service, but I was not going to let myself be hag-ridden by Prudence. My philosophy of the doorstep has committed me to many imprudences, but never to the last of all, which is miscalled Prudence. A young cabbage, though not exactly inspiring, has a comfortable, self-centred, complacent look; but an old cabbage by its side, straggly and run to seed, always seems to me to be ravaged by the Nemesis of prudence, a most dreadful example of a mis-spent youth.

I committed the imprudence of throwing up Government service for a native State with my eyes three-quarters open. Naturally I was made to suffer for it in many ways, for imprudences have their Nemesis too; but taking all things together I have never regretted it. For eight years I ruled over as jolly a crowd of students as a Principal of a College can hope to collect, north country lads—Sikhs, Muhammadans, and Hindus in about equal proportions. They played football with more conviction, though with less dexterity, than the Bengali, and with a great deal more backbone in adversity, though not quite enough perhaps for the John Bull standard. But when they were winning they were magnificent.

At cricket they were equally good. One or two of them were up to county form. And we had an English professional, sometimes two, Middlesex men, who coached them three times a week. Farrant was a bracing influence. He became attached to my *jiwans*. The first time he saw them he was immobilised with laughter at the way they had of wearing their shirts outside their trousers. It certainly did look odd on the cricket-

field. There are two kinds of Indian students—those who wear their shirts outside their trousers, and those who tuck them in. Tucking them in marks a stage in evolution, or hybridisation. It is a symbol of a changed “angle of vision,” to employ a favourite phrase of my B.A. students. I neither encouraged nor discouraged the practice, as I have never believed in the speeding up of evolution, which comes of itself all too soon. Mine was a distinctly provincial team. The Lahore young men looked urban and dandified by contrast with their shirts tucked in.

My happiest memories are of the old style. Muhammad Shah, for instance, that hard-hitting Pathan, had at the wicket a sturdy autochthonous look in his wide flapping cotton trousers. Technically they were an impediment, as they increased the danger of an l.b.w.; yet a secret source of strength, I felt sure, like Samson’s hair. Pads and flannels would have shackled him. Muhammad Hussein, his crony, and another “free-hitter,” was equally conservative in his costume. They had nothing to learn about opening out their shoulders when they hit. But as for a straight bat, Farrant gave them up. “I can’t teach them anything,” he used to say, “but I should like to take them home with me.” The scythe-like sweep with which Muhammad Hussein would cart a straight well-pitched ball into the pavilion savoured of the mango trick. I had great difficulty in concealing my emotions when these stalwarts pulled a losing game out of the fire.

I used to take my cricket and football teams on tour. The Inter-Collegiate tournaments provided a tonic excitement such as I had not enjoyed since the House matches at X. We became a very corporate institution, almost clannish—perhaps too covetous of honour. At any rate,

we fought for our prizes, and the vakil spirit did not exist. I remember once at Manikpur being so ashamed of my team that I was glad to see them beaten.

But I must not be unjust to Manikpur. Probably if I had stayed there the air would have lightened. Everybody who has had anything to do with the Indian student knows how attachable and responsive he can be, and I do not believe the Bengali is an exception. I was unfortunate in my period. Political irritation was at its worst. My sneaking affection for the young rebel, which has sometimes proved embarrassing, found no outlet here. I found this corner of Bengal "clamp and dammy," as the curate said of the school-room when he announced that the meeting would be "halled in the hell below." Only the eloquence of accident could describe the depressing atmospheric conditions of Manikpur. "Clamp and dammy" are as suggestive words as any. So, like the curate, I decided quickly on a removal.

II.

Needless to say, the enigmatic heart of the Bengali was never unlocked for me. Like most other Englishmen, I was blind to his spiritual and poetic side. Rabindranath Tagore was hardly known then outside his own province. Englishmen did not read Bankimchandra Chatterji. It is only in the last ten years or so that the subtle genius of the Bengali has found expression in fiction. If I could have read Saratchandra Chatterji or the sisters Sita and Santa Chatterji at Manikpur, I should have known more about my students. No confidences, if any had been obtain-

able, and no observation, could have given me a like clue to the world they disappeared into when they left the lecture-room. They went off like solemn secretive ghosts, and I tried to forget them until we met again officially.

This was a mistake. For if one cannot feel at home with the Indian, the next best thing is to be interested in him ; and if one can be neither one nor the other, it is better to stay in one's own country and leave India alone. I think Bengal is the only corner of the East I have lived in for any time without learning a little about the people. Yet after reading Saratchandra and the Chatterji sisters, I feel that I know as much about the Bengali as any class of Indian.

The faithfulness of the picture is unmistakable. These Bengali satirists idealise nothing. The caste inhibition, the barter of women, the monstrous dowry system, child marriage, the living death of the young widow, are such familiar spectres on the threshold of life that few Hindus need go outside their own family for the material of tragedy. Nor for heroism. The Bengali social system is a stern school for devotion and piety. Sarat Babu pummels the idol of caste, that *diabolus ex machina* in Hindu life, which appears on the stage at every crisis to the paralysis of humane and natural impulses. My students had their social as well as their political troubles. Politics perhaps were an escape from them. They were misunderstood by their parents as well as by their foreign teachers. In both worlds their liberties were clipped. At college they read our whig philosophy and were forbidden to be politically minded, and at home they suffered the tyranny of Manu. When they returned to these other inhibitions after poring over their English textbooks, they must have felt like fish in a pool

that is drying up. Their sensitive respiratory organs suffered in both elements, and we, their instructors, wondered why our experiments in acclimatisation were not happy.

I understood very little of all this at Manikpur. Nowadays contemporary Bengali literature is accessible in good translations, and a great deal of it is indigenous underivative stuff, and obviously genuine. Thus from being the most inscrutable of Indians, the Bengali has become the most intelligible, because he is the most articulate, and the articulate have portrayed the inarticulate. And faithfully, I think. Sita and Santa Chatterji write with the ease and grace, and even the humour, of our own practised women writers. They may be Brahma Somaj ladies; they are certainly social reformers; but they write of all classes with evident understanding. Propaganda is kept in its place; they have nothing to learn in this respect from our *roman à thèse*. And they tell us what the Bengali feels and thinks, and what he suffers, and how hag-ridden he is by his traditions. The lot of my students was happy compared with that of their wives and sisters. The cruellest observances in Hindu life are bound up with the marriage system. And the irrational thing is that the victims must in their turn become the sacrificers. The horrid rites are repeated by the parents, who, but for their obedience to this Moloch tradition, would appear pious, tender, and devoted in no ordinary degree.

I have joined in the derision that has been heaped upon our educational system in India, and deplored and commiserated its hybrid products, but I am now honestly persuaded that it is the best thing that could have happened to Bengal. Hardier races, I admit, have been spoiled by it. Take the young Jat from the plough and

turn him to Pope's 'Rape of the Lock' or Shelley's 'Adonais,' and you will make a comfortless harum-proditic amphibian of him. Probably an agitator; almost certainly a malcontent. Compare the clerkly Sikh with the agricultural Sikh. The Sikh in the office appears wilted, almost denationalised by contrast. He will probably think and talk a great deal more about his birthright as a Sikh, but it is his uninstructed brother who lives the part. The thing we have put into him is not half so wholesome as the thing we have taken out. Still, I suppose we cannot help that now. If the Sikh wishes to be babuised, babuised he will be. The loss is his and ours too. But in Bengal the case is different. We spoil nothing there. It is all nonsense to argue that a subtle, intelligent, inquiring, assimilative race like the Bengalis could have escaped Western influences. The impact of the two civilisations was bound to come, and it seems to me that the more sudden and staggering the shock, the better for the Bengali.

After all, how much of their tradition is worth keeping? And it cannot be said that we have put nothing in its place. There must be at least a million Bengalis who know what is rotten in their social system, and who are in revolt against it; and even if they dare not live up to their convictions—and some of them dare,—this at any rate is a start. The Bengalis have become the most literary people in the East; they are unsparing critics of their own society; and their novels, plays, and poems are read in all the bazars and villages. We should have no more regrets for our part in this than the Calcutta Improvement Trust in driving wide avenues through the slums of the city.

III.

I had one Bengali lad on whom I could practise my educational theories, and I had him entirely to myself. This was immediately before Manikpur. It was only for a few months, so I cannot speak with any certainty of my system. My second ward—we will call him the Kumar—was an impulsive impressionable youth, very different from my first ward, the little Raja of Devagiri, who was like a small ebony chessman, so solemn and wooden and unexpressive of himself, and disciplined out of all humanity by the weight of his traditions, that it was impossible to like or dislike him, or even to feel sorry for him. I never saw my first ward smile, or look pleased or disappointed. If there were anything he wanted and had not got, or anything he had and which he wished to get away from, one might have driven a wedge into his indifference. But there was nothing. He was even reconciled to his lessons, which I found intolerably tedious.

It was his tutor who watched the dragging hand of the clock—most apprehensively *before* his visit, for there was always a chance that he might not come. I listened for the heavy grating wheels of the palace landau. One could hear them half a mile away. How they crunched the gravel of my drive! It was a vehicle like an ark, which had once been magnificent, and which, though its parts were falling away from one another, was still gorgeous by reason of its new plush interior of a bright puce colour. The slatternly orderly perched up beside the coachman would climb down and force the resisting hinges of the carriage door. The reek of the sweating un-

groomed horses would pervade the bungalow. My ward would descend, and after him the palace major-domo, who, of course, sat with his back to the horses. He and the orderly, with his clanking sword, would follow the princeling up the steps to the veranda. My chaprassi obsequiously lifted the chick, and I would receive the procession with becoming gravity at my study door.

My first ward was specklessly neat. He had the appearance of having been sedulously groomed in the zenana for some State ceremonial. He was emitted, I know, from that holy of holies with reluctance, probably with apprehension. He reminded me of a baby Tirthankara. I think of him as vacant, but vacuity implies an emptiness which ought to be filled. And my ward was far from being empty. He was static, rather. What he contained had been deposited in him. You must think of him as the precious guarded vessel containing the *ruh*, or essence, of some secular immemorial principle preserved in his family since the days of the Pandavas. He was the only son, you must remember, and somehow he made you sensible of this. An English boy, if he could become the envelope of the same negations, would look vacuous or imbecile.

My ward did not fidget. He sat upright on his chair, his feet dangling a few inches from the ground, but quite motionless. The idol awaited the ministrations of the priest; and I, the constrained ministrant, wished I were in any other galley, on the *Chloe*, at Bethnal Green or Clapham Junction—anywhere, even with the green-ticket man. For a whole hour I should be exposed to the X-rays of ennui. I, who am cursed with a sensitive cellular tissue, peculiarly penetrable to such rays, had to suffer this. I have often been

bored, but never quite so perforated ; and it was an unequal encounter, for I could not bore him.

There were many things in the Kumar's household which reminded me of the house and retinue of my ward at Devagiri. His maternal uncle was rather like the major-domo. His orderly was like the Devagiri orderly, only an inch or two taller. He wore the same frayed and faded uniform and clanking incommodious sword. The palace furniture was equally *criard*, a superfluity of stained and cracked mirrors, cut-glass chandeliers of a distressing brilliancy, glazed oleographs, worm-eaten plush and velvet upholstery, and gilded throne-like chairs, which nobody ever sat on. The reception-room, with its magenta-cushioned divan on three sides, was a museum of antiquated clocks, all stopped at different hours. And the family coach was even larger than that of Devagiri ; and, if it was less like the ark, the reason was that it was *ante-diluvian*. It was embarrassing to drive in it through the streets of Calcutta behind the Kumar's coachman in his bright orange turban and his parroquet-coloured livery. The anachronism filled the Chowringhee.

My second ward, however, was very unlike my first ward. He had a mobile intelligent expression. You might almost call him mercurial. He was generous and impulsive, full of plans, places he wanted to go to, animals he wanted to kill. And he had his prejudices, too. Some of them arose out of his idea that a big man should not be seen in a small place. It was inevitable, of course, that he should grow up in the belief that he was big. He had been taught this, and he was reminded of it daily in penitralia to which I had no access. But he carried his sense of his own importance quite modestly. He was more vain

about his accomplishments; but here again it was an ingenuous and disarming vanity.

The Kumar had disliked the idea of an English tutor, but I think he took to me at once, in the first reaction from apprehension, so to speak, finding me not such a monster as he had feared. He was a minor of sixteen. His native guardian was the maternal uncle. He and Beni Babu, the Diwan, were the only members of the household with whom I had much to do, and I became attached to both of them, to Beni Babu especially. He was a Bengali of the old school, courteous, ingratiating, and gently voluble. A friend whom I took to see the Kumar hit him off happily. "You would think he was descended from a long line of maiden aunts," he said.

Beni Babu was a very commendatory old body. All his geese were swans—the Kumar, of course, and even the Kumar's English tutor, whose virtues were immediately reflected in his ward to the extinction of all pre-existing frailties, if indeed there were any room for reformation. The only time I saw Beni Babu huffy was when I called him a flatterer. It was an innocent pleasantry, but I touched on a sore point. Flattery, he admitted, was a vice in certain Bengalis. There were lip-servants and dissemblers, but he called God to witness that he never shot "with adulatory long bow."

I had come to look on Anstey's Hurree Bungsho Jabberjee as something of a myth until I met Beni Babu, who always talked as if he had been studying the tabular synopsis of categories in Roget's 'Thesaurus.' He was a master of the polysyllabic synonym. When I hear a fluent Bengali speaking my mother tongue, I often wish that I had been born in the age of Lyly. All these ornaments and conceits which we have

rejected would come in mighty effectively. Beni Babu's English was more expressive than mine. In a way, if one dismisses pedantic objections, it was better English, because it was more vivid. I was often refreshed by it.

I remember how refreshing I found it on the sultry afternoon on which I took over charge. The Kumar was in one of his rare fits of sulks, far from polysyllabic. He drifted away during our conversation to the veranda at the far end of the reception-hall, where, leaning on the balcony, he stared mournfully into the palms. His new English tutor threatened his liberty, and what was worse, his dignity, for he was at an age when the one was sensitively bound up with the other. Beni Babu, however, received me with smiles and welcome, as if my arrival on the scene were the most providential thing that could have happened.

The trouble with the Kumar was that his estate was heavily encumbered. It was a rich property, and it was hoped that, after a few years' management by the Court of Wards, "the two ends would be made to meet," as Beni Babu put it. In the meanwhile, the Kumar, who had always lived *en prince*, found the necessary retrenchments galling. My part in the general reconstruction was to reconcile him to them. It was not difficult, as he had many hobbies, and was easily diverted. Still there were sacrifices to be made. First of all, there was the question of his associates. I had been warned against certain doubtful influences. Beni Babu at once agreed with me that they should not be admitted to the palace. I asked him if there were any other young men who he thought would be better excluded. "Sir," he said, "I will prepare you a catalogue of undesirables." Then as to the Kumar's pursuits. If I could discover any common hobby, if we

could hunt together, so to speak, I knew I could count on a solid alliance. "Does he like shooting?" I asked rather anxiously. But my doubts were soon dissipated. "Sir," Beni Babu assured me, "the prince is habituated to destroy the most ferocious animals."

The Kumar's reputation as a mighty hunter, I was to discover, rested on a palace reputation; but that did not matter so long as he was keen. In the meanwhile he and I were occupied with projects of travel. It was arranged that I and the maternal uncle should accompany him on the Indian grand tour. My wife also was to be one of the party, for, as Beni Babu suggested, she would be able to teach the Kumar "all the etiquettes." That was rather bald for Beni Babu, but his fountain of eloquence seemed to dry up when he wished to pay my wife a compliment. And for a good reason, which I only learnt in the affecting moments before our final separation. Beni Babu was tearful and confidential. "Sir, I become intimidated," he explained. "If I speak what is in my mind about the beautiful, home-like, and respectable madam, you will call me flatterer, and it must not be predicated that the Bengali is addicted to culpable and Oriental adulation. Sir, *am* I hyperbolic?" I assured Beni Babu of my sense of his truthful moderation.

We went to Benares, Lucknow, Delhi, Muttra, Agra, Jaipur, Ajmere, Udaipur, Chitore; and there were a number of other places which we wanted to go to but had to avoid because they contained the Kumar's relations. One of the many virtues of the Hindu is his sense of family obligations. If the Kumar visited these connections there would be no end to the largesse he would have to dole out. The maternal uncle was responsible for this side of the budget, and the

margin at his disposal was too narrow. The Kumar, of course, would rather see all his collaterals perish than appear among them insufficiently munificent. My sympathies were entirely with him in this, though it meant that we had to score Budh Gaya out of our itinerary. Thus I never saw the birthplace of Buddha.

That our exchequer was exposed to and survived the spoiliations of Benares implies an equal boldness and piety—I use the word in its original and purer sense—on the part of the maternal uncle. No Hindu can visit Kashi without being partially or wholly devoured by the pandas. Directly the Kumar stepped out of the train he was surrounded by a shoal of these oily priests. They knew at once who he was. Probably they expected him. They took stock of his luggage and attendants, cross-examined his birkendass—a shock-headed, coarse-featured, rapacious-looking crew. I was tempted to run amok among them with a stick. The contour of their plump unwholesome-looking calves filled me with an almost canine envy of attack. For once in my life my sympathies were with the *chien de garde*.

But I had to restrain myself and remember that my ward's assailants were licensed and orthodox. It was for the maternal uncle to buy them off. They crowded round him with their long greasy *behis*, or ledgers, in which the obligations of every Hindu family of substance are inscribed. Often the entries date back for generations. The employment of an ancestor of the panda by an ancestor of the pilgrim may involve an intricate nexus of claims descending to collaterals in either line. Then there is a battle of pandas. I saw one, and the claimants reminded me of the holy carp in a temple fish-pond at feeding-time.

However, the Kumar's case was less complicated. One of the pandas opened his *behi*, and pointed to the signature of his father. Of course, that settled the matter. The ghostly monopoly was established, and the other spiritual guides retired discomfited. But we had the same gauntlet to run at Muttra and Brinda Ban. I was to discover that no holy place of the Hindu is free of the panda from Hardwar to Ramesvaram.

But there are very few shrines where the pilgrim is not exploited. The Haji is pestered in the same way on the day of his arrival at Mecca. Here the mutowif is the panda's counterpart, only with him the title of attachment is regional, not genealogical; the people of his own province are his legitimate prey. Buddhist pilgrims, perhaps, are less preyed upon. I have a happy impression from hearsay of Tashilunpo, but I may be wrong. And the Christian pilgrim is not immune. Were there no abuses of faith at Compostella? Are there none to-day at El Pilar in Saragossa? I used to be fond of going on pilgrimages, but now the crowd sickens me—not the credulous, but their parasites. Even at Lourdes, that Catholic Benares, I have felt a sense of uneasy shame when passing by the shops and booths in the neighbourhood of the basilica with their traffic in relics and tapers and rosaries. Lourdes was once a lovely mountain town: it is now a vulgar excrescence, with all the appurtenances of *snobisme*; and the change has been effected on strictly business lines. Is there anything sadder or more melancholy than the exploitation of ecstasy? Read the story of Bernadette Soubirous, the orthodox and the rationalist version; then turn to the history of 'The Maid of Kent,' as told by Froude in his second volume, for the parallel of priestly suggestion. The only pilgrimages which I know of

in which one is left alone are to natural shrines in the hills like Kailas or Amarnath.

Unfortunately I could not run amok among the pandas at Benares. It would have been "as much as my place was worth" in any Government Department. Besides, as the Eurasian young lady said to her partner at the railway dance when he asked her to sit out with him, it would have been wrong. Also, as the same young lady added, I am not that sort; or if I ever had been, years and responsibility had chastened me. But a more pernicious and chastisable guild of touts it has never been my lot to encounter, with the single exception perhaps of the Bhojkis of Jawala Mukhi.

At Benares the Kumar and his uncle lodged in one of the great houses on the river front belonging to that extremely orthodox Hindu, the Maharaja of D. Here their privacy was invaded by religious mendicants at all hours of the day. The Sadhu would stump up the corkscrew stone steps, tapping them with his staff, and, passing the Sikh sentry and the rifle-rack, gain the balcony unchallenged. I learnt to distinguish some of them. This man with the staff and gourd and antelope skin was a Talingi; that other a Dandi, who might not lay his staff on the ground; another belonged to a sect who must eat and drink from a human skull. Down below in the courtyard were a crowd of wild-eyed Bairagis, smeared all over with ashes of cow-dung, and wearing coils of rope in their coarse dyed hair. I have sometimes seen them entirely naked. Many affect a clownish apparel. The typical gentle Sadhu wears a salmon-coloured robe, and keeps his poll cropped. But our visitors were not all gentle, and some far from ascetic—the twenty licensed Sanyasis, for instance, who crowded into the

corner turret towards sunset and set up an unholy clamour if they were dissatisfied with their food, or if their tobacco were not to their taste.

At one time I made a study of the professional Hindu pilgrim and mendicant, and I visited many of their shrines. I may have gathered some rough notion of the motive of pilgrimage and the spirit of the quest in particular cases, but I doubt now if I could tell one sect from another. Their own claims and pretensions are so confused and contradictory that classification is misleading. Each sect has its ramifications of subsects, known by different names in different districts, and following different customs. There is no end to the variety of the rites, observances, dress, badges, privileges, and inhibitions that distinguish them. Then new sects are always springing up, and there are a host of independent adventurers in the garb of Sadhus, apart from the thousands of family pilgrims, occasional worshippers, drawn to the shrine by some need or in the fulfilment of a vow. Among the mummers and charlatans are honest anchorites and seekers after truth and religious mystics dedicated to the road by piety. As a rule, I think, the less they can tell you about their dedication the more pious they are.

Neither the Kumar nor his uncle was conspicuously orthodox. They were certainly not in sympathy with the Sadhus. As for their sects and tenets they were almost as ignorant as myself, and could not understand my curiosity about them. This is generally the case with the educated Hindu.

IV.

In these surroundings, of course, I learnt more than the Kumar, but I was glad to get away from the pilgrim path, if only for the sake of the exchequer. Rajputana was a pleasant change in every respect—scenery, climate, and humanity. There was something quite different in the air. The Rajputs bore themselves martially. The cities, in their colour and pageantry, were almost mediæval. The hilly scrub jungle, with its outcrops of rock, was characteristic of a zone that was new to me. Neither I nor the Kumar had yet stalked black buck or chinkara in the flaming dâk jungle. When my ward saw the herds browsing beside the railway embankment, and showing the greatest indifference to the traffic, he became restlessly excited. “See,” he said, “I could easily shoot one. They do not run away.” I think of the Kumar when I hear people talking about a boy’s eyes starting out of his head. He was blessed with the proleptic sense. In his imagination he already saw his Durbar Hall hung with trophies. But whenever I tried to get him to talk about his previous exploits in shikar he was vague and cryptic. I had a strong suspicion that he had never shot anything.

It was at Jaipur that his reputation as a mighty hunter was put to the test. We obtained permission from the Maharaja for him to shoot one antelope. Game is strictly preserved in the State, more especially in the neighbourhood of Jaipur city, where the black buck are almost tame. They will not feed out of your hand, but if you were to throw a stone at a herd, the odds are

that you would hit one. The Kumar's trophy, therefore, appeared a certainty.

We started early in the morning, riding beside a bullock-cart, which was to serve the double purpose of a stalking horse and a vehicle to carry home the quarry. A State shikari accompanied us, but I soon began to wish that this grave and courteous official had stayed behind. For the Kumar brought shame on our party. To begin with, he wanted to blaze off into the brown of the first herd we met. I explained to him that he must pick his head. People came to Jaipur for records, and we should be disgraced if we returned through the city with an undersized buck, or, worse, a doe. If he shot into the brown he would probably bring down a doe. And what should we do then? I for one would not be seen with it. But the Kumar only muttered sadly, "Assuredly without doubt I should have hit one, and it would have been buck."

But he had not to wait long for his chance. A little more than a mile out of the city we came upon two buck fighting. They were both fine heads, about equally matched, and so engrossed as they butted and clashed and locked and retired, watching each other as keenly as two swordsmen, that they let the cart come up to within twenty yards. "Now," I whispered to the Kumar, "you've got them point-blank. Choose your head. Don't stop the cart, or they'll bolt. And don't lie down; they'll take fright"—he was preparing to prostrate himself. "Shoot standing as we pass." He fired, and missed at twenty yards. The buck turned and gazed at us, as if shocked at this breach of amenities, offering another easy shot before they bounded away; but the Kumar was too "confused" to fire again.

This was his first chance of a trophy, and the

morning offered many more. None quite so easy, however, for the herd was becoming suspicious; the glimmering line of white bellies receded farther towards the horizon. The Kumar was shooting freely now, but not confidently. At last I saw a buck fall. I was a little way behind him, and he shouted out to me exultantly, "Sir, I have fractured one." "Put in another bullet," I called to him. "It is not dead." But he started running towards his prey. As he approached the buck it struggled to its feet and limped away, the Kumar in pursuit. There were less than ten yards between them at the start, but he would not shoot; he hoped to lay his barrel on the beast's hide. Then the buck began to gain. It seemed to have been more stunned than anything else. Three legs of it at least were completely "operative," as Beni Babu would have said. Soon the limp became a bound, but the Kumar panted behind long after the buck had outdistanced him, in the hope that it would lie down and die.

By 12 o'clock he had created a solitude, and we made a halt for tiffin by a Persian well under the shadow of neem trees. I was beginning to feel sorry for the Kumar; it was a humiliating business for him. As for myself, I could hardly look the Rajput shikari in the eye. I have seldom felt so vicariously ashamed.

All the afternoon the herd kept their distance quite outside the Kumar's radius. He began to tire and became a little dispirited, though he reminded me from time to time that he had "fractured one." He wanted my evidence in support of this, as there was only his word for it. At 4 o'clock I had to take a shot myself. The Kumar had long lost all hope, and it was his own suggestion. Anything better than the return with

the empty cart ! A few minutes after he relinquished his rifle I retrieved our common honour. It was an easy shot at eighty yards, but I nearly missed ; my bullet perforated the beast's wind-pipe. It was such a near thing that I still breathe a sigh of relief when I think of it. It was by no means a good head as heads go in Jaipur, but sufficient to save our face, and that was the important thing now. The Kumar seemed almost as pleased as if he had shot the buck himself. He sprinted to the carcase, and stood over it in a triumphant posture like a statue of Kartikeyya, the god of war, with one foot on its belly, pressing it firmly to the ground ; for all he knew, this might be another spitefully invulnerable beast. When I came up he beamed at me. " Now," he said, " we have both shot one, for the one I fractured will surely die." And he slept contentedly on that.

But at Udaipur a few days afterwards the Kumar made good. He got a sitting shot at a chinkara, and fractured it through and through. " A much rarer *avis*."

There was really very little to teach the Kumar in the three R's. I found him well advanced in English, and his mathematics were probably better than mine. He already had nice manners, not quite of the easy Rajput style, perhaps, but good enough. The important thing, of course, was that he should have equally nice ideas. In Rajputana we read Tod's 'Rajasthan.' This seemed to me the best possible education. We read of Pudmini and the heroes, Jeimul and Putta, at Chitore under the shadow of the very rock. Here perished the flower of Rajput chivalry in defence of their country and faith, and we have no finer tradition of sacrifice in our own annals.

The Kumar was not strictly truthful. But one

could not expect that. The gods and legendary heroes of his own sacred books had many virtues, but directness was not among them. Some one, of course, will quote the Bhagavad Gita at me; but search their scriptures; these things are as drops of well water in an ocean of ink. I was old-fashioned enough to hope to instil into him—dare I confess it?—the ideals of an English gentleman, which are probably still quite the best, though it has become unfashionable to say so.

We read together for an hour or two every day, mostly books of adventure of the hero-and-villain style. Happily, the finer the spirit in these tales, the more exciting they are; more hangs on the collision of the characters, and the moral is so digestible and appetising that the sauce of commentary is superfluous. I had taken the 'Prisoner of Zenda' and 'Rupert of Hentzau' with me. Who could be better than Antony Hope for the imparting of chivalrous ideas and a sound English idiom at the same time? And what more stimulating atmosphere than 'Ruritania'? I had forgotten how magnificent Rudolf Rassendyll was. I was carried away by the fellow. And so was the Kumar. We raced through the 'Prisoner of Zenda' in two days and a half, reading aloud turn by turn, and the Kumar wanted to begin the sequel the same evening. We were getting on swimmingly. I could see that my ward wanted to be like Rassendyll. He became such an absorbed partisan that when we got to the duel scene towards the end of the second volume he was almost inarticulate with excitement.

Rupert and Rassendyll faced each other with no more than three or four feet between the mouths of their weapons. It was at this breathless crisis that Rupert suggested to Rassendyll

that they should drop their revolvers and fight with steel. Rassendyll consented.

“Put your revolver on the table, then,” says the treacherous Rupert, “and I will lay mine by the side of it.”

“I beg your pardon,” smiled Rassendyll, “but you must lay yours down first.”

“I’m to trust you, it seems, but you won’t trust me !”

“Precisely ! You know you can trust me ; you know that I can’t trust you.”

I could imagine the Kumar crying “Priceless !” here if he were an English boy. In fact, I do not know any story or play in which the moral antagonism of all that has gone before is so nicely fined down at the end in two or three words. Even Rupert was sensitive to their sting. With an angry muttered oath he flung down his revolver on the table, and Rassendyll stepped forward to lay his beside it.

The Kumar, who was reading, could no longer contain himself. “Now’s the time ! Now’s the time !” he cried out.

“Now’s the time for what ?” I asked him sternly.

“To shoot him, sir. Now he has put down his gun.”

The Kumar was looking at his book, and could not see my face. It took him two or three seconds to realise that he had blundered, and much longer than that to understand how. I explained to him where he had missed the spirit of the thing, and I am afraid my comments pained him, for he was on the verge of tears. This was because he felt that I was disappointed in him. He pretended that he never meant it, that in Rassendyll’s place he would have been as honourable as Rassendyll, and that he despised Rupert because he could

not be trusted to keep faith. And I can quite believe he would have done the straight thing in Rassendyll's place if he had a preceptor by his side whose affection and respect he wanted to win. The lad was generous according to his lights, but the wrong signals were up; and no sermons or moralisings could substitute red for green. The incident left a melancholy impression on me. The Indian student is a glib translator of our Classics, but I have never since felt confident in his translation of our code.

V.

At Manikpur I was called upon to interpret the English Classics to the Hindu. I attacked the work with a certain zeal; the preparation of my lectures, at any rate, was congenial. At Cambridge I had wandered in the byways of English literature when I ought to have been reading some dead language. Now, I thought, I can turn this to account. I was at work soon after five every morning; volumes of literary biography and criticism littered my table; for four hours or so before college I was as busy and cheerful as a gold-digger. My hobby had become my *métier*. I might honestly refer to my recreation as work, and this, of course, is the secret of happiness. Dudgeon has its roots in that other kind of employment, doing something one does not like for money. That was Tubby's definition of work, if I remember, and in the early unregenerate 'nineties we all subscribed to it.

But I was soon to discover that the actual business of lecturing fell into Tubby's definition of labour. After this indolent browsing on the slopes of Parnassus the lecture-room was an anti-

climax. This was disappointing, as I had been told that the Indian student was intelligent and appreciative of the beauties of literature. I had looked forward to my profession of faith. It would be my province to honour and proclaim the true divinity, and to put false gods in their place. I had my doubts, though, about my powers of exposition. The standard at Calcutta was high. I had looked through the examination papers in the University Calendar, and they had rather frightened me. An Edmund Gosse or Augustine Birrell might pass with honours, but I felt that the average dabbler in letters would be grassed. Still, I reflected, it is much easier to set an examination paper than to answer one, and much easier to answer one's own paper than one set by somebody else.

I had not underrated my students' intelligence; I had only underrated their receptivity. They were extraordinarily good at answering examination papers. They could tell you the literary ancestry of an eighteenth century minor poet, or give you a summary of the characteristics of the metaphysical school, or detect by certain clues Shakespeare's earlier, middle, or later work. I was astonished at the way they found their way about in this maze of alien culture until I discovered the secret in their annotated text-books. These were prepared by the erudite Babu, ten pages of notes to one of text, so that in any question of the interpretation of the text, or of the author's place in letters, or his æsthetic values, or his "angle of vision," they could not go far wrong. The commonest stumbling-block was the misprint. There were "too many erratas," as Professor Mukerji used to say. Babu Hurree Bungsho Jaberjee was careless with his proofs. It was his annotated edition of "Ode to the Night-

ingale: Bird that sings in Thicket" that first put me on to the scent of the mischief. A student in his paraphrase of those haunting lines,

"O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blissful Hippocrene,"

spoke of "the fountain of Moses."

"The poet desired that he might drink the warm wine of South in a peg full of true fountain of Moses, saying that after intoxicating myself with above-mentioned wine I shall totally forget everything and be with you in jungle."

This was a fairly creditable rendering of the lines for an F.A. student. True, he had missed the spirit of the piece, but one could not complain of that. The most one could hope for was a plain statement of the facts of the case. The articles, too, are always a sporadic crop. For "peg" I suggested "draught." "And why Moses?" I asked. "The fountain of Moses," of course, ought to have been "the fountain of the Muses." Hurree Babu had slipped again, as in the preceding lines,

"'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thy happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,"

which the most silver-tongued of my adventurers in the realms of gold paraphrased thus—

"The poet, calling nightingale light-winged Druid of the trees, says further, I am not sad because of envy a low person might feel with bird for its sweet song."

But Hurree Babu was innocent of the outrage on the Chapman's Homer sonnet, when the lines,

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,
When a new planet swims into his ken,"

were paraphrased in my presence thus—

"Under above-stated circumstances poet ex-

perienced novel sensation as if thunderbolt had swum into one of his family members.”

I was glad when Keats was not “proscribed,” as my students used to say, for the First Arts Course. Proscribed was a much happier word than proscribed, for we were butchers rather than sacrificers, and under the text-book system I was a paid accessory. I wrote to the Syndicate, and asked them to spare that

“Pard-like spirit, beautiful and swift,”

and him

“Who grew
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true love’s tears instead of dew.”

But it was in vain. Even to-day in a hundred Indian colleges the spirit of Keats “dies every day he lives,” suffering a kind of Promethean immortality.

My students were critics as well as interpreters. It would be a great mistake to think of them as slow or dull. One must remember that the conditions of life and thought in the West were unknown to them. They were too precise and literal for our mental food, and the data they were given had no conceivable relation with their lives. Consequently they discovered inferences and motives which the author never dreamed of. They were analytically imaginative. That is to say, given a thread, they would set to work like clever detectives in a totally strange environment. The process was quite intelligent, but their deductions were naturally at fault. The Kumar’s misconception of Rudolf Rassendyll was a case in point. The subliminal self makes much the same pattern out of the tags thrown him by the waking consciousness.

Thus in the middle of reading 'Adonais' my students discovered that Shelley was a humorist. They knew all about the springs and ingredients of humour—the unexpected, the incongruous, the paradoxical, and the like. One of their annotators had provided them with a map in which these tributaries flowed into the sea of humour—*merum sal*—like the Mississippi and Orinoco into the Atlantic. This was their chart and compass. So when we came to the passage,

“ He hath outsoared the shadow of our night ;
 Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,
 And that unrest which men miscall delight,
 Shall touch him not, and torture not again,”

a grave inquiring youth rose from his seat and said—

“ Sir, are not these lines humorous ? ”

“ Humour ! ” I gasped, but he caught me on the recoil.

“ *Eef* it is unrest, then *ho-ow* can it be deelight. Humour depends on incongruous.”

This again was not Hurree Babu. It was honest pioneer work. The inquiring youth had found a new characteristic in Shelley, unnoted by the annotators. For the moment he was Cortes in Darien.

The characteristics of the “ proscribed ” authors were an important part of the subject-matter in the University course. Good B.A. candidates could enumerate them ; and they could roll off the hackneyed distinctions between the Classical School of convention and rhetoric and the Romantic School of poetic inspiration, only they had not a very clear idea as to the meaning of these words. If you were to ask them under what circumstances a drain-pipe could be romantic, they would not be able to answer you. Tennyson was commended

for his musical and melodious verse, his use of the figure of onomatopœia in which sound echoes sense, his observation and love of nature, his piety, his patriotism, his reverence for women, his loyalty to the Royal Family, his avoidance of the commonplace. Passages in the text which illustrated these qualities were marked like exotic shrubs in the Botanical Gardens, so that one moved in familiar country provided one did not get the labels mixed. ‘Morte d’Arthur,’ I remember, was one of our prescribed books, and Hurree Babu was always insisting on the author’s avoidance of the commonplace. “ ‘The knightly growth that fringed his lips.’ Moustache. Notice the avoidance of the commonplace.” “ ‘Drops of onset.’ Blood and perspiration. Notice the avoidance of the commonplace.” I grew very weary of Tennyson at Manikpur. I had never appreciated him, but I could not have told you why until I read Hurree Babu’s annotated edition of ‘Morte d’Arthur.’ Even at Cambridge I used to feel as if I were reading some precocious undergraduate who had learnt the trick of writing like a poet. Hurree Babu gave me the clue. It is a test as certain as litmus paper in determining physical properties. Real poets do not avoid the commonplace. It does not exist for them.

VI.

From Manikpur I went to Balloki. I found the Punjabi students more sympathetic, though not so nimble-witted or analytical as the Bengali. With them defeating the examiner was even more a question of learning text and commentary by rote. I had to steer them through the course

as I had steered my candidate for Holy Orders who, with ten words of Greek, satisfied the examiners in his paper on the New Testament. "Thanks to you," he wrote in the plenitude of his gratitude, "I have *past* my examination."

I found my students at Balloki struggling with 'Paradise Lost.'

"Hail, horrors! hail,
Infernal World! And thou, profoundest Hell,
Receive thy new Professor."

I owe this new reading of the passage in which the fallen Archangel, having "'scaped the Stygian flood," apostrophises "the seat of desolation void of light," to a student of the First Arts class. As I had only joined the institution a week, the adaptation seemed appropriate. I took it as an address of welcome.

Balloki was an escape from Manikpur. Here, "for my better entertainment," as old Ralph Fitch used to say, "I was clapt into a faire strong prison" for eight years. Prison is, perhaps, too strong a word for the penitentiary hours of routine in which my students and I murdered and dissected the English classics. Even the dissecting-room had its humours. And outside, on the cricket and football field, we were something like a fraternity. Besides, it was a glorious country to ride in. You could let a horse out almost anywhere, and I used to spend hours every week chivvying black buck, nilghai, chinkara, and pig in the State preserves, or I would stalk them on foot and lie in the long grass as still as a stone and watch them.

I had lost the faculty of shooting straight with the limb I left behind the other side of the watershed. I gradually dropped shikar—first the rifle, then the shot-gun. I suppose it is because I

cannot shoot myself that I am in danger of becoming one of those earnest idealists who denounce shooting as cruel, like the temperance reformer who is "uncharioted by Bacchus and his pards." There was a time when a rare and blind felicity of hand and eye with a gun seemed to me the *summum bonum* of existence. Now I have grown to hate the idea of crumpling up little birds. This, I suppose, has come through the habit of watching them. The person I dislike most in my corner of France is the "sportsman" who has killed off all the blackbirds and thrushes, and haunts the beach and cliffs for sea-fowl. When I see him stalking my dunlins, those heavenly sprinters on the edge of the wave, I could demand his head on a charger.

For months at a time every year, three months, sometimes four, I escaped from Balloki to the hills, to the snows and glaciers, or forests, or alpine *margs*. I have few regrets for the East. If I sometimes hunger for the Himalayas or Kashmir, it is not because they are of the East. I should be equally happy in the Pyrenees if I had legs to move in them. The *gîte* I have found in France between the mountains and the sea is a very good substitute for "the terrestrial paradise." Committed by the medicos to the South, I have chosen the Western sea. The longer one has lived in the East the greater one's bias towards the pastoral. Better the Basque country than the Catalan, the Atlantic than the Mediterranean, a green world than a brown or yellow one. Instead of the gravelly cliffs and dry, stony, treeless watercourses of the Pyrénées Orientales, bare as nullahs in Jebel Hamrin, I have found a country of grassy ravines where the cuckoo-flower grows hip-high, and is sometimes mistaken at a distance for a sown crop, where the moss in the roots of

the oaks and beeches has a pleasant, earthy, damp smell with a suspicion of fish in it like a freshly-caught trout,—a delicious unAsiatic smell only known in these turfy home lands, and where one has barely five weeks to wait between the autumn crocuses and the first primroses.

I have left the East behind ; but these things, recurring in their season, renew youth annually.

In the Himalayas it was generally the familiar English flowers that gave most pleasure. A homely bank of selfheal, wood sanicle, and yellow agrimony was worth all the show poppies and the imperial lilies of the valley. I remember the first time Minerva and I ascended to our hut when we arrived in Gulmarg, parboiled after a Punjab June. We halted under the garden by a small stony brook, which was choked with marsh-marigold, the dwarf white-flowering kind, and the *Veronica beccabunga*, which bungs up the beck at home. The Hun after whom it is named must have received his patronymic to perpetuate the atrocious pun. And there was a single plant of *Alisma plantago*, the first I had seen in the East. The giant Echinops on the bank, the great white thistle that rears itself like a fortress from the boulders of Himalayan streams, was an unconsidered alien. These three homely water-plants which we had trodden down with bare feet, paddling in English streams, dismissed the commonplace exotic from our minds. *Veronica beccabunga* in the brook implied *arvensis* in the cabbage patch and *chamædryas* on the lawn. We were not disappointed ; we found them there.

We had our first glimpse of the garden as we mounted the knoll above the stream—tall yellow spires of mullein in an irregular row overtopping the palings. We stopped, of course, and fingered their thick, downy, silken leaves. The border of

rose-bay willow-herb by the porch was dazzlingly familiar. The veranda was embowered in Kentish hops, which thrust their tendrils through the chinks of the wood to invade our rustic drawing-room. All that summer the bees invaded it too through the open window to sip our English flowers. English, I say advisedly, for Minerva's exclusiveness in table decoration admitted no others; the insect that was not content with them had to indulge his exotic taste outside. A homely room by day, and at night the crackle and sweet resinous smell of the pine-wood fire made it homelier still.

VII.

BOW AND ADORE

BOW AND ADORE.

THE war snatched me from the East, and returned me to it, but my days in Balloki were numbered in any case. This was because I could not "bow and adore." Nothing would induce me to squat on the floor with the Maharaja's turbaned courtiers and line up with them before the Presence, proffering the golden coin on the handkerchief to be touched and remitted in the Oriental way. This was their custom, I argued, not ours. But there were strong arguments on the other side. What my professors and students thought of it I do not know. My example ought to have been salutary, for the spirit of independence was in the air, and if they were consistent they must have approved. If they were inconsistent, they were no worse than Hobbs and Nobbs, who could see nothing commendable in the efforts of Indians to maintain their national self-respect.

When one comes to think of it, the spirit of independence, where it occurs in the East, is a Western product. Probably in the beginning pomp and magnificence in the despot were necessary agents of self-preservation. Then, as now, the Oriental could be commanded only by a display of power. The jolly monarch of the old King Cole type, who hobnobbed with his subjects, would not have survived a week. The will and power to raise up or strike down must be manifest, even if exercised by caprice. The material

insignia of wealth and resources—apes, ivory, and peacocks, men-at-arms, hunters, eunuchs, multitudes of slaves, elephants, horses, camels, lions, as well as the ghostly supports of religion and superstition—must be visible to impress and overawe. An atmosphere of magnificence must be created, in which adoration becomes instinctive. Symbols of dependence must be multiplied until the assertion of self becomes a blasphemy, and the subject feels as a grain of chaff that may be blown aside at the sovereign will. He owes his preservation to his minuteness alone: if he is ennobled he stands more in awe, for the taller the head the more likely it is to be lopped off, like an outstanding thistle in a field of corn. Uncles, brothers, nephews who have stood in the path of the royal succession have gone that way. The monarch is safe when the courtier feels as small as a poet in front of a great mountain-range at dawn.

“And when they are all seated, each in his proper place, then a great prelate rises and says with a loud voice, ‘Bow and adore.’ And as soon as he has said this, the company bow down until their foreheads touch the earth in adoration towards the Emperor as if he were a god. And this adoration they repeat four times, and then go to a highly-decorated altar, on which is a vermilion tablet with the name of the Grand Kaan inscribed thereon, and a beautiful censer of gold. So they incense the tablet and the altar with great reverence, and then return each man to his seat.”

Thus Marco Polo describes the reverence paid to the Great Khan. In another passage, as though human veneration were not enough, he tells of a lion among Kublai’s courtiers. The beast was led into the Emperor’s presence, and as soon as it

saw him it lay down before him with every veneration, as if it acknowledged him for his lord, and it remained there lying before him and entirely unchained. No doubt the Polo family, uncle and father and son, paid their respects to the Great Khan, prostrating themselves with all reverence to the ground. The three Venetians, though of noble birth, would not have felt any abasement in the homage, as they loved the Khan and were proud to be his liege men, declaring that he was the wisest and most accomplished man, the greatest captain, the best to govern men and rule an empire, the most potent as regards forces and lands and treasure that existeth in the world or ever hath existed from the time of our first father Adam until this day. The great Khan, to maintain his state, had a guard of twelve thousand horsemen. Marco Polo has given him exactly the same escort as Solomon (1 Kings iv. 26); and he was careful to explain that he kept these "not for fear of any man whatever, but merely because of his own exalted rank."

As the spirit of independence grew in the West, the habit of prostration before Oriental potentates became more difficult to acquire. In the thirteenth century the European, when approaching the earthly manifestation of the divinity, could strike his forehead to the ground without abasement. His reverence, indeed, as in the case of Marco Polo, was often quite genuine. But with the passing of the Middle Ages the exaction of these obeisances came to be regarded as a monopoly of the Almighty, and it was not so easy for the vessel of clay to "assume the God." Nevertheless, nearly five hundred years after the Polo foreheads struck the flags of the audience-chamber at Cambaluc, a similar act of homage was demanded of the Russian Ambassador of Peter the Great

at the court of Peking. The incident provided De Quincey with an ironic theme.

In dramatising the situation he indulged his hatred of the Chinese and the sense of personal dignity that amounted in him to a religion. "Between you and me, such old friends," said the Chinese Minister to the Russian—Ismaeloff was his name,—“a bauble not worth speaking of! Would you oblige me, when presented to the Emperor, by knocking that handsome head of yours nine times—that is, you know, three times three—against the floor? I would take it very kindly of you; and the floor is padded to prevent contusions.” Ismaeloff, after a little pondering, complied. He did “absolutely consent to elongate himself on the floor, as if preparing to take a swim, and then knock his forehead repeatedly, as if weary of life, somebody counting all the while with a stop-watch, No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, and so on.” But he hedged with his dignity by stipulating that any Chinaman seeking a presentation to the Czar should, in coming to St Petersburg, go through exactly the same ceremony.

The courtiers of Peking accepted this condition in good faith, no doubt chuckling inwardly, for by the laws of their country they were prevented from going outside the Emperor's territories. The Russian was regarded by the Chinese as a test case. What Russia would do, they argued, the rest would do; but when it came to the turn of the English lords, at the end of the eighteenth century, they were singularly disappointed. The British Ambassadors, Lord Macartney, and afterwards Lord Amherst, declined to *kowtow*, but were willing to make profound obeisances to the Emperor, provided similar homage was addressed

at the same time by a high mandarin to the portrait of George III.

It is an Asiatic instinct, this assertion of dignity by the infliction of an indignity, as when Sapor used the captive Emperor Valerian as his mounting-block, and when dead had him stuffed with straw, to be placed as a monument of triumph in one of his Persian temples. De Quincey traces the genealogy of the *kowtow* as descending to the court of Susa and Persepolis from the elder court of Babylon, and to that from the yet elder court of Nineveh, and discovers that in the days of Xerxes and Darius this very abject form of homage was extorted from the compatriots of Miltiades and Themistocles. He quotes a chorus in the 'Orestes' in which the Persian form of prostration provides the poet with a text for much impassioned and lyrical scorn. His own characteristic comment is that "man in his native grandeur, standing erect, and with his countenance raised to the heavens (*os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri*), presents a more awful contrast to man when passing through this particular form of degradation than under any or all of the other symbols at any time devised for the sensuous impression of a servile condition—scourges, *ergastula*, infibulation, or the neck-chains or ankle-chains of the Roman *atriensis*."

The miserable expedient resorted to by the ambassadors at the court of Peking merited De Quincey's scorn. In Sir Alfred Lyall's 'Theology in Extremis,' and Sir Francis Doyle's 'A Private of the Buffs,' a similar spiritual dilemma is introduced, though on a higher plane. In both cases the scene is in the East, and the choice death or servile submission to the barbarian. Lyall's hero, though an agnostic, would not recant. Doyle's

Kentish lad, unseduced by the vision of the cherry orchards of his home, refused to bow the knee.

“Let dusky Indians whine and kneel;
An English lad must die.”

We can recall other collisions, tragic and comic, between Eastern and Western pride in which the Oriental despot has been balked of the homage that is as dear to him as the breath of life. Manucci tells a story of a certain Lord Bellomont, ambassador of the exiled Charles II. at the court of Shah Abbas at Ispahan, who refused, on the failure of his embassy, to make his obeisance to the king. Without any civility or any sort of bow, he turned his back and went out of the presence, his head high, while the king sat with downcast eyes as if he saw nothing of what was passing. Niccolao Manucci, who was quite close to Bellomont at the time, was filled with dread, “anticipating that the king would send out some order to have us killed.” Bellomont’s scant courtesy did him and his master little credit, for it arose out of anger and impatience rather than self-respect.

One has more sympathy with Colonel Gardner, who, upon gross provocation from Holkar, drew his sword on the Maharajah in his Durbar tent, and in the astonishment and confusion that his boldness provoked, had the address to make his way to his horse, still brandishing his sword, mount, and ride away unscathed.

Sir Thomas Roe, ambassador of James I. to Jehangir, refused to touch the ground with his head on being presented to the Emperor. He tells us in his diary that, when called upon to abase himself before the canopy where Jehangir sat “in great and barbarous state,” he replied that he came in honour to see the prince, and was free from the manners of servants. Bernier

tells the story of another recusant, a Persian oddly enough, the ambassador of Shah Abbas, who had the hardihood to defy the etiquette of the court in making his salutation to the Great Mogul. The obeisance demanded of him was too deep for his pride. Bernier records how, when all the arguments and caresses of the courtiers had failed, the Emperor Shah Jehan had recourse to a cunning stratagem to induce the arrogant fellow to salute according to the Indian mode. He gave orders that the grand entrance of the court leading to the Am-Khas, where he intended to receive the ambassador, should be closed, and the wicket only left open, a wicket so low that a man could not pass through without stooping and holding down the head as is customary in doing reverence *à l'Indien*. "The proud and quick-sighted Persian," however, "penetrated the stratagem," and emerged from the wicket with the posterior part of his person presented to the king. To Shah Jehan's indignant "Ill-bred fellow! didst thou imagine thou wast entering a stable of asses like thyself?" he retorted, "I did imagine it. Who, on going through such a door, can believe he is visiting any but asses?"

The Mogul, in revenge, gave secret orders that when the ambassador entered a long and narrow street in the fortress leading to the Hall of Assembly, a *mast* elephant should be let loose on him. The envoy of Shah Abbas, however, seems to have been possessed of a degree of courage and resource not often credited to the countrymen of Haji Baba. Bernier records that he was so nimble in jumping out of his *palky*, and together with his attendants so prompt and dexterous in shooting arrows into the elephant's trunk, that the animal was scared away.

The association between bowing and adoring

and the system of despotism is logical ; the habit of dissimulation is not difficult to trace. Of the golden age in India we have no authentic record, but during the thousand odd years that preceded British rule we have ample evidence of the relations that existed between authority and the masses, and it all goes to show that for centuries before our coming abject subservience was a condition essential to leading an unmolested life. The only individualist was the freebooter. Under the Oriental potentate the cult of propitiation, the practice of humility in gesture and speech, flattery, adulation, self-abasement, the servility of the parasite and dependant, are natural growths. From the earliest times the Hindus have cultivated the ritual of subservience as a fine art. Their Sashtanga or prostration with the eight parts of the body (two hands, two feet, two knees, forehead, and breast) on the ground, and arms extended beyond the head, is a form of salutation that used to be paid indifferently to the Deity and persons of high rank. Abbé Dubois, who died in 1848, recorded that it was by no means rare to see Sudras of different classes performing Sashtanga before Brahmins. It was the Brahmin who invented the pariah and the doctrine of "untouchability," against which the modern Hindu reformer, inspired by Western idealism, has set his face. "Have we not made the pariah to crawl on his belly ?" Mr Gandhi asked with creditable and characteristic frankness in his campaign on behalf of the depressed classes. "We shall be unfit to gain Swaraj so long as we would keep in bondage a fifth of the population of Hindustan."

In the court of the Maharaja or Nawab it is now the image more than the fact of dependence that counts ; the reflection is more sought after than the reality. Probably it has been always

so. Any one who has lived long in India knows how the contented acceptance of the appearance of things will filter through layers of Babuism like a disease or an infectious miasma until it sometimes inoculates the bureaucracy at the headquarters of Government. Abbé Dubois, that acute observer of the psychology of the Indian, has enumerated some of the privileges for which the Hindu is ready to lay down his life: the right to wear slippers or to ride through the street in a palanquin or on horseback during marriage festivals, or of being escorted on certain occasions by armed retainers, or of having a trumpet sounded in front of a procession, or of being accompanied by musicians at public ceremonies. And so to-day the Raja would give years of his life for the salute of one more gun, or the subordinate official for the privilege of sitting on a chair at a Durbar. Even the Indian servant is jealous of the insignia of his master or mistress. Nabi Bakhsh, Khansamah, will insist on the observance of dignity in the Lady Sahib of his lately promoted Chief Commissioner. "Oh, but a Lady Sahib always has three almirahs in her kitchen."

In India the word *izzat*, honour or prestige, is commonly used by all classes of people. Half the inhibitions imposed by caste have grown out of it or support it; for the privilege of not being able to enjoy certain proscribed things is guarded as jealously as a right or a monopoly. The half-starving aboriginal without caste will reject offerings of quite legitimate food because he would rather satisfy his *izzat* than his hunger. *Izzat* makes many simple things impossible. Rajas of the same caste may live on adjoining estates but never meet, because their respective family traditions prescribing the exact number of steps that one may advance towards the other are irrecon-

cilable. Thus Devagiri was isolated. There was no one he could meet on these inelastic terms.

In the Durbars of native princes, as I discovered at Balloki, *izzat* is sumptuously fed, and one may witness something of the ritual observed in the court of the Great Khan, though on a sadly diminished scale. In some States *izzat* prescribes that the officials should squat on the floor while the Maharaja alone is seated; *izzat*, too, generally prescribes that he should be an hour or two late. The spectacle of the Durbaris filing up in turn to make their profound obeisances is duly impressive, and the Maharaja would sacrifice lakhs of rupees and thousands of acres of his principality rather than forfeit an iota of this ceremonial respect.

On occasions when the Oriental form of obeisance is demanded of English officials in the service of native states, nonconformity in a member of the dominant race is, of course, peculiarly galling, which reminds me that I have made a long digression from Balloki. My own recusancy was never forgiven. I soon became the object of stratagems. I was angled for, but without success, as the hook generally showed through the bait. One day, however, I was hooked, though not landed. Balloki, in one of his most ingratiating moods, promised me with sympathetic smiles that if I would write him a letter saying that I was willing to line up with the other courtiers, and bow and adore, and proffer the golden coin on the handkerchief after sitting on the hard polished floor of the Durbar Hall awaiting his unpunctual pleasure, he in his turn would write me a letter absolving me from all such unBritannic proceedings.

Like an unwary trout, who ought to have known better, I rose to the fly. However, no harm came

of it; the cast broke. He got my letter, and I, of course, did not get his. What use he made of mine I never learnt. Probably it is preserved in the State archives to serve, when the incident is forgotten, in the increase of *izzat*. But its immediate efficacy was nil. Like the Babu's jibbing tat I proved "an oppositious animal, too often vertical." I was cozened in vain. The general impression seems to have been that the squatting position was the main obstacle in getting me over the course. I remember being visited by an insinuating emissary from the palace who adroitly turned the conversation to *darbars*—with no personal reference to my own case, of course. He reminded me that in many of these ceremonials, as many perhaps as nine out of ten, chairs were provided, and the *darbari*, whether out of respect for his nether garments or his *amour propre*, was promoted from the floor to the sitting position affected by Europeans. However, my native pride rebelled. State officials who were not in disgrace ceased to visit me after this. The Maharaja, no doubt, would have liked to have loosed a *mast* elephant on me in the manner of Aurungzeb, but he bided his time, nursing a more prosaic revenge. Unfortunately, my obstinacy raised a racial issue, which I deplored, though I do not see how it could have been decently avoided.

It may seem paradoxical that the Oriental who worships power, if left to himself, is generally the least snobbish person in the world. The reason is, of course, that the compartments of his social system are so exactly demarcated that he lives content with the state into which he is born, and it never occurs to him to change it. It is because of this unquestioning fatalism that the humblest Asiatic is often possessed of a dignity to which the aristocrat of the West cannot aspire. Society

in the East is static ; where we have made it fluid, we have created the snob. The hybrid product of our education can give points in pretentiousness to the society climber at home. On the other hand, there is something naïve about the Indian's respect for established position that makes it inoffensive. In official circles, for instance, social status is estimated by pay. Ask an Indian the name of a subordinate Government official, and your informant, though he may not be able to put any other label to the man, will in all probability be able to tell you his exact value in rupees. "Sir," I was told at a garden-party given by the members of a municipality, "the somewhat corpulent gentleman who was addressing you a moment or two ago is a clerk in the Accountant-General's office, drawing 125 rupees."

Our responsibility for class-consciousness is regrettable, but the social ladder, or corkscrew stair, is an incidental defect of a virtue, and the climbers are not a large community. As a set-off, the democratic idea in India has been translated from the West ; the spirit of independence has been introduced and planted by us. And we have done it with our eyes open. When Macaulay's educational policy was being discussed, the consequences were clearly foreseen. The controversy was between the Orientalists, who were for developing education in the vernacular on indigenous lines, and the supporters of the system of "Anglo-Literary" instruction, which was eventually adopted, and is now in force. It was a question, to quote Macaulay's famous minute, as to "whether, when it is in our power to teach English, we shall teach languages in which by universal confession there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared with our own ; whether when we can teach European science we

shall teach systems which, by universal confession, whenever they differ from those of Europe, differ for the worse ; and whether, when we can patronise sound philosophy and true history, we shall countenance at the public expense medical doctrines which would disgrace an English farrier—astronomy, which would move laughter in the girls of an English boarding-school ; history abounding with kings thirty feet high and reigns thirty thousand years long ; and geography made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter.” Macaulay’s choice was unquestionably right. It is true that education on the lines he prescribed has been unintelligently developed, with results that have sometimes provoked more laughter than admiration ; yet the other system, which would have kept India indefinitely in the dark, as people content with their yoke, with no embarrassing political ideals, and without the desire for free institutions, would have been a crime.

“The English,” Emerson said, “do not respect power, but only performance. . . . In the power of saying rude truths, sometimes in the lion’s mouth, no man surpasseth them.” And he cited the example of Latimer, who, on the King’s birthday, when each bishop was expected to offer the King a purse of gold, gave Henry VIII. a copy of the ‘Vulgate,’ with a mark at the passage, “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” “And they so honoured stoutness in each other that they passed it over.” This is the spirit we have brought to the East.

It is Western education alone that has awakened and nourished the spirit of independence in India, whether national or individual. Yet the Indian extremist will have it that we have emasculated the nation. “Indians lose in courage and manliness by contact with Englishmen,” Mr Gandhi

maintains, and he attributes the servility he deplores in his countrymen to their subjection to a materialistic and godless race. Our responsibility for the "slave mentality" in India is a recurring charge in his indictment of British rule. But history does not bear him out. Nearly every record or report one turns to that throws any light on the condition of the people, from the days of the Great Mogul to the period of anarchy preceding the annexation, contributes evidence that the Golden Age before the British exploited and commercialised "the spiritual East," exists only in the Mahatma's imagination.

In charging his countrymen with servility, Mr Gandhi wished to denounce place-hunters, title-holders, parasites, seekers of favour or patronage from Government, all who he believes to be sacrificing national interests for private ends. Opprobrious epithets are heaped on the great body of moderates, who prefer to co-operate with Government in navigating the ship of State rather than to destroy the vessel that is to carry them into port. "*Apke-wasti, Jo-hookum, jholi-chuk*, toady, sycophant, train-bearer, are words bandied by schoolboys and college students in contempt of "the Government man." All this is a sign of the growing spirit of independence, which, though intended to be far from complimentary, we, the instillers of it, should accept as our meed.

Mr Gandhi himself is a product of the liberal education that he condemns; the best of his idealism he has borrowed from the West. Yet he would fix on us the responsibility of hypnotising and enslaving the youth of India. There is this amount of superficial truth in the charge, that we, being in authority, temporarily at least, receive from the Indian the concentrated homage that is the legacy of his own system. The worship of

the symbols of power, the ritual of propitiation by which those in whom it is invested are approached, are very ancient institutions in the land, and the existence of any kind of authority must tend to their survival. It will be a long time before the bogey of absolutism ceases to haunt the mind of the Indian. The spectre is impressed on his imagination. It evoked the habit of veneration, and the instinct to appease, centuries before our coming.

A fair test of the mentality of a people is the use that is made of the gift of speech. Among a race that has been accustomed to gain its ends by subtlety, conversation has no value as a means of exchanging ideas or arriving at the truth of anything: it is exercised simply as a medium of advancement. Thus the most open professions of the Asiatic are generally misleading, and the Oriental who is unfamiliar with our habit of mind expects the same oblique advances in conversation from a European. The Englishman's trick of going straight to the point puzzles him. Generally speaking, the instinctive aim of conversation amongst Indians of the old school is to impress or please. To-day the raw products of our colleges and schools display a contrary spirit; or, rather, if they want to impress, it is by the assertion of independence. Our detractors in India would no doubt argue that the new spirit is indigenous, and that the lads are learning self-respect from their nationalist leaders. But to be quite fair to ourselves, we must look farther back if we are to trace the origin of these influences. The pioneers in the campaign against "slave mentality" owe their inspiration to the "Satanic Government," whose educational system it is their avowed intention to destroy. But it is easy to generalise. If one wanted to convince Mr Gandhi about the

genealogy of slave mentality, it would be simpler perhaps to select one or two characteristic instances of the trait, submit them to him, and ask him to say frankly whether he discovered in them the expression of the spirit of the East or not. At Simla the other day, in an examination of candidates for cadetships at Sandhurst for the Indian Army, a sprig of the nobility was asked what he would do if he unexpectedly inherited fifty lakhs of rupees. "Sir," came the unhesitating answer, "I would give three lakhs to family members; the remainder I would bestow on benign Government." The reply was illuminating, not so much in betraying the candidate's mentality as his ignorance of ours. The young man might have been speaking to Sivaji or Aurungzebe.

The candidate for the King's commission was an aristocrat, but the art of propitiation which he cultivated so guilelessly is common to all grades of society in India. I will give an illustration from the other end of the scale. A syce I had at Balloki who had served me well for two years, and kept my horse in such good condition that I did not trouble myself to see it fed, became enamoured of a hill woman. This enchantress persuaded him that the purchase of ear-rings and nose-rings to adorn her person was more important than the pampering of his charge. The result, of course, was that the syce sold the horse's grain, until the animal became so lamentably thin that I insisted on seeing it fed in front of me three times a day. After a week it filled out and regained its old mettle. "Have you no shame?" I said to the syce. "The dumb animal has spoken and betrayed you. What have you to say? You have been robbing it of its corn." "Hazur," he replied, "the horse is growing fat and improving

in health on account of his pleasure in being fed in the Sahib's presence."

Probably the habit of saying the ingratiating thing is not so studied as it seems, and one is not expected to be so literal as to analyse the honey or to weigh it in the scale. Sufficient that it is honey, the naïve and unashamed admission of a deep-seated desire to please. The attitude is the legacy of generations who have learnt to bow and adore. The Oriental himself is not fool enough to believe in the sincerity of the flattery that is exhaled all round him; nevertheless his appetite for it is inexhaustible. He recognises it for what it is—incense, implicit adulation, the expression of submissiveness. If the Emperor exclaims that it is night at noon, says the Persian proverb, the courtier remarks on the brightness of the stars. This only meant to the Emperor that the carpet was soft and smooth under his feet. No rub, unevenness, or opposition in opinion or will was possible. Dependence on his authority was absolute.

The degree of submissiveness in a nation is in direct ratio to its helplessness—subservience grows out of dependence. Before the coming of the Moguls the Pathans ruled the Indian, and before the Pathan he was subject, directly or indirectly, to the Brahminical hierarchy, which to protect its own interests evolved the most extravagant system of privilege and abasement the world has known. If we could draw a chronological table indicating the posture of humility demanded by the different ages, we would have a perspective in which the angle of prostration from the perpendicular to the horizontal would recede on a gradually diminishing scale. The nearer "the Golden Age," the nearer the forehead to the ground.

VIII.

“NOTHING LEFT REMARKABLE”

“NOTHING LEFT REMARKABLE.”

I.

LOOKING back, it seems that the youth of our generation were ingenuously romantic and adventurous. I often wonder how much we gave ourselves away. Did we wear masks like the impassive enigmatic young Georgians, who seem incapable of joy? One must have had some kind of mask, or one would never have survived ridicule. The trouble with the youthful survivor of Armageddon seems to be that he has few interests or enthusiasms. I often wonder how the new order of existence which a few years ago gave every one the chance of living like Ulysses would have affected Tubby and Bangs and the rest of us if the storm had burst twenty-five years before it did.

Armageddon, when one comes to think of it, had more than occasional compensations. I remember an afternoon of content, snatched from the war, at Delphi, when I lay under the shining Phaedriades among the temples and treasuries of white-grey Parian marble, and watched the ships in a corner of the Gulf shut off by cliffs, which looked like a small still lake in the hills. I would not have seen Delphi if it had not been for the war, or the golden domes of Najaf and Kerbela, or the rock carvings of Bisotun, or Merv and Bairam Ali, or Vespasian's bridge at Shuster,

or Ur of the Chaldees. The mere catalogue of names is rich and musical. Artvin and Ardanuch, Samsun, Trebizond, Koweit, Muscat. At twenty, I believe, I would have envied a Merv- or Najaf-visiting corpse. Thirty years ago I found a night at Aden thrilling.

Yet the young men I met in the East during the war seemed to take their adventures very much as a matter of course. They were rather bored by them. Pan, of course, was dead. And if one held a post-mortem on Romance, her demise could easily have been explained. The nourishment of illusion was exhausted; nothing was left alien to experience; there were no new horizons to explore. Youth, in fact, had no wish to explore; it was much too tired, and horizons only implied movement and discomfort and fatigue.

I was beginning to hold a post-mortem on Romance that afternoon at Delphi, when youth itself broke in on my reflections in the vault where the Pythian priestess once played upon the sense of awe that is dead. "Well, damn it all," I heard, "you've come so far, you may as well see the damned thing out." A moment afterwards two callous perspiring young subalterns peeped into the shrine and peered about, searching the walls in a disappointed manner, as if they had put a penny in some kaleidoscopic slot on Brighton pier that promised a picture of a mermaid, and had "drawn a dud." Then, discovering a rather senior old buffer smoking his pipe under a yellowing mulberry tree, they turned, as if ashamed of their inquisitiveness, and more so of "being had," and precipitately fled. I saw them again in the mess at Itea that night. "Well, was it worth while?" I heard a third of their order ask them. "Was there anything to see?"

It is never worth while. There is never any-

thing to see. The young generation are incurious. Youth is no longer a quest. Those two subalterns, who were propelled up the steep of Delphi by some vestigial instinct which they could not have analysed or explained, and which left them a little shamefaced, were products of the age. A little keener, perhaps, than the average of their contemporaries, or they would never have stirred out of İtea until the lorry drew up at their camp which was to carry them along the wonderful road through the olive-groves of Amphissa to Bralo, whence they were to be borne incuriously by Larissa to Tempe and Salonica, which lies between Mount Olympus and the sea, a country in which, no doubt, the only landmark that existed for them in memory or anticipation was the canteen.

The richest images we old fogies carry in our minds are the spoils of places where there is nothing to see. I have often been to places for the simple reason that unseeing people have told me that there is nothing in them worth seeing. Only the other day I went to Jaca because a young man in Pamplona told me that Jaca was a small dirty town without a theatre or a casino, or even cinemas or trams—a place with no conveniences and nothing to do or see. He advised me to go to St Sebastian instead. It seems to me that in our outlook and youth's there is all the difference between Alice's dream and Alice's sister's dream.

I remember a night in Cairo. Five of us sat in the veranda of Shepheard's hotel. We had been exchanging enigmatic grins with the Sphinx, some of us for the first time. Two of us were from Mesopotamia, one from East Africa, one from Salonica, and one from Palestine. Youth does not enter into this scene. We were none of us under forty.

The East Africa man was a transport officer. He was for leave, but he had been submarined in the Mediterranean, and was kicking his heels in Cairo waiting for another boat. The Mesopotamia men were also on leave. One of them babbled of green fields. He was going to sit under a willow, he said, with his feet in running water, and watch the fish rise, and cast a fly when he was not too lazy. The man from Palestine, an aviator, and the man from Salonica were changing fronts.

“That was my fifth lion,” the East Africa man was saying. He was of the comfortable farmer type, half-yeoman, half-squire. In peace time he shot, fished, and hunted when he could afford it. His dream had always been big game, but until East Africa claimed him he had never shot anything bigger than a pheasant. “That was my fifth lion,” he told us casually when we had drawn from him bit by bit the kind of yarn with which Fenimore Cooper beguiles youth. “Our convoy was caught by heavy rain between posts—stuck for a week in the jungle fifty miles from anywhere. When they went on I was left—weak engine; thought it would be a matter of a day or two, but the rain came on, and I had to stick it another fortnight until it dried enough for the shop-car to get through. Food ran out after ten days, and I had to drink the radiator water. I had malaria pretty bad, and it wasn’t safe to sleep after dark even if one could, as those damned zombas (lions) were sniffing round all the time.”

Here the Salonica man broke in and discoursed learnedly of lions on friezes. He was an Oxford Don, and well over fifty, but his lean purse had never taken him as far as his beloved Ægean until in 1915 a knowledge of modern Greek had translated him in khaki to the haunts of Aphrodite.

He, too, had climbed the steep at Delphi—to the shrine of the oracle of Apollo,—of course, strictly on duty. The Don and his frieze talk set the other Mesopotamia man off at a tangent on the Persian lion. Was it really extinct? One of his sowars swore that he had seen one in the long grass near Dizful out Shuster way.

“We were rounding up some tribesmen,” he said, “who had been mixed up in a raid on the Cossacks, and were returning to their hills. I saw Jagat Singh’s horse jib and shy in a panic. He swore it was a lioness with cubs. The odd thing was, we were in the one locality where the Persian lion is supposed to survive, but Jagat Singh knew nothing about that.”

The man from Mesopotamia was the only one of us who had been a regular before the war. He was in the Indian cavalry, and had spent his leave every year trekking and shooting in the Himalayas, Burmah, and the Central Provinces. He was the youngest in spirit of our group, with the zest one used to have for the East before the world grew stale, a lover of sport, scenery, natural history, folklore, mountaineering, the psychology of the Asiatic, and the history of early civilisations. His field-service book was full of notes of the places he meant to go to, the animals he meant to shoot, the mountains he meant to climb, the tribes he meant to visit, “after the war”; but his job had taken him farther than he had ever dreamed of in the dull days of routine, drill, inspection, and cantonments.

Earlier in the evening he had been raving about Muscat and Shush, the Roman Susa, and the Shushan of the Bible, of a day’s partridge-shooting near Daniel’s tomb, and of a visit in an aeroplane to the shrine of the martyred Hussein at Kerbela. He described with great gusto “the Sinbad fleet”

of booms, buggalows, and bellams at Koweit, high and dry on the beach, with their beautiful curves and carved cutaway prows painted all over with figures like the signs of the Zodiac, and exuding a delicious smell of fish-oil. When the East Africa man told us about his vigil with the lions, he made a note of the locality, and he asked the Oxford Don to give him the references in Arrian and Strabo so that he might follow up the old Susa Persepolis road one day by Ahwaz, Bebehan, and Ram Hormuz. He wanted to know if it would take him near the Dashtiarzan valley, where he had heard there was the best ibex-shooting in Persia.

All this time the man from Palestine had said very little. Only he devised a new game for after the war—machine-gunning lions from aeroplanes, great sport for the Navy in the Red Sea. He was telling us about a forced landing near Jericho or Sinai or somewhere, and this carried him away to Darfur. All his Biblical reminiscences paled before Darfur.

“You were in Darfur?” the cavalryman asked enviously.

“Yes; you heard of our little show? I was in a Spad, and rounded up a small tribe on my own. We were beyond El Fasher, five hundred miles west of Khartum. They had never seen wheels on earth before, much less wings and wheels in the sky. They thought I was God and fell flat on their tummies—and all the while I had engine trouble.”

This was too much for the cavalryman. For quite ten minutes he wanted to chuck his job and join the Flying Corps. Then he decided that his show was too good to miss; it ought to take him right up to the Caspian. He meditated a moment, and then burst out—

“By Jove! it seems a rotten thing to say, but I believe I’m enjoying this — war. Of course,” he added, “I’d stop a bullet to-morrow if it would do any good.”

I never learnt whether the cavalryman stopped a bullet. As for the two young subalterns who climbed the steep at Delphi, they are dead in all probability, for they were young infantry officers, platoon commanders, of the generation who sacrificed themselves with such splendid nonchalance, and who, if any one had hinted that they were out of the ordinary, would have said, “Be damned to your heroics.”

They were not out of the ordinary, but the ordinary, as it proved, was good enough—sufficient even for the trench-bound life, which was hell. Youth walked into it with their eyes open, without a question, or even the luxury of a gesture, though generally with a true presentiment that its bounds were unescapable. Armageddon was a trap prepared by the devil for their particular generation. Naturally they came out of the pit with developed callosities. A certain insensitiveness to impressions was necessary to survival. Naturally, too, the post-bellum output of our schools and colleges is infected with their elder brothers’ tiredness. It will take a generation or two, I suppose, for youth to slip back into the illusions which we who opened our eyes on a more iridescent world still preserve.

We were lucky to have been born when we were. Twenty years later might have been too late. We might have preferred the gramophone to pine music and the cinema to the changing lights on the hills. “Twenty years ago,” as old Quondam said to me, delivering his soul in the club at Gulmarg, “the young subaltern used to come up in a tonga with his polo ponies, or if he left them

behind he would go off and shoot somewhere. Now he arrives in a motor with a gramophone and a box of records, plays golf or 'poodlefakes' all day, and dances in the evenings, though he doesn't seem really to enjoy it. Down below my youngsters don't take any interest in their men, and when they come up here they never leave the *marg*."

This seemed to me the test. The *marg* is a hollow depression in which folk play ball games, nothing so strenuous, of course, as cricket or football, a rather unsightly plateau covered with huts and go-downs like a station siding. Its convenience for social gatherings means that it has been divested of most of its native interests and attractions. The fascination of this caravanserai lies in the country accessible from it. Ride up to the edge of the cup, five or ten minutes on a *marg* pony, and you look over the shimmering plains of Kashmir to the snowy ranges of the north, incomparable in their majesty, markhor country, ravines haunted by red bear, virgin peaks to climb, and those all-enticing gateways to Central Asia, visible from Gulmarg, the road zig-zagging over the Woolar Lake to Gilgit and the Pamirs, and the corridor by the Sind valley over the Zogi-la to Tibet and Chinese Turkestan. The young "margling" is unaware of those corridors of romance. Yarkand, Kashgar, Bokhara, Khotan, have no meaning for him. No inspiration can equip him for "the golden journey to Samarcand," and it is doubtful if he could recall a single passage in a book of travel that would lend reality or outline to the uncharted country between Gilgit and Peking.

One puts it all down to the war, of course, remembering that one's chauffeur's billet used to overlook Queen Zobeide's tomb, and that the

waiter who brings one one's chop in Soho has returned from sentry duty at Babylon. Armageddon has flattened out everything, leaving nothing that has not become commonplace and familiar.

“Oh! withered is the garland of the war.
The soldier's pole is fallen—the odds is gone,
And there is nothing left remarkable
Beneath the visiting moon.”

Yet one wonders sometimes. Is it all the fault of Armageddon? Is it the lifting of the curtain that has surfeited the curiosity of youth? If the world beyond Acre and Trebizond were as little known as in Marco Polo's time, would they venture forth?

II.

Youth was happier in the East than in France. There came an escape from the trenches. Life was more varied, responsibility more individual. The side-shows of a side-show ramified in the most unexpected manner, and one never knew where the next adventure would be.

When I saw the Dunsterforce glide off into the unknown from Kermanshah in May 1918, I little thought that I was going to meet them less than a year afterwards scattered all over the East from Merv to Batum, or that I should be able to join up with the remnants of them by way of the Dardanelles, the Black Sea, and Caspian. Three months after the Armistice I ran into a nostalgic detachment of the M——'s at Merv, 1600 miles from their sea base on the Shatt-el-Arab. They had had their bellyful of adventure. But what an Odyssey! I asked for A. He was

away somewhere to the south of Lake Urmiah, a leader now of the Assyrians, of whom we had never heard on the Tigris. B. had been carrying arms through to the Jelus at Senna on the remote borders of Kurdistan. C. was with a detachment smoking out old Kuchik Khan in his thorn jungle of Gilan. D., a sallow, academic, bespectacled youth, told me about the last brush with these outlaws.

“We gave them hell in the end,” he said. “Mind you, we had been sitting on powder-barrels for months. They used to send us chits, skull and cross-bones with two daggers crossed. Reminded me of a slip out of the ‘Boys’ Own Paper.’ They swore they would wipe us out in Ramadan. The great day was on 21st July. Twelve thousand of them attacked our post at dawn, held by a weak company, the morning after the fast. We drove them off. Then they attacked Resht town—the Consulate, the bank, the bank house. We had to leave a small garrison in the post and go in and help. The whole tribe seemed to be out, and all the town up against us. We caught fellows skulking about with arms under their cloaks, and I had them all shot. We were two companies of M——’s and a company of Gurkhas, and we killed two hundred in the street-fighting. The Gurkhas rushed the Hôtel d’Europe, the Jungalis firing out of the windows. They killed every one in the house, all kukri work—I never saw such a shambles,—every one except a Russian chambermaid and an English civilian whom we found hidden in an empty vat.”

When the war broke out, D., who told me this, was a candidate for Holy Orders. He was going back to his theological college. His story has stuck in my mind, as it seemed odd that memories of scenes so primitive, bloody, and outlandish

could coexist with an intonation that was still academic.

The Turk was finished, but not adventure. Another lad in the same mess, from Perth or Aberdeen, told me how he had lately stopped a war, and a third how he had kidnapped a pretender to a throne. The pretender was none other than Salih-ud-Dowlah, the uncle of the Shah, who was out raising the Turcomans on the south-east shore of the Caspian, and playing for a kingdom of his own—a Hun-inspired adventurer, I believe, who was given his square of the draught-board to clear, ultimately, of course, for Wilhelm, but who played on for the mere love of the thing after the game was lost. The subaltern was given a ship, a sergeant, and twenty-five men, and sent out to arrest him. After following certain false trails he tracked Salih-ud-Dowlah down to the port of Ashuradez, where he landed at night, keeping his men concealed under hatches all day, like that other party in the belly of the horse at Troy.

The surreptitious landing, the stumbling in the dark through fields and orchards, the uncertainty as to the guide, the overpowering and disarming of the guard, the surrender of the courtly prisoner, make up quite a Stevensonian tale. The Shah's uncle embraced my friend when assured by him that his orders were to hand him to the British military authorities and not to the Persian Government. He became very attached to him on the voyage, played at least six games of chess with him every day, which he invariably won, and gave him on parting a silver wrist-watch to wear as a memento.

The boy who stopped the Georgian-Armenian war, or rather who suspended hostilities in the remote district where he happened to be, was

also a subaltern with two stars. He was at work there on some technical point connected with the railway when he heard of the trouble somewhere out Akhalkalaki way. There was no reason other than his British uniform why he should step in as arbiter. His khaki, however, was sufficient insignia; and one has a picture of him doubling into No Man's Land, authoritatively waving his white flag as the bullets whistle past, and crying out in English or Scotch, "Here, damn it all! drop it; this won't do!" For some occult reason both parties accept this speech as oracular; the firing ceases on either side; softer passions prevail. For the next few days the pacific mission is extended; the railway is neglected for the more serious affairs of State.

One was so used to playing odd parts on this front that the young engineer on the railway did not stop to analyse his feelings when he discovered that he was acting as fully authorised sole British plenipotentiary to two brand-new independent republics. His only comments as he told me the story touched on the extreme discomfort of the nights he endured during his brief diplomatic career in very close quarters with an Armenian family of refugees. It was the only house in the village with a roof to it, and they all slept in the same room, "the old man, the old woman, the children, the bugs, and the chickens."

But the Bolshevik was the new disturber of the peace. At last "the Rooshan bogey" of thirty years ago had materialised, and in the most unlooked-for form, an ensanguined but cowardly and enfeebled beast. At Baizam Ali I was not surprised to find our Indian cavalry "cooking their camp kettles in the palace of the Czar." In Trans-Caspia the remnants of the Dunsterforce and the East Persian cordon overlapped. Forty miles farther north,

at Annenkovo in the desert, facing the Bolshevik armoured train, and a bare hundred miles from Charjui, their bridge-head on the Oxus, I met other old friends of the Indian army, dwelling in kibitkas, the wicker and felt bird-cage tents of the Turcomans. They had just wiped the desert with the Bolsheviks. It was the fourth time, I think, and their Russian and Turcoman allies had played a meagre part in these engagements. I saw a Turcoman levy come in, herdsman, nomads, cultivators, with the loose unconstrained gait of men who move in large spaces—huge men, made to look huger by the enormous black or tawny busbies they wear, very high in the crown, covering the ears and descending to the nape of the neck, a round yard of fleece, undyed and untrimmed, with shaggy curls hanging down like tassels.

I had never seen Turcomans before. To look at them you would think they were as good material for troops as you could find in the East, but they were an undisciplined rabble, and one could only depend on them to save their own skins. When there was any fighting going on their policy was to “wait and see,” ready to clear up or clear off after the event. “They are better than the A—— Volunteers,” a subaltern explained to me. “They don’t attack, of course, and they don’t defend, but they will hover round and cut off stragglers when they find themselves in a majority of ten to one. Last Sunday when we mopped the Bolshies up they came in behind the crest of the wave and scuppered the whole train-load. And they didn’t waste any cartridges. They are good at cutting throats.” The only military virtue of the Turcomans, it appeared, was economy in ammunition after an engagement. But they are a hardy crowd and of a magnificent

physique, and it is quite possible that something might be made of them if they were well handled and trained. At Annenkovo I met Oraz Serdar, the son of Tekma Serdar, Skobelev's opponent at Geok Tepe, to whom he bore such generous tribute. He looked as if he had inherited his father's fibre.

The Turcomans and Russians never loved one another, but they were united for the moment by their common fear of the Bolsheviks and the retribution that would descend on them if the Tashkend army were to come down on Askhabad. Bolshevism was a relative term in Trans-Caspia in those days, and is probably so still. There were waverers in both camps, revolutions and counter-revolutions. Our presence at Merv and Askhabad was rendered possible by a Menshevist *coup d'état*. Most of the Menshevist officers in spite of their garb of democracy were royalists at heart. The political situation had its humours and romance. Merv, though one missed Ali Baba, had its compensations. The tragedy was to come a month or two later when our small force was withdrawn and the Red wave came flooding down to the Caspian.

I was in Russia then, but in the intervening months in one way and another I saw a good deal of the Middle East. I was at Tiflis and Baku, and the Black Sea ports, and I visited the Armenians at Samsun. Traffic was not yet resuscitated after the war, and His Majesty's Navy was put to strange uses. I remember H.M.S. *Dianthus* putting in at Ordu solely to land the maid-servant of the local bishop. And so at last I saw Trebizond, and found primroses and green hellebore in the fosse, and toad-flax and peillitory of the wall on the ramparts. All the plants that love old keeps were here too. This was in Feb-

ruary, and I was to see four springs that year. In the mountains behind Batum the rhododendrons were in bud. I joined an Intelligence officer on a tour a hundred miles into the interior, a country of mixed Armenian and Moslem population, to Artvin and Ardanuch. Ardanuch is the most dramatic little mountain town I have seen. The immense square rock above it might have been designed by the Almighty to receive the tables of the Law; the citadel is only accessible by ladders, and the gorges and chasms at its foot glow with copper and mauve and the rarer and subtler metallic hues peculiar to these mountains. No illustrator of Grimm could better it.

III.

I saw my next spring—it was in the same year—in Russia, but before this I had wandered far in the realms of Dis. When I went under the earth was frost-bound, and when I returned to the conscious world the wistaria was in blossom, and the starling was inhabiting the wooden box perched on a pole in the garden.

The Bolsheviks and Denikin's army were in the grip of typhus. The Bolsheviks used the scourge as a weapon, just as the Germans employed poisoned gas. When Deniken and his Volunteer army made their sweep to the Caspian in February, the Red army were dying in Vladikavkhaz at the rate of 700 a day. The dead were left unburied to spread contagion, packed in railway carriages, trucks, goods sheds, station buildings, and deserted houses. The waggons were left verminous. The Volunteer army, following on the heels of the Bolsheviks, at once contracted the plague.

The little white lice that swarm and pullulate everywhere, pensioners of the starved, unwashed, exhausted, and war-weary, had become the arbiters of destiny. They attacked me in the station at Novorossisk the very day I landed. There was a frightful crush at the booking-office. The lice from the lousy discovered one and battered on one as one pushed from door to door in the overheated waiting-rooms. The crowd were packed against the walls and lay thick on the floor, leaving a barely perceptible passage, Cossacks, most of them, in their weathered sheepskin cloaks and shaggy caps pulled down over the ears to the neck, each cap a hive of lice and fleas.

In the train I told Pashkoff that I had already been besieged. "Imagination," he said, and for a time I was persuaded. The irritation of the skin, I thought, must have been due to some subtle association of ideas. But I had not been thinking of vermin. The idea of typhus never entered my head. It was at Novo Cherkassk a fortnight afterwards that the enemy gripped me. I had in my pocket a pass for the armoured train. The Don Cossacks had rallied, and with the help of the Volunteer army were going to counter-attack and drive the Bolsheviks back to Lugansk. It seemed that Novo Cherkassk, the Cossack capital, the golden shrine, all the rich country by "the quiet Don," were to be distributed and inherited at the dictation of vermin. Novo Cherkassk had changed hands three times. The Cossacks had held it for nearly a year. Now the Bolsheviks were threatening it again. Climbing the hill on which the cathedral stands with its glittering domes, I had a feeling that I was entering a city devoted to a cause. The gilded shrine dominated everything, and the broad roads and boulevards leading up to it from the valley all

met at its gates, whence one looked down on the plain—an almost infinite horizon across the broad delta of the Don with its network of channels glittering in the slant rays of the sun.

But I did not feel in the least bit like a Cause. I felt most abysmally weak and tired, in that condition in which a gradient is a serious proposition, and one wishes that one went downstairs instead of upstairs to bed. I hated causes and the pains they brew. Yet there was nothing the matter with me—nothing one could put a name to. I had no fever yet. To return to Ekaterinodar was unthinkable. To-morrow I was going to meet Denikin in the armoured train, and assist in the repulse of the Bolsheviks. I had come all the way to the Kuban for that. The snow lay deep in the streets, and the wind was icy and penetrating. There was no untenanted bed in Novo Cherkassk. I had spread my valise in the corridor of the Quartermaster-General's office. Here one's head vibrated to tramping feet. I remember interminable interviews with officials, for my pass had to be franked. Pashkoff guided me through all this. I had only to sit in a chair and look as if I were a sane and attentive person. I had been most importunate about that pass. It was impossible to go back now and explain that I had not used it because I felt ill at the last moment.

During the next few days I thought I was in the armoured train. I remember Pashkoff dumping me in trains, and droshkys, and crowded waiting-rooms in which there was no room to lie down. It was only at Rostoff that I found we were going the wrong way. The trains were all late—we had to wait seventeen hours for one,—and when they arrived they would stop for hours outside the station. The roofs of the carriages were packed with refugees. Pashkoff tended me

through all this. He was "white bone," as the Russians say, an aristocrat, but as simple and unspoilt as a peasant. I think he was the most natural man I ever met, and perhaps the kindest and most selfless and philosophic. Before the war he had been in the Czar's bodyguard. Now he had exchanged the cuirass and shining helmet with the double-headed eagle for the rough, brown, woollen tcherkess of the Cossack. His estates had all gone, and he did not know whether his people were alive or dead. He carried all his worldly goods in a saddle-bag of Persian carpet cloth, tied together with a bit of cord, and was still a chivalrous idealist. I clung to Pashkoff as a peasant *in extremis* to his ikon.

When I came to in the typhus ward at Ekaterinodar a week or so afterwards, he was standing by my bed and greeted me with that wistful smile one associates with unexpected homecomings. The doctors and nurses, too, looked pleased and surprised, for my climbing out of the pit was an event. There was something familiar in their incredulous faces, and in the childish sense of dignity that came over me—the vanity of the resurrected after being officially dead. It was not the first, or the second, time that I had astonished the medicos.

The ward was packed. Men who should have been defending the liberties of the Kuban and the Don were lying by my side. Some lay still. Some had entered the gulf; others had emerged from it. Those who were immersed were fighting, not Bolshevists, but illusions. Only death, or the attainment of the illusion, could still these voices or bring sleep or peace. One man with revolving palms and rolling eyeballs bellowed and trumpeted. All through the night the convalescents execrated him and asked that he might be taken

away. He was the most aggressive disturber of the peace. Others raved more gently, rhythmically. In the early hours the pandemonium merged into something orchestral, like the chorus of the frog-pond—the same anthem,—only one missed the note of praise.

It was strange to think that for days I must have been in one of those boarded beds—no doubt a disturber of the peace, left bound in the morning, the mind only ranging unchained. Gradually I recognised figures familiar in my dreams. Stolid Ivan's face appears a friendly agency now, no longer a menace. It was always Ivan who rose from his dark corner and laid his hand on my chest, pressing me down when the droshky, or the sledge, or the stretcher waited by the door. There had been a Bolshevik tribunal. One was arraigned. Passages had been quoted from one's books. Silent witnesses had been summoned who spoke in whispers to the judge. It was all very stern and quiet and just. Judgment was deferred till the morning. I could hear the firing-squad coughing in the antechamber and gossiping in careless undertones. One of them kept tapping the stone floor with the butt of his rifle. The droshky was the only escape, but whenever I stirred Ivan pinned me down. There was a friend who sat by my side in court, with little notes of advice to drop into my hand, which I was afraid to open for fear of compromising him. They are now in the ghostly Ivan's keeping.

In Sister Marinsky I recognised the lady who stood like an allegorical figure at the crossways. One always passed her in an armoured train, or a stretcher, or a sledge. It was at the crest of a snow pass with an easy gradient on each side. One was given one's choice, and I do not remember any doubt or hesitation or fear. I banked every-

thing and chose the southern slope. Some record was taken, which she placed in a niche under a jutting rock where there was no snow.

Towards morning I slept. The disturber of the peace was tranquil. He had died, choosing, no doubt, in his fever and perplexity the northern slope. Before daylight they had carried him away.

When I was still in the hospital, my dear Russian nurse, Sister Marinsky, the guardian at the crossways, succumbed to the typhus. She recovered, but the accursed idealists shot her in the retreat. It all seems too hideous to be real, an inverted allegory, all the decencies of life in the skin of a fawn caged with a python. I have always thought of Russia as a land outside reality, more as a ghostly dimension than a country in which real people lived ; and I see it now, ravaged by the white lice and Bolshevists, through the same cruel illusory mist. When I escaped from Ekaterinodar, I felt as if I had been living in Mars or purgatory, cut off from everything familiar save in dreams or books.

IX.

A SYMPOSIUM ON THE TIGRIS

A SYMPOSIUM ON THE TIGRIS.

I WAS quite convinced when I woke up in the typhus ward that I had been dead, and I knew that if I was not careful I should slip back again ; but as there were certain things I longed to keep, and which I feared I might not find in the other state, I fought my way back into life. It was a struggle of days and weeks, and I hung on to my pieces of gold like a miser.

Does one keep them when one changes dimensions ? That is the most absorbing problem in life. I am inclined to think that one does if they are worth caring for and if one cares for them enough. Survival, I believe, is largely a question of will and faith. I knew a man who believed that he had been to the other side and come back, and he was so clear and certain about it that he more than half persuaded me. Farquhar's story is worth telling, but I must dramatise it a little, or say nothing about it. Farquhar, as I am portraying him, is not one but two or three people, what the novelists call a composite character, which means that I have "touched him up a bit," for one cannot put people just as they are straight into books. Nor does the doctor exist, nor I—not the ego of this story. Also, to be perfectly honest, I have tampered with the scene. The background is true, and the inanimate characters ; the others I have grouped in as an artist sticks in trees, and for the purposes of disguise.

Farquhar would haunt me if I made him recognisable. On the other hand, I know that he would like me to publish his story. He told it to encourage us.

Picture then a warm April day, a keen air, a fresh breeze after the rain, and the smell of cut grass and clover. It was the one fortnight in the year in Mesopotamia that reminds one of home. We had taken the knock again at Sannaiyat, but there had been no gun- or rifle-fire for hours. The lull amounted to something like an armistice.

The three of us—the doctor, Farquhar, a sick Oxford Don who was going down-stream in the first hospital ship, and myself—were in a mahaila moored to the bank. We were tired of mortality, but as though to remind us of it a European, a Turk, and an Indian came floating down-stream and made every effort to board our boat. The Turk was persistent, and when we pushed him off with a stick he came floating back in an eddy of the stream and seemed determined that the little *Snark* should give him a berth. He visited us twice at tiffin and again in the afternoon.

The doctor and I, filled with the sad sense of the impermanence of things, were discussing the hereafter. It was an ideal day; larks were singing; the smell of the clover was sweet; the only incubus was the intrusive Turk.

We had dismissed the idea of reincarnation. "Can you imagine," the doctor was saying, "being born again in a little girl with embroidered drawers."

We were both optimists; both counted that death could not mean a veto on everything that we had made a part of ourselves. As for the idea of being snuffed out, we scoffed at it. "I would prefer Calvin's hell," the doctor said. "One would at least be interested in the stoking."

Here the Don broke in, dropping *La Vie*, and knocking the ashes out of his pipe. "Don't you worry, old thing. It's not half bad fun being dead. One's old carcass is nothing. For the last nine years my spirit has dragged mine along. It's good enough to sleep in, that's all."

Both of us stared at Farquhar. He was not a man who was much given to talk. He was an Assyriologist who had excavated at Nineveh before the war and knew a bit of Arabic, and so, as he explained, "wangled" a job on the Staff out of the War Office—G.S.O. 3, Intelligence, or something of the kind. I forget exactly what he was. All I know is that he had bluffed the medical board, and that he had something wrong with his inside and might go out any minute.

"It's not half bad fun being dead," he repeated. "You know I went under in Serbia. My first feeling was surprise, as when one absent-mindedly opens the wrong door in a strange house or hotel and steps into a strange room with a strange person in it. Just that second before one is able to piece things together, where the furniture is all wrong and the fireplace ought to be the other side of the room, and one wonders who the unexpected person is who rises like a note of interrogation from the arm-chair. No dream, or trance, or nonsense like that. I did not feel cold, or detached, or left out of things in the least.

"Once through the door the new state soon dawns on one. There is no shock or crisis in the passage, least of all any sadness. The new world is very much like the old—or like the best of it, with all the disagreeables left out. The fears folk have about the other life are all bogies. There is nothing in that haunting dread of separation with which priests and atheists frighten one. There is no solitude or waiting. The people you want are

with you all the time. The only difference is that when we are alive we do not know it; it is being dead that gives one the faculty of knowing.

“You know everything when you are dead, or rather, all you want to know. You need not know anything unpleasant unless you deliberately think about it; but the spirit is so lightened, once it is out of the body, that you grow more interested in happy airy things and think less about things that are heavy and earthy.”

Here the old boy pulled out his pouch with the Balliol arms on it. The Don was as ugly as sin. He might have been any age, and looked as if he had spent the best part of his life with his mummies; only his smile irradiated him. In complexion he was almost grey, with a suspicion of yellow, and he would have been quite bald if it were not for a thin wisp of yellow hair, the colour of Tigris water, which stuck up in the middle of his pate like the tuft of a pochard.

“You see,” he went on, “the one channel of communication with things that are living or have been alive is sympathy; where there is no sympathy the current is switched off, the medium won’t work. The ghosts of the senses, the memory, image, echo of them, only survive in happiness; pain is blotted out. And that is what all the saints, Pirs, Gurus, and holy men, mean when they talk about heaven, only they haven’t been quite dead, so they can’t explain it. Hell must mean that the avenues which admit the happy ghosts are closed, so that the memories, echoes, senses, images that recur are only of sadness and unkindness. When I was dead I could smell hay or newly-cut grass, or mint or eglantine, but I couldn’t smell vinegar or furniture polish.”

Farquhar’s paradise seemed very credible to my optimism. It was such a simple solution,

stripped of allegory, and consistent with the promise of recompense in all creeds. I more than half believed it at the time. I remembered it afterwards in Russia when I struggled back out of the underworld. I remember seeing my body on the bed in the typhus ward. The sanitar had put up rough high boards all round the cot to keep me inside when I struggled, so that it looked deep and dark like a pen or sty, and my limp body, huddled on the straw mattress at the bottom half covered by a blanket, reminded me of a heifer or a pig. I had no longer any interest in it. I watched them making coffins and little white wooden crosses in the yard outside, and the smell of the sawdust was sweet. The doctor, Zvegintzeff, his watch ended, was leaning out of the window smoking. It was my tobacco, and I was glad of it. I enjoyed his pipe. This exactly fits in with Farquhar's experience. If you saw any one smoking you would taste the tobacco—that is, if you liked it. If you didn't care about it, you would only see the smoke.

“Serbia had been a wonderful mystery,” Farquhar continued. “Now I understood it all, even the Bulgarians, and forgave them everything. Those tunnelling dreams, that burrowing under mountains, had not been in vain. I was one with Nature, as Shelley would have said. Every flower had as much expression for me as a pansy, and I knew why one looked pleased and another glum, as if they were gossiping about the air and soil and sun. Very simple thought-reading this! Very simple emotions! You know what the owl feels like when he makes that comfortable clucking inside. I understood why a mare of mine was a sensitive, as the spiritualists would call it. I saw the things which horses and dogs see, but which men do not see, not very terrifying after all, no

'modification of space,' as your bogey-mongers would tell you, but figments of their own vestigial fears. They are not philosophers, our friends; but they have feelings of their own, which are near enough to thought."

The sun was setting over the broad swollen Tigris, and one could see the lake flashing across the dark strip of land between it and the river. The Don threw off his staff cap, revealing his wisp of hair, which looked as if it had been stuck on, and might blow off any minute.

"I don't mind telling you fellows," he said, stroking his head to see if the *panache* was in its place, "that I am married. Of course, that makes all the difference. If I weren't I wouldn't bother my head about being dead or alive. I tell you all these intimate things because it will make it easy for you when your own turn comes to go out.

"Well, one of the first things I saw when I was dead was a parrot which V. and I—I call my wife V.—watched for an hour in a mangrove at Gaya. He clung to the bark of the tree we were sitting under, thrust his head into a crack, worked his shoulders in and tried to enter. Then he gave up and perched on a bough outside, uttering challenging cries and clapping his sides with his wings and vibrating all over. V. and I felt his excitement and longed to know what it was all about. I said there was a store in the crevice just out of reach, but when the mate flew out V. was triumphant. 'I told you it was a love-affair,' she said, 'but, of course, your mind did not rise above grubs.' When I saw the scene again in what you would call the other world, I knew that I was right. Both were after fruit—not grubs, by the way. The only difference was that No. 2 could squeeze in and No. 1 couldn't. When No. 2 came out, No. 1

chived her to see what he could get. I wanted to tell V. and watch her unbelief and the dawning logic in her eyes with which she would confound me in spite of proof, for she never would recant. That Gaya parrot was one of the first creatures I saw after I was dead, and I did not know then that V. was with me all the time, or, rather, that there was no time or division of past, present, or future, or any possible separation in being or thought between people who were meant to be together. I can't tell you the best things about being dead. The whole story is too intimate. But I have always wanted to tell somebody this. After all, you won't find anything more satisfying in religion.

“And all this intimacy with things and being so near everybody does not dull one's curiosity. It widens and deepens it. One is off on a new kind of hunting, a voyage of discovery. You know that warm interested feeling one has for a way of living remote from one's own, which one would not share even if one could; how one watched the Greek girls at Chrisso shaking down the olives with their long sticks, or the Enthas of Lake Inle poised like birds on their thwarts, leaning over the water spearing fish—the glimpse of the daily round, the sense it leaves of recurrence, and the feeling one has, half of envy, half of relief, as one turns one's back on it and goes one's old familiar trodden way. When one is dead one's interest in everything and everybody increases, and one is never tired. All one's little perplexities are solved.

“There was the case of the archimandrite. I lay again with the picquet where we had scratched a *gîte* out of the camel-thorn on a ledge above the pass. It was north of Mendali, on the Persian Luristan border, where the desert meets the hills.

The desert behind us was white, streaked with inky black palm clumps like the shadows of cloud. But our eyes were stretched north-east beyond the red chasms of churned earth to where the branch roads to Kermanshah enter the hills. At last we saw a moving group far away coming towards us ; it seemed to surge round a bobbing yellow thing, which for a long time we could not distinguish. It must have been an hour after we sighted it that we made out the palanquin with its great saffron-coloured awning. It halted in the desolation midway between the two ranges of hills. Then it began to move again, but instead of advancing it turned back. We were all intrigued by the palanquin, and fell to guessing what had sent it on its purposeless journey to nowhere in the heat and sand. I began to think of it as a mirage or apparition ; but in the evening a subaltern of a cavalry patrol told us that the yellow awning concealed an archimandrite—or archimandrake, as he called it,—some Assyrian or Nestorian patriarch, or possibly an Armenian, who had been six weeks on the road from Urmiah. There had been preparations for him in Mendali, and nobody knew why he turned back.

“ Now, as I watched it I was aware of the will within the palanquin that moved it, as the spirit prompts the body, making it wobble and hesitate and stop and turn on its tracks. All our guesses had been wrong. It was a wave of home-sickness. There was danger to the patriarch in Urmiah, but the homing instinct was too strong. It had nearly sent him swinging back at Hamadan ; under the rock-carvings of Bisotun he had given the order to turn, but his bearers had not heard him. Now the call was irresistible, and I saw the pictures in his mind, the monastery by the lake, a white-washed chamber

with niches in the wall, a bed, a crucifix. Through the open door I could see hollyhocks blowing in the garden outside. There was a great mortar and pestle by the steps, and a strong, broad-waisted old lady was standing by it, her honest, weathered, wrinkled face full of kind thoughts and cares. Then, when sleep overcame the patriarch and he fell into happy dreams, I saw the hollyhocks scampering along the furrows of a field, some in white hoods, some in pink, beckoning to him and dancing in front of his palanquin like little elves.

“Then I was in an English garden and saw the bore. I remembered how talking to him and trying to fix one’s mind on what he said was like wading through acres of tissue paper, and how when I saw him coming my soul wanted to creep into a dark corner. Now I was in a dark corner. At first I was glad that I was dead; but when I watched him and saw the solitude he made all round him, and how lonely he was, I was sorry, but before I had time to feel unhappy about it he melted away, and I only saw two young people who had been hiding from him in a shrubbery, and the delighted signs they made to each other as his broad unconscious back disappeared down the drive.

“Of course, one cannot help seeing sad things and feeling sad about them; but the poetry of calamity is uppermost, and the ‘somehow good’ reassurance behind it all which one called religion has been put on trial, and one knows that everything that suffers will become as free of suffering as oneself. One is omnipresent, as it were, not merged or inherent, but watching outside, yet much nearer everything, much more akin. It is difficult to describe, but one is not absorbed. Do not believe there is anything in that cold idea of the universal essence. The individual is in-

destructible. You remember those two beautiful things of Rupert Brooke's, 'Tiare Tahiti' and 'The Great Lover.' Both are wrong. Songs do not disappear in song; love does not replace lovers; mouths are not one with Mouth; and that dreadful farewell picture in 'The Great Lover' is almost perverse. He hits truth, though, in his sonnet about the *Psychical Research* people."

I remembered the lines Farquhar had in his mind—

"Learn all we lacked before; hear, know, and say
What this tumultuous body now denies,
And feel, who have laid our groping hands away,
And see, no longer blinded by our eyes."

The quatrain had always seemed to me the apotheosis of the Heaven evolved in the muddy mind of "Fish"—

"And in that Heaven of all their wish
There shall be no more land, say fish."

Now, thanks to the Don's adventures, Brooke's hedging gibe at himself and at his dreams was stripped of its mockery. He and Farquhar had the same faith; the doctor and I were willing converts. In the most mournful surroundings we formed a small company of optimists, confident that our healthy earth-hunger would survive, that the covenant we had made with things would not be broken, that the divine ego in us was immortal. We've despatched two bugbears, I thought; now out goes the third—middle stump!

None of us were content with merely playing our part in "the One Spirit's plastic stress." The doctor in his own racy way poured pity on the votaries of Absorption. The universal essence, he said, was the heavenly counterpart of Utopian

Bolshevism. And the Don told us more about the freedom of the spirit and how happy he was when he discovered that death did not mean an end to encounters.

“Did you see your old Assyrians?” I asked him; “Tiglath-Pileser and his crew.”

“No; they must have gone on. One is not earthbound for ever, you know. Being dead, as one calls it, is not the end. It is only a phase. I am certain of this, because I knew nothing about the planets and stars—whether they were worlds with life in them, or only points of light,—and as long as there is more to know there must be other doors. One will have to go through them some day, I suppose, and make other journeys, though one may have little inclination for it. But there is nothing terrible in these passages, nothing like the false dread we used to have of dying. Once we are through the first door we leave behind for ever the fear—so utterly desolating—that we may have to explore alone.”

At this moment we saw the face of the Turk staring up at us from the backwater, his brow illumined by a yellow light out of the west. “I suppose old Abdul is up with his Peris,” the doctor said, giving his earthly part a kindly prod with the boat-hook. The Don’s story had divested mortality of half its offence. As the evening wore on the visits of the insistent corpse became less of an intrusion; barriers were broken down; our sympathies expanded, and I had the picture of the old Osmanli winging his way to his celestial harem, embarked “on his adventures brave and new.”

We fell to the old theme again. “It’s hunting I want,” the Don said. “There are heaps of things I want to find out—I wasn’t dead long enough,—and heaps of folk I want to hunt with

again, even if it is only for lichens in the moon."

"For my part," the doctor said, "I am all for peace. Give me quiet, no hurry or crowds, or dressings or wounds. I should like a spreading tree, a willow for choice, and a babbling brook to dip one's feet in, and the next angel a very long way off."

"Make it a lime-tree in June with the bees humming in it and shaking down the pollen on the lawn."

"Or a pine with its own music, and the snows glinting through it."

"Or an orchard of almond in bloom, pink flowers, blue sky, white mountains."

"Throw in a bottle of Pommard and a new story by X."

But here the beat of a screw disturbed our symposium. It was the launch which was to take Farquhar to the ship.

That was the last we saw of the Don. Instead of Pommard for a stirrup-cup we gave him whisky and Tigris. The launch bore him off. The doctor and I lifted him in just as it was getting dark, a feather-weight, shrunken body and match-like legs and arms, little more than a bundle of loose, ill-fitting uniform on which the incongruous red tabs never seemed in place. Not a medal on his coat—his adventures were not of that kind,—but on his face the imprint of the vision and the spirit, that "fearless and unperplexed, when I seek battle next" look, which I shall never forget, and the brave, challenging, conquering, irradiating smile.

X.

THE TYRANNY OF OBJECTS

THE TYRANNY OF OBJECTS.

I.

IN a life of wandering I early discovered that one's happiness depends a great deal on the paucity of one's possessions. The bachelor's rule should be never to possess anything that he cannot squeeze into a yakdan. Half the sufferings of the Anglo-Indian memsahib arise from her inability to fall in with this philosophy. Minerva, in her life of migrations, is always leaving things behind—furniture, children, china, dogs, knife-boards, meat-safes, hats, and all the superfluity of objects that refuse to submit to the confinement of packing-cases, or to being sewn up like mummies in bales.

“Bôj” is the expressive Indian word for luggage. A very good word, with its sound of dead inanimate weight, and its suggestion of incubus, a malevolent vitalised incubus. “Bôj” would be a good name for a popular Hindu god—a god to be appeased. And it might be included in the Anglo-Indian pantheon, as it weighs no less heavily on the spirits of sahibs than on the backs of coolies.

It was in a novel of Bourget's, I think, that I came across the delightful old Frenchman who was “*affranchi de la tyrannie des objets.*” I have felt a spiritual kinship with him ever since. Not that I lay any claim to asceticism. Give

me a pipe or a bottle of wine, or, better still, a tin of smuggled tobacco, and I am your humble servant; but I must confess I am apt to judge the ordinary gift by its girth. I know that my feigned satisfaction on the receipt of presents is the most miserable piece of acting. I can't even write a plausible letter of thanks. A new object means something else to pack. It is, or it ought to be, impossible to leave presents behind. And that is why, I am afraid, I have learnt to look Minerva's gift-horses in the mouth with base suspicions, discovering in them some ulterior household use.

Minerva has never understood my enfranchisement. In the matter of ornaments or furniture or clothes I pride myself that my instinct for the elimination of superfluities amounts to something like genius in the squaring of comfort with the economies and freedom of life. But Minerva has always resolutely refused "to pig it." I tell her that she cannot look into a shop-window without seeing an object that is "sure to come in useful some time." This she denies. Her purchases are contingent economies, she argues. Chintzes, embroideries, cretonnes, carpets, curtains, mats, silk, crockery, china, old brass accumulate; and I have noticed that on the eve of departure from anywhere, her hat-boxes, suit-cases, dressing-case, valise, trunks are always inadequate. I have become an adept at sitting on lids, adjusting straps, humouring refractory locks, and generally reducing bulk by what Dr Johnson would have called "fundamental physical pressure," though I am afraid that in my case it is too often the triumph of matter over mind.

But to be perfectly fair to Minerva, she has conceived certain ingenious economies—in space, that is to say. And to the Anglo-Indian mem-

sahib economy in space is the greatest economy, as it includes all others—economy in effort, tissue, temper, and ultimately in expense. Minerva it was who devised the method of packing our boots—one of hers in one of mine. And there was the purchase of those small lace-mats for the table from the Chinaman in the bazar. They go under glasses and plates, and a big one in the centre under the flowers, instead of a cloth. It is an extraordinarily dainty arrangement. Of course it meant a new polished oak table, which became a too essential part of our household furniture to leave behind; but it was a sacrifice to the Graces; and a more important point was that one could get all one's table-linen into the drawer of a small writing-desk, and the dhobie's casualty list dwindled.

Minerva's taste is infallible. The natural defect of this virtue, of course, is that her attachment to objects is aggravated. She has an eye for old brass. The merchants from Kabul and Yarkand have never imposed upon her. If she kept an "antiqua" shop and made a business of buying and selling she might amass a fortune. Only she could never be induced to sell.

The same week she bought a large jail-carpet, a Benares brass table, and a carved walnut Srinagar sideboard. The carpet was an extremely good bargain, I admit, and very handsome, a deep rich wine colour with the Swastika mark in black all along the edges. But we hadn't a room big enough to put it in, and it would have been a crime to have cut it up. Besides, as Minerva reminded me, we were hourly expecting a move.

One would have thought that in India women-kind would learn to dread the shadow of Bôj, but experience never seems to daunt them. I remember our preparations for our first move.

It was from Devagiri to the State of the progressive Raja who liked English people and English ways. We had packed up most of our belongings. Transport was simple. Bullock-carts from house to house, and the whole distance little more than a hundred miles. I remember the creak of the last bullock-cart receding down the drive like the dirge of a drunken violin, the treble in the orchestra, of which the bass was the moan of the Persian wheel. If all had gone well, or ill perhaps I should say, we were to have unpacked on the evening of the following Sunday at a particularly poisonous firepit, which we will call Agni Hotrodu, where Minerva insisted that she would stay on with me through the first months of the hot weather. That night I got the joyous telegram, and the next morning I was on my way to the frontier. Minerva went to Darjeeling, and then, as the Tibetans proved characteristically unaccommodating, home, where I joined her afterwards on furlough. We did not unpack that *bôj* for nearly two and a half years.

Often on the frontier when we were reduced to a 20-lb. kit, I was glad of the philosophy that liberated me from the tyranny of objects. Very rarely did the parcel post reach our advance camp, and the General Commanding and the *drabi* smoked the same brand of bazar cigarettes. "Tau," I heard one day, "there is a parcel for you—a large parcel. If there is any 'baccy in it, don't forget——" I strode to the post-office babu's tent, full of generous resolutions, and carried off a bulky package to the mess. My friend sat down beside me with his empty pouch as I broke the string, tore off the paper and cardboard, and unfolded—Minerva's riding-boots.

Minerva's riding-boots! I can imagine a mal-

evolent wrinkle on the stony features of the grim god Bôj. The new pair had been forwarded to me by our blundering agents in Bombay; the old pair which they replaced were the first objects that we unearthed from the first packing-case we opened after we returned to India. A quiet interjection from Minerva prepared me for the worst. Minerva's wonderful composure and restraint are pitched to occasion. Her tranquillity is greatest in a crisis. "It's wet," I heard; "it's sticky . . . ants . . . do come."

I stood by her side over the packing-case and looked in. A large jar of liquid ginger had burst and spilt its contents into her riding-boots. These were being consumed. I saw one palpably move. Underneath were the remains of what had once been a cheddar, the hard and shelly ramparts of a castle besieged from within. Remember that Minerva had packed for a week only, and it was lucky she had put in nothing more perishable than the cheese. The wreck of the jar was evidently recent. Bôj had kept this up his sleeve until the last, probably administering a jolt to the truck in a siding a day or two before it reached us. The partial decomposition of objects that had become the arena and were still being overrun by the warring pensioners of Bôj was the proof. The sticky stream had descended into the interstices of the packing-case. I remember a lampshade; a tea-cosy; the cover of a chesterfield; a clock; books and pictures; the Roman nose invidiously singled out for elision from the portrait of Minerva's aunt; Minerva's Browning—the poet had a theme here for a new Sibrandus; my De Quincey, gilt-edged, vellum, sixteen volumes, a college prize. The "silver-fish" had had their innings first. Generations had banqueted here of whom the pampered offspring fell intoxicated

as one shook the leaves of the volumes, or from the crevices between the picture and the warped frame, drunken yet clumsily agile, like real fish transferred from their element to air.

And so it was with all the objects that Minerva had collected to mitigate barbarism and civilise our Ishmaelitish existence at Agni Hotrodu. The only bit of luck we had was that the ginger-jar had held together until after the Trojan garrison that emerged from the cheese had concluded their epic encounters, devouring each other and what else there was to devour.

One could imagine the advance of these myrmidons to glut their obscene appetite in the stream of golden lava, into which they would fall engulfed, the prey of succeeding hosts in their turn engulfed. But the picture is too horrid to pursue. Horrid enough, one would think, to unseat the tyrant who resides in the idols of the shrine at which Minerva worships. Great constancy is presumed in the votary to whom after many such shocks the sovereignty of objects remains undeposed.

My own profane sensations in the moment of catastrophe are of small account. I was literally outside the temple. All I remember is being filled with admiration at the fortitude of Minerva standing tearless amidst her fallen, stained, ravaged, and broken gods. I wished she could have been less Spartan. Consolation would have been an impertinence, and I was silent, knowing that it is Minerva's way to be as quiet as a nun when she is feeling anything but benedictory inside.

I was put to salvage-work. A great deal might yet be saved.

When the cases were all unpacked and I reviewed the objects scattered on the floor and

ranged against the wall like things dug up from the strata of past incarnations, strange, or dimly familiar, or altogether forgotten, I knew that, if only I could have comforted Minerva, I would not have greatly cared if the whole dump had been destroyed.

My philosophy of unattachment was vindicated, but I forbore to point the moral. After those early days I learnt to shed an incarnation like a slough. When loss or breakage stirred even my Laodicean profanity I thought of the dump at Agni Hotrodu, and was consoled.

II.

If any one had told us in our last migration as our bôj was going to the station in a bullock-cart, that it would arrive in a bullock-cart at the destination which was to be our ultimate bourne, we should have been either incredulous or sunk in speculative woe. If the same clairvoyant had added "after a 6000-mile sea-voyage," a weight would have been lifted from our spirits, as we were both of us consumedly tired of the East. After quoting the mileage, I need not give the reader a hundred guesses as to the habitat of the bullocks. They were of the Pyrenean breed. One knows the equipage: the yoked fawn-coloured oxen of the Pyrenees, gentle-eyed, strong, with the shaggy coiffure of sheepskin on their foreheads, the same tint as their coats, and the lean, shaven, ascetic-looking Basque walking in front with his long hazel stick held erect or sloping on his shoulders, swinging round every few yards to exhort his cattle or prod them gently on the back. Beautiful, slow, sweet-smelling indolent

beasts, Minerva loved them, largely at first because they were unhumped and not of the East.

We had neither of us a thought of the Basque country when we left Bombay, but the spirit guided us there, and the physician forbade adventures farther north. The villa between the mountains and the sea was irresistible. A board in the garden directed us to the house-agent's, and notified that it was to let or sell: in five minutes, save for the signing of the *acte*, it was ours. Minerva went straight in and bought it from M. Biriadou, over the counter, so to speak, as if it had been a hat or a ham. We had been equally captivated, but as we left the agent's I was already thinking of the villa as one of Minerva's "objects," in the same category as the jail-carpet, the Turkoman rug, the carved walnut Srinagar sideboard, the Benares brass table. "Thank God," I said outside, "we won't have to pack it." Then the brilliant idea entered my head that we could use it as a receptacle: it would swallow up all our dumps; it might mean that we would never have to pack again. Little did I understand then how a mere habitation might affect one's philosophy of life.

The villa on the bleak December day on which we took over possession was very beautiful to the eye, but lacking in the essentials of comfort. We arrived in a *bourrasque*. The pine-trees were swaying and sighing in the garden; the rain beat against the windows; Minerva's coat and my overcoat were sodden. On this soaking wet day the great fireplace in the hall gave promise of cosiness. We had a fire lighted at once, but the smoke issued from the grate in suffocating volumes at an angle of forty-five, flooding the house. We sent Félicie to implore M. Biriadou to come. Rapid consultation. Whether a *rideau*

was needed to keep the smoke in its proper place, or perhaps the chimney was *bouchée*, or we could put in a *salamandre*—an anthracite stove with a pipe connecting with the chimney. But we didn't like the salamander; it was an ugly comfortless thing. At last the agent admitted there had never been a fire in the grate. Was not the house warmed by the *chauffage central*? The *cheminée* was only to look at, *pour regarder*, after all. It gave the house an air *plus gai*.

"The gayest thing in a house," I observed, "in winter, at any rate, is a crackling wood fire."

But no. The agent was not of my opinion. The English fashion was droll. The heat escaped up the chimney instead of warming the room.

"The Britisher," Minerva explained, meaning me, "doesn't know that he is warm until he feels the heat of the fire licking the back of his legs."

M. Biriadou departed, saying that he would send for the *fumiste* and the *ramoneur*.

"Don't," I wrote to my son at school, airing my newly-gotten French, "mix up as I did the *fumiste* and the *ramoneur*. It is as bad as confusing the *marchande de poisson* and the *poissonnière*. One goes up the chimney and comes down as black as a crow, while the other stands by the kitchen-range, possibly in a stiff white collar, and gives expert scientific advice. Not that the *fumiste* would feel insulted at being taken for the *ramoneur*. France is a much too democratic country for that."

After *déjeuner* Minerva and I discussed French and English comfort. The arm-chairs of the villa were elegant, but, like the *cheminée*, they left much to be desired.

"The French are great at essentials," I said. "Look at their bedrooms. In the humblest

French house there is no scamping of the bed, the fount and focus of existence. The beds and the *armoires* are magnificent, but these easy-chairs are no more use than a sick headache. And the *cheminée*—we must get that right.”

Minerva was wise in her remark about the Britisher and the moral support of fires. He may be accounted a dull phlegmatic dog by the Frenchman, and not overblessed with the gifts of imagination, but in the matter of fires or heating his nerves or senses are the conductors. I really believe I have been more conscious of warmth lying in front of a huge pine-log fire in a mountain camp just under the snow-line, with alternate sides of me roasted or frozen, as I turned them to, or away from, the blaze. On the other hand, though I have frizzled in Mesopotamia, and sampled equatorial mugginess of a dozen different degrees, I have never suffered so miserably from heat as in a Russian house in winter when they stoke up the furnace in the wall, an enormous, closed, upright, cylindrical oven, and line the window-sills and the edges of the panes of glass with pink and white cotton-wool. Everything in Russian character may be explained by that purgatorial hibernation.

“It’s air, not cold, they are afraid of,” Minerva observed. “We are lucky to have rooms without *croisées*. I am sure the Frenchman has some idea of *supplice* at the back of his mind when he talks of our *fenêtres de guillotine*. As for their heavy *croisées* opening on to the veranda, which must be open or shut, you can’t let a little air in. Either the room is invaded with wind or dust or rain, or it’s so stuffy you can’t breathe.”

Minerva believed that the air question was more prejudicial to the *entente* than Mr Lloyd George or the problem of reparations. She

had heard that the sufferings of British politicians in Continental trains affected "protocols," whatever that might mean. Anyhow, she was happy in a salon without *croisées*.

Yet the beginnings of our villagiature were not encouraging. We tried the fires in the dining-room and the drawing-room: they were both *bouchés*. We tried a bedroom fireplace next: the room was soon thick with smoke. The next morning, when the *ramoneur* came to inspect, his plumb-line would not touch bottom. The chimney was *bouché*. But it could not be soot, as M. Biriadou assured us that a fire had never been lighted in it. We got the masons to work, and with a few stunning blows they drove in a hole in the wall of the bedroom above where the obstruction was indicated. At intervals during the day we heard the work of destruction going on. By the evening they had dug out eleven pailfuls of bricks, which must have been shovelled in when the house was built twelve years earlier, and lain there ever since.

In a week we could count on a comfortable fire in every room in the house—except the hall. We decided not to disfigure or dismantle the *cheminée* with its oak supporters and inlaid tiles. We would use the hall for a lounge in summer only.

Summer arrived earlier than we expected. In the third week of February I discovered that we did not need a fire at all. Minerva was away. She had gone home to collect dumps. We had a small house in London which we had sub-let for years; the lease had now expired, and Minerva was going to sell the furniture she didn't want, and bring the rest over to France. But of the practical side of the business, the ways and means, her letters were suspiciously reticent. Bôj again.

The little god pursued us overseas. I was too ill to help, and confess to being selfishly conscious that if I lay low and did nothing and waited for the objects to come to me instead of having "to cart them about," why, then, the whole argument against objects had vanished. My philosophy, it seems, was in process of readjustment.

It was a great empty house, and I was feeling abysmally lonely and very ill and bored in it. I could do with a few more objects. "I don't mind roughing it on service, or when one is trekking, but——" How often had I heard that eloquent aposiopesis. Easy-chairs—there were none I could sit in. Pictures—the walls were bare. Objects may be an infernal nuisance to cart about, but, thanks to Minerva, I had never lived in a house that wasn't full of them. And I had run out of English tobacco. I have always enjoyed my Caporal cigarette with my coffee, but French 'baccy in a pipe! One wants a new tongue and a new stomach for it. They say one gets acclimatised, but it must be a painful process. On Sunday I felt as doubtful inside as a fourteen-year-old boy after a surreptitious cigar at school. One has to cure oneself of the craving to smoke by smoking it. The first few days it takes three or four pipes to dispel the illusion that it must be worth while; even then when one emerges fresh from one's morning tub one believes that a pipe of French 'baccy would be better than none at all. When one has tried it for a month one knows that it is not.

But it was books that I missed more than anything. Where were all the shelves full I had given away or sold? The day came when I was reduced to 'The Digby Diamonds,' left behind by my son, who had been over for the holidays. A detective story! "Why is one so high-browed

about detective stories?" I asked myself, as I laid the book down after the first chapter. "Now who on earth can have stolen those diamonds?" I began to think that I missed a lot by not reading detective stories, and had confused two things—books and games. "Why can't one take 'the bookstall novel' for what it is meant to be—a puzzle, something to put together or disentangle, to amuse or intrigue one when one is tired?" But after Chapter III. I threw the book down; I didn't care who had stolen the diamonds. Even as a jigsaw puzzle or Punch and Judy show it was bad. The "popular novelist" may bring his puppets on the stage, but he cannot make them dance. He can't contrive a twitch or a kick that might appear to proceed from themselves; in his own mechanical game the man of letters beats him every time—Buchan with his tongue in his cheek and his flair for romance, Chesterton with his exuberant fun.

Books arrived at last. The luggage that was delivered at the villa in the Pyrenean bullock-cart had been to Liverpool, and had been transhipped by cargo-boat to Bayonne. That was the first of the points that Minerva scored in this new phase of the controversy of Bôj. It was I who had insisted on sending it by sea to Liverpool. Minerva had foreseen that we might want it. I believe she had foreseen the villa. In the train from Marseilles, on the racks and under the seat and overflowing into the corridor, to the embarrassment of our polite, forbearing, and economically-equipped fellow-travellers, Minerva's bôj obtruded—hat-boxes, cabin-trunks, dressing-case, valise, a large tiffin-basket, an afternoon tea-basket, odds and ends of parcels too fragile for the van. I watched the afternoon tea-basket in the rack anxiously: it contained

the remnants of Minerva's Spode tea-service. There had been nine cups and saucers in the beginning, and the tragedy of these broken pieces, repeatedly mended, had been enacted in nine acts, spread over twice as many years. Nabi Baksh had been the principal villain in the piece, but there had been other agencies. As the train drew up with a violent jerk, throwing up the tea-basket on the rack like a ball from a cup, I was reminded of the subsidence of an almirah in an E.P. tent in the Himalayan rains. Almirahs ought not to reside in tents. The thing had fallen forward on its face like Dagon, with a crash that sounded like the laugh of Bôj.

One of the reasons why I was *affranchi* from the tyranny to which Minerva is subject is that one never gets any good news about objects. One only gets bad news. Glass and china are broken ; carpets and curtains fade and are stained ; furniture is scratched and chipped. One never gets a letter to say that the china bowl of the Ming dynasty has come together again, or that gloss has returned to the Kermanshah rug, or that any precious inanimate thing is "making a good recovery," or even "doing well." And even if the broken pitcher at the cistern is mended, it is never the same thing.

The jail-carpet with the Swastika-marked edges arrived with the bôj from Bayonne. The bale smelt of sea-water, and when I opened it I found the carpet disfigured with yellow stains. It must have been stowed in bilge. I would have to break this to Minerva. How often had I, who would have been glad to receive the equivalent of all my possessions in a cheque from the insurance agents, suffered vicariously through the wounds her objects have dealt her !

III.

One day when the fragrance of the Mimosa from the garden filled every room in the house, I pulled myself together and discovered that I was well enough to walk a mile. The Mimosa had been in bud a month. It was now flaming. We had accepted it when we took stock of the garden in December, though allied to the babool of Agni Hotrodu, as a sufficiently frankified tree. The villa had a fine garden of pines, a little disfigured by the vegetation, which the guide-book advertises as among "the attractive features of this coast." There ought to be a tax on palms and tamarisks in the South of France. Our instinct was to eliminate the pseudo-Oriental. "There is a horrid date-palm in the garden," Minerva observed on that bleak December day when we took over possession. I looked out of the window and saw the familiar, fibrous, desiccated tree with its clusters of immature grape-coloured fruit. I decided that the date-palm must go. One might be in Basra or Mozuffargarh. I hoped there wasn't a prickly-pear. Minerva pointed to a yucca under which she expected to see a cobra's head emerge. "I'd have all those bamboos down," she said. "The monkey-tree, of course, is impossible, and there is an appalling thing by the gate which looks like a castor-oil plant, much admired by M. Biriadou. I am going to dig it up and send it to him in a basket. I suppose we will have to leave the magnolias."

I left the sand for the clay, and made for a wood on the rise behind the house. No fear of a palm on this soil, the bed of celandines and cuckoo-flowers and primroses. There were violets

as big as periwinkles, and periwinkles in masses like a blue inlaid tile floor under the hedges. It was the season of catkins when the shallows are covered with a downy gold dust, and the brown tassels of the alder hang soft and pliant, and the lamb's-tails fleck the hedges. A season of lambs, too, and the butterflies had come out and were busy in the shallows. I need not describe the vintage of the air: an early February spring in the Pyrenees presupposes it, a vine that needs no bush. It had brought out summer flowers in profusion, the alkanet, and the lesser comfrey aping the cowslips, and the tuberous bitter vetch, the mountain kind, growing so thick among the heather that a few yards off it looks like the flower of the plant; on these sun-bathed slopes it is exactly the same colour. As for the primrose carpet in the wood at the top, the clay of Norfolk or Devonshire could not vie with it. I had forgotten the way they grow on a sloping bank, that frank and homely, lavish and modest way they have of spreading themselves peculiar to the plant, like nothing exotic. "Minerva must see this," I gasped, and pictured her bôj-ridden, bravely struggling with auctioneers, furniture removers, shipping agents, leaning against gusty Boreas in Kensington High Street, pelted with sleet and rain.

Minerva did see it. The very next day I found a telegram when I got back to the villa which barely preceded her, and in less than twenty-four hours I was sitting by her side on a stump in the wood, smoking English 'baccy and pointing proudly to the primroses as if I had caused them to grow.

"What is it about them that grips one so?"

"They lurk," Minerva suggested.

"No, they don't lurk. That's just it. They

may fill lurking-places, but there's no ambush about them."

I knew exactly what Minerva was feeling. Coming unexpectedly on one's first bank of primroses after not having seen them for years is like meeting a bevy of English girls when one has been buried in a zenana country—girls with faces fresh as apple-blossom, who would stare at you open-eyed if you told them that there were countries where women went about veiled.

"What is it about them that gives you that peculiar thrill? It's almost as unsettling as calf love."

"'Heralds of the flaming hours,'" Minerva suggested.

"No. There's the snowdrop and the celandine, —and daisies and dandelions all the winter. No. It's more than that. It's themselves. One feels personal relations with them. They have the same appeal among flowers as the robin among birds."

"What of cowslips?"

"Yes. Cowslips, perhaps, and wallflowers. I suppose it must be half association. And partly spring, as you say. The sight and smell of a cowslip is the next best thing, yet you wouldn't call the cowslip a really beautiful flower if you hadn't seen one before. The wallflower is the only garden flower one thinks of in the same way. However much you rooted up primroses and wallflowers and put them into pots or window-boxes, you couldn't make them look sophisticated."

I saw a rapt meditative look in Minerva's eyes.

"Bôj?" I suggested.

She smiled. "Yes, I suppose you would call it bôj. I was thinking of the bowls we had. Which they would go into best. Primroses and periwinkle

heads in the cloisonnée bowl on the dark oak dresser. Then in the hall——”

“Where *is* the *bôj*?” I asked. Minerva had been oddly secretive about it since she came back.

“It’s coming,” she said, with an enigmatic smile.

“But how?”

“You will see. A little surprise for you.”

“But when?”

“I expect it on Friday. Anyhow, it will be here in less than a week.”

I was incredulous, of course. That was not the way of *bôj*, unless Minerva—Heaven forbid!—was sending it by *grande vitesse*.

But on the Friday morning after my tub I looked out of the window, and beheld the incredible. Parker’s van was drawn up outside the gate, the great, brown, familiar van that rattles down Knightsbridge. I read the familiar inscription in bright yellow letters: “Parker & Sons, Furniture Removals.”

“Exactly a fortnight,” said Minerva, who was standing behind me, “since I saw it off at No. 9. Not the *chassis*, of course, but the top part—the lift van, I think they call it. House to house. I signed a declaration at the French Consulate, and it was shipped straight from the docks in London to Bayonne.”

Wise, wonderful, and foreseeing Minerva! In a few hours the passages, hall, basement, dining-room, landing, bedrooms, were choked with resurrected things. One tripped up over objects everywhere. Minerva, placid and unruffled in triumph as in adversity, directed the men out of the van like a priestess at the altar of *Bôj*. I have an impression of Félicie and Dolores with armfuls and apronfuls of books, pictures, photo-

graphs, and ornaments—objects that recalled my own and Minerva's youth, awaking memories as far back as the nursery. I picked up a book that had fallen on the floor, and opened it at the first picture I remember being shown, "She peered into the robin's nest." And then I met Marie coming upstairs with the children's museum, the ostrich's egg, and the Tibetan praying-wheel, the lama's dorje—or doorkey, as the children called it,—the green lizard from Pompeii, the wooden shoe made by the lunatic at Colney Hatch. In the basement I ran into Félicie with her apron bulging with my De Quinceys—"sixteen volumes, gilt-edged, vellum, a college prize," and upset one of them. In 'The English Mail-Coach,' stuck in the passage on the vision of sudden death, there was sediment of the lava stream, in which I found silver-fish, ants, and worse—preserved as in amber.

I began to be afraid that there were too many objects. I hate an overcrowded house. The hall, with its stuffed and corded furniture, reminded me of a warehouse in Tottenham Court Road. I remember telling Minerva I would rather live in an orderly room than a museum. I must have been very ill to have let old Bôj get his claws into me again like this, and correspondingly peevish. Before half the things were unpacked I was immobilised in bed with fever, seeing visions. In my mind's eye I saw the world as a chart, as in the old days, with dumps marked on it in wavy hummocky lines like shoals. Who was the man who first used the word "dump"? A poet *manqué* or a wag with his tongue in his cheek? A dump means things one puts down to take up again; only one doesn't take them up. The first cumulus that was called a dump with its suggestion of heavy, piled implacable weight was christened by a wanderer.

In three days, when the fever left me, I found a changed house. All this time Minerva must have been doing *pūja* to Bôj. I stood on the *tribune*, the round gallery on the first floor, and looked down over the banisters into the hall. Minerva was standing on the bearskin by the *cheminée* arranging flowers. The *tribune* was carpeted. The five book-shelves from No. 9 lined the walls, all filled; even the twenty-five staidly-bound volumes of 'The Monthly Packet,' an aunt's legacy, had been imported. "Furniture!" Minerva called up to me. "You will find all your own books in the salon—the ones you like." Other shelves held china. I discovered most of the oils and water-colours from No. 9. The comfortable English arm-chairs and chesterfield in the hall were covered with the same cretonne, the one shade for which the villa had waited. Even the clocks matched the wall-paper and wainscotting.

I watched Minerva putting daffodils into the green vase. I remembered her seeing it in the shop-window at Rouen and being drawn in. We were outward bound then, after furlough, wandering across France, and she really hadn't room for another thimble in her boxes. She nursed it, carriage and cabin, all the way to Bombay.

"How splendidly those daffodils go with the green vase!" I called down to her.

"I bought it for daffodils," she said. What faith! For all she knew, we might have been posted to Agni Hotrodu. But Minerva saw beyond. I was the opportunist, she the consistent votary. I only saw the stages; she saw the bourne. I believe she had always seen the villa. She had a bowl or a vase in the house for every kind of flower. The golden down of palm was meant to spill itself on that dark copper Najaf

jar, primroses and periwinkles to float in the china bowl on the oak dresser, the red berries of butcher's broom to glow from the Sadhu's wooden begging bowl. What a gentling of things Eastern! And palm instead of palms! A world of symbolism in the transition.

I descended the carpeted stair into the hall. Minerva's economy of distribution was perfect. The villa had swallowed everything. Not a superfluity, or the superfluities were in the basement or box-room all packed away. The jail-carpet filled the dining-room as if Minerva had had the measure of it. It had actually "made a good recovery"; the bilge-water stains had disappeared.

But this is not an inventory: it is an apologia. Bôj had become a smiling benevolent god. His countenance was changed. Or perhaps Minerva had worshipped at the true shrine all along, unbeknown to me, and had not been betrayed. Countries have the gods they deserve. My own theory is that Bôj is a two-faced Janus god. He frowns at Agni Hotrodu, where gods exist only to scourge; but in this *paysage riant* of the Basques he and all the jolly goblins by his side, deities of the barn, the orchard, the cross-roads, and the byre, smile.

But whatever manner of god he be, Minerva has laid the bogey of Bôj. Objects tyrannise no more.